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**WOMEN IN JIHAD: AN ANALYSIS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE  
OF HADITH**

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***Abstract***

The terminology of jihad although seems more synonymous with men, women however have their fair share in their roles and contributions in defending and fighting for their homeland from any foreign invasions. The proof lies in the historical warfare of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) that saw involvement of women hand in hand with men although within the scope that was certainly different from that of men. The question is, to what extent women in Islam are permitted to participate in jihad. This paper therefore aims to examine the role of women in jihad by analyzing the hadiths of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) which talk about their involvements in the series of the Prophet's (p.b.u.h) war. Therefore, in order to achieve the objectives, this qualitative study shall engage library research method in procuring relevant data, primarily by referring to the respectable major hadiths compilation books namely *al-Kutub al-Sittah* and also the books on the commentary of hadiths. The data obtained will be analyzed through inductive and deductive methods. The findings show that women's role were recognized by the Prophet (p.b.u.h) befitting of their gentle nature. However, women were not the main player to engage in combat with the enemy, instead their roles were confined within the scope of supplementary roles to men in the battlefield. As such, it is hoped that the discussions in this article illustrate the true perception of the role of women in jihad according to the standpoint of the hadiths of the Prophet (p.b.u.h).

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## 1. Introduction

Jihad is not an alien term although derived from an Arab word, this terminology has been widely adapted, globally across nation and national borders. In this context, Sharif (2011) states that the word jihad has permeated into many major languages of the world. He further opines that the term is difficult to understand. Typically, jihad is often touted as an activity that involves weaponry and violence committed by individuals aspiring to achieve honorable positions in the hereafter. Unfortunately the limited understanding of the concept of jihad has left negative imprints that tarnished the connotation of jihad; not only in the Muslim community itself, but extends to the non-Muslims. In addition, Darajat (2016) is of the opinion that jihad is the most misunderstood terminology there is by the orientalist and the Muslims alike. In furtherance to the above observations, Cook (2015) shares the same standpoint that views jihad as the most biased and misconstrued terms to date. In view of this distorted image of jihad, Majali (2010) sees the confusion of certain individuals in understanding the true concept of jihad in accordance to the Islamic perspective.

In terms of language, the word jihad is derived from the word *al-jahd* which means *al-taqqah* that is ability and *al-jund* which means *al-mashaqqah* that is difficulties (Firuzabadi, 2015). Whereas in definition, despite the differing views, especially among the imams of the four sects, all are on the same wavelength with the same definition and meaning; namely a war by the Muslims against the unbelievers. A definition that centers on the fight against the enemy of Allah through a myriad of means to eradicate their tyranny are described as jihad in its pure sense (Qurashi, 2010). This statement indicates that jihad has a larger scope with a general as well as comprehensive meanings. Thus Ibn Hajar does not limit the definition of jihad from the view point of *shara'* i.e exerting force in fighting the non-believers that which involves the use of hands, belongings, tongue and heart but it even includes three other forms of jihad namely *mujahadah al-nafs* (jihad of soul), *mujahadah al-syaitan* (jihad against satan) and *mujahadah al-fusaaq* (jihad against people committing sins). More explicitly he describes that the jihad of soul means the need to learn religious teachings with requirements to practice and to preach to others. *Mujahadah al-syaitan* is defined as rejection against satanic whispers which could trigger *shubhah* and lust. For *mujahadah al-fusaaq*, the only explanation given is in sequence, i.e refraining against committing sins by way of hands, tongue and heart (2013). Therefore, jihad in Islam can be understood by two different definitions namely individual jihad against one's desire that which forms an internal jihad and on the other hand physical jihad in defense of Islam which forms the external jihad (Leede, 2018). Jihad against one's desire is in fact the highest form of jihad (Amin, 2016). As such Harbi (2017) concludes that jihad does not only mean combating the infidels but in fact revolves around extended and comprehensive meanings. Hence jihad is among the complex instruments in Islam that needs to be thoroughly understood. Unfortunately, a narrow interpretation on the definition of jihad had rendered negative connotation which had more often than not gave rise to rigid understanding that refers to war per se (Irawan, 2014).

In the context of the understanding of jihad, on the broader and more comprehensive scope, Ibn Taimiyyah defines the essence of jihad (Qurashi, 2010) as maximum exertion in achieving anything that pleases Allah for example having faith and doing good deeds while simultaneously rejecting whichever displeases Allah the likes of disbelieving, committing sins, and disobedience (Ibn Taimiyyah, 2005). This

implies that the description of jihad in Islam has a very broader meaning, not exclusive to the jihad in the battle fields per se (Rahman, Kashim, & Pitchan, 2017).

Furthermore, from the aspect of the role of women in jihad against the enemy, Qaradawi (2014) opines that generally it is unfit for women to be involved in jihad. This is justifiable by the fact that jihad cause requires physical efforts which are always challenging. This decree is in line with the justice of Allah and His wisdom in creating women as tender beings, thus making them unsuitable to carry out the mostly challenging jihad endeavors that men do. The basis of this dissuasion is that Allah made women as mothers with physical bodies that need to undergo the phase of pregnancy, giving birth, breastfeeding and caring for the children. All these natural roles have absolved women from any more extra role of jihad in the battlefield which would otherwise require them to deal with difficult and dangerous situations. This consideration has been the order of the day that throughout history, the world of warfare is synonymously that of men. However, according to Qaradawi (2014), this does not mean that women are ultimately prevented from working together with men in a war. In short, jihad is not compulsory upon women. Their participation is restricted to certain sectors which are deemed as supporting to the war efforts, in line with the nature of their creation, ability and life experience (Purnamawati, 2015).

From the viewpoint of law on women participating in jihad, Qurashi (2010) divides the views into four, namely women are not obligated to partake in jihad; women are permitted; permission is subject to the consent of the husbands; and subject to availability of *mahram*. These divisions express the basic rule that women are not obliged to go on jihad but the exception is tied up with two conditions, namely the consent of the husbands and the availability of the mahram. Hence there is no view that forces women to join jihad cause. As such, this writing will discuss the hadiths concerning the roles of women in jihad against the enemy of Islam by presenting the views of reputable hadith figures and scholars in order to obtain a clearer picture.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The involvement of women in jihad cause is nothing out of the ordinary seen from their participation in war efforts circa the time of the Prophet (p.b.u.h), thereby displaying undisputed contributions of the women in the past. This statement specifies that women are not strictly prohibited from being involved in the battlefield. However though, jihad is not obligated upon the women as opposed to the men. The roles of women in jihad are rather supplemental in nature in which sense no arms wielding alongside the men. This is the popular view since long. However, according to Lahoud (2014), from the standpoint of jihad ideology that which excludes women from combat, in spite of its classical stance that makes it compulsory upon women to defend their country as well as their faith.

Apart from the above, there is another opinion that says the main jihad for women is not in the battlefield but precisely referring to jihad in the form of performing hajj and umrah which view is sourced from an authentic hadith of the Prophet (p.b.u.h). There is yet another interpretation that women's jihad lies in the obedience of their husbands. The above variance of opinion indicates that the concept of women's jihad is wide and diverse. In the context of the roles of women in the jihad battleground, in line with time, there has been a paradigm shift in positioning their roles, in particular, with the advent of a few pro-jihad movements in recent times that saw the increasing number of women participating and assuming a more

active roles beside men in battlefield combat; a sheer contrast to the understanding of the traditions that limit their roles to a certain scope within jihad cause (Inch, 2017).

The discourse on women's jihad although have been addressed by both the Islamic and western scholars, there is still room for further discussions, particularly so from the aspect of their roles as the key combatants alongside the men in the battlefields, is still open for debate to date. The majority of the writings of Islamic scholars are more suggestive towards the general role of women in jihad as researched by Qurashi in *Jihad al-Marah wa Hijratihā fi al-Sunnah*. While a western scholar's work still needs scrutinizing for example the work of Kneip in *Female Jihad – Women of ISIS and Women Fighting in Jihad?* by Cook (2005). In Cook's works, he states that the Prophet (p.b.u.h)'s hadith on women's jihad needs to be examined to ascertain whether or not the Prophet (p.b.u.h) allows the women to engage in jihad or forbids them. This opinion calls for thorough analysis on the western scholar's writings as their understanding of the concept of women's roles in jihad are not made based on in-depth reference to the primary sources of the discussions. As such, to fill the void, this research will dissect the hadiths of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) relevant to the roles of women in jihad as the primary source and further analyzing the hadiths from the hadiths' own perspective befitting its position as the second main source of law for the Muslims after the al-Quran.

### **3. Research Questions**

- 3.1. How far women are allowed to shoulder roles in the battlefield?
- 3.2. Are women allowed to engage in arms combat in the battlefield from the perspective of the hadith of the Prophet (p.b.u.h)?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

- 4.1. To study the real roles of women in battlefield.
- 4.2. To analyze the hadith pertaining to women wielding arms in battlefield

### **5. Research Methods**

The whole qualitative study was carried out based on data collection methods conducted through library research. Data were collected from the major hadith compilations i.e. *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* in addition to several commentaries of hadiths in particular *Fath al-Bari Syarh Sahih al-Bukhari* by Ibn Hajar and *Syarh Sahih Muslim* by Nawawi.

In addition to that, a few more literary works that deliberate on women's jihad were referred to, for example the works of Qaradawi and a number of western scholarly writings that discourse on this subject. The data were analyzed based on inductive and deductive approaches.

### **6. Findings**

The role of a warrior in a battlefield is not the main goal in women's participation in jihad. This statement stems from the time of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) when women were involved in wars such as Uhud,

Khandaq, Hunayn, Yamamah and Yarmouk who took arms with the intention to defend themselves and others from the onslaught of the enemy which occurred in a pressing situation that compelled them to use arms. This signifies that the women who went to the battle with the Prophet (p.b.u.h) were ready and equipped to join forces against the enemy when the situation compelled them to. This is evident in the Uhud war whereby the Muslims were almost defeated, Umm Umarah was found to have been wielding arms to protect the Prophet (p.b.u.h) that resulted in her sustaining injury even though her initial intent was to join other women in offering drinks to the fighters and nursing injured soldiers (Qurashi, 2010)

But the role played by Umm Umarah as quoted by Qurashi (2010) in her works *Jihad al-Marah wa Hijratiha fi al-Sunnah* based on the history found in a few books written by scholars such as *al-Sirah* by Ibn Hashim, *al-Tabaqat al-Kubra* authored by Ibn Sa'ad and *al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah* written by Ibn Kathir. In this case, according to 'Umari (1994), the narration of Ibn Hisham is weak (*da'if*) due to broken chain of narrators (*sanad*). Furthermore, the narrative is through al-Waqidi which status is very weak (*da'if jiddan*).

In the context of the hadiths of the Prophet (p.b.u.h), from the observation of the researcher, there exists a hadith that clearly illustrates the involvement of women in the battlefield against the enemy and also few hadiths that speak about the Prophet (p.b.u.h) not forbidding them from taking arms as what was evidenced by Umm Sulaym in the battle of Hunayn. Among the hadiths is one narrated by Muslim as follows:

From Anas that Umm Sulaym brought a machete with her on the day of Hunayn battle and witnessed by Abu Talhah and he said, O' Messenger of Allah, Umm Sulaym always carries the *khinjar* with her, then the Prophet (p.b.u.h) said for what you always bring *khinjar*? Umm Sulaym replied I bring it with me for if any of the Mushrik approaches me, I will split his stomach. This made the Prophet (p.b.u.h) laughed upon hearing her and Umm Sulaym responded O' Messenger! Kill those whom you have freed on the day of the conquest of Makkah that now they have fled from you. Thus the Prophet (p.b.u.h) said: O' Umm Sulaym, verily Allah is sufficient and improving (Muslim, 2014)

Nawawi (2014) when discussing this hadith does not comment on the role of Umm Sulaym in the war, but only mentions that Umm Sulaym brought a *khinjar* which is understood as a big double eyed blade and asked the Prophet (p.b.u.h) to kill those who embraced Islam during the opening of Makkah but were weak in their faith because she considered them hypocrites who were lawful to be killed. Qurashi (2010) is of the view that Umm Sulaym joined the war with the intention of serving drinks to the fighters and be of service to them and that the mere carrying a machete by Umm Sulaym does not indicate her intention to join the battle in combat even though she was armed; in contrast, the machete was meant for defending herself or anyone when attacked.

Apart from that, there is a hadith narrated by Bukhari which implies that women are not barred by the Prophet (p.b.u.h) from joining the jihad against the enemy, as follows:

From Abdullah b. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Ansari said that he heard Anas said: the Messenger had met Milhan's daughter and leaned beside her and laughed. And she asked why are you laughing, O' Messenger? The Prophet (p.b.u.h) answered there are those among my people wandering in the green sea in jihad in Allah's cause, they are like kings above their thrones. She said O' Messenger of Allah, do pray to Allah that He may make me among them. Then the Prophet (p.b.u.h) said: O Allah, make her

from among them. Then he resumed laughing. Thus she asked like before or why the Prophet (p.b.u.h) laughed. Thus the Prophet (p.b.u.h) explained like before. And she again said: pray to Allah that He made me among them. The Prophet (p.b.u.h) said: you will be the first and not the last (Bukhari, 2015).

The above hadith regarding the participation of Milhan's daughter is cited in the *Sahih al-Bukhari* between chapter *al-Du'a' bi al-Jihad wa al-Shahadah li al-Rijal wa al-Nisa'*, chapter *Fadl man Yusra'fi Sabilillah Famata Fahuwa minhum* and chapter *Ghazw al-Mar'ah fi al-Bahr*. However, according to Ibn Hajar, the daughter of Milhan refers to Umm Haram binti Milhan who is the aunt of Anas bin Malik, as described in the latter's other narrations (2013). This hadith gives an impressions that there were women at the time of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) who were concerned about the involvement in jihad for Allah's cause. Not only that, Umm Haram also had the desire to fall as a martyr in the battlefield. Qaradawi (2014) when deliberating this hadith observes that this hadith clearly indicates the aspiration of women at the time of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) to be involved in warfare in spite of having difficulties and challenges but then the irony was the Prophet (p.b.u.h) did not forbid it.

Although the above hadith is neither able to associate the involvement of Umm Haram as a weapon wielding heroin in the battlefield, nor denying it, but it is clear that she showed a keen desire to die a martyr; with which a grand reward awaits those who strive for the cause of Allah (Qurashi, 2010). Although Umm Haram died from a fall off her ride on her way home from a battlefield, she was considered a martyr though according to a few narrations that say whomever dies in a journey to and from a jihad is recognized as a martyr. Ibn Hajar (2013) views that this hadith entails that it is permissible for whomever desires to die a martyr including women.

The hadith on the subject of Umm Haram goes under critical review of Cook (2005) who claims that this is a strange narration in light of the intimacy between the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and Umm Haram who was a wife of another man while her husband was not present then. As such, this hadith is contradictory to Islamic law which emphasizes on limitations on social relationship between a man and a woman of non-mahram. The issue raised by David Cook is indeed able to impair the holy image of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) while in reality, Umm Haram is the paternal aunt of the Prophet (p.b.u.h), thus making her a mahram to him. There is also a view that says Umm Haram is one of the Prophet (p.b.u.h)'s mahram by reason of nursing him when he was a suckling baby (Qurashi, 2010). Meanwhile as for the claim that Umm Haram was the wife of 'Ubadah bin al-Samit is also incorrect as their marriage took place after the war as per highlighted by Ibn Hajar (2013). Cook (2005) further opines that this hadith upholds the notion that women are allowed to engage in jihad warfare and thereby die as *shahids* whereby the interpretation given by the majority of Islamic scholars is that it is not permissible because the real jihad for women is the Hajj.

To counter Cook's opinion (2005), Ibn Hajar (2013) produces a hadith narrated by 'A'ishah concerning the hajj as women's vehicle of jihad. This in essence gives rise to an understanding that it is not obligatory for women to participate in a warfare jihad in view of other religious requirements which demand compliance from the women; among others namely the strict observation of 'aurat and strict limitation of social affairs with the opposite gender. This restriction is by no means an absolute prohibition for women against joining a war but one should understand that the hajj is accorded more importance for the women to engage in rather than in jihad. This shows that Cook's claim (2005) is made without referring to the views of the hadith scholars who have already resolved this issue in their works.

There is no denying that the hadiths associated with the involvement of women in jihad lead to the roles of helping the men at war such as treating the wounded and giving water. Among the many, the following hadith fits the description above:

From Anas said: Verily I saw ‘A’ishah binti Abu Bakr and Umm Sulaym walking fast that their anklets were showing while carrying *qirab* (and other narrators said: transporting the *qirab* with both shawls) and pouring into the mouth of the soldiers; both returned to refill the water in the *qirab* and returned again to pour water into the mouth of the soldiers (Bukhari, 2015).

Ibn Hajar is of the opinion that this hadith which is categorized under a chapter of Women in Wars i.e *Ghazw al-Nisa’ wa Qitalhinna ma al-Rijal* which contains in a book entitled *al-Jihad wa al-Siyar* does not suggest that women are conditioned to join in the war efforts; but instead suggests the assistance from the women towards the fighting men at war. In short, the deliberation of that chapter by al-Bukhari demonstrates that women do not engage in combat even though they are present at the war zone. Ibn Hajar (2013) further quotes the view of Ibn al-Munir who opines that the hadith is not the precise representation of participation of women in war but more precisely on their contributions in the war (towards the soldiers) and with this interpretation, this hadith is therefore placed by Bukhari under the above chapter on the basis that women too defend themselves in war. This notion of him confirms that women are not obliged to wield arms in jihad as are men.

## 7. Conclusion

From the above discussions, it is clear from the hadith of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) the women did join the war together with the Prophet (p.b.u.h), however, their involvement did not exceed the role of rendering assistance like offering drinks and food as well as providing treatments to the wounded soldiers who took up the leading role in the battle zone. This goes to show that women were not the key players who employed weapons in the fight off because the duty to go to war is accounted for on the shoulders of men, befitting their greater strength and energy to the women who are endowed by Allah with grace and gentleness.

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