97739 - Is the [Arabic] phrase, “Let us put our hand in the hand of time” permissible? And the ruling on inveighing against time.

the question

“Let us put our hand in the hand of time” – is this phrase regarded as haraam, seeing that Allaah is Time?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

It is essential to understand correctly the sentence “Allaah is Time”, because misunderstanding it leads to misunderstanding the phrase mentioned in this question. Hence we say:

It is proven in the saheeh Sunnah that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Do not inveigh against time, for Allaah is Time.” Agreed upon.

This is wrongly understood by some people, who think that al-dahr (translated as “time”) is one of the names of Allaah. But that is not the case. Rather al-dahr means [the vicissitudes of] time. The people of the Jaahiliyyah – who still have followers in this matter – used to inveigh against time, but none of them intended to inveigh against Allaah. How can they have intended to inveigh against Allaah when they used to say ‘Qabbah Allaah al-dahr (May Allaah curse time)’? Rather inveighing against time was forbidden, and time was ascribed to Allaah, because He, may He be exalted, is its Creator and controller.

For more detailed discussion of this matter, please see:

1.The answer to question no. 26977, in which it states that al-dahr is not one of the names of Allaah.

2.The answer to question no. 9571, in which it states the meaning of the saheeh hadeeth, “Do not inveigh against time, for Allaah is time.”

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) was asked about the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), “Do not inveigh against time, for Allaah is time.” Does this support what the Ittihaadis [pantheists] say? Please explain that to us.

He replied:

The hadeeth “Do not inveigh against time, for Allaah is time” was narrated in other wordings, such as “Allaah says: ‘The son of Adam inveighs against Me, he inveighs against [the vicissitudes of] Time (al-Dahr), and I am Time, in My hand are all affairs, I alternate the night and the day’” and “Do not inveigh against time (al-dahr), for Allaah is time, He alternates the night and day” and “The son of Adam says, ‘Woe to time,’ but I am time.”

The words “in My hand are all affairs, I alternate the night and the day” indicate that the meaning is not “I am time [zamaan]”, because Allaah states that He alternates night and day, and time [zamaan] is night and day. Thus this hadeeth indicates that He alternates and controls time, as is indicated in the verse in which He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“See you not that Allaah drives the clouds gently, then joins them together, then makes them into a heap of layers, and you see the rain comes forth from between them; and He sends down from the sky hail (like) mountains, (or there are in the heaven mountains of hail from where He sends down hail), and strikes therewith whom He wills, and averts it from whom He wills. The vivid flash of its (clouds) lightning nearly blinds the sight”

[al-Noor 24:43].

Allaah states that He creates the rain and sends it down to the earth; it is the cause of life on earth because He has created from water every living thing. Then He says “Allaah causes the night and the day to succeed each other” [v. 44]. So He alternates the night and day, and causes the state of the earth to change by sending down rain, which is the cause of the creation of plants, animals

and minerals. This is what causes people's situations to change, which leads to some people being raised in status whilst others are lowered.

Allaah tells us in more than one place that He has created time, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

"and originated the darkness and the light"

[al-An'aam 6:1]

"And He it is Who has created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon, each in an orbit floating"

[al-Anbiya' 21:33]

"And He it is Who has put the night and the day in succession, for such who desires to remember or desires to show his gratitude"

[al-Furqaan 25:62]

"Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are indeed signs for men of understanding"

[Aal 'Imraan 3:190]

And there are other texts which state that He is the Creator of time.

There is no confusion in this hadeeth, even if He did not state that He alternates the night and the day, so how about when it says in the same hadeeth that in His hand are all affairs, He alternates the night and the day?

The Muslims are unanimously agreed on something that is based on common sense and rational thinking: that Allaah is not al-dahr in the sense of al-zamaan.

Majmoo' al-Fataawa (2/491-494).

Abu ‘Ubayd al-Qaasim ibn Salaam al-Harawi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

The phrase “Allaah is time (al-dahr)” – no Muslim should be confused about its meaning, because those who deny the attributes of Allaah use this hadeeth against the Muslims. I have seen one of those who are accused of heresy and who do not believe in the hereafter quoting this hadeeth and saying: Do you not see that he says ‘Allaah is time’? I say: Is there anyone who would inveigh against Allaah in any era? Rather its meaning in my opinion – and Allaah knows best – is that the Arabs (before Islam) used to blame time and inveigh against it when calamity such as death, old age, loss of wealth or other things befell them, so they regarded time as that which did that, so they inveighed against it because of that, and mentioned it in their poetry.

Ghareeb al-hadeeth (2/145).

Secondly:

When it becomes clear to you that al-dahr is not one of the names of Allaah, you will understand that there is nothing confusing about the phrase mentioned in the question, which is “Let us put our hand in the hand of time.” Because it does not imply any meaning that is contrary to sharee’ah, rather it is just a rhetorical style.

It may be criticized from another point of view, however. We have seen some people who use this phrase with the word “zamaan” and unfortunately many of them use expressions that inveigh against time, and they add more ideas to that, such as the notion that time is an oppressor, and some of them apply this wording to Allaah, may He be exalted, and some of them mean thereby al-qadar (divine decree). So the ways in which people use this phrase vary, but we have not seen this phrase in the words of scholars and imams. The ruling thereon depends on how it is used in the sentence and what the speaker believes with regard to it.

The meaning of the words mentioned in the question may be that a person is going through life with changes in reality and time, and he is not going against it. This understanding includes both that which is true and that which is false. We cannot judge the sentence fully unless we know its context and the intention of the speaker.

And Allaah knows best.