

## War Ethics of Prophet Muhammed: Lessons for Con- temporary Conflict

---

*Yoonus. MTP*

*Research Scholar, Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh, UP*

---

### Abstract

The war ethics of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) provide important moral advice for behavior in modern warfare. These ethics, which have their roots in Islamic teachings, place a strong emphasis on the value of cooperation, deference to leaders, and moral rectitude even in times of conflict. The teachings of the Prophet emphasize the need of fighting for causes that are just, and they forbid wrongdoings like stealing, betrayal, mutilation, and the slaughter of innocent people. They also emphasize how important it is to wage Jihad with true intentions in order to guarantee that fighting is done only for Allah's sake. The Prophet also promoted humanitarian treatment of adversaries, covenant protection, and the outlawing of needless violence or disruption. His acts of forgiving adversaries and asking for their wisdom are examples of his dedication to rapprochement and peace. The ethical framework of the Prophet Muhammad stands as a timeless beacon in a world tainted by conflict and moral ambiguity, promoting morality, fairness, and the pursuit of peace even in the most trying situations.

*Key words: War Ethics, Islamic Warfare, Moral Conduct, Justice, Peace and Reconciliation*

### Introduction:

Islam as a religion emphasizes personal accountability and responsibility for one's conduct. Even in the most trying and extreme conditions, like a war, adherents to this core concept are influenced in how they behave. Islam offers pre-war precepts that direct its followers' behavior during times of warfare. These guidelines stress the value of moral behavior, fairness, and devotion to divine commands even during times of conflict, as demonstrated by the deeds of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This talk will examine the pre-war directives and customs of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), illuminating how they represent Islam's dedication to preserving decency and righteousness in all spheres of life, including the horrifying reality of war.

## **Seeking Counsel from Companions**

Muhammad, as the Prophet of Allah, received divine guidance directly from the Almighty. He possessed the ultimate source of knowledge and wisdom, rendering him independent of seeking advice from others. However, as a leader and mentor to his companions, he often engaged in consultations with them before embarking on military campaigns. This practice of seeking advice was not because of his own need for guidance but rather as a means of nurturing the development of his companions. It served the purpose of clarifying doubts, gathering valuable insights, and refining the collective wisdom. The Qur'an itself underscores the importance of consultation, instructing believers to "consult them in the affairs."<sup>1</sup> as a means of making informed and well-considered decisions. Abu Hurairah narrated: "I never saw anyone consult his companions more often than the Messenger of Allah."

## **Obeying the Commander's Directives**

Adhering to the commands of a leader during wartime was a fundamental principle and a fundamental strategy for achieving victory in the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). It served as a cornerstone for achieving success in the battlefield. Following the commander's orders was seen as a direct reflection of one's commitment to emulating the actions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Narrated Abu Huraira: That heard Allah's Messenger ﷺ saying, "We are the last but will be the foremost to enter Paradise)". The Prophet added, "He who obeys me, obeys Allah, and he who disobeys me, disobeys Allah. He who obeys the chief, obeys me, and he who disobeys the chief, disobeys me. The Imam is like a shelter for whose safety the Muslims should fight and where they should seek protection. If the Imam orders people with righteousness and rules justly, then he will be rewarded for that, and if he does the opposite, he will be responsible for that".

## **Ethical Guidelines for Muslim Armies in Warfare**

Even with its terrible reality, war needs to be governed by moral precepts. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) gave explicit instructions on how to wage war in Islam in a way that is righteous and kind. This paper examines these moral principles, stressing the need to fight exclusively in Allah's name and for just reasons, and forbidding acts like stealing, betraying promises, disfiguring bodies, and murdering innocent people—including children. In line with Islamic teachings, these principles provide a timeless framework for conducting battle in a morally and justly manner, reflecting a profound commitment to moral integrity and respect for human dignity.

The ethical values of war have always been of great importance in Islam. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) played a pivotal role in articulating these values by providing clear instructions whenever he dispatched groups for military campaigns. These instructions serve as a blueprint for the ethical conduct of Muslim armies during times of conflict, reflecting the Prophet's commitment to upholding moral and ethical standards in warfare. In this discussion, we will explore these ethical guidelines and their significance in the context of Islamic warfare. Sulaiman bin Buraidha reported on his father's authority that the Prophet (s) said: "Fight in the name of Allah and in the way of Allah. Fight against those who disbelieve in Allah. Make a holy war, do not embezzle the spoils; do not break your pledge; and do not mutilate (the dead) bodies; do not kill the children."

### **The Importance of Sincere Intentions in Jihad**

Jihad, in the Islamic context, is not merely any form of warfare; it is fundamentally rooted in the intention to establish the Islamic system. Any conflict devoid of this noble objective is not considered true Jihad. When a Mujahid engages in battle not for the sake of Allah, but for personal gain, fame, wealth, or worldly ambitions, their efforts will not be deemed meritorious in the eyes of divine rewards. Islam places a profound emphasis on the purification of the soul and offers guidance and training to fortify individuals, enabling them to steadfastly follow the directives of Islam, even in the most challenging circumstances, such as warfare. Without this spiritual foundation, it becomes difficult to faithfully adhere to the orders and instructions of Islam. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) subjected his companions to rigorous training and demanding situations, transforming them into devoted and obedient followers of Islam. In this context, here is some of of Prophetic narrations that illuminate the importance of sincere intentions in Jihad. It was narrated that Abu Musa said:

Narrated Abu Musa: "A man came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and asked, "A man fights for war booty; another fights for fame and a third fights for showing off; which of them fights in Allah's Cause?" The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "He who fights that Allah's Word (i.e. Islam) should be superior, fights in Allah's Cause."

### **Avoid the Disobeying**

It is the act of unlawfully taking from the spoils of war before their rightful distribution. It is crucial to emphasize that stealing from the war booty, whether in small or large quantities, is unequivocally forbidden according to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon

him). Even in times of war, Islam places a high value on the virtues of justice and integrity. This introduction emphasizes how important it is to follow moral guidelines when it comes to war booty. The story of the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) reaction to the illegal stealing of goods emphasizes how crucial it is to uphold the rightful distribution of property. We are given insight into the need of integrity and justice in all facets of life by highlighting the dire consequences of breaking this mandate. This contemplation serves as a reminder of the high moral standards anticipated in all endeavors, in addition to directing our behavior.

### **Narrated Abu Hurairah:**

“When we conquered Khaiber, we gained neither gold nor silver as booty, but we gained cows, camels, goods and gardens. Then we departed with the Messenger of Allah to the valley of Al-Qura, and at that time the Messenger of Allah had a slave called Midam who had been presented to him by one of Banu Ad-Dihab. While the slave was dismounting the saddle the Messenger, an arrow, the thrower of Allah which was unknown, hit that slave. The people said, “Congratulations to him for the martyrdom.” The Messenger of Allah said, “No, by Him in Whose Hand my soul is, the sheet (of cloth) which he had taken (illegally) on the day (of the battle) of Khaiber from the booty before the distribution of the booty, has become a flame of fire burning him.” On hearing that, a man brought one or two leather straps of shoes to the prophet (s) and said, “These are things I took (illegally).” On that the Messenger of Allah said, “This is a strap” or “these are two straps of fire”

### **Prohibition of Covenant Violation**

Maintaining the integrity of agreements and defending the rights of others are essential Islamic values that characterize moral behavior. This introduction explores the seriousness of breaking a promise, as highlighted by the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). It is morally necessary to uphold the prohibition against violating treaties and causing harm to people who are protected. The grave consequences of such offenses—which include the offender's exclusion from Paradise—emphasize how precious commitment and trust are. These teachings, which represent the fundamental principles of compassion and faithfulness in Islamic ethics, serve as a potent reminder of the significance of keeping promises and guaranteeing justice for all.

Breaking a covenant and committing harm against those with whom agreements have been made are regarded as grave transgressions and among the most significant sins. Narrated 'Abdullah bin 'Amr: The

Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Whoever killed a person having a treaty with the Muslims, shall not smell the smell of Paradise though its smell is perceived from a distance of forty years.”

This proclamation underscores the severe consequences and moral reprehensibility associated with breaching agreements and harming those under the protection of such covenants. As Narrated Abu Bakrah: The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “If anyone kills a man whom he grants protection prematurely, Allah will forbid him to enter Paradise.”

### **Prohibition of Mutilation and to be Benevolent in Killing**

Even in the midst of combat, the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (s) provide ageless wisdom on upholding decency and humanity. One important rule is that dead bodies should not be disfigured. The Battle of Uhud saw Muslim warriors subjected to terrible disfigurement at the hands of their adversaries, underscoring this principle. This order is still very much in effect today because identical acts of violence are still committed in contemporary wars. The teaching of the Prophet (s) emphasizes the constant necessity of moral behavior in combat, promoting respect and dignity despite the terrible reality of modern conflict. These values need a humane handling of conflict that holds true in both historical and contemporary circumstances. One of the important instructions which the Prophet (s) gave their companions is to keep away from the mutilation of dead bodies as it was acted by the armies after victory. The Muslim army also faced in the battle of Uhad in which the unbelievers mutilated the bodies of the Muslim soldiers. They made some bodies as much damaged that it became very difficult to identify them. The uncle of the Prophet (s) was mutilated badly. His heart and liver were chewed by a woman. The Messenger of Allah had given a law of the prohibition of mutilation.

Narrated `Abdullah bin Yazid Al-Ansari: “The Prophet (ﷺ) forbade robbery (taking away what belongs to others without their permission), and also forbade mutilation (or maiming) of bodies.”

### **Impacts of the Prophetic Narrations**

The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) served as an example of moral behavior for his companions as well as a source of guidance. An important illustration of this is the story of the Jewish woman who tainted the Prophet’s meal. The Prophet’s steadfast devotion to mercy and justice is demonstrated by his decision to choose forgiveness over retaliation in the face of a serious threat to his life. This incident highlights how prophetic teachings can be applied practically to sustain ethical standards. It also shows how his example has a tremendous impact

on his followers and highlights the on- going relevance of his instruction in ethical conduct. The teachings of the Prophet are not just valuable guidance; they were exemplified in practice by his companions, who steadfastly adhered to his instructions. They couldn't fathom the idea of transgressing these teachings, illustrating their deep commitment and unwavering obedience.

The Prophet (s) forgave a Jewish woman who poisoned the food. Narrated Anas bin Malik: "A Jewess brought a poisoned sheep to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), and he ate of it. She was then brought to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) who asked her about it. She said: I intended to kill you. He said: Allah will not give you control over it ; or he said : over me. They (the Companions) said: Should we not kill her ? He said: No. He (Anas) said: I always found it in the uvula of the Messenger of Allah (10)"(ﷺ)

### **Praying for the Guidance of Belligerents**

The Prophet (s) would have refused to invoke against the enemies and instead prayed for them if His companions had requested Him to, as the opponents had left no possibility of the Prophet being tortured physically or mentally. The hardest moment was when the People of Ta'aif threw stones at the Prophet (s). The Prophet (s) suffered serious wounds. At that point, Allah dispatched angel to petition Him for permission to crash that city between the two mountains if He granted it. However, the prophet prayed for them without granting them permission.

The way the Prophet Muhammad (s) handled hardship served as an excellent example of profound leadership. First of all, even in the face of great personal injury, he showed forbearance and compassion by choosing prayer over retribution, signifying a dedication to higher ideals above instant gratification. Second, he demonstrates his commitment to kindness and forgiveness by turning down the angel's plea to destroy Ta'if and choosing long-term good results over immediate retaliation. Last but not least, his leadership is demonstrated by his decision to put future direction and reconciliation ahead of reacting to provocation, demonstrating a profound comprehension of the transformational power of empathy and patience in leadership.

### **Prohibition of Making Voices highly and Shouting in the Way**

Islamic teachings place a strong emphasis on respect and concern for others, and they dictate how people should behave both during times of conflict and during religious ceremonies. During a Hajj journey with his companions, the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) emphasized these principles, emphasizing the prohibition against raising voices and making unneces-

sary noise. the advice of the Prophet embodies a wider ethical position against behaviors that could cause harm or disturbance to others, even during religious zeal or acts of worship. This method emphasizes a great regard for other people as well as a thorough understanding of Allah’s omnipresence and attentiveness. Narrated Abu Musa Al-Ash’ari: “We were in the company of Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) (during Hajj). Whenever we went up a high place we used to say: “None has the right to be worshipped but Allah, and Allah is Greater,” and our voices used to rise, so the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “O people! Be merciful to yourselves (i.e. don’t raise your voice), for you are not calling a deaf or an absent one, but One Who is with you, no doubt He is All-Hearer, ever Near (to all things).”.

In summary, Prophet Muhammad’s military ethics, as demonstrated by his deeds and teachings, provide timeless guidance for modern wars. These guidelines emphasize the value of cooperation, deference to superiors, moral behavior, good intentions during combat, forbidding misbehavior, and favoring peace over violence as a manner of resolving disputes. The ethical counsel of the Prophet acts as a beacon in a world characterized by persistent disputes and moral difficulties, reminding us of the eternal significance of morality, justice, and the pursuit of peaceful solutions even in the face of the most trying and terrifying situations.

## References;

1. The Quran, 3:159.
2. Ahmed ibn Muhammad. Musnad Imam Ahmed ibn Humal.
3. Al-Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Ismail. Sahih al-Bukhari (Hadith No. 2956, 2957).
4. Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj. Sahih Muslim (Hadith No. 1731).
5. Al-Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Ismail. Sahih al-Bukhari (Hadith No. 2810).
6. Al-Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Ismail. Sahih al-Bukhari (Hadith No. 4234).
7. Al-Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Ismail. Sahih al-Bukhari (Hadith No. 3166).
8. Abu Dawud, Sulayman ibn al-Ash’ath. Sunan Abi Dawud (Hadith No. 2760).
9. Al-Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Ismail. Sahih al-Bukhari (Hadith No. 2474).
10. Abu Dawud, Sulayman ibn al-Ash’ath. Sunan Abi Dawud (Hadith No. 4508).
11. Al-Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Ismail. Sahih al-Bukhari (Hadith No. 2992).