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## **SIGHTING THE HILAAL WITH TELESCOPES**

***“THE SHARIAH DOES NOT SANCTION IT.”***

On this issue Hadhrat Mufti Muhammad Shafi’ (Rahmatullah alayh) said in his booklet, *The Question of Sighting the Moon and the use of Scientific Instruments*:

IT IS NECESSARY to find out the reality of the question before venturing to express an opinion to the effect whether in the things which are dependent upon the sight of the moon, the mere proof the moon’s existence is necessary, or whether it is necessary to see the moon with our eyes? Before seeking an answer to this in accordance with the law of Islam, it is necessary to note that every literate person invariably knows the fact that the moon does not, at any time of the day or night, disappear from its orbit, but it continues to exist and remain in circulation somewhere in its orbit at all times.

Therefore without regard to the 29th day or the 30th day, the moon could be sought and found even on the 18th day of the month through **powerful telescopes**, which might not be seen by naked eyes on account of the sun’s bright rays. If the question was only centred around the moon’s existence then there could be no point in debating on the subject of 29 or 30 days of the month.

It obviously means therefore that the question is not one of the moon’s existence in the sky but of the ability of seeing the moon with the eyes of the general public. On this does not only depend the determination of Ramadaan and the two Eids but a thousand other matters of the Shariat of Islam. It has tremendous effect on laws of marriage, divorce, the period of Waiting etc. etc. and if, like in the past...

This meaning of the Hadith has been further clarified in the last sentence to the effect that if the moon remain concealed – that is, it is not seen with your eyes then you are not required to resort to **astronomical calculations** to seek the existence or birth of the moon and act thereon, **or find the moon’s existence through the use of**

**telescopes and other such instruments.** The Words used in the Hadith are that: "If the moon remains hidden from you then complete thirty days to end the month." In the Arabic text the Word "**Ghumma**" is used and this is specially significant because the meaning of the Word in the dictionary and by common usage is, according to "**Qamoos wa Sharha Qamoos**" as follows:

"The words: 'Ghummal hilal alannaas' etc. are used on such occasions when there is a cloud or some such obstacle between the moon which prevents it from being seen."

From this we gather that the Holy Prophet himself accepted the existence of the moon when he gave the above direction to the Muslims because concealment itself pre-supposes the existence of a thing, and there could be no question of concealment of a thing which does not in fact exist. The Word used to express the meaning of concealment of an existing thing is "**Mustoor**." For that which does not exist at all, the word used in Arabic usage is "**Ma'adoom**," the non-existent.

And we also learn from this that there could be various reasons for the concealment of the moon from general sight of the people, so when the moon is concealed from the sight of the people and could not be seen, then the law of the Shariat lays down that, that is enough to prevent us from accepting the moon for the purposes of fasting, celebrating Eids, etc. ...

UP TILL NOW we had accepted for the purpose of discussion, that the findings of astronomical calculations and of the telescopic instruments were reliable, and on that basis we discussed the subject and found that even if they were considered **to be absolutely reliable, the law of Islam would not sanction their use** because such would not be beneficial but harmful and create a number of difficulties.

Then on the 31st of March, an official of the Department of Astronomy of the Punjab University said in an interview with a correspondent of the P.P.A. that in the dispute involved on the subject of the moon of the Eid, people are consistently asking of the Weather Forecasters, Astronomers, etc. as to how far these calculations could be relied upon as reflecting the truth the Punjab University's Department of Astronomy, had taken a clear stand that there is no possibility of sighting the moon on the evening of Friday without the use of a telescope. Explaining further, the official said that in order that the moon could be seen it is necessary that it should have come into existence for one or more days, whereas the time shown for the moon to be seen in Karachi only allowed seven or eight hours after its existence, and the time during which the moon could be seen in Karachi has been given as eighteen minutes, and the height at which the moon could be seen was given at 325 degrees. The official said that it would be impossible to see even the full moon at this time and height, because the brightness of the sun was over a thousand times stronger than the crescent moon.

*(Extracts from Mufti Shafi's treatise: The Question of Sighting the Moon and the use of Scientific Instruments)*