



Breakdown of Mental Health under Capitalism

Humanity at large has been going through bouts of economical, political, social and environmental stress and strains owing to the man-made system of Capitalism. The sheer volume and intensity of these crises have unintended consequences creating a new wave of crisis. Mental health is one of them which we would like to discuss here insha' Allah.

A good mental health has been a part of overall well-being of an individual and society. By the will of Allah (swt) and the warmth of Islamic Aqeedah, the Muslims have been marginally affected by the horde of mental health crises engulfing the world especially the Western world.

Various books, articles and journals directly and indirectly attribute the ever growing mental health crises to Capitalism. James Davies 'Sedated: How Modern Capitalism Created Our Mental Health Crisis' (2021) is one of them where the author not only dissects the primary reason(s) behind the Western civilization breakdown in terms of mental healthcare but also voiced a stern warning to the evils of exploitation, individualism, profit of big pharmacy on workplace, schools and masses in general.

Whether it is the rise of suicide, depression, anxiety or the creation of psychopaths with evil hearts and mind, the continuum of Capitalism makes one thing quite clear to any sound minded person that it has only rotten fruits to offer for humankind.

The ideological blind point of capitalist analyst and author makes them err in solution part since they do not take the ideological root cause into consideration. An in-depth analysis of reality proclaims that the ideas of **freedom; sensual pleasure; incapable and incompetent human beings making laws**, interest and **benefit being the only criteria** are some of the root causes behind Capitalism's unleashing of mental health crises.

a) Freedom, with no boundaries and premise to judge upon, human is let lose to create and cater to his or her needs without any accountability and direction that can help guide through the trials and turbulence of life. Philosopher Byung-Chul Han raised a valid point in Burnout society: The dialectic of freedom means developing new constraints. Freedom from the other switches into narcissistic self-relation, which occasions many of the psychic disturbances afflicting today's achievement-subject.ⁱ

b) Sensual Pleasure - It has been abused and misused to the point of saturation, the agitation of procreation and survival instinct has been weaponized to fulfill a particular role of mesmerizing, indulging and distracting the masses. This persuasion of basal and carnal instinct has relegated mankind to animality.

c) Sovereignty lying with incompetent, biased and incapable human beings - Ever changing laws, guidelines, definition of good, bad and evil (lowering the bar every other day) are other causes. Hans Hermann Hoppe puts it aptly: The mere act of legislating—of democratic lawmaking—increases the degree of uncertainty. Rather than being immutable and hence predictable, law becomes increasingly flexible and unpredictable. What is right and wrong today may not be so tomorrow. The future is thus rendered more haphazard. Consequently, all-around time-preference degrees will rise, consumption and short term orientation will be stimulated, and at the same time the respect for all laws will be systematically undermined and crime promoted (for if there is no immutable standard of "right," then there is also no firm definition of "crime").ⁱⁱ

d) Benefit as the only criteria opens the floodgate of conflict and exploitation whereby apart from the materialistic value nothing is taken into consideration. Author and Psychology professor Tim Kasser conducted a meta analysis: The result was 'Regardless of Age, Wealth or Homeland people who favor materialistic, status oriented values, on average-feel lower life

stratification; suffer more depression and anxiety; feel sad more often; experience less joy and pleasure; smoke and drink more; have lower self-esteem.”ⁱⁱⁱ

No amount of patch work can mitigate the evils of this man-made system. Only the comprehensive nature of Islam and its implementation can completely phase out the evils of Capitalism.

Islam, by providing meaning and purpose of this life and connecting it with life of hereafter and the life before this world, answers the greatest question a human can fathom whereby it ascertains and clarifies his or her role in grand scheme of things unlike the paradoxical and compromised idea of secularism where it severs the ties of this world and the life of Hereafter. ﴿أَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُمْ زِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهيجُ فَتَرثُهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطْبًا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ﴾ **“Know that this worldly life is no more than play, amusement, luxury, mutual boasting, and competition in wealth and children. This is like rain that causes plants to grow, to the delight of the planters. But later the plants dry up and you see them wither, then they are reduced to chaff. And in the Hereafter there will be either severe punishment or forgiveness and pleasure of Allah, whereas the life of this world is no more than the delusion of enjoyment.”** [TMQ Al-Hadid: 20]

The external, unbiased, neutral and fixed criteria to judge upon create homogeneous society whereby the heart finds peace and tranquility. ﴿الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا﴾ **“Today have I perfected your Deen, completed my favour upon you, And have chosen for you Islam as your Deen.”** [TMQ Al-Maida: 3]

Furthermore the material, spiritual, humanitarian and morals values are channelized neither crushing nor unleashing them thereby a peaceful coexistence of survival, procreation, reverence instincts and basic organic needs take place at an individual and societal level. ﴿وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنَ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفَسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ﴾ **“But seek the abode of the Hereafter in that which Allah has given you, and do not neglect your portion of worldly life, and be kind even as Allah has been kind to you, and seek not corruption in the earth. Verily, Allah likes not the Musfsidun (those who are mischief-makers, corrupted).”** [TMQ Al-Qasas: 77]

So come forward O Ummah of Muhammad (saw)! Verily it is time to liberate humankind from the shackles and mental enslavement of Capitalism.

I would end this article with a reminder from Imam Ibn Hazm (ra): “Do not use your energy except for a cause more noble than yourself. Such a cause cannot be found except in Almighty Himself: to preach the truth, to defend womanhood, to repel humiliation which your Creator has not imposed upon you, to help the oppressed. Anyone who uses his energy for the sake of the vanities of the world is like someone who exchanges gemstones for gravel.”^{iv}

Alhamdulillah Rabbil Al Amin

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
Mohammad Hassan**

ⁱ The Burnout Society by Byung-Chul Han

ⁱⁱ Democracy the God That Failed: The Economics and Politics of Monarchy, Democracy and Natural Order by Hans Hermann Hoppe.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hypercapitalism: A Cartoon Critique of the Modern Economy and Its Values by Tim Kasser and Larry Gonick

^{iv} Al Ikhlāq wal Siyar (Morals and Behaviour) by Ibn Hazm