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**Jihad in Islam**

# **Introduction**

The verbal meaning of jihad in Islam is that of a struggle or effort and is not limited to just war which many westerns think it is. Muslim believers use the word Jihad to describe three kinds of struggle which are the struggle to live out Muslim faith, the struggle to build a good Muslim society and lastly the struggle to defend the dignity and name laws of Islam, even if force is required. Many Modern Muslim scholars now a days consider the meaning of Jihad as internal struggle of a person against evil thoughts and this is also accepted by the majority of Muslims across the world as well. However, Jihad is also referred by many as a military struggle but there is a difference on the opinion that when it is necessary. The concept of Jihad is different in two major sects of Islam i.e. Sunni and Shia. In Sunni Islam it is one of the basic belief of Islam while in Shia Islam it is one of the ten practices of Islam (“Islamic Practices”).

# **Jihad and The Prophet**

The internal Jihad is the one which the Prophet Muhammad declared as the greatest of the three. The faith internal Jihad is considered as the efforts in which a believer tries to live his life according to the way and teachings of Islam. The basic purpose of this is to please God and it is required of all people to live the way that will please the creator. So, if a Muslim tries to live by the way in which he is ordered to live, follow all the rules and continue the struggle against evil the he is doing an internal Jihad. Many people consider living on the God way as struggle, as many rules in Islam are very tough to follow and people have to fight against their personal and worldly desires. The other ways in which Muslims can be involved in Jihad includes giving up smoking, working for social justice, forgiving someone even if you are right, taking part in community activities, or even as little as cleaning up floors of mosques.

When either people, their territory or faith of Muslims are under attack, Islam allows or in some ways directs its followers to impose military war and protect people that are under attack. Many people now a days have twisted the meaning of word Jihad in their favor to achieve individual and group based targeted goals. People now have taken the meaning of Jihad as Holy war and used in their favor as self-defense. There are number of reasons that according to Muslims can justify Jihad. The first and foremost cause of Jihad is self defense while other reasons may include, strengthening, punishment of an enemy when an oath is broken, Protecting Muslims against oppression, and overthrowing an oppressive ruler to free its people.

However, there are some conditions to impose jihad and any war cannot be named as Jihad. Any war cannot be termed as Jihad if it is meant to force people to convert them to Islam, settle disputes, colonization, show your might and power as a nation, take a territory to exploit it financially. One cannot initiate Jihad until it is started by the opponent and the order to start a war must be given by a religious leader or head of an Islamic country. The result of the war must be positive or in other words it should be for the gain of people and not harm them. If any other political or social interactive way is there to avoid Jihad it should be used first and under any circumstance’s women, children or older people should not be hurt. The captured enemies must be treated with Justice and according to the laws of the state and the war must immediately be stopped if the enemies ask for peace or surrender from their demands. Like other religions the scriptures of Holy Book of Islam advocate both peace and war at the time of need. In one place it says “Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! Allah loveth not aggressors”. (Qur’an 2:190). While in one other place it says” Therefore, if they withdraw from you but fight you not, and (instead) send you (Guarantees of) peace, then Allah Hath opened no way for you (to war against them)” (Qur'an 4:90).

# **Concept of Jihad in Sunni Islam**

The concept of Jihad has provoked mixed emotions in the western countries, where the concept often appears on TV screen very often. People in the west have equated Jihad with “Holy war”. However, within the two main sects of Islam there is also a large confusion over the term Jihad. This has led to not only failing in presenting a clear view of Jihad in Islam but also led many countries into a confusion about their security and foreign policies. In the early period of Islam, the message of the prophet of Islam Muhammad focused on the spreading of Islam. When the prophet migrated to Medina Jihad took an activist sense and was purely associated with both defending Islam from the people of Mecca to its spreading through other parts of Arabia (*Contextualizing Jihad and Takfir in the Sunni Conceptual Framework*). This led Jihad to both an Inward and outward struggle, Inward struggle against evil and bad of a society while outward struggle against the invading forces.

However, after defeating Abbasid Caliphate through Mongols the meaning of Jihad against took a turn and now it was against the Muslim rulers who tried to suppress them from their rights. A new generation of Salafis later came on, whose true purpose was to restore the beliefs of first-generation Muslims. In Further near history AL-Qaeda emerged to stop the support and influence of America in Middle east and south Asia. Since Al-Qaeda is a Sunni Islamic Jihadist organization, people in the west have developed a perception about Sunni Islam and Jihad as a violent and more war like form. Then after Al-Qaeda ISIS appeared in the middle east who also shared the main ideology, but their focus was on a short-term goal which was the creation of an Islamic Government that they can control (*Contextualizing Jihad and Takfir in the Sunni Conceptual Framework*). They controversially promoted the verses from Quran which focused on the fighting parts.

# **Concept of Jihad in Shia Islam**

The doctrines of Jihad in both Sunni and Shia Islam have a lot in common, however, the Shia conception of Jihad is significantly inclined towards Shia perceptions of historical grievances. Those sufferings and myths have an evident impact on their identities. They have been taught about the injustice, tyrannical rule, dishonor and resistance that their elder had to suffer. The basic difference between Sunni and Shia Jihad doctrines is primarily based on words rather than deeds. The most formative identity building incident in the Shia history is the cruel martyrdom of Prophet Muhammad’s grandson Hussein. The story of sufferings of the innocent in the desolate plains of Karbala in 680 marked the fateful Ashura (Moghadam). It became the central identity and instilled the meaning of the most emotive drama of Shia suffering. Another incident that has a direct bearing of the understanding of the Jihad in Shia context is the Occultation of the twelfth Imam. Imams are the descendants of the Muhammad’s family and are considered as the rightful spiritual and worldly heirs of the prophets’ authority. They are considered as the true leaders of the Muslim Ummah. Shias condemn the persecution and assassination of their Imams at the hands of Caliphs to undertake Caliphate.

Shia believe that their twelfth Imam, hidden after the Great Occultation’ will return as Mahdi and he will bring justice and equality in the world. The Shia discernments of the sufferings have been fueling up along with the Shia agony against the Sunni usurpers (Moghadam). They believed that they were the ones with whom they had to begin a battle with. In context of the historical events, the perception of Jihad in both the sects differ from each other and is still a matter of ongoing debate. In Shi’ism, the idea of Jihad is dependent on the concept of return of the rightful Imam Mahdi.

In Shi’ism the key difference from Sunni’s is on the notion that the final Imam will arrive and lead all the Muslims on the true path. Apart from that there is no major difference or explanation of the Jihad is presented. Despite the fact that Shia Islam don’t believe in the expansionist theory of Jihad that is being promoted. However, the concept of fighting against oppression is there and it can be seen through the emergence of Islamic state in Iran. Where Ayat Ullah Khomeini took over the throne from the Shah of Iran in the Name of Islam and said that the rules and teachings implemented by him were against the basic principles of Islam. This has led to the emergence of disputes among the Shia and Sunni countries and this difference can be seen through the political polarity on the international stage.

# **Work Cited**

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