

Man's Compassion is Limited

News:

New Zealanders have voted to legalise euthanasia for those with a terminal illness, in a victory for campaigners who say people suffering extreme pain should be given a choice over how and when to bring their life to a close. (The Guardian 30/10/2020)

Comment:

Euthanasia is legal in Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Canada, Colombia and although illegal in Switzerland, physician assisted suicide is legal. And now voters in New Zealand have also opted for this procedure to be allowed.

The age of when a person can decide on euthanasia is varied and the reasons usually are based on terminal illness or medical conditions that cause unbearable suffering. In some countries children as well as adults can opt for euthanasia.

Whilst illnesses can test a person, their family and caregivers, the desire to end the life is linked to a person's beliefs and what is identified as the purpose in life.

In a secular system, the purpose of life is not openly discussed and left to people to discover through religious authorities, that they can choose to follow. If there is a concept of life after death in many belief systems, a moral code in life is followed to attain the better afterlife and this is usually a code man decides for himself, collectively or by oneself.

Secularism teaches us that the importance of life is limited to this life. Even if you have a religious belief the main domain is this one, religion is sidelined in society. Capitalism, which does not discuss the afterlife also teaches us to make the most of this life. Secular and capitalist ideas dominate the societies we live in. So, if this is the main life and we need to enjoy it by gaining pleasures and reducing pain, illness and pain are seen as a 'bad' thing. Hence ending life to avoid pain is seen as an option and even a compassionate or good option.

The Islamic mindset differs from the secular and capitalist. The life of this world is limited and the life of the Hereafter is unlimited. The Hereafter is agreed upon in Islam as the ultimate goal for a Muslim. There is no wish washy belief but a decisive and clear belief based on rational acceptance of the Quran that leads Muslims to understand the unseen Afterlife. Although the human mind cannot comprehend that reality, the belief is decisive as the sources explain it are proven and believed in. This is not an emotional but an intellectual conviction based on proof rather than a limited human mind. This strong foundation leads to strong convictions and actions in life.

The code of conduct is also given in clear ways, so we do not need to look at realities and wonder, 'What would God think?' Or "What would God want from me?"

Or moral dilemmas of, 'What is the best approach here?' Rather we have criteria for all actions and we use this as the base when judging all the problems we face in life.

Whether we ourselves are ill or a family member is ill. For Muslims, suffering is viewed as an expiation, a blessing, a chance to gain Jannah. Pain can be used as an opportunity to please Allah (swt) through means we may never have been able to create ourselves.

The Prophet (saw) said: «مَا يُصِيبُ الْمُسْلِمَ مِنْ نَصَبٍ وَلَا وَصَبٍ وَلَا هَمٍّ وَلَا حُزْنٍ وَلَا أَذًى وَلَا غَمٍّ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا كَفَرَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ خَطَايَاهُ» **“No fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of his sins for that.”** (Bukhari)

For caregivers and family also there are opportunities to serve and assist and gain reward.

Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say: «مَا مِنْ مُسْلِمٍ يَعُودُ مُسْلِمًا غُدْوَةً إِلَّا صَلَّى عَلَيْهِ سَبْعُونَ أَلْفَ مَلَكٍ حَتَّىٰ يُمَسِّيَ وَإِنْ عَادَهُ عَشِيَّةً إِلَّا صَلَّى عَلَيْهِ» **“There is no Muslim who visits a (sick) Muslim early in the morning but seventy thousand angels send blessings upon him until evening comes, and if he visits him in the evening, seventy thousand angels send blessings upon him until morning comes, and he will have a garden in Paradise.”** (Al-Tirmidhi)

With a focus on the Akhirah, we also know that life and pain will end at the time decreed by Allah (swt) so suicide, euthanasia and taking life into the hands of humans is considered a crime and will never be legal.

This case shows how a nurturing society needs correct ideas as a basis not its own definition of 'compassion'. The Islamic society will provide its members with reminders of life's purpose and the link to Allah (swt). It will ensure citizens see life as it is and not a place of ease and fun. Also it will teach the criteria needed for actions, so people do not use their limited minds and decide what is 'good' and 'bad'. As a community we collectively support and assist, so the pain and suffering is not endured by an individual or the family without reminders and assistance. "Visiting the sick does not involve only those whom you know, rather it is prescribed for those whom you know and those whom you do not know." (al-Nawawi in Sharh Muslim)

These standards and ideas produced harmony and care for people and allow them to attain the highest levels of conduct and behavior. This is what the world lacks and can only be ensured when the Islamic system is applied holistically with its education system and culturing of the Ummah and society at large.

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by

Nazia Rehman