



## MISCONCEPTION ABOUT JIHAD AND MARTYRDOM IN THE 21ST CENTURY: THE ROLE OF SCHOLARS IN SAVING ISLAM AND HUMAN LIFE

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**Abstract:** The word jihad in Islam which means strive or struggle is a wide concept that comprises of parts. Presently, this concept of jihad (strive) in Islam is witnessing a different phenomenon in this contemporary world which is revealing a blameworthy outcome. Several verses of the Qur'an have mentioned of jihad (strive) with either wealth or life of both. The Prophet (SAW) has categorically stated the highest type of jihad: which is against the egocentric or whims and caprices of an individual. In this era, there are many casualties from different areas of the world of killing in the name of God. Islam as complete way of life attached so much values to life. Therefore, this paper aims at stressing the role of scholars especially those in Islamic studies to clarify the meaning of jihad in a comprehensive manner to save human life. Man is created to serve Allah not to kill or be killed. The way of massing killing in the name of martyrdom is strange and did not represent the actual teachings of the Prophet (SAW). The paper therefore suggests the scholars have significant contribution to make in this respect; in order to make a better people who can live and serve Allah in the best way. I-war should be utilized by the scholars to conduct jihad for the betterment of humanity rather than killing. To urge Muslims to partake in moderate path of handling the concept of jihad, and exercise to greatest against the self-ego as best way to execute such a task.

**Keywords:** *Jihad; Islam; Martyrdom; Scholars; and Save*

### INTRODUCTION

The inclusiveness and interrelatedness of Islam as a religion that covers the entire human life of action and belief, thought and practices, can be fully appreciated when realized and analyzed within the framework of Islam itself (Ezzati, 1986). Muslim belief and ascertain that this life is mortal and the essence of life after death is to conduct jihād and attain martyrdom. The quest for everlasting life and attaining the pleasure of Allah in the hereafter make Muslim to go for jihād and achieve martyrdom (Al-Fazl, 2002). The 21st century Muslim world is witnessing new interpretation of the concept of jihad and martyrdom in Islam. This new concept and interpretation is opening a way for wanton killing of innocent civilian from among

both Muslims and non-Muslims. Besides that (Mythen et al., 2009), it portrays the notion that Islam, is not a religion of peace, and Muslim are terrorist as exaggerated. At the same time, it opens up for extremism among Muslims (as well as non-Muslims), with a wrong notion and unjustified intention to die for the sake of Allah, and acquire martyrdom. Every day of life, there are news of Muslims detonating themselves and killing others. And the leaders of such societies hunt upon its citizens based on such action, and are condemned as terrorist. This has made non-Muslims develop a phobia against Islam and Muslim. On the other hand, youths are misguided and recruited every day for the action of jihād. Several literature have discussed about the concept of jihad in Islam as explained

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by Kilani (2015). Others consider the doctrine of jihad as according to (Peters, 1980), that it can only be fought under the leadership of an imām. At the same time kamali (2014), explains how the concept of jihad is distorted and portrayed by the west as 'holy war' while Moniruzzaman (2008) consider it as foreign concept in Islam. In an article by (Ramlan et al., 20015), the various definitions of the term jihad is elaborated and its explanation by the scholars is given. Thus, the aim of this paper is to discuss the role of the scholars in restoring the image of Islam as practiced by the Prophet (SAW) and the companions. The Prophet has categorically stated that the highest jihad is to strive against the 'self-ego'. One of the methods to adapt is moderate mode as enjoined by the Qur'an and exemplified by the Messenger of Islam, in resolving this issue Kamali, 2005).

## 2. METHODS

The method of adopted by this research is based on the internet material and available books in the library. Besides, it also utilizes the information from the media indicating the act of jihād or martyrdom. The research used content analysis to analyze the data in order to come up with the result needed to elaborate on the actual meaning of the concept and how it is being distorted through the utilization of the media.

## 3. The Concept of Jihād (strive) and Martyr (*Shahīd*) in Qur'an and Ḥadīth

The word jihād is an Arabic word originated from the root *Jahada* which means struggle or strive or to exert. It also designates "Work wholeheartedly" (Mansur, 1992:9). It thus signifies any form of action, either personal or for the community of Muslims, with the aim of striving for the cause of Allah and Islam (*al-jihād fi sabil Allah*) (Qutb, 1981). This translation points to the polysemy of the term jihad 488 and the potentially different meanings that may be ascribed to it in different contexts, since the phrase "in the path of/for the sake of God" allows for human striving to be accomplished in multiple ways. Thus, Jihād consists

also of the effort to fix something good and to avert or oppose evil (Qur'an 3:104, 110, 114; 7:157; 9:71, 112, etc.). The "struggle" implicit in the application of this precept is jihad, properly and plainly speaking, and the endeavour is both individual and collective. The means for carrying out this struggle vary according to circumstances, and the Qur'an often refers to those who "strive with their wealth and their selves" (*jahadu bi-amwalihim wa-anfusihim*; e.g., Qur'an 8:72). This is how Muslims understood the concept as shown from the Qur'an and expatiated by the moderate Muslim scholars. Ijtihād is as well from the same word jihād, (Noorani, 2002) which is exertion of the intellect, and it's recognized as a source of Islamic law. Scholars have made ijthihad in order to arrive at solution to certain kind of problems. It is an indication of an effort and hard work for the sake of Allah and guide people by disseminating the religion, explaining to layman about Islam. The Qur'an, indicates multiple meanings of jihad that range from non-combative to combative. Furthermore, the Qur'an does not have a single word for "martyr" or "martyrdom," concepts that became intrinsically linked to the concept of jihad as armed combat against the enemies of Islam. One of the Qur'anic verses (3:169; cf. 47:4; 2:154) that has been construed to refer to the special status of the military martyr runs thus, "Do not think that those who were slain in the path of God are dead. They are alive and well provided for by their Lord." Some of the exegetical and hadith works, however, make clear that the phrase "slain in the path of God," was not understood to be restricted to those fallen in battle, but could be glossed in several ways. The concept of martyrdom (*shahāda*) in Islam can only be understood in the light of the Islamic concept of Struggle (jihad). While the concept of jihad may only be appreciated based on the concept of enjoining right and discovering wrong (*al-amr bi'l-maruf*). (Qur'an, 3:104.Cf. 13:11, 8:23, 8:29, 8:53; 91:8-10). Good and bad, right and wrong deeds can only be understood through the revealed sources, and how the



messages conveyed to humanity are honestly and properly understood. The common Arabic word for martyr became *shahīd*. Nowhere in the Qur’ān is this word used for a martyr; rather it is only used, interchangeably with *shāhīd*, to refer to a legal or eye witness. Only in the later tradition does this word acquire the specific meaning of “one who bears witness for the faith,” particularly by laying down his or her life. Extraneous, particularly Christian, influence may be suspected here (Hasluck, 1930). The contact of the Muslims with the Christian in the 7th century might have contributed to that. The term *shahīd* in the sense of martyr-witness only in the hadith literature, implies the later development of this strand of meaning. According to Afasruddin, (2016) there are several reports that challenged the growing prevalence idea of jihad as predominantly armed combat, which leads to Romanticization of the concept of military martyrdom. Most of the information are attributed to the companions (*mawqūf*: “truncated”) rather than the Prophet himself. Examples can be cited from the narration of Abu Huraira (d. 62/681) that the *shahid* is one who, were he to die in his bed, would enter heaven. (‘Abd al-Razzaq, 2000). Meaning someone who dies on his bed and without sin (*la dhanb lahu*). Another record of the same author declared that, people who died as a result of the plague, parturition or delivery of a child, drowning, and a stomach ailment, have attain *shahāda*. ), (5:268). There is no mention of martyrdom being in the battle in this report. The other one that is included is “one who is killed in the way of God (*man qutila fi sabil Allah*).” (Bukhari). The Muwatta’ of Malik b. Anas (d. 179/795) records that the Prophet identified seven kinds of martyrs, in addition to those who died from fighting in God’s way. Thus, “He who dies as a victim of an epidemic is a martyr; he who dies from drowning is a martyr; he who dies from pleurisy is a martyr; he who dies from diarrhoea is a martyr; he who dies by [being burned in] fire is a martyr; he who dies by being struck by a dilapidated wall falling is a martyr; and the woman who

dies in childbed is a martyr.” (Muwatta’, 1:366–367). The above reports assigns martyrdom to the believer who suffers a painful death from a variety of debilitating illnesses, from a difficult labour in the case of women, or from falling victim to an unfortunate accident, such as being crushed to death by a falling wall, in addition to falling on the battlefield. These early expansive definitions of a martyr are an important corrective to the later predominantly military significations attached to the term *shahīd*. Perhaps the honour of martyrdom of being forgiven and with high status in Jannah, are part of the factors that prompt Muslims to involve into this kind of jihad alone, ignoring other modes of jihad in Islam.

#### 4 DISCUSSIONS

##### 4.1. Systematic Deviation from the actual Concept of *Jihād* and Martyrdom

Striving for the sake of Allah to establish something good and eliminate evil has now been distorted by both Muslims extremist and non-Muslims alike, due misunderstanding of the actual meaning of the term, or deliberate action. Even though, it may depends on the situation and the circumstances for self-defense or any recognized element by Islam that warrants such. But ordinarily for the sake of martyrdom, without following the Qur’anic injunctions and prophetic traditions, it does not portrays the actual meaning of the concept as enjoined by Allah.

As the concept of *jihād* has become the most influential misconceptions about Islam, and that Islam has spread by the sword has given roots to the rising terrorism across the globe. Islam has always respect and gives freedom of religion to anyone. The Qur’an says: “There is no compulsion in religion”. The commercialization of arms, besides the distortion of the term has made the term disturbing to non-Muslims, they connect it with religious extremism and indiscriminate violence. Thus, for sake of inventors of war weapons to find a means to dispose their products for an income. Digging deeper into the matter, pronouncing the word ‘*jihād*’ instills fear into the heart of



a non-Muslim, because the orientalist portrays Islam as a religion disseminated by the sword.

This is done deliberately by the enemies of Islam to distract the attention of both Muslims and non-Muslims from the actual meaning of the concept, while the Qur'an does not mean war by the term. There are plenty of Arabic words denoting armed combat, such as *harb* (war), *sira'* (combat), *ma'araka* (battle), or *qital* (killing), which could have been used such, if war had been the Islamic principle way of engaging an effort. The Qur'an employs this *Harb* term four times: to refer to illegitimate wars fought by those who wish to spread corruption on earth (5:64); to the thick of battle between believers and non-believers (8:57; 47:4); and, in one instance, to the possibility of war waged by Allah and His Prophet against those who would continue to practice usury (2:279). This term is never used with the phrase "in the path of Allah" and has no bearing on the concept of *jihād* (Afsaruddin, 2016). Instead, the Qur'an chooses a vaguer richer word with a wide range of connotations.

Another thing that might be attributed to this, is the implementation of the real *jihād* which is making an exerted effort wholeheartedly to progress. This will ginger the Muslims world into struggling to be at the top. This was and remain a duty for all Muslims to commit themselves to all forms of struggles. These includes besides the physical moral spiritual and intellectual efforts, to create a just and descent society, where the poor and the vulnerable are not exploited, in the way Allah intends man to live. In actual sense, *jihād* is the effort or struggle towards oneself to control and refine one's ego, to conquer ignorance, to discipline one's immoral desires, and to excel in the work undertaken to the best of one's ability, is the *jihād* of the self (*jihad al-nafs*). The effort to eliminate corruption and abuse, fight poverty, combat diseases, build houses for the poor, would all qualify as *jihād* of great social benefit for the society.

This method is utilized to topple down and eliminate as many lives as possible specifically the number of the Muslims in the world. The unfortunate thing is, the Muslims themselves desist from using the term due to how it is portrayed. Actually, using the term in its appropriate way is the best way to interpret its notion.

#### **4.2. The Role of Scholars in Restoring the Image of Islam and Human life**

The Qur'an value the life and property of all human being. It equivocally stated the killing of an individual equal's destruction of the entire nation (5:32). There several verses of the Qur'an warning against self-destruction. In Islam, *Jihad* is more accurately described as the struggle to be a dedicated Muslim. Thus, the role of the scholars these days are more crucial and their responsibility more significant. Among such roles that scholars should play is educating people generally about the diverse meaning of the concept of *jihad* and martyrdom in Islam.

##### **4.2.1. Strive to Propagate the Message of Islam**

Strive to guide people about the actual teachings of Islam in respect to *jihād*. There are several rules and regulation of *jihad* to attain martyrdom for the sake of Allah, which are violated in this new era of self-destruction. For example: not to destroy houses, or to mutilate or commit treacherous actions, killing civilians, who do not involve into war. Not to cut down fruit trees nor burn houses and cornfields and to refrain from killing livestock. All are not considered in the quest for so called '*shahāda*'. The value Islam attached to saving life should be clearly explain for people to understand by the scholars. So that the rich diversity of meaning associated with the term from the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet. The excellences of the "combative *jihād*" often greatly exaggerates merits of falling on the battlefield in defending the realms of Islam, be explain by the scholars in relation to the contemporary world situation. There are divers ways to die as a martyr not necessary self-killing and destructions. These are done in order to re-direct the quest for the highest honour of



*shahāda*. The scholars should strive to dispel the common negative misconceptions that surround jihad and martyrdom. Educate the public on the reality of Islam that Jihad is not a motive to be intolerant of other religions, self-destruction, and property obliteration, to mention a few.

In order to begin reversing the misconstrued ideas, which have led to misconceptions of Jihad, everyone needs to be a part of the change. The truth should be known; people are misinformed. This should be made clearly by the scholars and take a stand when it comes to religious tolerance, separating Islam from violent extremists, racial profiling, women's rights, freedom of worship, and many more issues that surround the topic of jihad. By being dedicated to providing an Islamic perspective on issues of importance attached to jihād and Shahāda in Islam.

#### 4.2.2. Struggle against the Self-ego

Among the duties of the scholars in this regard is to redirect the concept to its actual connotation. The Prophet is reported to have said that the greatest jihād is fighting the animal tendency in human. This shows it is internal rather than external: striving in the path of Allah to overcome the human animal side, which is dangerous when left loosely. To bring these passions under control, means jihād. There are various ways to conduct such. The prophet made mention that Mujāhid (person who does jihad) is the person who does it against the lower self in obeying Allah the mighty the sublime (Musnad: 24678). This is indicating a higher valorization of the spiritual human struggle over the physical.

Patient in controlling the self or in general, over the practice or implementing the religious injunctions, can be part of jihad as well. There are reports from the Prophet on such aspects. The Messenger of Allah, (peace and blessings be upon him), wept and we asked him, “What has caused you to weep, O Messenger of Allah?” He replied, “I reflected on the last of my community and the tribulations they will face. But the patient from among them who arrives will be given the reward of two [military]

martyrs (shahidayn).” This categorically challenges other, better-known reports which assign the greatest merit to military martyrs and posits instead a different, non-militant understanding of virtuous self-sacrifice. These two literary genres—the excellences of fighting versus patience—taken together represent competing but also complementary articulations of how best to struggle for the sake of Allah.

Currently, the matter is indicating the control of the devil over human, through a deceptive way of attaining highest honour of martyrdom. Reminding the Muslims of the tricks of Shaitān is very important in this respect. Being an opened enemy is categorically stated in the Qur'an, 2:168. Cf.2:208; 36:60; 7:14-18. The scholars are obliged to remind Muslims about these hidden tricks. Therefore, the different categories of jihad be made clear for Muslim to abide by and non-Muslims to understand Islam clearly, by the scholars as part of efforts to educate the public.

#### 4.2.3. Neutralize the I-war on Islam and Muslims

A Muslim as enjoined by the Qur'an to be an all-round individual, as far as this world and hereafter are concerned. More especially to be up to date in this contemporary world, he should live to the utmost of it. All these false accusations are contemporary methods to distort and misdirect Muslims and Islam through the concept of jihad and its fruits of martyrdom, are disseminated through the media. The scholar should use the same media to rectify the issue and educate Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Expose of Islamic religion's culture for all to understand.

Hence, *da'wah*—performing the activities of propagating Islam and its related fields of knowledge—is the cornerstone of the ‘building’ of Jihad and its rules; and any attempt to build without this ‘stone’ would damage the meaning and reality of Jihad. This is as against the information war of the modern era of distorting Islam and destroying human life in the name of jihad and attaining martyrdom.



Encourage Muslim NGO's to think out of the box. To involve in the affairs of the humanity not just Islamic world. Remove all misconceptions and stereotypes in clarifying the image of Islam held by non-Muslims. Build a trusting relationship and work with them in ways that accord with their way of thinking, are all primary forms of Jihad. An all-round dissemination of knowledge about Islam from outside the Islamic aspects, like the technology and any other secular knowledge should be the goals to be achieved by the Muslim NGO's.

#### 4.2.4. Proficient Scholars

Muslims scholars should be Versatile, flexible, resourceful, talented and skilled and well prepared with knowledge in the modern era. These includes preaching and educating about the religion of Islam, dismissing all the uncertainties about Islam and making available all the skills and qualifications which people might need in the religious, secular, physical and financial interests. Because these constitute the regulations of both this life and the life to come.

Similarly, establishing a strong community and nation which can fulfil all physical needs of its people, thereby creating for them conditions in which the message will be heard, rather than being lost in the strife and struggle of everyday life, are requirements and form a basic building block of the *Jihādīc* concept. These foundations fulfil the Qur'anic injunction, "Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: and these it is that shall be successful". (Qur'an, 3:104). These are some of the duties to be fulfilled by the scholars to accomplish the conditions of jihad redirection from humanity's mind-set of the concept.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research urges Muslims scholars in particular to redirect their efforts in disseminating the message of Islam in order to save Islam from external destruction by its enemies. At the same time, it urges the

Muslims and non-Muslims alike, to strive hard to understand the actual message in the concept of jihad and martyrdom. This is not to fall prey of the trap of Shaitān. The same can be said of the non-Muslims, to read a lot about Islam from authentic material available. Importantly, the information media should be utilize judiciously by the Muslims to propagate Islam. Besides that, implementing the *akhlāq* (ethics) displayed by the Prophets is one of the best ways to conduct jihad and attain martyrdom.

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