



HILAL WANI & SAKINA KHAZIR

Critical Analysis on Islamophobia, Politics of Misunderstanding, and Religious Fundamentalism

ABSTRACT: This research paper, using the qualitative approaches and literature review, is a scholarly attempt to encounter the misunderstanding and wrong practices of some of the Muslims and non-Muslims, which give birth to fundamentalism, radicalism, and extremism. The findings show that Islam, like any other religion, has from the very outset stressed on peace with all humankind. Practicing and preaching Islam wrongly would be injustice with the book of Holy Al-Qur'an and the Prophets teachings. Another narrative is Islamophobia debate of anti-Islamic forces. The Muslim world and other religions cannot survive without moderation and good character. Nevertheless, the theory of "spiritual goal of Islam" and the real meaning of "jihad" (hard effort) are paramount theoretical dimensions for moderation purposes. It can be said based on research that peace can be established at the global level, when Muslims and non-Muslims will have good character, moral behaviour, and moderation in their religious practices. And another dimension is moderation principle, which may bring unity among the world religions. In other words, moderation in religion may be the real panacea not only to the Islamophobia debate, but other phobias in other religions. Hence, the principles of peace of the world religions must be emphasised if world religions want to live in peace and harmony. Civilizational dialogue and commonalities of world religions can be used as an alternative to bridge the gap.

KEY WORD: Radicalism; Misunderstanding on Islam; Islamophobia; Moderation; World Peace.

ABSTRAKSI: "Analisis Kritis tentang Islamofobia, Politik Kesalahpahaman, dan Fundamentalisme Agama". Makalah penelitian ini, dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan tinjauan literatur, merupakan upaya ilmiah untuk menghadapi kesalahpahaman dan praktek salah dari beberapa Muslim dan non-Muslim, yang melahirkan fundamentalisme, radikalisme, dan ekstremisme. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Islam, seperti agama lain, sejak awal menekankan pada perdamaian dengan semua umat manusia. Amalan dan dakwah Islam yang keliru tidak sesuai dengan kitab suci Al-Qur'an dan ajaran para Nabi. Narasi lain adalah debat Islamofobia dari kekuatan-kekuatan anti-Islam. Dunia Islam dan agama-agama lain tidak dapat bertahan tanpa moderasi dan karakter yang baik. Namun demikian, teori "tujuan spiritual Islam" dan makna sebenarnya dari "jihad" (usaha sungguh-sungguh) adalah sangat penting dalam dimensi teoritis untuk tujuan moderasi. Dapat dikatakan berdasarkan penelitian bahwa perdamaian dapat dibangun di tingkat global, ketika Muslim dan non-Muslim memiliki karakter, perilaku moral, dan moderasi yang baik dalam praktek keagamaan mereka. Dan dimensi lain adalah prinsip moderasi, yang dapat membawa persatuan di antara agama-agama dunia. Dengan kata lain, moderasi dalam agama mungkin merupakan obat mujarab yang sebenarnya tidak hanya untuk debat Islamofobia, tetapi juga fobia terhadap agama-agama lainnya. Karenanya, prinsip-prinsip perdamaian agama-agama harus ditekankan jika agama-agama dunia ingin hidup dalam damai dan harmoni. Dialog peradaban dan kesamaan agama-agama dunia dapat digunakan sebagai alternatif untuk menjembatani kesenjangan.

KATA KUNCI: Radikalisme; Kesalahpahaman tentang Islam; Islamophobia; Moderasi; Perdamaian dunia.

About the Authors: Dr. Hilal Wani is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science, Government Degree College Sopore, Jammu and Kashmir, India. Sakina Khazir is a Research Scholar at the Department of Philosophy AMU (Aligarh Muslim University) in Uttar Pradesh, India. Corresponding authors: wanihilal@gmail.com and saku.wani99@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, most of the Islamic nations are affected by terror groups, who are devastating these nations in different ways. Islamic fundamentalism and radicalism have very strong roots in extremist type of Islamic ideologies, who have misunderstood Islamic gospels and who lacks the real knowledge of Islam which emphasises on human dignity and respect to human rights. Due to radical followers of Islamic ideology, most of the people around the globe started thinking differently about the Islam and Muslim world. Islam as an ideology of peace and brotherhood was misinterpreted by some of the sections of Islamic sects and they started practicing the same what they believe in. This misunderstanding of Islam by chosen few is the real challenge to the Muslim world in particular and world in general (Cooper & Yue, 2008; and Guidere, 2012).¹

Nevertheless, it can be said that Islamic understanding in theory is paramount, but Islam in practice is much larger and bigger debate to the Muslim world, where attention is required to go for moderation and stability rather than devastation and violence which affects millions of the people; and, then, the remaining choice for them is nothing except to become refugees or face deadly consequences. The radical Islamic ideology has resulted negative effects throughout the world. The world has seen more destruction in recent years more than what had been seen in First World War (1914-1918) and Second World War (1939-1945), due to sectarianism and radicalism (Sheffield,

Korotayev & Grinin eds., 2013; Bucci, 2015; and Kamolnick, 2017).

This paper is negation of the radical Islamic ideology and Islamophobia. We identified firstly the main causes of worry how actually Islam is being interpreted by Islamic preachers to the larger Muslim community, or how some Muslims believe and practice Islamic principles? Secondly, where from this type of radicalism and fundamentalism is coming from? Thirdly, do we think Islamophobia is the real challenge or it is Islamic radicalism which gives birth to Islamophobia around the globe? Fourthly, what could be the real panacea to the ideology of Islamic radicalism and fundamentalism? And fifthly, how to unite Muslim world, especially Middle East, on unity and cohesion without sectarianism?

These are some the main research questions which we are going to encounter in this research paper. So, by using the qualitative approaches and literature review (Altbach & Kelly, 1986; Creswell, 2003; Bowen, 2005; Bleich, 2011; and Gee, 2011), this article tries to elaborate pertaining: *Exploring Radicalism and Fundamentalism Debate; How Do Muslims Respond to Radicalism vis-à-vis Islamophobia?*; and *Critical Understanding of Concept of Middle Path in Islam*.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Exploring Radicalism and Fundamentalism Debate. In this debate, we are going to delve ourselves what are the responsible factors which gave birth to the Islamic radicalism and fundamentalism across the globe? Based on the available literature, which entails that there are many responsible factors which created cycle of violence and radicalism not

¹See also, for comparison, "Neo-Conservatism Misunderstanding the Threat?" in *The Economist*, on 2006. Available online also at: <http://www.economist.com/node/5624746> [accessed in Jammu and Kashmir, India: June 22, 2018].

only in the Muslim world but also other parts of the world, especially in Western and European world. One of the major mistakes, which some followers of Islam are doing, is the misrepresentation of Islam, because of their lack of understanding about Islam and, then, misinterpretations of peaceful religion which paves way to Islamic radicalism (Colbaugh *et al.*, 2010; al-Andalusi, 2014; and Mills & Miller, 2017).

Therefore, Muslim world has to give greater attention who actually preaches Islam in mosques, *madrasas*, and in Islamic states? Who are the actual leaders whether they are extremist in their ideologies, faith, and practicing Islam? It all has to be judged at the very beginning, when these types of people are being given powers and positions. Hence, the main debate is Muslim world has to go to reformation and rejuvenation so far as the threat of Islamic radicalism is concerned.

How do Muslim world reform the Muslim society? They have to start it in every institution from family to the higher level of Islamic institutions. Moderation is required in Islamic world, so that stability could be built in Muslim world and *vis-à-vis* this moderation principle can also create compatibility between Islam and rest of the world. There is also need of dialogue between the Islamic world with rest of the ideologies, so that a consensus can be built against any sort of misunderstandings (Hanapi, 2014; Rumi, 2015; Wani, Abdullah & Chang, 2015).

The socialisation about moderation and harmony needs to be taught from the very beginning starting from the family, then in schools, *madrasas*, mosques, literature and arts, Muslim universities and institutions, and more importantly

in Muslim leadership who are the main source of political, social, religious, and educational guidance. The Muslim world has to teach the lessons of peace and tranquillity to the children, who are going to be their future tomorrow rather than just motivating and provoking people on the very little theme that is extremism and fundamentalism (Zia, 2007; Blanchard, 2008; and Hussain, 2008).

It is this type of thinking, which creates otherness in Muslim youth. And let us be true in stating this fact that Islam is not religion of violence, rather it is very peaceful religion. However, the Muslim world has to take strong measures, so that they can control over the mentality and practice of extremism which creates a bad image for the Islam and Muslim world (Groff, 2002; Davies, 2010; and Dieng, 2013).

Islam is very tolerant religion in the world, but the tolerance of Islam is being affected the way some Muslims believe, act, and react. However, the Holy *Al-Qur'an* very clearly states "*the way of Islam is the path of peace*" (cited in Rahman, 2009). This path of peace has to be accepted as the first principle by every follower of Islam. Ironically, some Muslims only believe in some verses of the Holy *Al-Qur'an* and even forget the context, history, and importance of that verse which may have different meaning and connotation which some people does not understand. For example, the concept of *jihad* has mentioned in the *Al-Qur'an*, but it has its own context, history, and meaning (Ramadan, 2004; Rahman, 2009; and Devenyi, 2014).

There are more verses which talks about dignity of human beings, mercy, kindness, character, behaviour, peace, sympathy, compatibility with others, and above all

humanity. Why do some Muslims always forget these verses and why do they choose only few verses of *jihad* and then believe, act, and react accordingly and they consider it is all Islam? This type of belief, act, and react is the main cause for damaging the image of Islam and Muslim world across the globe. This is the reason people are showing reaction from Western and Euro-centric world by stating the terms like Islamophobia, rogue states, evil for the Islam and the Muslim world. Therefore, the rationality of Muslim world is only there, where they can fully understand the entire picture of Islam not some verses of the Holy *Al-Qur'an* which has its own context, history, and meaning which is beyond the understanding of some people who don't want accept Islam in a peaceful way (Bonner, 2006; Rahman, 2009; and Devenyi, 2014).

And peace can only prevail in Muslim society, when they will be tolerant and accommodative with one another. Tolerance is one of the major ways towards peace and peaceful coexistence; if it is lacking, peace can never be established. Patience and tolerance are very important for every human being; it is these two methods through which many hearts can become together with feelings of love and humanity. The root of Islam is an Arabic word, *Silm* which means peace (Kalin, 2010).

The basic philosophy of all the religions is same; and that philosophy is philosophy of peace, love, and harmony which human beings cannot ignore otherwise the world will become full of conflicts and wars. Because of lacking of these features, wars and conflicts are going on in Middle East in particular and world in general. It has been found that

people have forgotten the philosophy of peace, tolerance, and patience about which all the global religions are talking about this resulted turmoil, cycle of violence, and war type of periods in the human society. The Holy *Al-Qur'an* also emphasises on the righteousness (Qadri, 2004:4-16). The Holy *Al-Qur'an* states as following here:

Believers, Jews, Christians, and Sabeans – whoever believes in God and the Last Day and does what is right – shall be rewarded by their Lord; they have nothing to fear or to regret (cited in Rahman, 2009).

Tolerance and peace had been the paramount attributes of Muslims throughout the entire Islamic history. And one of the successful factors of dissemination of Islam towards other people around the globe was actually the character, conduct, ethics, and tolerance of Islam and Muslim world. Islam has achieved the astonishing success in its first phase in the world. Within a century after Prophet Mohammed SAW (*Salallahu Alaihi Wassalam* or peace be upon him) death, it had brought large part of the globe from Spain across Central Asia to India under a new Arab Muslim empire (Khan, 2013:2-30).

Ironically, the image of Islam and Muslim world has been diminished, damaged, and affected in the modern context, due some followers of Islam who believe in Islam differently and then act and react differently. The Muslim world can gain again their lost status and position, if they are really ready to practice Islam the way it was practiced by the Prophet of Islam, Mohammed SAW. Prophet Mohammed SAW was the symbol of excellence in every field and sphere. His examples of tolerance are not

only famous in the Muslim world, but also in non-Islamic world. This is the reason not only Muslims love Prophet, but non-Muslims love Prophet, because his life was complete by every angle and he was the Prophet of peace to the entire world. Unfortunately, for the sake of interests, some Muslims have forgotten the ideal philosophy of the Islam and the Prophet Mohammed SAW (Birgivi, 2005; Ahmed, 2009; and Hellyer ed., 2018).

Muslim world can regain their fame and image, if they will try to have that type of character which would differentiate them from others and that character is the character of peace, harmony, moderation, patience, mercy, humanity, kindness, and sympathy. And these features were part and parcel of Prophet's life. Thus, Muslims world have to be adamant enough to save the image of Islam by understanding the Islam well; when they will understand Islam in a better way, it will change wrong faith of some Muslim groups who believe, practice, and perform Islam wrong ways. Practicing Islam in wrong ways, due to the reasons of misrepresentation and misunderstanding of Islam by chosen few, are the main causes of concern for the Muslim world (al-Qaradawi, 2010:1-35).

The recent situation of cycle of violence, brutalities, and devastation caused by radical and extremist forces in the Muslim world are the main threats to the Islam and Muslim world. The recent Arab invasion on Yemen can be also categorised as an act of terror and extremism. If the Muslim world would have understood Islam better way, then we cannot see the situations where Muslims are fighting one another. Examples can be cited from Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. For the sake of power, the Muslim countries

cannot use extremist agendas and to wipe out millions of people of their countries and forget the real message of Islam which is peace (Hajjar, 2004; Shahzad, 2009; and Cecari, 2011).

How Do Muslims Respond to Radicalism vis-à-vis Islamophobia?

According to Daniel Pipes (2001), as cited also in Hilal Wani, Raihanah Abdullah & Lee Wei Chang (2015), that fundamentalists are revolutionary in outlook, extremist in behaviour, and totalitarian in ambition (Pipes, 2001; and Wani, Abdullah & Chang, 2015). We argue to Daniel Pipes (2001) statement, Islam is not fundamentalist, extremist, and radical. Some chosen groups who made Islamic radicalism and extremism, as their way of life, is the major danger which the world is facing in twentieth first century. The main aim and objective of the Islamic radicalism is to impose Islam by force on others and to see the entire world as Islamic world is nothing but mistake of irrationality and ignorance. And this kind of arrogance come into existence once some Muslims, they don't know Islam completely, they rather started reading some verses of the Holy *Al-Qur'an* and understand it, their mission of life which is actually not Islam (cf Ahmed, 2009; Kalin, 2010; and Wani, Abdullah & Chang, 2015).

When some people believe Islam in this way, then, they react and practice it also that way; this is the major challenge what Muslim world is going through now. Now, the main question what do Muslims do to prevent this growing challenge? There could be many ways to mitigate, transform, and finally prevent the radicalisation in Muslim world, but the moderation is one of the best panacea

to the growing threat of Islamic radicalism and Islamophobia (Esposito, 1995; Friedmann, 2003; and Cecari, 2011).

Grand *Mufti* of Egypt emphasises on the principle of moderation in these words. Dr. Mufti Sheikh Shawki Allam (2015) says, and we quote him, as following here:

[...] the principle of moderation is the key principle in all the teachings of Islam. [...] Prophet Mohammad sayings: "We should not be cowards or hold an extreme position, such as murdering innocents and committing acts far removed from the teachings of religion" (Allam, 2015).

What would be the major repercussions and ramifications if we hate others, kill others, and show extreme position in our thought and actions would create different image of Islam and the Muslim world; and that is what we are experiencing in the twentieth first century. The main discourse here is that if Muslims want to safeguard the image of Islam and Muslim world, then, they have no other tool except to adopt moderation in their beliefs, thoughts, and actions; and this would automatically pave way Islamic revivalism and prevent Islamophobia threats (Esposito, 1995; Friedmann, 2003; Cecari, 2011; and Wani, Abdullah & Chang, 2015).

Looking into the present context of ISIS (Islamic States of Iraq and Syria), who believes that their aim is establishment of Islamic state around. The wrong vision and wrong actions of vicious terror group of ISIS can never be a successful mission. If someone thinks he/she is true Muslim, then nobody should be hurt by his/her policies and actions (al-Yaqoubi, 2015; and Gerges, 2016). Islam never supports compulsion of religion on others. The Holy *Al-Qur'an* says that "*there is no*

compulsion in religion" (cited in Rahman, 2009). This verse of the Holy *Al-Qur'an* is the total negation to the vision and actions of ISIS and other kind of terror group. Extremism, militarism, and violence is not allowed in Islam, whether it is used by the individual or by the states (al-Yaqoubi, 2015; Wani, Abdullah & Chang, 2015; and Gerges, 2016).

It signifies the total failure of term *wasatiyyah* and its departure from the path (Salman, 2015). Islam talks about middle path must be used in every field. Character is very liked by the Almighty God and those who possess the better character, they are surely very close to the God. Moderation in character is very paramount in Islam. One has to acknowledge this fact that during the period of Prophet Mohammed SAW (*Salallahu Alaihi Wassalam* or peace be upon him) and subsequently in other periods of Islamic administration, moderation, kindness, mercy, and justice were the main corner stones of Islamic rule. This was the only reason that people embraced Islam in major portion, when they saw the true character and behaviour of Muslims (Lings, 2006; Armstrong, 2007; and Salman, 2015).

Muslims survival could be possible in this world, when they will keep practicing religion with moderation and peaceful way; and that is the true spirit of Islam. The Muslim world in particular is going through very tough circumstances, where you can see devastation, holocaust, annihilation, and massive violations are committed by the vicious Islamic terror groups and by the some of the Muslim countries, i.e. ISIS and Syrian regime is the best example of this kind. The unprecedented destruction, which we

have observed in the recent years in the Muslim world, is the outcome of extremist elements, radical thinking, and division in Muslim community are the major challenges in Muslim world (al-Yaqoubi, 2015; Wani, Abdullah & Chang, 2015; and Gerges, 2016).

Muslim world lacks political leadership, that is also the reason sectarianism and *Balkanisation* is at the peak in the Muslim world. Muslim world has to accept this reality that rising extremism, violence, and Islamic terrorism cannot give anything to them, except they would be day by day weak by choosing and following this kind of path. The main alternative for Muslim world is to ban all kinds of extremism and stress on moderation and character. The role of OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation), political and religious leaders of Muslim countries, Muslim preachers at mosques and in *madrasahs*, and head of the Muslim family, all have the equal responsibility to play a crucial role in this regard (Wani, 2012).

Muslim world has to also accept and realise this major fact that peace is very important and absolute prerequisite for all humanity. Without peace normalcy cannot be achieved. Therefore, the Muslim countries have to be united enough for the cause of peace and to create normalcy and peace, which would be conducive for all the people of the world. Violence, terror, provocations, militarism, and radicalisation are great dangers which are threatening to the entire world. And another good thought for Muslim world is that they are fighting for small issues and forget the larger issues (Hasan, 2011; and Wani, Abdullah & Chang, 2015). In the words of Mohd Hashim Kamali (2015), as

following here:

[...] The Islamic revivalist discourse of recent decades has, on the whole have been dominated by legalistic interpretations of Islam, that focussed attention on relatively minor issues of mannerism. [...] The larger challenges of good governance, poverty eradication, economic development, quality education, and the like hardly became engaging themes of the Islamic revivalist discourse, which is why they remain unmet (Kamali, 2015:83 and 115).

So far as Islamophobia issue is concerned, it is not at all a new phenomenon. Rather, it was there in the earlier period of Islamic history. A massive anti-Islam protest and movement started when Islam was spreading very fast in early eight century. The major role in this anti-Islam propaganda was played by the Church and Christian polemicists. Islamophobia remained a continuous legacy by anti-Islam forces against Islam and Muslim world. In most of the Western and European nations and some of the other countries in other parts of the world, they look down Islam and Muslims. Even, they say it without any fear that Islam is fundamentalist religion and Muslims are radical in their ideology and practice. Orientalism had played a crucial role in bridging the gap between Western civilisation and Eastern civilisation (Said, 1995; Bleich, 2011; and Cecari, 2011). According to Edward Said (1995), as cited also in Wajahat Ali *et al.* (2011), that around 60,000 books were written by the Orientalist scholars on different issues on West Asia, Islam, and Muslims during the period of 1800-1950 (Said, 1995; and Ali *et al.*, 2011).

Around Second World War (1939-1945) and subsequently Muslim and Western unity became strong. The reasons behind this tie were many Islamic scholars

visited to the West. And another reason was Christian-Muslim dialogue initiative. So, everything was going on well between Muslim world and Western world; however, the relationship between the two was badly affected due to the uprising of the Iranian Revolution in 1979. It has created again Islamophobia idea again in practice. Subsequently the 9/11 attack in the United States of America further complicated the situations and badly affected Western and Muslim world relationship. And this has bolstered the Islamophobia debate in the Western and European world (Ali *et al.*, 2011; Bleich, 2011; Cecari, 2011; and Karmi, 2011).²

The role of Western scholars and media was highly important so far as Western movement of Islamophobia is concerned. The Western scholars, who used to criticise Islam and the Muslim world, were receiving lot of appreciations and awards from the Western and European world. The scholars, like Samuel Huntington (2007), can be included in the above-mentioned list of Western scholars who can mostly work for the reward and appreciations without looking into the real debate whether or not his work is based on proofs (*cf* Ashki, 2006; Huntington, 2007:38-100; and Karmi, 2011). Samuel Huntington (2007) argued, as cited also in Umar Karmi (2011), that the reason between West and Muslims is not “Islamic fundamentalism”, but it is Islam itself (Huntington, 2007; and Karmi, 2011).

However, we believe that Islamic fundamentalism is the real problem, not Islam, because both are two different fields. Therefore, it can be said that Islam

in theory is alright, but Islam practiced by some of the Muslims, due to lack of understanding and misrepresentation, is the real hindrance. And Muslim world needs greater attention to reform these kinds of practices of Islam, which defames, damages, and affects “*the spiritual goal and real connotation of Islam*” (Karmi, 2011).

After the Soviet Union downfall in 1990s, Western countries tried a lot to choose second enemy and they found it in Islam and Muslim. Why do they believe like this, there are many major reasons. Firstly, West knows, it very well Islam principles are not in favour of capitalism, consumerism, and materialism. This could be the first reason that West considers Islam and Muslim world as a challenge. Secondly, West knows that Muslims had been in power till many centuries across the globe they fear that time should not come again, they should not regain power again. Thirdly, the radical elements of terror of ISIS (Islamic States of Iraq and Syria), Taliban, and Al-Shabab exported or imported ideology have also diminished and damaged the image of Islam and the Muslim world around the globe more importantly in the Western civilisations. Fourthly, Western project of considering Islam and Muslim world their enemy, they did it by different ways first through cultural imperialism, then weakening Islamic world through interventions (Khan, 2013:63-65; al-Yaqoubi, 2015; and Gerges, 2016). According to Fareed Zakaria (2015) as follows:

[...] the authors note that the largest strikes in Western nations after 9/11, the Madrid, and London bombings were “specifically inspired by the invasion of Iraq” (Zakaria, 2015).

Muslim scholars have not been so much successful letting Western and European

²See also, for comparison, news and views in the [http://theamericanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/islamophobia in the west how muslims should respond](http://theamericanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/islamophobia%20in%20the%20west%20how%20muslims%20should%20respond) [accessed in Jammu and Kashmir, India: June 22, 2017].

know about Islam. Muslim scholars were, firstly, more engaged in the process of sectarianism rather than clarifying the image of Islam to the other parts of the world. Secondly, Muslim world lacks that kind of scholars who could challenge to the West and European anti-Islam debate through their intellect and scholarship and let them know Islam is not the religion of war rather Islam is the religion of peace and message of peace to the entire world. Thirdly reason, Muslim could have also responded through the practice of character of moderation by avoiding violent clashes, which are going on in most parts of the Muslim world. The Muslims have not been successful in keeping moderation, which is one of the important part of Islamic ideology. This may be the reason their image is not good in Western and European world. And this could be also the reason they have to listen the words of Islamic fundamentalism and radicalism as label by others (Khan, 2013).

The one of the major tools, which Muslim world would have applied, is the charismatic leadership; unfortunately Muslim world do not have charismatic leadership, except Muslim world have more dictators in their list rather than democrats. Because of lacking charismatic political visionary leadership in Muslim world, Muslim leaders are not able to maintain unity in the Muslim world rather violence, war, and sectarianism is their main tool to keep strengthening their dictatorial regimes (Toameh, 2011).

The undemocratic regimes in Muslim world and lack of visionary political leadership are also the one of the important reasons of damaging image of Islam and Muslims around the globe. Therefore, Muslim world needs character of tolerance,

moderation, intellectualism, better preachers, charismatic leadership, democratic regimes, and unity which may protect the image of Islam and Muslim world across the globe. It can be also said that Muslims have to stop fighting between themselves, if they are really followers of Islam. Islam is totally against sectarianism and division (Roy, 1994; and Volpi ed., 2011).

Muslim world have been badly affected by the politics of sectarianism and *Balkanisation*. Muslim followers are fighting on small mannerism rather discussing the larger debates about Islam is talking about such as good governance, development, intellectualism, education, unity, character, kindness, and trade, etc. If Muslims would have followed larger debate of Islam, they might have been successful; but when they constantly followed small issues and start fighting on these issues, they became weak and fragmented (Kamali, 2015:240).

Muslims have to really understand what *jihad* is actually all about and what Islamic state actually means? Tariq Ramadan (2014), an Oxford based Islamic scholar, says that *jihad* is an effort which Muslims put in every kind of activity whether that is prayer, that is helping poor people, or whether showing right behaviour like how to talk with others in every kind of these activities, Muslims have to put efforts. And, then, he says that *jihad* is actually peaceful movement, it is not violent (Ramadan, 2014).

And one of the imperative part of *jihad* is *jihad benafas*, or *jihad* with your physical instincts, that is the highest kind of effort which is considered in Islam by Prophet Mohammed SAW (*Salallahu Alaihi Wassalam* or peace be upon him).³ And

³See, for example, "Jihad and the Spread of Islam" in *Dawah Institute of Nigeria*, on 2009, p.3. Available online also at:

jihad which mostly Muslims do in few circumstances, where you will see *kitaal* (killing), is considered minor *jihad* in Islam; and it has to go with circumstances where Muslims are not allowed even to live a life, but it needs also Islamic state that time which will allow to fight with them who are suppressors (Bonner, 2006; Lings, 2006; Khanam, 2009; Ramadan, 2014; and Kabbani & Hendricks, 2017).

On the other side, Islamic state is not a state of terror what world is watching these days by looking the vicious crimes committed by ISIS (Islamic States of Iraq and Syria) against humanity. This kind of Islam was never there in the entire history of Islam. And even Islam vehemently bans these types of crimes committed by the devils of the world (Esposito, 1995; al-Yaqoubi, 2015; and Gerges, 2016).

Mualana Waheedudin Khan (2013) interprets the quality of Prophet Mohammed SAW, which is important lesson for all humanity (Khan, 2013). The paramount lesson which we can learn from the Prophets life is that the strength of peace is more than the strength and power of violence. The Prophet used peace more than anything else in his life; and his entire life was the symbol and best example of peace. We are going to cite only one example of Prophets Mercy, kindness, and peaceful behaviour. When Mecca was conquered by Muslims at the time, all his opponents who had tortured, expelled, and launched a war against him and his companions. These enemies were brought before him and undeniably these people were war criminals and they are expected to be punished by the victor (Lings, 2006; Khanam, 2009; and Khan, 2013).

But, look at the Prophet's Mercy and kindness he simply said, "Go, you are all free" (cited in Khanam, 2009). And this was the reason many people accepted Islam by looking this character and moral behaviour of Prophet. The point we are trying to make here is actually the principle of good character, moral and peaceful behaviour, and moderation are very important principles in the Islam. And these all principles were given preference by all Islamic administrators and rulers from the very beginning of Islam. However, it is also bitter truth that Muslims in large have forgotten the lessons of peace taught by Prophet Mohammed SAW (Lings, 2006; Armstrong, 2007; and Khanam, 2009:41-137).

Jews and Christians, who were living there, under the Muslim rule and administration from the last seventh century. Muslim rule was usually tolerant and peaceful to all non-Muslim entities. And all non-Muslims were fully allowed to follow and practice their faiths. This was the case when Muslims controlled some parts of Spain between 711 and 1492 AD (*Anno Domini*) around. Jews and Christians were viewed by the Muslims as *Ahl al-Kitab* or people of the book (Kamali, 2015:4-35).

Critical Understanding of Concept of Middle Path in Islam. Allah SWT (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala* or Almighty and Most Worthy of Praise) says in the Holy *Al-Qur'an*, *Soorat Al-Baqarah*, Verse 143, as following here:

Thus We have made you [Muslims] a "Wasat" nation, that you be witnesses over mankind and the Messenger Muhammad be a witness over you (cited in Baianonie, 2004).

In Arabic dictionary, when you see the meaning of the word *Wasat*, you will find

<https://thequranblog.files.wordpress.com/2010/04/jihad-book.pdf> [accessed in Jammu and Kashmir, India: June 22, 2018].

three meaning: to be moderate; to be in the middle; and to be the best. What does it mean to be moderate, to be middle, and to be the best? It means actually every Muslim has to be moderate in his/her all affairs and spheres of his/her life; and this is the path of Islam which is the path of moderation (Baianonie, 2004; Hanapi, 2014; and Allam, 2015).

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim always encourage people to be the moderate and peaceful, because it will rescue them from the transgression and violation from law and duty. He says it is in following the middle path man would receive the benefits of this world and hereafter. He also says that if a person would be moderate when sleeping, eating, walking, drinking, and exercising, then its repercussions would be that body will function properly.⁴ However, if person is following extreme in the following of these options, then he would be not normal (Ssenyonjo, 2012; al-Qardhawi, 2013; and *ibidem* with footnote 4).

What does we got by the above statements is actually Muslim has to be moderate and his/her moderation must be applied in every sphere and affairs. If he/she does follow moderation, then he/she would be in normal condition, and if he/she does not he could be dangerous to him/herself as well as to others; this is what we are experiencing today in the Muslim world. Moderation principle, which is the main thought of Islam, is not being practiced (Baianonie, 2004; Hanapi, 2014; and Allam, 2015). And Prophet Mohammed SAW (*Salallahu Alaihi Wassalam* or peace

be upon him) also says, narrated by Abu Hurairah, as following here:

Religion is very easy and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way, so you should not be extremists, but try to be near to the perfection and receive the good tidings that you will be rewarded; and gain strength by worshiping in the mornings and the nights (cited in Al-Bukhari, 2000).⁵

Due to lack of good character, moderation and peace which are the paramount thoughts mentioned in the Holy *Al-Qur'an* and the Prophet's Mohammed SAW (*Salallahu Alaihi Wassalam* or peace be upon him) preaching's have been ignored by majority of the followers of Islam; this is the main reason the Muslim countries are in doldrums and pathetic situations. This may be also the reason that Muslims lack unity in Middle East and other parts of the world, where sectarianism and *Balkanisation* is at the peak. The destruction and annihilation, which is taking place in the Muslim world, it's one of the major cause is also lack of moderation (*wasat*) which is one of the important feature of Islam and has been highly mentioned and emphasized in Islam (Baianonie, 2004; Lings, 2006; Armstrong, 2007; Khanam, 2009; Hanapi, 2014; and Allam, 2015).

Another narrative of this research, it has been also seen that due to lack of knowledge and lack of deep understanding about Islam is also the cause of concern, because if any Muslim does not have clear understanding about Islam and Prophets life and if he only takes some verses of the Holy *Al-Qur'an* and some Prophets preaching's, then he/she would not be

⁴See "The Status of al-Istiqaama – Imam Ibn al Qayyim" in *AbdurRahman.Org: Islamic Knowledge, Islam, Sunnah, and Salafiyah*, on 8 October 2014. Available online also at: <https://abdurrahman.org/2014/10/08/the-status-of-al-istiqaama-imam-ibn-al-qayyim/> [accessed in Jammu and Kashmir, India: February 9, 2018].

⁵See also, for example, *Fath-ul-Bari*, Vol.1, No.1, p.102; and *Sahih Bukhari*, Book 2: *Hadith* No.38.

able to understand the actual picture and objective of Islam. Muslim should have holistic and comprehensive understanding of Islam. It has been found due to lack of understanding about Islam and following some Islam and leaving larger portion creates actually fundamentalism and radicalism in the attitude and practice of some Muslims followers (Lings, 2006; Armstrong, 2007; and Khanam, 2009).

The concept of *jihad* (effort or struggle) can be applied in every field and affairs of Muslim life. *Jihad* is not only killing others, but the biggest *jihad* is to control your instincts and that is *jihad benafs* or struggle with your physical instincts. Greater attention is required in the Muslim world that Islam has to be preached and practiced in a moderate way. This could pave better results in the Muslim world. Ironically, Muslim world is more engaged in mannerism and they have forgotten the larger picture of Islam. Nevertheless, the trend demands that Muslims have to follow the greater picture of Islam with principles of tolerance, moderation, moral behaviour, and good character. Muslim world has to understand the spiritual goal of the Islam and practice it in their lives (Bonner, 2006; Ssenyonjo, 2012; and Devenyi, 2014).

Meanwhile, Muslim world has to redefine and relook the concept of *jihad* and understand the concept of *jihad* in its larger context (Kabbani & Hendricks, 2017). And one has to accept this bitter truth that, because of following of some of Islam and ignoring larger parts, can give birth negative ramifications. Hence, larger picture of Islam is needed to be taken into cognizance thereby Muslims would be active part and parcel of the global peace and world order. And by this,

the real image of Islam and Muslim world could be bolstered across the globe. And by following the good deeds about which Prophet Mohammed SAW said, as follows:

The good deeds of any person will not make him enter Paradise (i.e. no one enters paradise only through his good deeds). The Prophet's companions asked: "Not even you?" The Prophet replied: "Not even myself, unless God bestows His favour and mercy on me. So be moderate in your religious deeds and do what is within your ability. None of you should wish for death, for if he is a doer of good, he may increase his good deeds, and if he is an evil doer, he may repent to God" (cited in Al-Bukhari, 2000).⁶

The following good deeds are the result of the success to Muslims in this world and hereafter. According to this *Hadith*, the good deeds are going to be the way of salvation to Muslims in this world and eternal world. If Muslims will not follow good deeds than salvation is impossible no matter how powerful would be the person cannot be successful at the Day of Judgment; and, even, in this world if he does not follow the good deeds and good character (Smith, 1993; Birgivi, 2005; and al-Qaradawi, 2010).

The British Prime Minister recently vehemently criticised the idea of Islamic state, which media is repeatedly using for ISIS (Islamic States of Iraq and Syria) and ISIL (Islamic States of Iraq and Levant), is entirely the disrespect of the great religion Islam; he said "*perversion of a great religion*". He also requested all Muslims, including *Imams*, to speak out against terrorism carried out under the guise of "*perversion of great religion*"; and clearly mentioned it that this type of extremism is the gateway to terrorism (cited in Chorley, 2015).

Hence, what does the statement justify it, justify that Muslims should not support

⁶See *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Volume 7, *Hadith* No.577.

the ISIL concept of Islamic state, which is perversion of great religion Islam rather they have to stand up against these types of groups and save the image of Islam and Muslim world (al-Yaqoubi, 2015; Chorley, 2015; and Gerges, 2016).

The picture of other religions, also very bad for example the role of so called Buddhist followers in Myanmar, is very much pathetic where innocent Rohingya Muslims were butchered by the Buddhist monks in Myanmar. Similarly, there are many cases where Muslims themselves are being threatened by the evangelical Christians or by the radical Jews in Western and European world. Extremism and radicalism in theory or in practice is entirely against humanity and world peace (Selth, 2003; Qadri, 2004; Cooper & Yue, 2008; Ahmed, 2009; and Griffiths, 2016).

CONCLUSION ⁷

The concept of peace, good character, mercy, kindness, and above all humanity are corner stones of Islamic thought and philosophy. Islam is a very broad religion and complete code of life. Muslim world has to take into cognizance the broader

picture of Islam rather than fighting on mannerism. Sectarianism is the major hindrance, which Muslim world recently is facing and it has badly affected Muslims around the globe, particularly in Middle East. The spiritual dimension of Islam is much more prevailing thought in Islam.

Concept of *jihad* (effort/struggle) has a large paradigm and wide meaning in Islam. Struggle is not all about killing others, rather it is an effort which every Muslim put in every sphere of his/her life, whether he/she would be praying, helping poor, showing kindness, or resisting injustices, all comes within the domain of struggle or effort. Ironically, some Muslims have understood wrongly the concept of *jihad*. Nevertheless, Muslim world needs to review and redefine what actually *jihad* is all about. And Muslim world has to adamant enough to protect the image of Islam. How they are going to do that by following Islam with principles of moderation (*wasat*). This moderation will bring the real change in the Muslim world and can create better ties of the Muslim world to the Euro-centric world.

The moderation, which has been highly emphasised in the Holy *Al-Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Mohammed SAW (*Salallahu Alaihi Wassalam* or peace be upon him), needs to be practiced as it is. Believing half of Islam and leaving its larger paradigm could be very much devastative for Muslims around the globe. And this belief, in some of Islamic principles and ignoring larger portion, could create elements of fundamentalism and radical thinking; because person has understood the larger portion of Islam. He/she rather just following some principles of *jihad*, where resistance is mentioned

⁷**Acknowledgement:** This research work is based on scientific analysis of religion looking from the humanistic perspectives. The author and co-author have equally contributed to this research work. Corresponding author and co-author have no differences of opinion, so far as this research work is concerned. In summation, it can be said that its the moral and religious duty of all followers of world religions to practice their religion with moderation and tolerance. Practicing religion with moderation is going to contribute to the world peace. Religion in theory and religion in practice, both are important methods for establishing a peaceful planet and sustainable development. Extremism of any sort leads to instability and divide. Therefore, moderation in religion may be one of the great method to establish a world full of peace and cooperation. As it is important to mention here that violence begets violence and the results of violence are always not fruitful for any religious community. Commonalities and civilizational dialogues are other methods, which can be used to bridge the gap among the followers of different religions. All leaders of different religions can use micro and macro tools, which may be important for transforming religious violence and establishing world peace.

when there would be suppression, but ironically some individuals understand Islam only *jihad*. These type of individuals need to understand that even *jihad* in Islam is peaceful not devastation, killing, annihilation, beheading, and burning etc. The Islamophobia narrative, which has been much more highlighted after 9/11 attack in United States of America, has really affected and damaged image of the great religion Islam and the Muslim world.

The elements of fanaticism and radicalism comes through ignorance and less understanding about Islam. On the basis of research, the revivalism of Islam is only possible through good character, moral behaviour, kindness, and moderation. This was the main reason that after Prophet Mohammed SAW, the Islam has become very successful religion in the world. People accepted Islam by looking the conduct, character, and kindness of Muslim rulers and Muslims living within the Islamic states. There had been some wars in Islam, but wars were only between the Islamic forces with enemy forces. It had never been allowed by the Prophet of Islam to kill any children, women, or burn and devastate the resources not at all. And after assessing the Islamic wars during Prophets were very much limited and where you can find less destruction. The Prophet of Islam was the Prophet of mercy not war monger; this was the main reason even the non-Muslims respect the personality of Prophet Mohammed SAW.

One has to accept this reality that ISIS (Islamic States of Iraq and Syria) and this type of forces have nothing to do with Islam and Muslims; rather, they are the high class of enemies of Islam and Muslim world. And these forces are actually damaging and defaming the real image of

Islam. Muslim world needs to be united to use its all institutions from family to state level and global level, and try to ban these types of organisations who create bad name for the Islam and the Muslim world. This kind of ban and making Muslim societies aware bring about the change in Muslim societies; and this change would be positive step towards development and prosperity in the Muslim world. Hence, Muslims and followers of other religions need to understand the larger philosophy of Islam, which is actually the philosophy of peace and harmony.⁸

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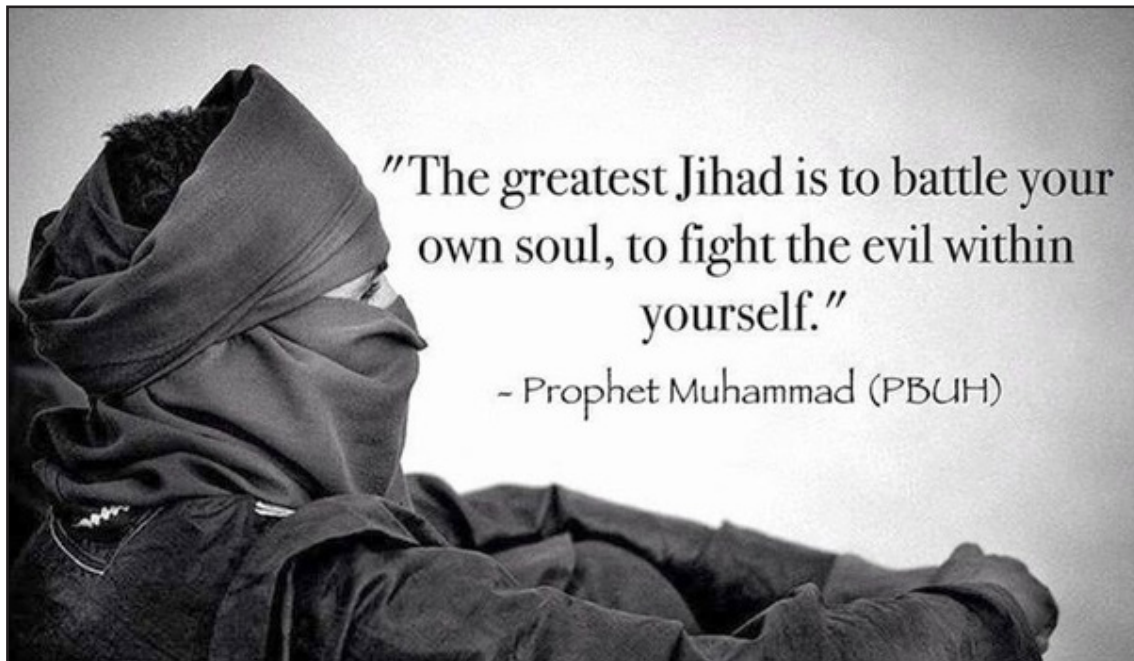
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⁸ **Statement:** Herewith, we declare that this paper is our own original work; it is not product of plagiarism and not yet also be reviewed as well as be published by other scholarly journals.

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Concept of *Jihad* in Islam

(Source: <https://www.quora.com/what-is-jihad-in-Islam>, 9/2/2018)

Concept of *jihad* (effort/struggle) has a large paradigm and wide meaning in Islam. Struggle is not all about killing others rather it is an effort which every Muslim put in every sphere of his/her life, whether he/she would be praying, helping poor, showing kindness, or resisting injustices, all comes within the domain of struggle or effort. Ironically, some Muslims have understood wrongly the concept of *jihad*. Nevertheless, Muslim world needs to review and redefine what actually *jihad* is all about. And Muslim world has to adamant enough to protect the image of Islam. How they are going to do that by following Islam with principles of moderation (*wasat*). This moderation will bring the real change in the Muslim world and can create better ties of the Muslim world to the Euro-centric world.