

AN APPRAISAL OF CLIMATIC CHANGE AND ITS EFFECTS ON *IBĀDAH* (WORSHIP) IN ISLĀM

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Abstract

Climate is the average weather conditions of a place over a long period of time. The main purpose of man's creation in Islām to worship Allāh. However, being a major component of Allāh's creation, climate determines and affects how various acts of worship particularly in Islām are carried out. This paper examines some acts of worship influenced by climate reactions in a bid to underscore its significance in the entire existence. Descriptive design is adopted with exploration of library materials as the major source of information. The paper further makes inferences which reecho the veracity of the Lordship of Allāh and the uniqueness of Islām as a total way of life.

Keywords: *Climate change, Effects, Dilemma, 'Ibādah, Tadabbur*

1. Introduction

Climate change is a long-term change in the statistical distribution of weather patterns over periods ranging from decades to millions of years. It may be a change in average weather conditions or the distribution of events around that average (e.g. more or fewer extreme weather events). Climate change may be limited to a specific region or may occur across the whole earth. (Encyclopedia Britannica: 2021)

In Islam, *'Ibādah* (worship) is the motive of existence; life is meaningless, without worship and any endeavour cannot be dissociated from it. This is in line with the dictate of Allāh in the following Qur'ānic passage:

And remind me, for indeed, the reminder benefits the believers. I do not create the Jinn and mankind except to worship me. I do not want from them any provision, nor do I want them to feed Me. Indeed, it is Allāh who is the (continual) Provider, the firm possessor of strength. (Qur'ān 51: 55-8).

In consequence of this unique objective of creation, it is clear that the climate is a phenomenon to be reckoned with in all situations and in every circumstance since there is high tendency that weather changes at an unpredictable rate. Climatic reactions dictate various endeavour of man. It influences geographical location, economic conditions, and in fact wide range of social dispositions of man.

Belief System is also influenced by the condition of the climate at one time or the other in different geographical settlement of Man. For instance, certain people of the world have chosen to worship the sun because of the coldness of their region while others worship the moon because their region is warm. In specific terms, the concept of *Tawhīd* in its comprehensive meaning encapsulates the perception of Allāh's Lordship and ownership of the entire Universe. So, the proper understanding that all components of climate belong to Allāh is an issue for consideration. Therefore, this paper was considered necessary because of the recent "patronage" of the issue of climate change and the sustainability of the environment.

It should be brought to mind that various effects of climate change as occasioned by human influence among other factors will also affect the major purpose of creation and subsequently determine the eternal abode of mankind. Hence, the needs to be sensitive to various effects of climate change be it beneficial or adverse and respond to it accordingly. In other words, this work seeks to enunciate some specific forms of worship influenced by climatic factors, specific forms of worship that are precipitated by climatic dilemma, how the climatic changes affect the fortune of man and its implications for individual life and national development.

The Climate as a Major Component of God's Creation

The climate is a complex concept. It becomes more complex to discuss the climate without recourse to weather. The word "Weather" is used to denote the state of the atmosphere, to the degree that it is hot or cold, wet or dry, calm or stormy, clear or cloudy. When used without qualification, 'weather' is understood to be the weather of earth. Common weather phenomena include but not limited to; wind, cloud, rain, snow, fog and dust storms. On the other hand, climate is an aggregate or composite of weather (Tarbuck & Lutgens, 1994:416).

Although weather and climate are not identical, the nature of both is expressed in terms of the same elements, those quantities or properties that are measured regularly. The most important are air temperature, humidity, type and amount of cloudiness, type and amount of precipitation, air pressure and speed and direction of the wind. These elements constitute the variables from which weather patterns and climate types are deciphered.

A region's climate is generated by the climate system, which involves the atmosphere, the oceans and other surface waters, the world of ice masses, the surface soil and vegetation and geographical features of the earth (Ojo, 2007). It is important to note that the climate system has been strategically designed by Allāh to facilitate the goal of creation. In fact, it gives meaning to the entire creation just as life may not be meaningful without it. The following Qur'ānic verses explain the components of the climate system:

Say (O Muhammad) "Do you verily disbelieve in Him who created the earth in two days? And you set up rivals (in worship) with Him? That is the Lord of worlds (Mankind, Jinn and all that exist). He placed there in (i.e. the earth) Firm Mountain from above it, and He blessed it, and measured therein its sustenance (for its dwellers) in four days equal for all those who ask (about its creation). Then He completed and finished from their creation (as) two days and made in each

heaven in its affair. And we adorned the nearest heaven with lamps (stars) to be an adornment as well as to guard. Such is the degree of Him the All-Mighty, the All-Knower (Q 41: 9-12).

And in the alternation of night and day, the provision (rain) that Allāh sends down from the sky, and rivers therewith, the earth after its death, and in the turning about of the winds are signs for a people who understand (Q 45: 5).

The implication of climate is simply the neighbor of Man and Jinn in the entire creation. Even though the climate does exist not in human form, it is the conglomerates that make human kind a meaningful creature. In fact, Man and Jinn can only fulfil their purpose on earth due to the existence of the phenomena that constitute climate.

The Concept of *‘Ibādah*

‘Ibādah is an Arabic word which is usually translated as “worship”. The English word “Worship” means reverend, homage or service paid to God. In English usage, the word commonly refers to prayer and praise of God usually performed in places of worship (Lemu, 1989: 134).

‘Ibadāh refers to worship, devotional action, and observance required by Islamic faith. It is basically the rituals enjoined by Islamic law. Lemu (1989) explains that the term *‘Ibādah* in Arabic has much wider meaning than English denotation of the word “worship”. It includes all lawful acts done with consciousness of Allah, and all acts of kindness acts done with the intention of pleasing Allāh. It also includes but not limited to, avoidance of unlawful acts out of obedience to Allāh. *‘Ibādah* covers everything man does in life provided it is in conformity with the dictates of Allāh. In fact, it is the purpose for which creation of man took place. The Qur’an expressly declares: “I have not created Jinn and Mankind except to worship Me” (Q. 51: 56). Sequel to this declaration of Allāh, it becomes unequivocal that every endeavor of man is *‘Ibādah* and should be *‘Ibādah*. Sarumi (2008: 19) concludes that: *‘Ibadāh* is the only way to attain success and happiness in the life after death.

From the foregoing discussion *‘Ibādah* is neither limited to the activities in the mosque nor the pillars of Islam. It rather covers all interactions with other creatures of Allāh be it human or inanimate. Therefore, the activities of man that are connected to the reactions of the climate or influenced by it are *‘Ibādah* to a Muslim as required by Islam.

In specific terms, the basic pillars of Islam such as; *Kalimatu-sh-Shahādah* (word of declaration), *Ṣalāt* (prayer), *Zakāt* (Alms tax), *Ṣawm-ur-Ramadān* (fasting in the Ramaḍān) and *Ḥājj* (Pilgrimage) are only a segment of *‘Ibādah*, even though they are the most fundamental parts, various means of acquiring sustenance is also an aspect of *‘Ibādah*, while ways of seeking knowledge is also an integral component of it. *Muhibbu-Din* (2008), identifies three levels of Islamic perception of knowledge as; spiritual, intellectual and sensory. He explains that “the intellectual level deals with cognitive processes like thinking, reflection, meditation, contemplation and understanding or discernment”. Therefore, *‘Ibādah* as conceptualized by Islām covers both the spiritual and mundane endeavours of human being.

Assessment of relationship between Climate and Worship

Generally speaking, it is not possible to separate worship from climatic influence. This will be explored under the following headings:

Pillars of Islam and the Weather:

The basic requirements of Islām is the five pillars, virtually all these pillars have connection with the climate. *Ṣalāt* (prayer) which is the major ritual that distinguishes the Muslims from others is basically hinged on weather. The time of each prayer is determined by the situation of the weather. There are passages in the Qur'ān that highlights different period in which prayer should be established. For instances;

Establish prayer at the decline of the sun (from its meridian) until the darkness of the night and (also) the Qur'ān of dawn. Indeed, the recitation of off dawn is ever witnessed. And from (part of) the night, pray with it as additional (worship) for you; it is expected that your Lord will resurrect you to a praised station (Qur'ān 17: 78-9).

And establish prayer at the two ends of the day and at the approach of the night. Indeed, good deeds do away with misdeeds. That is a reminder for those who remember (Qur'ān 11:114)

It's imperative to note that, *Ṣalat aṣ-Ṣubḥ* (the dawn prayer) is not valid until it is dawn and becomes a "debt" when the sunrises, this condition is irrespective of the clock time. *Ṣalat-az-Zuhr* (The noon prayer) begins when the sun passes its meridian and continues until an object's shadow is approximately the same length as object itself. If it is extremely hot, it is preferred to be delayed until it is cooler. This is done in order to retain the humility and awe of the prayer, as well as prevent one's skin from sunburn. When it is sunny, if the shadows are shorter than the heights of the objects that cast them, then it's wise to seek shade, or to protect oneself with proper clothing or a good sunscreen lotion. (Tarbuck & Lutgens, 1994:419)

^ᶜ*Asr* (Afternoon) prayer begins when the shadow of an object is of the same length as the object itself, and continues until the sun sets. *Maghrib* (sunset) prayer begins with the disappearance of the sun and lasts until the red twilight ends. *Ishā'i*(Night) prayer, begins when the red twilight disappears and continues up to half of the night.

Apart from these stipulated periods for prayers, there are others situation when the order of *Ṣalawāt* (prayers) are altered due to weather conditions orchestrated by the constraints of the climate. For instance; *Zuhr* and ^ᶜ*Asr* prayers can be combined and offered at either time when there is heavy rain that prevents easy movement or as a results severe cold weather condition. The same is applicable to *Maghrib* and *Ishai*.

Ṣawm (fasting) in the month oof Ramaḍān is a major act of worship in Islam. It is characterized by *Sahur* (pre-dawn meal) and *Iftār* (meal for terminating fast) which are the two major meals between which the fasting takes place.

Sahur is the meal one takes at night up till a time before the dawn. But in order to be on the safe side, it is advisable to refrain from eating or drinking a few minutes earlier than the break of dawn. Eating or drinking after the dawn for a single minute renders the fast invalid.

Iftār means to conclude a fast after sunset by eating or drinking something, worthy of note is the fact that one's fast will be nullified and void if *Iftār* takes place even a minute earlier than the sunset actually takes place on its horizon. Similarly, if the weather is cloudy, it is advisable to delay *Iftār* for a few minutes after the time of sunset.

Ramaḍān the month which the compulsory fast takes place is ushered in with the sight of the crescent. However, sighting of the crescent is absolutely dictated by the situation of the weather and by extension of the climate.

Pertinently, *Hājj* which can be translated to as (Pilgrimage) and technically as; holy journey to Makkah for the purpose of performing certain acts of worship, in the 12th month of Islamic calendar, also hinge on the clarity of the sky which indicates a favourable weather condition. This fact is handed down by the Qur'an thus:

They ask you (O Muhammad) about the new moon say: These are signs to mark, fixed period of time for mankind and for the pilgrimage (Qur'an 2: 189).

It is also a major condition of pilgrimage to embark on the holy journey only if the weather is favourable for aircraft to sail safely.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to note that timing of devotional worship in Islam is not only attached to the weather but it also validated by strict compliance to the particular demands of its conditions. Hence weather condition is specifically observed before worship.

In furtherance of the relationship that exist between the climate system and worship, Robinson (1999), asserts that "by offering the prayers at the prescribed times, the believers conform to the will of the creator as observable in His creation". Therefore, every component of the climate system by the desire of the Creator also worships in agreement with Allah's dictate. The Qur'an states thus:

To God prostrate themselves all that is in the heaven and the earth, willingly, as do their shadows in the mornings and the evening" (Q. 55: 5).

***Tadabbur* and the Climate**

Tadabbur is the Arabic word for meditation. The Longman Dictionary for Contemporary English defines meditation as the practice of emptying one's mind of thoughts and feelings, in order to relax completely or for religious reasons. It is the act of thinking deeply and seriously about something. Islām sees *Tadabbur* as a form of worship, is a state or condition of appreciating the

creator and complete submission to Him in the intellectual realm. This state of awesome has been commanded thus:

Say, “I exhort you to one (thing) only: that you stand up for Allah’s sake in pair’s and individually, and then reflect (within yourselves)” there is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you before a severe punishment. (Qur’ān 34: 46)

While the early disbelievers and doubters of the mission of Muhammad was concerned on how to fault the Qur’ān which was seen as a unique miracle to his mission, Allah asked the prophet to challenged them to meditate “*Tadabbur*” on the book itself, in order for them to know that, an unlettered Muhammad cannot author such book. The Qur’ān states in this respect:

Then do they not reflect upon Qur’ān? If it had been from (any) other than Allāh, they would have found within it much contradiction. (Qur’ān 4:82).

Also, “then do they not reflect upon Qur’ān, or are there locks upon (their) heart? (Qur’ān 47:24)

According to Sarumi (2008: 19), “everything we do come under ‘*Ibādah*, if we do them in obedience to Allah and for seeking His pleasure and not for any personal gain”.

In relation to the biosphere which is the part of the planet containing the living organisms and an integral component of the climate system, there is wide latitude for worship as required of a Muslim. The in-exhaustive nature of this component and its dispersal across the globe is a good ground for concern. *Nadwi* (1984: 10) raises some questions upon which human being can reflect as “Why do the animals of the same species living in mountains and jungles, under different climatic conditions, develop different characteristics? Why are the dogs of Europe different in appearance from those in Africa? Why does nature provide them with different types of paws and furs and skins according to different physical and climatic conditions?”

Search light could also be beamed on the capacity of certain animals. Their nature calls for reflection as some of them have unimaginable traits which is even strange to the capacity of human being. The camel is a good case study to which Allah invites the attention of men. The Qur’an says: “Do they not look (reflect) at the camels, how they are created?” (Q 88: 17).

Most animals, even human beings cannot survive without food for a long time. Camel can travel long distances without retirement. They can withstand a massive amount of dehydration which allows them to survive not only between watering holes, but sometimes between seasons. When at a watering hole camel are able to gorge themselves and rehydrate quickly. For food, camels are omnivorous, they can eat almost anything be it vegetation, meat, or bone, a camel’s stomach knows no limits. The physical size of an average camel should have been a threat but it is their temperament that truly endears the camel to man. Docile and sweet under a caring hand, but stubborn and angry if ill-treated. The camel both wins one’s heart and respect. All these call for reflection as ordered by Allah. It is a reflection which is an ‘*Ibādah*.

Apart from the camels, other animals like horses, mules and donkeys are of immense benefit which should induce deep thought from man. The donkeys would not resist high-mounted loads no matter how long the journey. Every community would have loved to use these animals for transporting their materials if only possible to get it everywhere. But for the climatic conditions of every locality, all classes of animals would not exist in all places, hence the adherence of certain people to some forms of worship than the others. Just like the people with regular rain are familiar with combined prayer (*Ṣalātul Jam'u*), those who lack rain would be more familiar with prayer for rain (*Ṣalāt-al-istisqa*).

The manner of growth of different species of vegetations and its availability or otherwise in different parts and places as influenced by the climatic conditions still underscore the need to reflect and meditate on the Majesty of Allāh, the Creator.

Climatic Dilemma and *ʿIbādah*

According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, “dilemma is a situation in which it is very difficult to decide what to do”. Ojo (2007), asserted that “various characteristics resulting from variations and changes in the weather and climate create a lot of problems and consequently dilemma in many human activities and socio-economic sectors”. However, Islam as a total way of life, has made spiritual provisions for such unwanted but inevitable situations, thus the institutionalization of eclipse and rain prayers.

a. Prayer of the Eclipse (*Ṣalāt al-Kusūf wal Khusūf*)

Eclipse of the moon refers to time when the earth’s shadow falls onto the moon and makes it seemed dark to us. Eclipse of the sun refers to time when the moon comes between the sun and the Earth and cuts off the sun’s light from us. These events are signs of Allāh to which it is a practice of Islām that Muslims perform a special prayer called *Ṣalat al-kusūf*. The Qur’an says: Among His signs are the night and the day, the sun and the moon, prostrate not to the sun and the moon, prostrate to Allah, who created them, if it is (truly) Him you worship (Q 41: 37).

Without doubt, the prayer of this nature is not a regular event but occasionally dictated by the climatic condition. More importantly, the event of climate change may create more situations that require more eclipse prayers than expected.

b. Prayer for Rain (*Ṣalāt-al-Istisqa*)

It is prayer to seek rain from Allah during the times of drought. The prayer for rain is a demonstration of natural inclination in man to turn towards Allah and beseech Him when they are in need. Muslims turn towards Allah seeking rain during drought. This is done through prayers, supplication and seeking Allah’s forgiveness. It is observed at the outskirts of the town in an open space. It is pertinent to note that frequency of this prayer is determined by the climatic condition. While it is common in some communities, it is strange to others.

However, climate change may also precipitate its occurrence. Phil-Eze and Nnaji (2007) observed that effect of global warming includes changes in the amount and pattern of rainfall, flooding,

drought, changes in agricultural yields, addition of new trade routes, reduces summer stream flows, species extinctions and increases in the range of disease vectors among others.

Moreover, there are other events that may be categorized as dilemma of the climate as it affects man and other living organisms and more significantly creating fear and terror. These could include thunderstorm and wind among others. Specific supplications are recommended in these situations which are also particular to Islam and recognized as acts of *‘Ibādah*. In a nutshell, all these spiritual remedies are meant to control the malevolent influence of the climate.

The Climate and Prosperity

The socio-economic status of people is also affected by the state of climate and weather of different season. Farming, fishing, mining, hunting to mention a few are traditional professions that generate raw materials for the corporate industries. Without doubt, these professions obviously experience seasons of adversity and prosperity which are dictated by the changing nature of the climate. The scenario painted in the sojourn of Prophet Yusuf regarding adversity and prosperity is a good example. The Qur’an states:

(Yusuf) said: For seven consecutive years, you shall sow as usual and that (the harvest) which you reap, you shall leave in cars, except a little of it which you may eat. Then will come after that seven hard (years), which will devour what you have laid by in advance for them, (all) except a little of that which you have guarded (stored). Then thereafter will come a year in which people will have abundant rain and in which they will press (wine and oil) (Qur’an 12:47-9)

From these verses of the Qur’an, the instability of the socio-economic status of man is established on one hand, while the influence of the climate is affirmed on the other. The implications therefore, compel a sense of planning ahead of time to meet up with the challenges of every season.

Inferences and Conclusion

The climate is made of components that are purposely designed by almighty Allāh, the heavenly bodies such as the sun, the moon and stars and worldly components such as the oceans, rivers, forest components and the entire biosphere are signs of Allāh and not accidental occurrences. The weather greatly determines when major acts of worship are observed and sometimes how they would be performed. The entire life on earth is affected by the climate of which *‘Ibādah* is not an exception in any degree. Since the purpose of creation is worship and of which the climate is a major component, it is therefore central to worship. Human being needs to make recourse to Allāh whenever a climatic disaster occurs in order to secure a blissful abode in the hereafter. Provisions for acts of *‘Ibādah* to correct disaster of dilemma situations, is also an indication that Islām is a true and dynamic religion. It also proves Islam as a religion of all ages. Hence, Islām is a comprehensive way of life. The Qur’an says: “We have neglected nothing in the book, then unto their Lord they (all) shall be gathered (Q 6: 38). The adverse effects of the climate that are generally seen as caused by human influences are trial periods which required sincere repentance unto the creator of all Allah.

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