

## THE MYSTICAL DIMENSIONS OF JIHAD AND THE ROLE OF SUFISM IN PROMOTING PEACE AND TOLERANCE

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### ABSTRACT

*The concept of jihad in Islam has various meanings and interpretations. While many associate it with armed struggle or holy war, its true meaning goes beyond that. One of the most important aspects of jihad is its spiritual dimension, which plays an essential role in the lives of Muslims. The mystical aspect of jihad is about striving to animate life in accordance with Islam's education. This involves striving to purify oneself, do good deeds, follow the commands of Allah, and avoid sin. It is a continuous struggle to maintain a state of purity, righteousness, and submission to Allah. This type of spiritual jihad is sometimes referred to as the "greater jihad" (al-jihad al-Akbar) in contrast to the "lesser jihad" (Al-jihad al-Asghar), which refers to physical struggle or fighting. According to Islamic tradition, the Prophet Muhammad said that the greatest jihad is the struggle against one's own self (nafs) and desires. The spiritual aspect of jihad is not limited to individuals but extends to the wider community. Muslims are encouraged to work towards improving the society where they live by promoting justice, fairness, and compassion. This can involve speaking out against oppression, corruption, and social inequalities, and working towards a more just and peaceful world. One of the key aspects of spiritual jihad is the cultivation of spiritual practices such as prayer, fasting, and charity. These practices help Muslims to develop a closer relationship with Allah and to purify their souls. Muslims are also encouraged to seek knowledge and wisdom, to reflect on the teachings of the Qur'an exegesis and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and to strive towards self-improvement and self-discipline*

**Keywords:** Executive summary, Sufism, jihad, tolerance and peace in subcontinent.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Executive Summary

In summary, the spiritual aspect of jihad is an essential part of the Islamic faith. It is a continuous struggle to animate a life that is in accordance with the education of Islam and to strive towards self-improvement, social justice, and compassion. By embracing the spiritual dimension of jihad, Muslims can cultivate a deeper connection with Allah and work towards creating a better world for all. Sufism is a mystical dimension of Islam that emphasizes the importance of spiritual development, inner peace, and compassion towards all humanity. Sufis are known for their peaceful and tolerant approach to life, and their teachings have played a significant role in promoting peace and tolerance in society.

The role of Sufis in promoting peace and tolerance can be traced back to the earliest days of Islamic history. Sufi scholars and mystics have always been at the forefront of promoting interfaith dialogue, peaceful coexistence, and mutual understanding among different religious communities. One of the key principles of Sufism is the credence that all human beings are equal and deserving of love and respect, regardless of their religious, cultural, or ethnic background. This belief has led many Sufi teachers to actively promote peaceful coexistence and tolerance among different groups. Sufi leaders have also played a vital role in promoting social justice and equality. Through their teachings, Sufi scholars have emphasized the importance of treating all

members of society with fairness and dignity. This has helped to create a more just and tolerant society, where people from different backgrounds can live together in peace and harmony.

Another important aspect of Sufism is the emphasis on spiritual development and personal transformation. Sufi practices such as meditation, prayer, and spiritual retreats help individuals to develop greater self-awareness, empathy, and compassion. This, in turn, promotes greater understanding and tolerance towards others, regardless of their differences. Overall, the role of Sufia in promoting peace and tolerance cannot be overstated. Through their teachings and practices, Sufi scholars and mystics have helped to create a more peaceful, just, and tolerant society, where people of all backgrounds can live together in harmony.

### **What is Sufi Movement?**

Sufism has been a universal movement throughout human history. During the era of Banu Umiyyah and Banu Abbasid, when the sciences of exegesis, hadith, and jurisprudence were being edited, Sufism formed an identity as a separate field, and it has since become the most important part of the Islamic world's curriculum. Sufism is, in fact, a higher condition of mind that serves as the primary unifying force. It is a never-ending anthem that has enchanted the entire world by reintroducing the spirit of Islamic teachings. The Sufia creed has spread the message of peace and tolerance as a solution to divergent problems, as well as the teachings and lessons of brotherhood, harmony, forbearance, serenity, and the perception of monotheism, i.e. Allah's oneness. They infected the approach to put on accuracy in (Tariqat) Sufi path and churned humanity's minds and even souls.

Allah, the Almighty, has characterized the characteristics of saints and Sufis in the Holy Qur'an as follows: The true servants of the Most Compassionate are those who walk on the earth modestly, and when the foolish address them wrongly, they only respond with peace (al-Furqan verse 63). As such, the Saints and Sufia are those who consider torture and violence to be completely prohibited and advise people to live in peace, love, and tolerance; they are models of holiness and piety, as Sufis have always been true

emissaries of peace, and they continue to be a torch for us now.

The term 'Sufi' is derived from the phrase 'Suf,' which means "simple woollen cloaks." "True Sufis are mystics; they follow a sanctimonious Islam and believe that an individual experience of "Allah" can be attained through meditation (Webster, 2000). Some scholars referred to the Sufis as pure of heart (Ahl-i-safa) because they prayed in the same spot as the Prophet (PBUH). "Sufi masters are also known as (Ahl-e dil), or persons of the heart." They preach that religion has no value unless it is warmed by feelings of love, and they see Sufism as the core of Islam"(Dehlvi, 2009).

Sufi saints are the compassionate people of "Allah," and their cenotaphs are symbols of peace, harmony, tolerance, sympathy, and service to humanity. The basic four Sufi chains (Silsilas) (A chain or link between master and disciple) Qadriyya, Chishtiyya, Suhrawardiyya, and Naqshbendiyya Shazliyya achieved esteem in the Subcontinent particularly Shazliyya and Rafaiyya in the Middle East territory. They were shown as Islamic spiritualists who were motivated by the same Godly cause. Sufi canons featured various features that went beyond Prophet Muhammad's teachings (PBUH). Sufis were the authentic representatives of Islam. They preached Islam here with love and sacred influence, and they were the actual embodiment of Islam's holy proportions.

Sufis use the light of Islam to convert a large number of individuals. An 'awakening' occurs when a Muslim receives spiritual rebirth through a Sufi. Conversion occurred when a non-Muslim was similarly influenced. Sufism, in its real spirit, is a love of God and all His creatures. One Sufi stated, "Sufism implies religion and philosophy of love, the recognition of all faiths, the equality of human beings, revolt against untruth, adoption of truth, and release from egotism" Implicit egotism (2002). According to Buhler (1998), "Sufi and Sufism are associated with Islam." Sufis, in reality, symbolize Islam. They have an important part in the formation of Islamic societies. People respect them because they are loved. A Sufi has a personal effect on society."

According to Annemarie (1975), "the Sufi messages are universal and illumine the intellect and soul." Because their words are based on love

and truth, they have an impact on the soul and mind. They adore everyone, without exception. People have faith in them because they are a part of Islam and have made significant contributions to the preaching of Islamic beliefs. Sufi ideology is built on universal brotherhood and love" According to Ghazali (1972), "Sufis are also known as the people of 'real stature.'" They are people all around the world with their teachings, love, and culture. Their love and teachings demonstrate the transparency of their heart and soul. Trimingham (1998) studies the Sufi chain (Silsilas) in Islam and claims that "Sufis are the ones who represent Islam with peace and love in the contemporary world." Sufi saints have played an important role in the spread of Islam."

### **Mystical Dimensions of Jihad in Islamic Discourses**

Mystical Jihad, also known as Jihad al-Akbar or Greater Jihad, is a concept within Islamic discourse that refers to the inner struggle of a believer to purify their soul and attain a higher level of spirituality. It is often contrasted with Jihad al-Asghar or Lesser Jihad, which refers to the external struggle or physical warfare in defence of Islam. In Islamic teachings, Jihad is not limited to armed combat but encompasses a broader meaning of striving or struggling in the path of Allah. Mystical Jihad emphasizes the inner struggle to overcome one's own flaws, temptations, and sins, and to cultivate virtues such as humility, patience, gratitude, and compassion. It involves introspection, self-reflection, and self-discipline, as well as engaging in acts of worship, such as prayer, fasting, and seeking knowledge. Mystical Jihad is often associated with Sufism, which is a mystical and contemplative dimension of Islam. Sufism emphasizes the inner spiritual journey towards a closer relationship with Allah, and its practitioners, known as (Sufis or dervishes) saints, strive to purify their hearts and minds from worldly attachments and egoistic desires. They seek to attain a state of spiritual enlightenment or union with Allah, often through practices such as meditation, (dhikr) remembrance of Allah, and asceticism. In Islamic discourse, Mystical Jihad is considered to be of paramount importance, as it is believed that a believer must first purify their inner self before engaging in external acts of worship or spreading

Islam to others. It is seen as the foundation for all other forms of Jihad and is considered essential for personal growth and spiritual development. However, it's important to note that the concept of Jihad, including Mystical Jihad, has been interpreted and understood in various ways by different scholars and Islamic communities throughout history. While some emphasize the importance of internal struggle and spiritual purification, others may emphasize the physical defence of Islam in the face of external threats. It is a complex and multifaceted concept that continues to be debated and discussed within Islamic discourse. Ultimately, the interpretation and practice of Mystical Jihad may vary depending on cultural, historical, and individual factors. So, it's important to approach the topic with nuance and respect for diverse perspectives within Islamic discourse. As with any religious or philosophical concept, it's important to consult a variety of sources and perspectives to gain a comprehensive understanding. Always consult qualified religious scholars or experts for authoritative interpretations of Islamic teachings. Al-Sam'ani, a renowned Islamic scholar, in his interpretation of Sura al-Hajj verse 78, discusses three types of jihad. These types are:

### **Types of Jihad**

1. Jihad against one's own self (jihad al-nafs): This refers to the inner struggle against one's own base desires, ego, and temptations. It is considered as the highest form of jihad, as it requires self-control, discipline, and purifying one's heart and soul to seek nearness to God.
2. Jihad through knowledge and preaching (Jihad al-'Ilm wa al-Da'wah): This type of jihad involves spreading knowledge and wisdom, guiding people towards the right path, and preaching the teachings of Islam. It emphasizes the importance of education, intellectual efforts, and constructive dialogue to promote understanding and tolerance among people.
3. Jihad through physical defence (Jihad al-Daf'): This type of jihad relates to self-defence and protecting one's faith, family, and community from external aggression or oppression. It is generally understood as a

defensive measure taken in exceptional circumstances and under proper Islamic guidelines, such as protecting the weak and oppressed, preserving social justice, and ensuring the freedom of religion and belief.

### **Broader Essence of Mystical Jihad**

It's significant to note that jihad in Islam is not solely associated with armed struggle or violence, but it has a broader meaning that encompasses various forms of striving and exerting effort in the path of God. As we mentioned, jihad is viewed as a quest for God's sake, aiming to establish peace, abolish cruelty, and promote human dignity and self-respect for the purpose of seeking pleasure in the hereafter, rather than being driven by dissatisfaction or aggression. It is a concept that emphasizes moral and ethical conduct, spiritual growth, and social responsibility within the framework of Islamic teachings. So, while jihad can involve physical defence when necessary, it is also deeply rooted in inner struggle and promoting goodness and justice in society. It is significant to recognise the multifaceted nature of jihad and its nuanced interpretations within Islamic teachings. It is often misunderstood or misrepresented, and it is crucial to refer to reputable Islamic scholars and sources for a comprehensive understanding of this concept in Islam. It's also important to note that interpretations of jihad may vary among different scholars, schools of thought, and cultural contexts within the Muslim community. Ultimately, the understanding and practice of jihad should align with the principles of peace, justice, and compassion in Islam. Mawil Izzi Dien, J. (2009). The concept of jihad in Islamic ethics. International Journal of Humanities.

### **Scholarly Orientation of Interpretations**

Al-Razi, a prominent Islamic scholar and commentator, interpreted Sura al-Nisa verse nine in a way that emphasized the different types of jihad or struggle in Islam. According to Al-Razi, there are various forms of jihad, including jihad bil qalb (the struggle of the heart), jihad bi'n- nafs (struggle with oneself), and jihad bi'l mal (struggle with wealth or resources).

Al-Razi believed that individuals who put in a strong effort to achieve greatness, particularly in terms of striving for righteousness and engaging

in acts of charity, are considered true strivers or Mujahideen. He valued those who actively work towards improving the lives of others through honesty, dignity, and philanthropic actions. Al-Razi regarded these heart-centred efforts as more significant than other types of striving. Furthermore, Al-Razi suggested that merely battling one's lower self or engaging in acts of charity alone does not make a person a genuine striver. He argued that true striving encompasses a holistic approach, where individuals strive to be all things to all people, meaning they strive to excel in various aspects of their lives and make a positive impact on others in different ways.

Al-Razi's interpretation of jihad emphasized the importance of inner struggles, such as self-improvement and self-control, as well as outward struggles, such as using one's resources for the betterment of society. He viewed these forms of striving as superior to other types of effort and considered them more valuable in the eyes of Allah. However, it's important to note that interpretations of Islamic teachings can vary among scholars and communities, and Al-Razi's views represent one perspective among many within the broader discourse of Islamic scholarship. Overall, Al-Razi's interpretation highlights the multidimensional nature of jihad and the importance of striving in different aspects of life for the betterment of oneself and society. Jihad is a concept in Islam that refers to the struggle or striving in the path of Allah. It

can take various forms, including physical, intellectual, and spiritual struggles. Jihad bil qalb (the struggle of the heart), jihad bi'n- nafs (struggle with oneself), and jihad bi'l mal (struggle with wealth or resources) are examples of different types of jihad. The interpretation of jihad has evolved over time and has been subject to different interpretations by Islamic scholars. It is important to note that jihad is often misunderstood and misinterpreted, and it is not synonymous with violence or terrorism. Rather, it encompasses a wide range of actions, including self-improvement, self-defence, and social justice, aimed at upholding righteousness and promoting the well-being of individuals and society as a whole. It is important to approach the topic of jihad with nuance, understanding its multifaceted nature and the diverse interpretations within the Islamic tradition. Jihad is a complex



and nuanced concept, and its understanding and application should be guided by the teachings of the Quran, the Hadith (sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad), and the scholarly tradition of Islam. Overall, jihad, as interpreted by Al-Razi and other scholars, emphasizes the importance of striving and struggling for righteousness and societal well-being in various aspects of life, and it is not limited to physical combat or violence. (Al-Razi, 1981)

Abdullah Ibn al-Mubarak was a famous Islamic scholar and jurist who lived during the 8th century. Umar b. Abd al-Aziz was a caliph who ruled the Umayyad Caliphate from 717 to 720 CE. The quote we mentioned, "Which jihad is righteous? Defending your lusts," is attributed to Umar B. Abd al-Aziz in response to a question asked by Abd Ibn al-Mubarak Abu Bakr al-Daynawari al-Maliki in *Mujalasa wa Jawhir al-ilm* P. 335 § 1963. Al-Antaki emphasizes that the noblest form of jihad is to combat one's own worldly pleasures and desires, which can often lead to indulgence, excesses, and disobedience to Allah's teachings. This can involve resisting the urge to engage in prohibited activities or behaviours, such as lying, cheating, stealing, or engaging in immoral conduct. Furthermore, al-Antaki highlights the importance of battling against one's own ill-commanding, which refers to the negative inclinations or impulses that may arise within oneself, such as anger, jealousy, greed, and lust. This involves striving to control these base instincts and aligning one's actions with what is lawful and righteous according to Allah's teachings (Ibn Asakir, 1995).

Al-Qayyim has given his verified judgment on the subject of striving against oneself. Fighting the enemy in the battlefield, according to Ibn al-Qayyim (691-57AH), is equivalent to a servant working against his lower self in submission and obedience to Allah almighty. A striver, according to the Prophet (PBUH), is someone who fights his own desires in obedience to Allah, whereas an immigrant (Al Muhajir) is someone who gives up or deliberately avoids doing what Allah prohibits. As a result, secretly battling one's own self takes precedence over fighting the enemy (in the combat zone), and this is how it all started. (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1407/1986). According to al-Alusi, (a Quran scholar), is a stronger jihad than fighting the enemy in the area.

"Allah's Messenger remarked to a group returning from a fight," according to a story reported by al-Bayhaqi and other Hadith scholars based on Jabir's authority." Your return to al-jihad al-Akbar (greater jihad) from al-jihad al-Asghar is warmly welcomed." He said, 'The fight of a person against his own lusts.'

We may also present the analytical and impassioned side of Jihad, which will assist in understanding Islamic jihad discourse. As a result, some of the holy prophets were martyred (peace be upon him). Narrations assist us in comprehending this realm." (Al-Alusi, 2008). According to Abu Hurayra, a well-known friend, "I heard Allah's Messenger says: Anyone comes to learn or impart knowledge in my mosque has the same standing as those who strive in Allah's path." (Hanbal, 1398 /1978.) Ibn Majah in al-Sunan, (Abu Ya'la, 1426/2005 ), (Al-Bayhaqi, 2000 b) , (Al-Mundhiri, n.d).

Abdallah Ibn. Abbas was well-known for his knowledge of customs and interpretation of the Qur'an. He started by studying from other senior companions and producing commentary about the verses' background. He stated, "A person does the finest jihad if he built a mosque so that the Qur'an, jurisprudence, and Sunna may be taught there to foster positive knowledge," Abd Allah b. Abbas stated, As a result, we may deduce that all educational undertakings, including schools, colleges, and institutions where students have been learning, fall under the category of jihad. (Al-Qurtubi, 1435/2014),(Ibn Abi Ya'la, 1982). The term "jihad" is often used in Islamic teachings to refer to a struggle or striving, and it has both a spiritual and a physical dimension. In its traditional sense, jihad can refer to the struggle against one's own inner flaws and vices, as well as the struggle to uphold justice and righteousness in society. It can also be understood as a defensive military action in response to aggression.

The interpretation of jihad has evolved over time and has been subject to various interpretations by Islamic jurists and scholars. While some interpret it strictly as armed warfare, others emphasize the importance of peaceful means and diplomacy in resolving conflicts. The concept of jihad as a struggle to reduce poverty and economic inequality, as mentioned in our statement, is one of the interpretations that has been put forth by

some scholars in recent times. It is important to note that there are diverse views on the concept of jihad within the Islamic scholarly tradition, and it is a complex issue that requires careful study and understanding of Islamic jurisprudence and context. It is also important to consider the broader socio-political, economic, and historical context in which the concept of jihad is being discussed. As with any complex issue, it is crucial to consult authentic experts and scholars who have a deep understanding of Islamic teachings and jurisprudence to interpret and apply the concept of jihad appropriately. Misinterpretation or misuse of the term can indeed have serious consequences and may lead to misunderstanding and misguidance of innocent people. In the context of the real peace process, it is important to consider how the concept of jihad can be understood and applied in a way that promotes peaceful resolution of conflicts, upholds justice, and respects human rights. This may require a comprehensive review of Sunni jurisprudence and consultation with authentic experts in the field.

Ultimately, the interpretation of jihad and its implications should take into account the broader teachings of Islam, which emphasize peace, justice, compassion, and the well-being of all individuals and societies. It is important to approach this topic with sensitivity, understanding, and a commitment to promoting understanding and tolerance among different perspectives. Dialogue, education, and respectful engagement with diverse viewpoints are key to fostering a nuanced and informed understanding of complex issues like jihad. So, it is important to approach the topic of jihad with caution and seek guidance from authentic experts and scholars in the field of Islamic jurisprudence. It is also crucial to promote peaceful interpretations of jihad that are in line with Islamic teachings and promote harmony and understanding among people of different faiths and cultures.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the concept of jihad is indeed complex and requires careful interpretation and application by competent experts who have a deep understanding of Islamic teachings and jurisprudence. It is essential to approach this topic with sensitivity, respect for diversity, and a

commitment to promoting peace, justice, and understanding in our world. If you have any further questions or concerns, it is recommended to consult with reliable sources and experts in Islamic studies for a more comprehensive understanding.

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