

SOARING RATE OF SUICIDE IN SRI LANKA: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT: Suicide is a serious public health issue in Sri Lanka and the rate of it is soaring unprecedentedly. Many people sans age differences are committing suicide to evade the failures in life, the mental illness, the high depression, the mounting of debt, the frustration life, etc. Of the victims, the youngsters and adults are most vulnerable. Several efforts taken in the past to control the proportion of suicide has not paid dividend as envisaged. In this situation, the active role of religion is, therefore, warranted in mitigating the rate of suicide in Sri Lanka. In this backdrop, this paper attempts to discourse the perspective of Islam in dealing with the spiraling rate of suicide in Sri Lanka. It also analyses how Islam contributes to the effort of diminishing the rate of suicide and its perspectives of the victims of suicides. From the analysis of the paper, it is revealed that Islam has banned any form of suicide on any occasion and provides solace and confidence to the vulnerable and those subject to suicidal efforts to face the challenges of the world effectively.

Key Terms: Suicide, Islam, Perspective

INTRODUCTION:

Suicide is a serious public health issue in Sri Lanka and the rate of it is soaring unprecedentedly. Many people sans age differences are committing suicide to evade the failures in life, the mental illness, the high depression, the mounting of debt, the frustration life, etc. The police say that 80 percent of those that commit suicide in the country are males. Police Media Spokesperson SSP Ajith Rohana said that 3,461 suicide cases were reported last year alone. According to a report published in a seminar by Dr. Neil Fernando, head of National Institute of Mental Health in September 2011, almost 4,000 people commit suicide in Sri Lanka every year. Fernando's statistics shows the majority of victims were aged 15 to 44. According to the statistics of Registrar General's office, at the time of independence (1948) suicide rate in Sri Lanka was 09 per 100,000 people. In the 1970s, it rose up to 19 per 100,000, and in the mid 1980s, it reached 33 per 100,000. It remained static there afterwards.

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THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN MITIGATING THE RATE OF SUICIDE

In controlling the rate of suicide, the role of religion is significant. No religion allows suicide at any eventuality. Even though various religions provide different remedies for suicide, effective

and efficient solutions are found in the religion of Islam. It has substantiated that suicide is not the best way to end one's problems and sufferings.

ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES OF SUICIDE:

The Quran and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhamed [PBUH], being the fundamental sources of Islam guide and motivate human beings to face traumas, tragedies and challenges with patience and *Thakwa* [fear on Allah]. In this regard, Almighty Allah says in Al-Quran, ولا تقتلوا انفسكم ان الله كان بكم رحيم

"And do not kill yourself. Allah is merciful with you" [Al Quran4:29]. And further He says, "whoever kill himself with aggression and inequity we will make them suffer in the hell fire, and this is easy for Allah to do" [surah An-Nisa]. The prophet Mohamed [PBUH] said that, "He who kill commits suicide by throttling shall keep on throttling himself in the hell fire forever and he who commits suicide by shabbing himself shall keep on shabbing himself in the hell-fire" [Sahih Al Buhari-Book 23 Hadith 446] (Jazeel and Parimala, 2016).

It is clear that suicide is haram in Islam which mean it is strictly prohibited. Attempting or committing suicide is a punishable sin that definitely make the suicider enter the hell fire. Suicide rates are much lower in Islamic nations than in other nations and lower in Muslims than in those who belong to other religious groups. There is a significant negative correlation between Muslims and the rate of suicide.

SOLUTIONS FOR REDUCING THE RATE OF SUICIDE IN ISLAM:

Islam has better solutions for every human problem which can urge a person to commit suicide. Teaching patience and faith can be considered the foremost aspects رينا افرغ علينا صبرا "Lord, grant us patience and take our lives only when we are in a state of submission" [Quran7:126] ان الله مع الصابرين "Allah is with those who are patient". Further من الهم و "Oh Allah I seek refuge in you from grief sadness."

The holy Quran emphasizes the sanctity of life and provide instructions and guidance on the values of life and fulfilling the human role in this world while maintaining stability, patience and steadfastness in all circumstances. The prophetic traditions, faith on Day of Judgment and fear on hell fire deter ones wish for death through suicide.

By establishing Haram and Halal, Allah has provided human beings a clear knowledge and awareness on what is good and what is bad. Islam prohibits whatever that can harm or depress human life which can lead him to suicide. Accordingly for examples: There is no class, cast, superior-inferior, Gender and racial differences and deviations in Islam. Islam

treats every human being equally. Allah says, Respect and honor all human beings irrespective of their religions, colour, race, sex, language, status, property, birth, profession and so on. Every human beings are equal in the perception of Islam (Jazeel, 2016) .

Poverty is another important reason why people commit suicide. Through implementing a compulsory tax [Zakat] on the rich or wealthy people to be given to the poor, Allah has made arrangements in helping the poor for the survival, Islam gives high dignity to the poor. The Prophet Muhammad [PBHU] said, *"Do not turn a poor man, even if all you can give is half a date. If you love the poor and bring them near you, Allah will bring you near Him on the Day of Resurrections"* [Al-Thirmidhi: 1376] and خيرات كومت روكو وربه تمهारा رزق بهي رو كاديا جا يكا

Prophet [PBHU] said, *"Don't withhold your money if you do so Allah would withhold blessings from you"* [Sahih Buhari 513] Islam has prohibited the usage of alcohol which can damage different parts of the brain and affect one's ability to think clearly and finally leads to suicide. Prophet Mohammed said *"If any man from among my ummah drinks wine, Allah will not accept his prayers for forty days"* [Sunan-Al-Nasa-i 5570]. Using intoxicants is a great sin according Al-Quran.

Another vital cause that results in suicide is having illegal or illegitimate relationship and sexual violations. But Islam completely stand against this immoral behavior. Al Quran clearly says that, ولا تقربوا الزنى انه كان فاحشة وساء سبيلا

"And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse, Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as away" [surah Bani –Israyil verse 32]. Holy Quran urges every human beings to be justice and to be fair at the rights, property, dignity and suavity of another. Prophet Mohammed [PBHU] said, *"whoever conceals the faults of a Muslim, Allah will conceal his faults on the day of Resurrections"* [Sahih Muslim 6578]. And the Holy Quran says, ان الله لا يظلم مثقال ذرة

"Indeed, Allah does not injustice even as much as an atoms weight" [4:40]

Islam treats a suicider as a coward further. Islam advises human beings to be patient remembering the fact that, this world is only a temporary place and the permanent place is yet to come. If someone leads his life considering this he will definitely tolerate or uphold any kind of problems in life without committing suicide. Further, the remembering of Allah always calm down human minds. This can minimize mental health problems. It is narrated in Hadthees that *"whatever adversity a Muslim faces due to ailments worry sadness, harm or grief, even if he is pricked by a thorn, Allah makes this adversity an atonement for his sins"* [Saheeh Buhari]

Every problem has a solution in the holy Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Mohammed [PBHU] which can deter a desperate person from committing suicide, and show him a better path. Islam as a perfect religion has the capability of eradicating suicides from the world by its norms, guidelines and directions. Finally it is evident that suicide rate among Muslims is comparatively low in Islam than in other religions.

CONCLUSION

The rate of suicide is burgeoning in Sri Lanka. Most of the adults are the victims of suicide due to various reasons. The efforts of successive government have not paid dividend as expected. In this context, the role of religion in fighting against suicide is successful. Islam provides pragmatic solutions to control the soaring rate of suicide in Sri Lanka. The solutions are very effective and that rate of suicide among Muslims are relatively low than among the other communities.

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