

Jihaad In Islam

In this present world there have been so many misconceptions concerning the word Jihad. In fact, the views that some people, especially the non-Muslims, have on the term Jihad in Islam is totally wrong. After all there are different kinds of Jihad.

The Arabic word “*jihad*” comes from the root of the word “juhd” which means “effort.” Jihad is the process of “exerting one’s best efforts”, to achieve a particular goal. The word “jihad” does not necessarily imply violence or war. Contrary to the common belief that “jihad” is considered as “holy war,” Islamic jihad does not refer solely to fighting in the way of Allah. The Qur’anic concept of jihad refers to exerting efforts for the sake of Allah. This effort can be fighting back armed aggression, but can also be resisting evil drives and desires in one’s self. As such there are different types of Jihad, internal as well as external.

At the outset, we have **Jihad of the heart/soul**; in Arabic: jihad bin nafs/qalb. It is referred as “the greater Jihad” (al-jihad al-akbar). It is one’s inner struggle of good against evil; refraining oneself from the whispers of Shaitan (Satan). This process involves allowing Islam to transform one’s soul to achieving internal peace; and forgoing the hatred and anger. “Jihad is ordained for you (Muslims) though you dislike it, and it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you and that you like a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows but you do not know.” {Quran, Surah 2: Al-Baqarah, Verse 216; Mohsin Translation.

Added to the above, we have **Jihad by the tongue**; in Arabic: jihad bil lisan. It is defending Islam and spreading Islam by scholarly lectures, speeches and debates. It often overlaps with Da’awah (invitation to Islam, or spreading the message of Islam). In The Last Sermon, Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) asked the listeners whether he has passed on the message to them; and they confirmed affirmatively. Then the Messenger of Allah ordered all those present today to pass on the same message to those who are not here today; and the last person to hear the message should understand it better than the people here.

Thirdly we have **Jihad by the pen/knowledge**; in Arabic: jihad bil qalam/ilm. This form of Jihad involves scholarly research of Islam in aiding the spread and defence of Islam; and publishing written articles in clearing misconceptions and correction lies against Islam. Examples of such Jihad include the research and discovery of scientific evidences, literature miracles and mathematical miracles from the Quran. Messenger of Allah once stated that the ink of a scholar is holier than the blood of a martyr; and one who is reading looks handsome in front of Allah.

Next we have, **Jihad by the hand**; in Arabic: jihad bil yad. This is a Jihad of action rather than words. At certain areas, it overlaps with Zakaat (charity) and Hajj (pilgrimage). Some of its examples include giving charity to the poor and needy, performing Hajj or Ummrah, helping those who need help, saving people’s lives, etc. These are more of physical deeds instead of words. “A person whose feet become dust ridden because of [striving] in the way of Allah will never be touched by the flames of Hell” { Sahih Bukhari 2811}. The most beautiful of all Jihad is a perfect Hajj. It involves testing of one’s patience and piety to the apex. The whole period of Hajj, with just one intention and aim, worshipping Allah!

Moreover, we have **Jihad by the sword**; in Arabic: jihad bis saif. In contrary to Jihad of the heart/soul; this form of Jihad is referred as “the lesser jihad” (al-jihad al-asghar). Sometimes it is necessary to undertake Jihad by the sword. This would include usage of arsenals and engaging in a combat. This could be simply a bunch of freedom fighters or an organised campaign of army. Jihad by the sword is use of arms to engage into a combat. It is **not** misuse of arms to create violence.

There are only two situations where Jihad by the sword is allowed to be undertaken. 1) **For self-defense.** When someone attacks you or when your nation has been attacked. Engaging into combat due to self-defense. 2) **Fighting against evil and unjust.** It is also a sin if a Muslim sees unjust been done, capable of stopping it, yet not doing anything about it. This can include war on drug, war on child labour as well as war on terror! The American administration today seems to be launching a global war on terror, but are they the first to launch the war on terror? The Muslims already announced the war on terror fourteen centuries ago, under the name of Jihad bis saif! There are many rules and limitations when engaging in combat under the title of Jihad. For example, civilians are not to be harmed; trees are not to be cut down; asylum should be granted to surrendering enemy soldiers; etc. “And if anyone of the Mushrikun seeks your protection then grant him protection, so that he may hear the Word of Allah, and then escort him to where he can be secure, that is because they are men who know not.” {Quran, Surah 9: At-Taubah, Verse 6; Mohsin Translation}. The above verse states that when an enemy soldier surrenders during a battle, the Muslim soldiers must grant asylum and in addition, escort him to safety! The treatment for prisoners of war is also clearly stated in the Quran. Prisoners of war under Muslim prisons are to eat, drink and dress the same Muslim soldiers eat, drink and dress. And even under the unfortunate event of shortage of food, it is the prisoners who are to eat first before the Muslim soldiers guarding them!

Thus, as we have seen, Jihad is not a violent concept. Jihad is not a declaration of war against other religions. Those who misunderstand the Qur’anic term jihad as armed jihad only have totally failed to notice, among other things, that Jihad is first through our own ego. The term jihad actually refers to the more general concept of exerting efforts in the way of Allah.