

A Request by RHCNA with Respect to Moon Sighting

Islam emphasizes the completion and soundness of all worship. That is because worships are “Amr e Ta’abbudi”¹. Any type of doubt is not tolerated while worshipping Allah. The worships of Ramadan ul Mubarak are also similar - they are absolute; not doubtful in any form. According to Islamic rulings, the only way Ramadan will be established is by the sighting of the moon; hence it is considered very carefully. There are five months in which it is obligatory to sight the moon: Sha'ban, Ramadan, Shawwal, Zul Qa’ada, Zul Hijjah. The reason for this is that these five months have a strong connection with worship. That is why one should make arrangements to look for the moon. But in this day and age, many people are heedless as they try to create doubts in this matter through which a dispute arises. If this issue is cleared by making the Quran and Hadith as a basis, then there would be no dispute.

The Quran and Hadith have considered moon sighting as the basis. Moreover, honorable jurists have mentioned the mediums for proving it. Firstly, people should make arrangements to see the moon in their own cities. If it is not sighted then one should use the methods outlined by the honorable jurists along with all of its conditions and limitations. The pure Islamic rules have mentioned seven ways to prove the moon sighting. All of these are mentioned in the blessed Fatawa Razawiya. This means that when the moon is not sighted anywhere in the city, and one gets to know that the moon was sighted in another city, then the way to prove this information can be done in the following seven ways:

- 1) The person who saw the moon gives the testimony himself.
- 2) Al-Shahadah ‘ala Al-Shahada - This means that when the witnesses give their testimony at a certain place, someone listens to this testimony and then testifies it somewhere else.
- 3) Al-Shahada ‘ala Al-Qada - This is when there are testimonies coming in the court of a Qadi², then two just witnesses corroborate these testimonies and then they testify in front of the Qadi of some other city/jurisdiction.
- 4) Kitab al Qadi ila al-Qadi - This means that one Qadi receives testimonies and then informs/sends it to some other Qadi through two just witnesses.
- 5) Istifada - This happens when there is a Qadi in a town (by whose decision the rulings of Islam are imposed), who makes an announcement to report any moon sightings. Then various groups come and give the information of the moon which results in certainty. This can prove the moon as well.
- 6) Ikmal e Iddat - This means completing 30 days to start the new month.

¹ Issues which are not dependent on rationality. These issues are followed because Allah has ordered us to do so.

² An Islamic Judge

- 7) Firing cannons to announce the moon, which will tell everyone that the new month has started. This is actually a way to announce the moon after the above mentioned 6 ways are followed.

Nowadays there is big insistence for global moon sighting and people begin criticizing the honorable scholars for not accepting modern scientific methods - which is not true. The problem arises when the preferred Islamic Rules are ignored and considered second, while the scientific methods are considered the basis. That is when the honorable Ulama do not accept it.

Global moon sighting or scientific research is nothing new. Our pious predecessors had anticipated this a long time ago. Global moon sighting is the well established opinion of Hanafis. But the proponents of global moon sighting never mention the “Tareeq e Mujib”³, meaning that if the moon is sighted in faraway lands, then it will be proven only by the six above mentioned methods and not by rumors. This is my experience, that people end up making wrong decisions when it comes to this issue. Accepting global moon sighting without a proper channel of proving the moon is against the rules of Islam. As far as scientific research is concerned, it should be known that we take it as a supporting evidence in order to see which place has the highest possibility of visibility of the moon.

However, for whatever reason if still the moon was not sighted, then just the possibility of moon sighting will not be sufficient to start the new month. Until the testimony of a person who saw the moon with his eyes is proven, the new month will not be announced. If people still do it, they would be wrong. This is because the basis is “sighting”. We have seen many times that this controversy is started, and by taking the support from global moon sighting, people announce the moon. This is extremely faulty.

Another issue is that there are a few people who keep deferring to Saudi Arabia at all times. Their naivete is exemplary. The situation of Saudi Arabia is crystal clear. They only use the word “Rooyat” (moon sighting), but the announcement is against it. It has been ages, people have seen that there is no possibility of moon sighting; yet they continue to announce the moon. A few years ago, Al-Jazeera had reported that due to the wrong announcement, Saudi government will pay expiation for the missed fasts. If this issue was based on moon sightings of the people, then this could have been considered “Tareeq e Mujib” and accepted as a result. However, the reality is that nobody there has the right to have their own opinions due to the pressure of the government. Even the scientists who work at observatories are helpless. A few years ago, an astronomy expert went against the government’s announcement. The consequences he had to face are well known by the world. Therefore, because of these reasons, we cannot consider this as standard.

³ The way moon sighting can be proven

Lastly, I want it to be noted that the possibility of moon sightings in the eastern hemisphere are less than in the western hemisphere. That is because after the moon starts waning, it appears earlier in the west. This is why it will appear in the United States earlier. The RHCNA conducts extensive research and fulfills all the requirements of Islamic Rules before making any announcement because this is a matter of worship. Therefore, we request everyone to make arrangements for moon sighting in their respective cities, and if it is sighted, then let us know.

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