

Lessons to the Ummah In the Light of Islam on Covid-19 Pandemic

Introduction

We have been witnessing a great pandemic since the beginning of this year which made many to get confused, or at least become uneasy, in understanding some Islamic concepts that are clear without having differences. The reason for this confusion is not just because of their lack of knowledge, but because of the panic created by the Western secular system in the name of Coronavirus, though this disease is not as fatal as other pandemic diseases like Black Death and others. As a result, many of the Ahkam Sharia are neglected or forcefully aborted in the name of pandemic, just as we have been abandoning the mother of all obligations, Khilafah (Caliphate) since its destruction. Masjids were closed for more than fifteen weeks, congregation and Jummah prayers were abandoned with a claim to stop the spread of pandemic even in the lands where there were no infections at the time of closure of Masjids. Negligence of Ahkam Sharia continued even after Masjids were opened by praying congregation and Jummah prayers with social distance, claiming that this would stop the spread of pandemic without actually referring to what Sharia says in this regard. Some even issued fatwa on compensating Eid Ul Adha Sacrifice with donations due to the fear of pandemic [1]. Almost everywhere, a sense of fear was apparent. This article shall clarify the misconceptions and wrong views so that Muslims who possess the Islamic creed must also possess Islamic concepts and address the contemporary issue from the Islamic perspective. This shall make Muslims content and ease with what Allah has decreed to follow and implement the Ahkam Sharia at the time of both ease and hardships.

Ajal is the only cause of Death and Allah is the One who decreed Ajal

Every creation has its own life-span after that it will perish. No creation is eternal as Allah (swt) says, ﴿كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ﴾ “**Every soul will taste death**” [TMQ 21:35]. Allah has decreed every creation a certain life-span, which neither delays nor advances. This life span is called Ajal and death occurs only when Ajal is terminated. The cause (*sabab*) for the termination of Ajal is none other than Allah (swt). This is because Allah is the One Who gives life and death and He is the One Who has fixed Ajal just as He (swt) has fixed the *rizq* (provision) of every creation. No other circumstances like plague or accident or anything can be a cause (*sabab*) for death.

Allah (swt) says, ﴿وَاللَّهُ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ﴾ “**And Allah gives life and causes death.**” [TMQ Al-Imran:156], ﴿رَبِّي الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ﴾ “**My Lord is He Who gives life and causes death.**” [TMQ Al-Baqarah: 258], ﴿أَيْنَمَا تَكُونُوا يُدْرِكَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ مُّشِيدَةٍ﴾ “**Wherever you are death reaches you, even if you were in lofty towers.**” [TMQ An-Nisaa’: 78], ﴿وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تَمُوتَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ كَتَبْنَا مُوَجَلًّا﴾ “**No soul can ever die except by Allah’s leave and at a term appointed.**” [TMQ Al-i Imran: 145].

These and other verses are definite in proof that death is from Allah (swt), and these verses are definite in meaning that Allah is He Who causes death, and that cause of death is the end of life term (*intihaa’ ul-’ajal*), and not the case in which death occurred.

It should not be said that if the heart stops, life will end. Life is nothing but the attribute of heart. So presence of life in heart doesn't mean it is the cause of life and absence of it also

doesn't mean the cause of termination of life. The real cause of life is Allah (swt) and the cause of death is also Allah. Dying in an accident or illness or plague are nothing but the circumstances and not the causes of death. Thus, it is clear that the death is due to the termination of Ajal whose cause is Allah (swt). [2]

The concept of Ajal strengthens the believers to remain steadfast in obeying the commands of Allah at difficult situations

When a believer affirms that it is Allah Who gives life and death and He is the One Who decreed the Ajal (life span), his heart becomes at ease and content in life-threatening circumstances such as uttering a word of truth before the oppressive rulers, spread of fatal diseases, fighting against the enemies and others. This would also remove his reluctance and make him steadfast in obeying the commands of Allah (swt) without fearing anyone. On the other hand, failing to affirm such a fact causes desperation and distress, particularly at the time of difficulties. As a result, this may even lead the one to think about the decree of Allah badly, instead of being patient over that.

Allah (swt) clarified this to the Companions (ra) of the Prophet (saw) after they had turned back from the Battle of Uhud upon hearing the rumour of death of the Prophet (saw). Allah (swt) says, **ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُم مِّن بَعْدِ الْغَمِّ أَمْنَةً نُّعَاسًا يَغْشَى طَآئِفَةً مِّنْكُمْ وَطَآئِفَةٌ قَدْ أَهَمَّتْهُمْ أَنفُسُهُمْ يَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَقُولُونَ هَل لَّنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ مِن شَيْءٍ قُلْ إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ كُلَّهُ لِلَّهِ يُخْفُونَ فِي أَنفُسِهِم مَّا لَا يُبْدُونَ لَكَ يَقُولُونَ لَوْ كَانَ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ مَّا قُتِلْنَا هَاهُنَا قُلْ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ لَبَرَزَ الَّذِينَ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَتْلُ إِلَى مَضَاجِعِهِمْ وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللَّهُ مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ وَلِيُمَحَّصَ الْأَمْرَ لَكُمْ وَلِيُخْرِجَ اللَّهُ الْظَالِمِينَ** “Then after distress, He sent down upon you security [in the form of] drowsiness, overcoming a faction of you (i.e. Believers), while another faction (i.e. Hypocrites) worried about themselves, thinking of Allah other than the truth - the thought of ignorance, saying, "Is there anything for us [to have done] in this matter?" Say, "Indeed, the matter belongs completely to Allah." They conceal within themselves what they will not reveal to you. They say, "If there was anything we could have done in the matter, some of us would not have been killed right here." Say, "Even if you had been inside your houses, those decreed to be killed would have come out to their death beds." [It was] so that Allah might test what is in your breasts and purify what is in your hearts. And Allah is Knowing of that within the breasts.” [TMQ Al-Imran:154]

In this verse, Allah (swt) narrates the lamentations of Hypocrites who could not bear their losses in the Battle of Uhud and they started to think of Allah inappropriately with the thought of ignorance. He (swt) also clarified to the Hypocrites that even if they did not leave for fighting, death would come to them as decreed. Allah (swt) then advised the believers in the next verses not to be like those hypocrites who lamented about their losses in the Battle of Uhud. Allah (swt) says, **يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَقَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ إِذَا ضَرَبُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَوْ كَانُوا غُرَىٰ ﴿١٥٦﴾** **“O you who have believed, do not be like those who disbelieved (i.e. Hypocrites in the battle of Uhud) and said about their brothers when they traveled through the land or went out to fight, "If they had been with us, they would not have died or have been killed," so Allah makes that [misconception] a regret within their hearts. And it is Allah who gives life and causes death, and Allah is Seeing of what you do.” [TMQ Al-Imran :156]**

In this verse Allah reminded the believers that He (swt) is the One Who gives life and death such that their hearts become ease and content with what Allah has decreed. Thus the concept of Ajal makes the believers remain steadfast in obeying the commands of Allah without turning their backs even at life's threatening circumstances, such as fighting the enemy and uttering a word of truth against oppressive rulers and others.

Shariah is the Benchmark for actions of Muslims

Though Sharia has permitted to neglect some of the Ahkam Sharia under *Dharoorah* (necessity) like life-threatening circumstances, severe hunger leading to death, this permission does not come in 'general' to leave all the obligations under the pretext of '*Dharoorah*'. Rather, each circumstance needs specific sharia evidence for the permissibility of neglecting the Ahkam Sharia. For example, in the following verse, **﴿فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ فِي مَخْمَصَةٍ غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِإِثْمٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ﴾** **"But whoever is forced by severe hunger with no inclination to sin - then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."** [Al-Ma'ida: 3].

The permission here is only to eat the forbidden things due to severe hunger that would lead to death. However, this permission cannot be generalized to permit all the forbidden things under the pretext of 'Necessity', not to mention the presumed life threat situations like Covid-19, where contagiousness is used as pretext to abandon the obligations of establishing congregational prayer and Jumma prayers in the Masjids.[3] Worst is the situation of people, who can avert the threats of the oppressive regimes, and continue to abandon the obligations of Allah under the pretext of contagiousness of the virus, fearing death whilst the disease is not as fatal as other contagious diseases. On the contrary, the concept of Ajal should remind the Muslims not to neglect the commands of Allah even at the times of life threatening situations. Rather, it should motivate the Muslims to pursue his obedience to Allah even at life threatening situations. Amongst those situations is the 'obligatory fighting' in the path of Allah in which life threat is inevitable and thus turning back from that battlefield is considered as a grave sin. Allah (swt) narrates the story of the people who left their home without fighting the enemy, whilst they were capable to fight and more in numbers, in order to encourage the Muslims not to neglect his commands, particularly the 'obligatory fighting'. Allah (swt) took their souls and restored them back to affirm that it is Allah Who gives Life and death. Allah (swt) says, **﴿أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ مُوتُوا ثُمَّ أَحْيَاهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ﴾** **"Have you not seen those who left their homes in many thousands, fearing death? Allah said to them, "Die"; then He restored them to life. And Allah is full of bounty to the people, but most of the people do not show gratitude."** [TMQ Al-Baqarah:243]

In the above verse, the description of people being many thousands (i.e. above ten thousands) indicates their ability to fight back and they feared death to neglect the commands of Allah (swt). So Allah (swt) took their souls and restored the life back to them to show that It is Allah Who gives life and death. [4]

The Muslim Ummah must fear the Punishment of Allah but not Covid19 and Death

Fear is an innate nature of humans; however, it does not occur except with the presence of something that agitates it. Fear is one of the dangerous problems due to which weak people and nation suffers backwardness.

Fear is harmful and destructive in some situations whereas it is beneficial and useful in other situations. If the fear agitates from wrong basis or situation, like fear of death or any harm that leads to leave the obligations (except that Sharia has permitted), then this fear must be treated and removed, whereas if it is stimulated from correct and needed situation that must be encouraged. Therefore, Muslims must fear upon correct basis and situations, like fear from Allah's punishment that would encourage the Muslims to stay away from the prohibitions of Allah (swt) and fulfil the obligations.

Fear of death due to the disease is inappropriate for Muslims. This fear is wrong because disease is not the cause of the death but it is the end of Ajal (lifetime). The creed of

secularism (i.e. separation of religion from state) had driven the people with ideas and slogans like “Enjoy life you live only once”, “Live your one life the way you want to”. Thus this worldly life is the priority for them and this pandemic had driven them mad due to fear of death, since this death puts a full stop for all of their enjoyment. But for the one who believes in the correct creed (i.e. Islam) and possess Islamic personality, he lives in this world as a traveller without neglecting his worldly needs and not forgetting about his afterlife. [5]

Secular Capitalism disregards the Spiritual Value in the society

We saw Masajids were shutdown during the pandemic on the pretext that gathering of worshippers in the Masajids would spread the virus. However it is well known that the economic activities were permitted; rather, there were technological advancements introduced to enhance the economic activities which resulted in surge in online shopping, even liquor were permitted under online orders to deliver at doorsteps according to the court order in some of the states in India. This clear contrast between the enhancements in economic activities and shutdown of masajids proves the fact that the ideology of capitalism looks at man as a purely materialistic creature, empty of spiritual needs and moral objectives. Capitalism neither cares about establishing moral value in the society nor does it worry about spiritual elevation i.e. making the realisation of man's relationship with Allah (realising the existence of Allah), the driving force behind all relationships for the sake of attaining the pleasure of Allah. Thus the activities of worship in masajids are marginalized or totally neglected, which was clear from the orders of the secular governments in the capitalistic countries; worse is that even some of the Muslim countries shutdown the masajids by following the footsteps of the West. There were capitalist companies and the CEOs that had increased their wealth during this pandemic as their primary focus is increasing the net worth and the value of the company. [6]

Allah (swt) says in the verse: ﴿الْهَاجُمُ النَّكَاتُ * حَتَّى زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ * كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ * ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ * لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ﴾ “The mutual rivalry for piling up of worldly things diverts you,, until you visit the graveyards, No! You are going to know, Then no! You are going to know, No! If you only knew with knowledge of certainty, you will surely see the Hellfire.” [TQM 102: 1-6]

Ibadah are referred as Tawqeefiyah rules

In principle, deeds of Ibadah (worship) do not have reasons for its hukum (on its root) and no analogy can be made on the hukum unless the text possesses an illah (reason) it. Closing of a Masjid, distancing in prayer, handing donations equivalent to udhiya (sacrifice) are some of the strange opinions which came in recent times due to pandemic. In many of the fatwas, situation or reality had been taken as the source to provide the opinions, but reality or the situation must be studied and for the hukum Shariah daleel (i.e. Quran, Sunnah, Ijma As-Sahab and Qiyas) must be looked to derive the hukum. Major flaw in these opinions are reasoning (finding Illah) and the argument like “welfare of the society”. It is really dangerous to seek reasons and benefit from the ibadah; rather, Ibadah are purely for the sake of Allah to attain His pleasure which must be carried according to the Sunnah and not according to the benefit or welfare of the society. These are also referred to be tawqeefiyah rules where hukum is derived from the text and not based on analogy. Closing the masajids and social distancing in prayer are haram and Bidah respectively whose sin is upon the ruler that imposes this rule.[7] With regards to the udhiya, it is a well-established hukum; there are details of rulings to be followed during the sacrificing the animal. Allah (swt) says: ﴿لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهُ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْكُمْ كَذَٰلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾ “Their meats

will never attain pertain to Allah, nor their blood; (Literally: bloods) but piety from you will reach Him. Thus He has subjected them to you that you may magnify Allah for that He has guided you. And give good tidings to the fair-doers.” [TMQ 22:37]

The above verse clearly portrays that the deed of udhiya is purely an ibadah for the sake of Allah where neither meat nor the blood pertain to Allah but the sincere piety.

Conclusion:

Allah (swt) has created life and death in order to test humankind that who are best in their deeds; indeed, deeds are based on the thoughts and inclinations that the man possesses. Secular capitalist creed and its system had shaped the thoughts of the people devoid of the spiritual need, focused on worldly enjoyment by neglecting the hereafter. Islam, after convincing the mankind with its true creed, built upon the spiritual basis. It obliges Muslims to adopt certain concepts like obedience to Allah (swt) and to worship Him alone to attain His pleasure. He is the One who gives and takes life with an appointed term. The concept of Ajal encourages the Muslims to pursue the obedience to Allah, without giving pretexts that are not valid according to sharia to violate the commands of Allah. With this firm understanding, Muslims will be at ease and content with the decree of Allah (swt) in difficult conditions, like this pandemic, and will continue to obey the commands of Allah fearing none but Allah (swt).

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Reference:

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- 4) Commentary of "Taysir Fee Usuli Tafsir" for Verse 2:243.
- 5) *Islamic Thought – Fear (Khawf)*, Hizb ut Tahrir Publications
- 6) *Economic System in Islam – Introduction to Economic System*, Hizb ut Tahrir Publications
- 7) <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.info/en/index.php/questions/jurisprudence-questions/19635.html>