
Life, Death, and Sanctity of Life according to Islamic Literature and Medical Science: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

Muslims scrutinize life as a consecration of Allah the Almighty. It is an imperative gift from the Lord for every human being. Islam stresses on asylum and the respect of life of not only Muslims but non-Muslims as well. An Aseptic life is another gift of Allah the Almighty. The last epistle of The Holy Qur'an, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be peace and greeting) explicit the sanctity of the life of human beings again and again. The recapitulation of verses signifies the prestige of human life. In the contemporary age, research in Medical Science has attained worthwhile importance. The innovations in the field of medical science have made some issues extremely exigent. Such types of mechanical means have been invented which are the substitute for vital functions of life and imitate the functions of some organs of human beings e.g. Respirators, mechanical hearts, and dialysis machines which are capable of continuing a proper functioning life. So it is decisive to present a comparative analysis of life, death, and sanctity of life to prospect their significance according to Islamic literature and medical science to sort out the issues like euthanasia, abortion, infanticide, and removing mechanical support. It also abates the issues for doctors and also makes it effortless for caretakers of the patient.

Keywords: Holy Qur'an, Life, Death, Medical Science, Sanctity

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Imām Al-Suyūṭī's *Sharah al-Ṣadūr bi Shārah al-Mawtā wal-Qubūr* is a remunerative work in this regard. In his book, he has presented a sufficient exposition on death and life hereafter. Islam on Origin and Evolution of life by Majid Ali, published in 1979, has provided the fractions of the origin and evolution of life of a human being with an Islamic Perspective. "The definition of death in Islam: Can death of the brain be used as a criterion of death in Islam?" was issued in the Journal of the Islamic Medical

Association of North America, published in 1986. Fabian Andres Ballesteros Gallego from McGill University Montreal did his dissertation in 2001 entitled “Sanctity of Life: Exploring its Significance in Modern Science and Bioethics”. In his thesis, he explores the sanctity of life according to medical science and to some extent in the context of Semitic religions. There is no such work that can provide a systematic analysis of the concept of life, death, and sanctity of life according to Islamic literature and Medical science.

INTRODUCTION TO LIFE

First of all, it is better to confabulate the concept of life and death with respect to the Qur’ān, Prophetic Traditions, prominent Muslim scholars, and Medical Science.

“The New Oxford Encyclopedic Dictionary” has defined life in terms of the difference between living and nonliving organisms with these words:

“Condition or fact of being living, that state of ceaseless change and functional activity which constitutes the essential difference between living organisms and dead or non-living matter; continuance of animate existence”.⁽¹⁾

“The Random House Dictionary of English Language” also beams light on the concept of life in terms of human existence:

“The general or universal condition of human existence”⁽²⁾

In Arabic English Lexicon, Edward William Lane ascertained the word “life” concerning animals, plants, and human beings. He considers it also as an attribute of God.

"It signifies the faculty of growth as in an animal and a plant: and the faculty of sensation and the faculty of intellect: and freedom from grief and sorrow and everlasting life in the world to come: to which one attains by that حياة. Which are intelligence and knowledge and the حياة that is an attribute of God?"⁽³⁾

There is not any single definition of life that grasps all of its aspects. It can be defined in various ways according to different subjects.

It can be said that it is a state of existence which differentiates living beings from non-living ones.

The perspective of life can elucidate in the manner as the author of New Encyclopedia Britannica did. He explained life in the context of different subjects.

(1) The New Oxford Encyclopedic Dictionary, (Oxford: Oxford University Press & Bay Books, 1983), vol.2.p.975.

(2) Ed by Stein, Jess, (1973), The Random House Dictionary of English Language, (New York, Random House Inc, p.p.827.

(3) Lane Edward William,(1863), Arabic- English Lexicon, (London: Williams & Norgate,vol. 1, p.682.

DESCRIPTION OF WORD “LIFE (ḤAYĀT)” IN THE QUR’ĀN

The word “Life (Ḥayāt)” is derived from the trilateral root (ح ي ا). This can be written in two forms (الحياة) and (الحيوة). This word life is used sometimes as a noun and sometimes as a verb. Life is an antonym of death and this fact is abutmented by the following verse of the holy **Qur’ān**:

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَحْيَاءُ وَلَا الْأَمْوَاتُ (1)

“Nor are alike those that are living and those that are dead.”

Several Qurānic verses contain the word Life (Ḥayāt) and throw light on this world according to different aspects. The theme underlined in this verse has been presented under:

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ (2)

“These are the people who buy the life of this world at the price of the Hereafter.”

The verse points out the people who don't accede their wrong deeds for the sake of the benediction of this world. Allah Almighty has said that they are the losers of the next world because they have attained these worldly possessions after losing rewards of the hereafter as a penalty. No one can help them to reduce their punishment afterward.

The life of this world is temporary and will end soon. One of the crucial purposes of life is to anticipate for the hereafter and to spend it according to Almighty's Will.

The gods other than Allah will never give them any benefit or detriment because they do not possess any power related to life and death. They do not have the authority to rise again after death. Allah almighty points out a distinction between Him and the fake people by expressing His attributes related to life and death.

The sublime verse of Sūrah al-Mulk denotes the creativity of Allah Almighty in this manner:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ (3)

“He Who created Death and Life.”

In Sūrah Yūnus Allah Almighty expresses the exclusiveness of His creation by interrogating that it is very astonishing when He creates life from a lifeless thing. And the only supreme power behind this marvelous process is Allah.

وَمَنْ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ (1)

(1) Al-Qurān 35:22

(2) Al-Qurān 2:86

(3) Al-Qurān 67:2

“And who is it that brings out the living from the dead and the dead from the living?”

Allah has bestowed life of different ranks to various possibilities according to His Design (of creation) and their qualifications.

Some creatures are bestowed with such life due to which they have recognized Allah’s existence and attributes.

The different verses of the Holy Qurān presented above shed light on the mismatched percepts of life:

Allah Almighty is the Master of life and death of His all creations. Life is an antonym of death. No one has the authority to harm himself. The worldly life is not eternal, the only eternal life is the life of the next world. The remorse of the persons on the day of resurrection is those who spent their worldly life in beguilement and play. It is only the quality of superb power that brings life from the dead after that again gives death and will rise again.

So it can be said that after the above discussion the Holy Qur’ān does not define the concept of life. However it sheds light on its different aspects in various manners same is the case of Prophetic Traditions but several prominent Muslim scholars have shed light on the concept of life in an elaborated and sophisticated manner.

PROMINENT SCHOLARS ON THE WORD “ḤAYĀT”

In the view of Husayn bin Muhammad renown as Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī the word Ḥayāt contains several terminologies and meanings.

الحياة تستعمل على أوجه:

الأول: للقوة التامة الموجودة في التّبات والحيوان، ومنه قيل: نبات حيّ... الحياة التي يوصف بها الباري⁽²⁾.

1. Faculty of growth (al-Quwwat al-Namiyah), which is possessed by human beings, plants, and animals.
2. Faculty of sensation (al-Quwwat al-Hassasah), due to which animal is called Ḥayawān.
3. Rational operative faculty or faculty of intellect(al-Quwwat al-‘Amlīyah al-‘Aqlīyah) that is possessed by the human being and because of it he is the crown of all creations.
4. Freedom from grief and sorrow (Irtif ā‘ al-Ghamm)

(1) Al-Qurān 10:31

(2) Al-‘Asfāhānī, Raghīb, Imām, Al-Mufradāt fī Garīb-al-Qur’ān,(Bayrūt:Dar-al-Qalam, 1412h), pp.268-269.

5. Everlasting life in the world to come (al- Ḥayāt al-'Ukhrawiyyah al-'Abadiyyah); to which one attains by that Ḥayāt which is intelligence and knowledge. The life which will be faced surely by every human being.
6. Life is an attribute of Allah Almighty.

The human being has faculty of growth and intellect due to it he has been called 'Ashraf ul Makh'lūkāt. He will surely face the life after death or hereafter. The life of a human being is surely an attribute of Allah Almighty.

Imām Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī elaborates Ḥayāt in term of as antonym:

“It is an attribute that is a cause of perception and its opposite is death or non-existence.”

Qāḍī Thanā' Ullah Pānī Patī explicates the phenomena of Ḥayāt in his exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān with these words:

“Ḥayāt is one of the attributes of Allah Almighty and it is the such quality that is associated with attributes of the highest order like knowledge, command, intention, etc.⁽¹⁾”

An eminent scholar 'Abū Ja'far Muhammad ibn-Jarīr al-Ṭabarī sheds light on the word ḥayāt with reference to the magnificent verse of Sūrah al-Bakarah as:

فَإِنَّهُ يَعْنِي: الَّذِي لَهُ الْحَيَاةُ الدَّائِمَةُ وَالْبَقَاءُ الَّذِي لَا أَوَّلَ لَهُ يُحَدُّ، وَلَا آخِرَ لَهُ يُؤَمَدُّ، إِذْ كَانَ كُلُّ مَا سِوَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ وَإِنْ كَانَ حَيًّا فَلِحَيَاتِهِ أَوَّلٌ مُحَدُودٌ وَآخِرٌ مَمْدُودٌ، يَنْقَطِعُ بِانْقِطَاعِ أَمَدِهَا وَيَنْقُضِي بِانْقِضَاءِ غَايَتِهَا⁽²⁾

“This word ḥayāt who has perpetual (dā'imah) life and a permanent existence (baqā') without any initial or terminal limit, for everything that is not he, although it is living, has a life that begins at a definite point and a fixed limit”.

He enlighten on the phenomena of ḥayāt in limited context in a beautiful manner.

In Al- Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ the phenomena of life has been expressed in the context of growth, survival, and a characteristic that can differentiate a living being from an inanimate object.

الْحَيَاةُ) النمو والبقاء وَالْمَنْفَعَةُ و (في علم الأحياء) بجموع ما يُشاهد في الحَيَوَانَات والنباتات من مميزات تفرق بينها وَبَيْنَ الجمادات مثل التغذية والنمو والتناسل وَنَحْوَ ذَلِكَ⁽³⁾

(1) Pānī Patī, Qāḍī Thanā' Ullah, Tafsīr Mazharī, (Queta, Balochistan Book Depot, 1983)Part 29, vol.10, p.18.

(2) Ṭabarī, Muhammad ibn-Jarīr, 'Abū Ja'far, Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī, ((Bayrūt: Mūassat al-Rsālat, (1420h),vol.5, p.386.

(3) Muṣṭafā, Ibrāhīm et al, Al- Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ, (Dār al-Da'wat), P.213.

“Life is growth, survival and benefit and (in human sciences) the sum of the characteristics seen in animals and plants that differentiate them from inanimate objects such as nutrition, growth, reproduction, etc”.

Imām Jurjānī explains the phenomena of life as an attribute with these words:

الحياة: هي صفة توجب للموصوف بما أن يعلم ويقدر⁽¹⁾

“Life: It is an attribute that enjoins upon the person who does have it, to know”.

Most scholars express life as an idiosyncrasy of Allah the Almighty. This worldly life has existence, growth, survival, and a fixed time limit. But the life afterward has no limits. And the life of a human being has also the qualities of intellect and knowledge. In this regard, the definition of Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī can be considered as best because it elucidates the various aspects of life.

DEFINITION OF LIFE ACCORDING TO MEDICAL SCIENCE

Life is a state that extricates animals and plants from inorganic objects and dead organisms. J. A.Thomson gives five elementary functions that are necessary to continue the function of life.

“Self-dissimilation

Self-preservation includes assimilation, growth movement, etc.

Self-multiplication

Self-development

Self-regulation is the exercise of all functions, including self-differentiation, self-adjustment, self-adaptation, and in many organisms, distinctly recognizable psychological functions.”⁽²⁾

According to an eminent international scholar Pauling, it is a tough task to comment on life, he says:

“It is not an easy task to define life. It is hard to elaborate; sometimes it is easier to study a subject than to define it.”⁽³⁾

(1) Al-Jurjānī, Alī bin Muhammad,(1403), Kitāb al-Ta'rifāt,(Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al- 'Ilmiyyah,p.194.

(2) Thomson, J. A.(1980), Life and Death (Biological), Ed, Hastings, James, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, (Edinburgh, T.& T. Clark), vol.3, p.1.

(3) Jackson & Moore,(1987), The Nature and Origin of Living Organisms, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul), p.57.

The definition of Muslim scholars and medical science is almost the same with some minor differences. But the fundamental concept is the same.

1.2. DEFINITION OF DEATH (MAŪT)

The New Oxford Encyclopedic Dictionary sheds light on the phenomena of death as “Final cessation of vital functions”.⁽¹⁾

It can be said that the state of death is the failure of major functions of life.

THE WORD “DEATH” IN THE QUR’ĀN

Surely life and death are correlatives. The understanding of one depends on the other.

The Root word for Death (موت) is mentioned 165 times in Quran in 8 forms. The word موت occurs fifty times. The remaining ones are (مَاتَ), (أَمَاتَ), (مَمَاتَ), (مَوَّتَ), (مَوَّتَتْ), (مَيَّتَ) and (مَيَّتَتْ).

All of the verses contain information regarding death except this verse:

كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمَيِّتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ⁽²⁾

“Then will He cause you to die, and will again bring you to life, and again to Him will ye return.”

The verse reflects the fact that a human being refutes Allah Almighty but He is the one and only Who gives him life and death. The only supreme power gives life again after death. The time of death is certain that never can be changed by anyone.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ⁽³⁾

“Every soul shall have a taste of death.”

Abdullah Yūsuf Alī comments on the above-mentioned verse as:

“The soul will not die, but the death of the body will give a taste of death to the soul when the separates from the body. The soul will then know that this life was but probation. And seeming inequalities will be adjusted finally on the Day of Judgment.”⁽⁴⁾

(1) The New Oxford Encyclopedic Dictionary, (Oxford: Oxford University Press & Bay Books, 1983), vol.1.p.432.

(2) Al Qur’ān 2:28

(3) Al- Qur’ān 3: 185

(4) Yūsuf Alī, Abdullah,(1983), The Holy Qurān Text, Translation, and Commentary, (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, p.172.

The verse presents the universal truth that in the end, every leaving being faces death no one can survive forever. Everything has life will go to an end and perish. The only Allah Almighty is eternal. No one escapes from death either; he endeavors to run away from it. Death is an eternal fact; everyone must meet it at its prescribed time. Death is an end of deeds and all human activities. And The next world is only the world of accountability.

(1) *أَيْنَمَا تَكُونُوا يُدْرِكُكُمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ مُّشِيدَةٍ* (1)

"Wherever ye are, death will find you out, even if ye are in towers built up strong and high!"

The same subject has been presented in the verses 4:15, 6:61, and 62:8. No one can escape from death because it is a universal reality. The death clasps when its time approaches and there is no advantage of durable houses and sound towers to evade it. The Holy Qurān 6:94 explicate the hardships and severe pain of death which face an atrocious person because they invent lies about Allah Almighty.

(2) *الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَفُورُ* (2)

"He Who created Death and Life that He may try which of you is best in deed and He is the Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving".

Abdullah Yūsuf Alī⁽³⁾ throws light on this verse as:

"Death is here put before Life, and it is created. Death is therefore not merely a negative state. The state before life began, which may be non-existence or existence in some other form: the state in which Life as we know it ceases, but existence does not cease; A state of Barzakh (23:100), or Barrier or Partition, after our visible Death and before Judgment; after that will be a new Life, which we conceive of under the term Eternity."

Allah almighty created life and death because he is the only creator of all creations.

The second part of the verse sheds light on the proposition of life which is to testify the worth and doings of human beings. He is the best doer who spends his life according to the Will of Allah Almighty.

"Who amongst you do good deeds in the most perfect manner, which means to do that for Allah's sake and following the legal ways of Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be peace and greeting). Creation, therefore, is not in mere sport, or without a purpose concerning man. The state before our

(1) Al- Qur'ān 4:78

(2) Al- Qur'ān 67:2

(3) Yūsuf Alī, Abdullah,(1983), The Holy Qurān Text, Translation, and Commentary, (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, p.1576.

present life, or the state after, we can scarcely understand. But our present Life is given to accredit us to strive by good deeds to reach a nobler state”.⁽¹⁾

In the light of the above discussion it can be said that the word death appears in numerous delinating verses of the Holy Qur’ān containing the following multiple subjects:

1. The human being has no right to refute Allah Almighty, He is the one and only who has the authority of life and death.
2. One should be obliged to the supreme power who will surely raise all human races after death.
3. Death is an unforgettable /invincible reality no one can escape from it. The people involved in sins never seek death.
4. If someone has any worldly measures and the time of death comes nearer it is better to prescribe all of the worldly measures to achieve God's pleasure.
5. The time of death is understood as any precautionary measure never averts anyone from it and Allah Almighty has created life and death for good deeds.

It can be said after the above discussion the Holy Qur’ān does not obviously delineate the meaning of death, not the ḥadīth literature. However, several traditions in which the Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be peace and greeting) permitted and gave bits of advice to remember death and reminded them the benefits of remembering Death. Some people have love of the Holy Prophet and also have affection to death in their hearts. Because they know that very after their death they will meet their beloved Prophet. It must be considered that the aspiration of death has been strictly prohibited according to various traditions even in the case of hardships and critical problems.⁽²⁾ Various traditions imply the fact the long life of the Muslim is better in the sense that he has a better opportunity to perform virtues and good deeds because death ceases the process.⁽³⁾ The Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting) Muhammad forbids death the long life provides the opportunity to a person who does not on the right path.

(1) Khan, Muhammad Mohsin, Dr & Hilālī, Muhammad Takī-ud-Dīn, Dr., Translation of the Meaning of the Noble Qur’ān,(Madinah: King Fahd Complex),p.771.

(2) Bukhārī, Abū Abdullāh Muhammad ibn Ismā‘īl, Imām, Al- Jāmi‘ *Al-Ṣiḥāh*, Kitāb, al-Da‘awā’ti, Bāb, al-Du‘ā’i bilmawti wal- Ḥayāti, Ḥadīth# 6351

(3) Muslim Bin Ḥujāj, Imām, Al-Musnad Al- Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb, Al-Zakri-wa-al-Du‘i..., Bāb,Karāhati tamanna al-Mawti Liḍrra Nazala bihi, Ḥadīth#2682.

The more life provides an opportunity to give up bad deeds, astray, and refrain from bad attitudes ⁽¹⁾.

The Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences (IOMS) and the Kuwait Foundation for Advancement of Sciences held a seminar in 1985 on human life and presented their decision ⁽²⁾. In this regard, the Holy Qur'ān does define neither death nor the ḥadīth literature. So it is necessary to turn toward Muslim scholars.

1.2.2. DEFINITION OF DEATH BY MUSLIM SCHOLARS

Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī the term death is used in many ways. In the context of death he states the five forms of death as he has stated the different types of life.

أنواع الموت بحسب أنواع الحياة:

فالأول: ما هو بإزاء القوّة النامية الموجودة في الإنسان والحيوانات والنبات. الثاني: زوال القوّة الحاسّة.. الثالث: زوال القوّة العاقلة، وهي الجهالة. الرابع: الحزن المكدر للحياة، وإيّاها قصد بقوله: وَيَأْتِيهِ الْمَوْتُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمَيِّتٍ [إبراهيم / 17] الخامس: المنام، فقيل: النوم مَوْتُ خفيف، والموت نوم ثقيل،

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةٌ الْمَوْتِ [آل عمران / 185] فعبارة عن زوال القوّة الحيوانيّة وإبانة الرّوح عن الجسد⁽³⁾

“The first: what is about the developing power that exists in man, animals, and plants? The second: is the demise of the sensing power. He said: I wish I had died before this. The third: is the disappearance of sane power, which is ignorance. Fourth: sadness that disturbs life and what he meant by saying death will come to him from every quarter, yet will he not die: The fifth: a dream, and it was said: sleep is a light death, and death is a heavy sleep. Every soul shall have a taste of death. It is an expression of the disappearance of animal power and the separation of the soul from the body.”

Alī bin Muhammad al-Jurjānī in his worthwhile work Kitāb al-Ta'rifāt explores the meaning of death as:

(1) Bukhārī, Abū Abdullāh Muhammad ibn Ismā'īl, Imām, Al-Jāmi' Al- Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb, al-Marda, Bāb, al-Marīḍi al-Mawta, Ḥadīth#5673.

(2) Madhkūr, K. L., A. Awadī, Human life, its inception and end as viewed by Islam: the full minutes of the Seminar on Human Life: Its Inception and End as Viewed by Islam, Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences & Kuwait Foundation for Advancement of Sciences, Kuwait, (1985).

(3) Al-'Asfāhānī, Rāghib, Imām, Al-Mufradāt fī Garīb-al-Qur'ān,(Bayrūt:Dar-al-Qalam, 1412h), pp.781-782.

الموت: صفة وجودية خلقت ضدًا للحياة، وباصطلاح أهل الحق: قمع هوى النفس، فمن مات عن هواه فقد حَيَّى بهداه⁽¹⁾

“Death: an existential quality that was created against life, and in the terminology of the people of truth: suppressing the desires of the soul, so whoever dies of his desires has lived by his guidance.”

'Allāmah Khāzin defines death in the perspective of attribute and a condition that appears after the exit of the spirit from the body:

“Death is an existing attribute lacking life and it is said that death means the disappearance of animal faculty and departure of the spirit in the body it is due to sensation with habitual existence of the spirit in the body. It is due to which an animal is called an animal.”⁽²⁾

Ahmad Faiz in his distinctive work captioned al-Yawm al- Ākhir fī Zilāl al- Qur’ān comments on the critical situation at the time of death in an explanatory manner:

“It is worse than the stroke of the sword, the cutting of the saw, or the twisting of the pincers because it attacks both the body and the spirit. The final intensity of the pain comes from extreme sadness experienced by one who is to die. A period of progression in the development of man.”⁽³⁾

المُوت: ضد الحياة وَيُطلق المَوْت وَيُرَاد بِهِ مَا يُقَابِلُ الْعَقْلَ وَالْإِيمَانَ نَحْوُ مَا فِي التَّنْزِيلِ الْعَزِيزِ { أَوْ مِنْ كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ } و { فَإِنَّكَ لَا تَسْمَعُ الْمَوْتَى } كَمَا يُرَاد بِهِ مَا يَضْعَفُ الطَّبِيعَةَ وَلَا يَلْتَمِهَا كَالْخَوْفِ وَالْحُزْنِ كَقَوْلِهِ تَعَالَى { وَيَأْتِيهِ الْمَوْتُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمَيِّتٍ } وَالْأَحْوَالُ الشَّاقَّةُ كَالْفَقْرِ وَالذَّلِّ وَالْهَرَمِ وَالْمَعْصِيَةِ⁽⁴⁾

‘Death is the absence of life; it is also considered the opposite of reason and faith as may be seen in the Holy Qur’ān “Or he who was dead, then We revived him and made for him a light by which he walks among the people.” And “You cannot make the dead hear”. As it is meant by it, that it is the thing that weakens nature and does not suit it, such as fear and sadness. The Qur’ān says: “And death comes to him from everywhere, but

(1) Al-Jurjānī, Alī bin Muhammad, Kitāb al-Ta’rifāt, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah:1403), p.161.

(2) Al Khāzin, ‘Alauddīn, (1399h), Tafsīr al- Khāzin, Bayrūt: Dār al-Fiqr, Vol.6,p.236.

(3) Smith, Jane Idle man & Haddad, (1981), Yvonne Yazbeck, The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection, Albany, State University of New York Press, p.102.

(4) Mustafā, Ibrāhīm et al, Al- Mu’jam al-Wasīṭ, (Dār al-Da’wat), P.891.

he is not dead.” It also means 'difficult conditions such as poverty, humiliation, old age, and disobedience'.

Ibn Manzūr has defined death by quoting Laith:

المَوْتُ خَلْقٌ مِنْ خَلْقِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى. غَيْرُهُ: المَوْتُ وَالْمَوْتَانُ ضِدُّ الحَيَاةِ⁽¹⁾

“Death is a creation of God Almighty. Others: death is the opposite of life.”

The same view is of the author of *al-Qāmūs al-Muhīṭ* that death is an antonym of life⁽²⁾

Hafiz Ibn-Qayyim⁽³⁾ comments in his worthwhile work *Kitāb al-Rūḥ* regarding Sheikh Ahmad bin 'Amr:

“Death is not an end but the transfer of place”

In Arabic English Lexicon Edward William lane says about death,

“It is the situation when a person becomes quiet, still or motionless, lifelessness when there is no spirit”.⁽⁴⁾

It can be said that the condition in which Life as we are familiar, ceases, but existence does not cease. It is a state in which the soul separates from the body.

CONCEPT OF DEATH ACCORDING TO MEDICAL SCIENCE

Miller’s concept of death has been presented as:

“The irreversible cessation of cardiac and respiratory activity”⁽⁵⁾

The Uniform Determination of Death Act (UDDA) is a model state law that was approved for the United States in 1981 with the collaboration of National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws, the American Medical Association and, the American Bar Association. This law states:

1. The death is Irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory functions, or
2. Irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain, including the brain stem.⁽⁶⁾

(1) *Ibn Manzūr, Lisān 'l - 'Arab*, Dār al- Ṣādir, vol.2, P.90.

(2) Feroz, 'Abadī, Muhammad bin Ya'qūb, *al-Qāmūs al-Muhīṭ(Bayrūt: Mū 'sarah al-Risālah, 1426h),p.160.*

(3) Ibn-Qayyim, Hafiz, *Kitāb al-Rūḥ*,

(4) Lane Edward William, *Arabic- English Lexicon*, (London: Williams & Norgate, 1863), p.2742.

(5) Miller, Andrew C., *Opinions on the Legitimacy of Brain Death Among Sunni and Shi'a Scholars*, *Journal of Religion and Health*, vol.55, No.2, p.395.

(6) *Uniform Determination of Death Act*, National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws, (1980), P.5. <https://www.uniformlaws.org>. Retrieved on 30th June 2021.

In 1986 third international conference of Islamic Jurists the Islamic Fiqh Academy (IFA) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC; formerly Organization of the Islamic Conference) declared: (IFA-OIC 19)

‘A person is considered legally dead, and all the principles of the Shari‘ah can be applied when one of the following signs is established

1. Complete stoppage of the heart and breathing, and the doctors decide that it is irreversible.

2. Complete stoppage of all vital functions of the brain, and the doctors decide that it is irreversible, and the brain has started to degenerate. ⁽¹⁾

1.3. Sanctity of Life

1.3.1 Definition of Sanctity of Life

The word sanctity is renowned for equivalence of life, transparency of life, and the aptitude of life the quality of "sanctity". It is a Latin word.

The Oxford English Dictionary throws light on the word Sanctity as:

“The quality of being sacred or hallowed; sacredness, claim to (religious) reverence; inviolability.” ⁽²⁾

The Random House Dictionary ⁽³⁾ elaborates the word "Sanctity" with these words:

“Holiness, saintliness, or godliness; Sacred or hallowed character; inviolable sanctity of the temple; sacred thing.”

James F. Keenan sheds light on the concept in an elaborated manner with these words:

“Sanctity is a quality which is referenced as somehow touched by divinity and therefore untouchable for humans: sanctity is that which the divinity protects from violability” ⁽⁴⁾

It can be said that the word sanctity supports the concepts of reverence, veneration, and inviolability. No human being cannot murder or commit suicide: the sacred value of life draws a line that cannot transgressed by anyone. The life of a person is not only sane for himself but also others. The life of the patient is not only sane for himself but also for the caretakers and doctors.

1.1.1. Sanctity of life in light of the Qur’ān and Prophetic Traditions

(1) Moosa E., (1993) Brain death and organ transplantation—an Islamic opinion, South African Medical Journal, vol.83, no.6, pp, 385–386.

(2) The Oxford English Dictionary, (New York: Clarendon Press Oxford, 1989), vol. xiv, p.442.

(3) Ed by Stein, Jess,(1973) The Random House Dictionary of English Language,(New York, Random House Inc, p.1265.

(4) Ed by Bayertz, Kurt,(1996) Sanctity of life and Human Dignity, (The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, p.3.

Allah Almighty has blessed man with sanity and an honored man with special favors because he made human beings in the greatest form of all his creations. Man is not only superior but also noblest in all living species of the universe.

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا⁽¹⁾

“We have honored the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favors, above a great part of Our Creation. “

Abdullah Yūsuf Alī says in the exegesis of this verse:

“The distinction and honor conferred by Allah on man are recounted to **enforce** the corresponding duties and responsibilities of a man. He is raised to a position of honor above the brute creation: he has been granted talents by which he can transport himself from place to place by the land, sea, and now by air: all the means for the sustenance and growth of every part of his nature are provided by Allah; - and his spiritual faculties (the greatest gift of Allah) raise him above the greater part of Allah's Creation. Should he not then realize his noble destiny and prepare for his real life in the Hereafter?"⁽²⁾

The man is blessed as a special creature of Allah and bestowed superiority never given to any other creature.

فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ⁽³⁾

“So blessed be Allah, the Best to create”.

In the context of this verse, Al-Rāzī states the superiority and status of a human being with these glorious words:

أَيُّ خَلْقًا مُبَايِنًا لِلْخَلْقِ الْأَوَّلِ مُبَايِنَةً/ مَا أَبْعَدَهَا حَيْثُ جَعَلَهُ حَيَوَانًا وَكَانَ جَمَادًا، وَنَاطِقًا وَكَانَ أُنْبُكَمَ، وَسَمِيعًا وَكَانَ أَصَمَّ، وَبَصِيرًا وَكَانَ أَكْمَهَ، وَأَوْدَعَ بَاطِنَهُ وَظَاهِرَهُ بَلَّ كُلِّ عَضْوٍ مِنْ أَعْضَائِهِ وَكُلِّ جُزْءٍ مِنْ أَجْزَائِهِ عَجَائِبَ فِطْرَةٍ وَعَجَائِبَ حِكْمَةٍ لَا يُحِيطُ بِهَا وَصَفُ الْوَاصِفِينَ⁽⁴⁾

“A creature different from the first creature, different from the later one, where the almighty made him animal from the stone, speaking from the dumb, hearing from the deaf, seeing from the mound and granted him inner

(1) Al- Qur’ān 17:70

(2) Yūsuf Alī, Abdullah, The Holy Qurān Text, Translation, and Commentary, (Lahore: Sh. Muhamma d Ashraf, 1983), p.714.

(3) Al- Qur’ān 23:14

(4) Al-Rāzī, Mafāṭīḥ al-Ghayb, (Bayrūt: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1420AH), Vol.23.P.265.

and outer selves rather than every part of the body is the miracle of nature which can't be counted by any counter.”

The human being is the most honored creation and this honor has been given to him by the one and only creator Allah Almighty. Allah Almighty also has given this honor to its life. The life of all human race has sanctity and those who go against it, will be extremely punished.

مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَلِكَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَىٰ نَبِيِّ إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنَّهُ مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا⁽¹⁾

“On that account: We ordained for the Children of Israel that if anyone slew a person -- unless it is for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people.”

Ibn Kathīr interprets this verse:

وَمَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ سَبَبٍ مِنْ قِصَاصٍ، أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ، وَاسْتَحَلَّ قَتْلَهَا بِلَا سَبَبٍ وَلَا جِنَايَةٍ، فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا؛ لِأَنَّهُ لَا فَرْقَ عِنْدَهُ بَيْنَ نَفْسٍ وَنَفْسٍ،⁽²⁾

“The verse means that whoever kills a soul without a just cause such as legal punishment for murder or for causing corruption on earth, then it will be as if he has killed all people because there is no difference between one life and another.”

The Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be peace and greeting) said on the day of ‘Arfah:

فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَىٰ قَدْ حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَأَمْوَالَكُمْ وَأَعْرَاضَكُمْ إِلَّا بِحَقِّهَا، كَحُرْمَةِ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا، فِي بَلَدِكُمْ هَذَا، فِي شَهْرِكُمْ هَذَا،⁽³⁾

“Verily, Allah the Exalted has made sacred your lives, your wealth, and your honor except by right of justice, just as your day, your city, and your month are sacred.”

In Al- Jāmi‘ al- Tirmadhī it has been narrated by narrated Ibn- ‘Umar that the Messenger of Allaah (upon whom be peace and greeting) said:

عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ قَالَ... مَا أَعْظَمَكَ وَأَعْظَمَ حُرْمَتَكَ، وَالْمُؤْمِنُ أَعْظَمُ حُرْمَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْكَ⁽⁴⁾

(1) Al- Qur’ān 5:32

(2) Ibn Kathīr, Muhammad, bin, Ismā‘īl, Abū al-Fidā,(1420h) Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr(Dār Tayibah-lil-Nashr-wal-Tawzī’,Vol.3,p.92.

(3) Sarkhasī, Muḥammad bin Aḥmad, ‘Usūl Sarkhasī(Bayrūt: Dar al-M‘arifah), vol.2,p.334.

(4) Tirmadhī, Abū ‘Isā, Muhammaad bin Isā Tirmadhī, Imām, Al- Jāmi‘ al- Tirmadhī, Kitāb, al-Bir wa Šilah , Bāb, Mā Ja‘ā fi Ta‘zīm al-Mu‘min, (Bayrūt :Dār Iḥyā Al-Turāth al- ‘arabiy), Ḥadīth#3032.

“Narrated Ibn- ‘Umar ... Whose honor is more sacred than yours! And the believer's honor is more sacred to Allah than yours.”

It is not the quality of a true Muslim believer who hurts others and degrades them. To exploit or insult is an erroneous and answerable act.

Muslims have been directed to not only secure the life and rights of others but also their wealth, respect, and blood. Allah Almighty bestowed duty on man to save the dignity and rights of others concerning life, death, wealth, and freedom. All these inviolable duties are obligatory to fulfill by all mankind as mentioned in the above tradition. It is one of the foremost duties of the Muslim that he must preserve his tongue and hand to harm others.

Muḥammad bin Aḥmad Sarkhasī has undelined in his worthwhile work ‘Usūl Sarkhasī:

لِأَنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى مَا خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ لِحَمْلِ أَمَانَتِهِ أَكْرَمَهُ بِالْعَقْلِ وَالذِّمَّةِ لِيَكُونَ بِهَا أَهْلًا لِرُجُوبِ حُقُوقِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ أُثْبِتَ لَهُ الْعِصْمَةُ وَالْحُرِّيَّةُ وَالْمَالِكِيَّةُ لِيَبْقَى فَيَتِمَّكَنَ مِنْ أَدَاءِ مَا حَمَلَ مِنَ الْأَمَانَةِ ثُمَّ هَذِهِ الْحُرِّيَّةُ وَالْعِصْمَةُ⁽¹⁾

“As Allah, the Exalted created humanity to carry His trusts, He dignified them with reason and sacred inviolability to be responsible for the duties and rights Allah placed over them. Then He granted them sanctity and freedom.”

The fact is crystal clear from the above-mentioned tradition that there is no discrimination among the life of Muslims and non-Muslims. The life of all human beings is sacred and tries to be secured till its last extant.

1.3.2 Sanctity of life According to a Medical Science:

It is better to elaborate the concept of the sanctity of life in the light of medical science because the present era is the era of medical science. Along with the medicalization of society, life has gained a prominent part of scientific and medical scrutiny. In the present modern age, the two major sources of science and medicine determine the definition and value of life to a great extent.

The Greeks have elucidated life philosophically in the context of traditional western medicine. "man" was conceived of as inextricably embedded in the natural world, and consequently life was a vital quality shared by all living things, something that could not be controlled or modified. Life was inevitably "sacred". Health and disease were

(1) Sarkhasī, Muḥammad bin Aḥmad, ‘Usūl Sarkhasī (*Bayrūt*: Dar al-M‘arifah), vol.2,p.334.

understood to be manifestations of being alive. The body itself was a natural body-mind unity. ⁽¹⁾

The above discussion reflects the Greeks' respectful understanding of the body of human beings and the mystery of life as well.

No human being owns the right to end of his life under his authority. Allah Amighty alone, has absolute power to dominion over it" ⁽²⁾

Intentionally one's demise is no doubt immoral as murder; such type of act on the behalf of a being is to be deliberated as a refusal of Allah's sovereignty and his affectionate strategy it is the contravention of divine law.

Helga Kuhse states:

"Sanctity of life means the sanctity of human life - that is, the bodily life possessed by us between conception or birth and death" ⁽³⁾

Sanctity of life is renowned as an ethical principle that demands determining the set of moral rules concerning issues, especially in the end of life issues, problems concerning euthanasia and abortion, infanticide, etc. Many ethical and moral questions arose concerning these issues.

Now in the contemporary age of globalization when the progress in the field of medicine is at its crowning point and the system of bioethics has been organized and developed some modern medical practices would threaten human life. The issues related to this field can not only be discussed according to the religious point of view but also expresses the bio-medical context. The sanctity of life principle belongs to the subject of bioethics so it is better to elaborate on the term bioethics. It can be defined as:

"A system of morality based on biological knowledge and human values, with the human species accepting responsibility for its survival and the preservation of the natural environment" ⁽⁴⁾

The above mentioned principle discussed in the span of bioethics induces everyone to keep this (principle) in mind before taking any decision that could amend what we venerate as human life.

With the advancement in the field of medical science, the field ignores some real concerns about the life of human beings. In the broader sense, the sanctity of life as an ethical principle deals with establishing set of organized moral rules concerning present-

(1) Vivian, Nutton & Cornard, Lawrance et al, " Roman Medicine 250 BC to AD 200" in The Western Traditional Medicine 800 BC to AD 1800.

(NewYork: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.31-35.

(2) "Euthanasia" New Catholic Encyclopedia, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), vol. 5, p.639.

(3) Kuhse, Helga, Sanctity-of-Life Doctrine in Medicine,(New York: Oxford University Press, 1987),p.3.

(4) Meine, Curt, (1989) Review of the book "Global Bioethics: Building on the Leopold Legacy", Environmental Ethics, Vol. 11, p.282.

day issues. It means respect for the life of an individual means respect for its inviolable integrity. In this sense, the principle relating to the sanctity of life demands establishing a set of tests of moral rules as prescribed by Somerville. Both tests presented her with the concept of life with its sacredness. The tests are presented as follows:

The first, "does this procedure or technique demonstrate profound respect for life?" is concerned with the understanding of what life is and the respect that it is worthy of. This test calls first for recognition of the complexity of human life, not only in physical structure, chemical composition, and physiological activity but also in taking into account the diverse religious interpretations, people's beliefs, and experiences that overall lead us to a deep reverence for human life. "The Sanctity of Life Principle" urges us to keep this in mind before making any decision that could alter or hazard what we revere as human life.

This perception of the idea of "sanctity of life" underlines the fact that no one has a right of the domain of human life; his right is only restricted to use it. In the sense of the religious paradigm, the idea can be understood as an activity in which God commends to a human being the obligation for the invaluable life and responsibility for it in a "stewardship" to a specific limit.

In the view of Gallego "The above mentioned principle is directed to the organization, regulation, and correction of those sorts of moral rules that help to identify, analyze and resolve those particular problems that arise in the practice of clinical medicine around life concerns".⁽¹⁾

Callahan argues five main problems where this principle of Life's sanctity should be carefully considered and where developed moral rules would be necessary. The basic issues are:

- "The survival and integrity of the human species
- The integrity of family lineages
- The integrity of bodily life
- The integrity of personal, mental, and emotional individuality
- The integrity of personal bodily individuality"⁽²⁾

"Life is precious, should be respected and protected, treated with consideration, and is a basic principle of our society".⁽³⁾

This principle is known as an "ethical principle"

(1) Gallego, Fabian Andres Ballesteros, Sanctity of Life: Exploring its Significance in Modern Science and Bio-Ethics,(Montreal: Mc Gill University, 2001), P.50.

(2) Sanctity of Life: Exploring its Significance in Modern Bio-Ethics, (Montreal: McGill University), p.51.

(3) Keyserlingk, Edward W.(1979), Sanctity of Life or Quality of Life in the context of ethics, medicine, and law,(Montreal: Law Reform Commission of Canada

The Law Reform Commission of Canada, p. 42.

Keyserlingk presents two main themes to explore ethical principles according to theological perspective:

1. "Man's dignity, worth, and sanctity are from God, and these aren't due to some quality or ability in a man.
2. Life is a gift in trust, it is on loan, and man does not have dominion over it. "⁽¹⁾

The above-mentioned principles of a western scholar not only reflect the Islamic concept of sanctity and dignity of life but also other major religions of the world. Moreover, even though each proposed issue has certain specific aspects of human life that deserve debate, there are some medical issues such as the advances in genetics and reproductive medicine, that for their complexity and breadth demands more than one of those features of human life. Today, a hospitalized patient is commonly seen, asked, and suggested more by his or her family physician and the diminution from one specialist to another is part of medical assistance. The present-day modern medicine specialization presents moral responsibilities related to the medical field. The specialization in this field not only presents medical knowledge but also offers health care ways.

This approach is based on the concept that taking human life in the medical field is strictly prohibited. The life of all human beings has the same value even if they belong to any part of society, caste, or religion.

Conclusion

The above discussion provides a comparative analysis of the phenomena of life, death, and sanctity of life according to Islamic literature and Medical Science. Life is a precious gift, an attribute and a great blessing of Allah Almighty Who bestowed man with life with different consecrations to fulfil its commands. The phenomena of death have not been clearly elucidated in the Holy Qur'ān but only some symptoms of death have been explained in the aḥādīth. However different Muslim scholars have written the definition of life and death like 'Asfāhānī, Suyūṭī, Ṭabarī and Jurjānī. Medical science has a clear view of death.

The Holy Qur'ān and the number of aḥādīth have elucidated and proved the concept of Sanctity of life. Man has been bestowed with dignity and inviolability by the Almighty Allah. It is not due to any kind of deservedness of man but it is purely a God's gift. That's why, a human has no authority to kill himself because life is a trust of Allah. Islam and Medical Science have uniformity in this regard and lay emphasis on it. The principle of sanctity of life focused on the systemization and legalization of all kinds of moral rules that help to detect, examine and sort out in the field of clinical medicine concerning the end of life issues. Medical Science grasps all the aspects of the sanctity of

(1) Keyserlingk, Edward W, (1979) Sanctity of Life or Quality of Life in the context of ethics, medicine, and law, (Montreal: Ministry of Supply, p.13.

life in the form of an ethical principle and the Islamic literature provides clear views regarding the sanctity of life. It can be said that the ethical principle is an exact shadow that reflects the teachings of the Holy Qur'ān and Ḥadīth regarding the sanctity and security of the life of a human being. The purpose behind both of them is almost the same. The code of Sanctity of life is a considerable stumbling block in this regard to overcome the issues like euthanasia, suicide, abortion, or infanticide and remove mechanical support. So it is not only the duty of Muslim physicians but also all others to take measures for saving the life of every human being.

