Halal Concept According to Abu Mansur Al-Maturidi: A Thematic Study

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Abstract

Awareness among Malaysian people towards halal issues is a good sign of holistic development and very beneficial indeed. This awareness should be fostered from a better understanding (true) and comprehensive/worldwide, not just focus on one issue of halal food only, but the scope of halal issues need to be expanded and worldwide, across all aspects of life. Starting from this point, this paper will discuss about the concept of halal according to Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, cited from his interpretation’s works known as Ta’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah.

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1. Introduction

Halal is no longer just purely a religious issue. It is in the realm of business and trade, and it is becoming a global symbol for quality assurance and lifestyle choice. The halal concept (especially for

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foods) is truly from the farm to the table, and requires nutritious items prepared from permissible ingredients in a clean and hygienic manner. One of the most important concepts in Islam is the concept of *halal*, which means “permissible” covers the aspects of slaughtering, storage, display, preparation, hygiene and sanitation and must not be harmful to health. It covers food as well as non-food category of products. Under the food category, all the contents or ingredient of the particular food must be compliance with Islamic dietary laws. Muslims follow a set of dietary laws which are outlined in the Qur’an. Everything is permitted (*halal*), except what Allah SWT specifically prohibited (*haram*). Muslims do not consume pork or alcohol, and follow a humane process for the slaughter of animals for meat. Within these rules, there is wide variation among the eating habits of Muslims around the world. Given the speed of trade globalization, the advancement in science and technology, and the on-going initiatives to simplify manufacturing processes, it is essential that the *halal* concept be fully understood by marketers. The country has set itself to become the major player in providing *halal* products and services. This complements well with Malaysia’s role as the Chairman of the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and its vision to become the global halal hub. Beginning from that, this paper will discuss the concept of *halal*, according to the interpretation of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi Ta’wilat through its interpretation of the work of Ahl al-Sunnah.

2. Humans as Caliphs of Allah on Earth

Humans are the creatures created by Allah SWT, which represent the climax of the stages of creation, fashioning in the right proportions, walking upright on two, and imaging them in the best of images. God’s decision, or mandate, to make humans His successors, caliphs (Al-Khalifa) on Earth, ruling it according to His Law (Shari’a), and on His behalf. Humans’ responsibilities were mainly to devote themselves entirely to the rules and commandments of Him in all aspects of life. This description has been clearly stated in Surah al-Dhariyat, verse 56;

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\text{وَمَا خَلَقْتُ اَلْجِنَّ وَالْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيُعْبُدُونِ (٦٥)}
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Meaning:

*I have not created mankind and jinn except to worship Me.*

Surah al-Dhariyat (51): 56

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In general, there are two forms of devotion in Islam, which are ritual worship and social worship. Ritual worship is a kind of manifestation and obedience of a servant toward Allah SWT, either obligatory or voluntary. Its may be refer to ritual prayer, such as salat. Meanwhile, the social worship is a sort of act that performs according to the instructions of the Prophet, mainly for the pleasure of Allah SWT. This kind of worship has been carried out by every single of Muslim from out of Islamic divine and 5 pillars of Islam, with the orientation to maintain, expand and improve their life.\(^6\) However, the forms of these acts are varied, which appropriate accordance to the environment at where they lives, community, and the value of human civilization progress achieved by them, generally.\(^7\) These commands need to be performed to all Muslim, as been addressed by Allah SWT to all of His caliphs on earth, which has been stated in Surah al-An'am, verse 165:

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\text{وذّا الذي جعلكم خليّائف الأرض ورفع بعضكم فوق بعض } \text{ذّرات يبتغون مبتعثكم في ما آتىكم إن ربك سريع العقاب وإنه غفور رحيم}
\]

Meaning:

*It is He who has made you caliphs in the earth and raised some of you in rank above others, so that He might try you in what He has given you. Swift is your Lord in retribution; yet He is Forgiving, Merciful.*

Surah al-An'äm (6): 165

Indeed, this verse has clearly stated about the responsibility of Muslims as caliphs of Allah SWT on earth, not just to sustain and uphold a good relationship with Allah SWT only, but also concerned about their relationship, in terms of dealing with other peoples. In fact, in carrying out their duties as caliphate, each Muslim must equip themselves will all the competencies, strength and healthy body, because without all those things, they may not be able to completely perform and carry out their duties as caliphs of Allah SWT on earth. The prophet Muhammad PBUH also emphasized about this issue, chiefly stated in Sahih Muslim:

المؤمن القوي خير وأحب إلى الله من المؤمنضعف

Translation:

*Strong believers (Muslim) is better and more loved by Allah SWT than the weak believers (Muslim)*\(^8\)

(H.R Muslim)

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\(^7\) Ibid.

Thus, to become healthy and strong, every human should fulfill the rights of their bodies, such as eating, drinking, sports and leisure, as well as enough relaxation (rest). Eating and drinking are two main requirements of the body, in order to maintain and improve the quality of health and body strength with a well-balanced of healthy food intake. Al-Quran also from his verse has clearly states about the importance of eating and drinking, as well as its influences towards the human life, not even focus just toward Islamic law only, but also discussed in details the variety of foods, especially towards the people who accept the Holy Quran at the time being. Eventually, it is become more relevant to be practiced and implemented in our daily life currently, because there are a lot of evidences and proof of studies, as well as research carried out under the field of nutrition and health about the good and nutritious food compared to bad and unhealthy food.

3. Halal Concept according to Abu Mansur Al-Maturidi

Holy Qur'an gives a special attention towards the halal concept, where it has been mentioned in 8 times, regardless to the variety of its versions. Allah SWT already emphasized through His command to choose the right food categorized under the good and healthy foods, in which contains the elements needed and necessary in human body, as well as halal based on syar’ie (Islamic law). Realizing the importance of the biological aspects, the needs for foods and drinks is very important for continuation care of physical growth, vitality and strength of body, as well as overall healthy health. Healthy foods and a well balanced food intake, which has been consumed everyday in our daily life, will form body cells that essential for physical body to be growth and replaced any damaged cells. In fact, the good foods (halal) also have calories that able to produce energy and strength prerequisite by the human body. This is the main function, which is considered as a good effect of healthy food intake towards the individual Muslim. Moreover, with the right proportion of good food intakes in our daily life, humans may able to perform their worship to Allah SWT, much better as reflection from their faiths. This fact is clearly stated in verse 115 of Surah Al-Nahl:

فَكُلُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ خَلاَلًا طَيِّبًا وَاشْكُرُوا لَعْبَةَ اللهِ إِنَّكُمْ إِبَاءَ تَعْبِدُونَ (١١٤)

Meaning:

Eat of the lawful and good things with which Allah has provided you and be thankful for the favors of Allah if it is He you worship.

Surah al-Nahl (16): 114

Some Muslim scholars argue about these two clauses (طَيِّبًا وَاشْكُرُوا لَعْبَةَ اللهِ) from this verse, that bring the same meaning of halal, which is the same things said by the someone else about halal “Eat whatever is

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lawful (Halal) for you”. However, there are a few scholars claims that these two clauses (اختلاف الثانية للurous), were defined as something that is halal and good for you, to enjoy the delightfulness at any time, as long as it’s may not bring harm to you. It is because, Allah SWT has made the human foods from the good elements which consists of the best materials and composition, with the most delicious for them to eat, whereas He made the food feed for farm animals from the something that dangerous and rough, until the humans feels very thankful to Him, as their food made from the best contents.

Also included under the verse of Allah SWT (فَذَٰلِكَ مَا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ خَالِصًا ﻣِنَ الْخَطَّاء), clearly states that it is not included with a something that beyond your capability, because this verse brings the dalil that Allah SWT gives sustenance (رزقي), either in the form of dangerous or halal based on His decision, and instruct to all humans to choose from the halal foods only. This text is followed with a instruction from Allah SWT (هَ ﻧِعْﻤَةَ وَاﺷْﻜُﺮُوا ﻷنْ  اﻟﻠّﺎهُ ﻣَنْ ﻋَبَرُوا ﻣِنْ ﻣُﺒِينٍ ﻋَﺪُو). Due to show the appreciation towards rezqi given by Allah SWT, we as servants of Him needs to preserve the good relationship and devotion towards Him, by doing the good deeds and always pray and thankful to Allah SWT, as a regular routine. Obedience to Allah SWT and His Messenger is a must (obligatory), and if they do not belong to be among the Muslim believers, or they say: Express the grateful towards the pleasure (رزقي) given by Him, if you really the obedient servants, and do perform worships and always thankful to Him at any time, everywhere.

The same command also can be seen in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 168;

يا أَنْتَ الَّذِينَ كُنُوْا ﻓِي الْأَرْضِ ﺧَالِصًا مِّنَ ﺍﻟْخَطَّاءِ وَلاَ تَسْتَبِعُوا خَطَّواتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ ﻋَلَدَ مَنْ عَمِّدَ (١٦٨)

Meaning:

People, eat of what is lawful and good on the earth and do not walk in Satan’s footsteps, because he is for you a clear enemy.

Surah al-Baqarah (2): 168

In interpreting this verse, al-Maturidi has quotes a few opinions, which claimed that they are forbidden to eat from something or to take advantage from bahair12, sawaib13, wasail14, and hawami15, as been said by Allah SWT in Surah al-Maidah, verse 10316:

10 Allah SWT clearly states in Surah al-Nisa’, in verse 3 (فَذَٰلِكَ مَا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ خَالِصًا ﻣِنَ الْخَطَّاء) means “whatever food that is halal for you”. Al-Maturidi, Abu Mansur Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Mahmud (2005), Ta’wilat of al-Tafsir al-Sunnah Maturidi, tahqiq by Dr. Majdi Baslum, Lebanon: Dar al-Pole al-’Ilmiyyah, ch.6,pg.585
11 Ibid.
12 Camels (female) who have given birth five times and the fifth was a male, then the ear of camel (female) has been cut, released, can’t be ride anymore, and can’t take her milk
13 Camels (female), which have been left behind and go anywhere because of a vow. As if an Arabs’ pagan, that would like to do something or tough travel, hence he often vowed, to make his camel saibab, when the purpose or his travel do have output and safe journey.
14 A goat (female) gave birth to twins, which is male and female, then the male is called as wasilah, means can’t be slaughtered and given to God (idol)
15 Camel (male) can’t be threatened anymore, because he (male-camel) was able to make the camel (female) pregnant 10 times.
Allah has not made cattle, a slit eared camel (female), nor a freely grazing camel (female), nor a camel (female) that bore twins, nor an uncastrated camel (dedicated to idols), but those who disbelieve invent lies against Allah. Most of them do not understand.

Surah al-Maidah (5): 103

Not necessarily the good food is halal, but whatever food categorized as good foods, is permissible to be consumed by humans, even though sometimes they do not feel or enjoy with the delightful from the something considered as halal. In fact, the good food is the most delicious and more satisfying to be enjoyed.\(^\text{17}\) This description is related and refers to the verse of Allah SWT;

كلٍّ من حَرَمَ زَوَّةَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أعْقِلُوهُمْ، وَالشَّعُرَاتُ، وَالشَّيْطَانَ، وَالظُّرْقُ، فَلَلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاتِ الْزِّنَةَ خَالِصَةً يُؤْمِنُونَا.

Meaning:

Say: Who has forbidden the adornment that Allah has brought for His worshipers and the good provision? Say: They are in this life for those who believe and purely theirs on the Day of Resurrection. 'As such We distinguish the verses to people who know.

Surah al-A’raf (7): 32

According to the descriptions denote by this verse, it seems to imply that in this world, everything from halal and haram is available for us.\(^\text{18}\) However, is it something that considered as halal is good, without containing anything illegal (haram)? Hence, there is an command to take something which is good, according to the affordability of each human, because the sentence of exceed the good rate is defined by enlarging and expand the broader meaning about halal in heart, thus encouraging them to feel thankful for His blessings and bringing up the honours of every kindness made by ourselves.

Besides, the concept of halal according to al-Maturidi also can be retrieved from Surah al-A’raf, based on the following verse of 160;

\(^{17}\) Ibid.
\(^{18}\) Ibid.
We divided them into twelve tribes, each a nation. And when his people demanded drink, We revealed to Moses: 'Strike the rock with your staff.' Thereupon twelve springs gushed from the rock and each tribe knew its drinking place. We caused the clouds to cast their shadow over them, and sent down for them manna and quails, saying: 'Eat of the good things We have provided for you. Indeed, they did Us no wrong, but they wronged themselves.'

Surah al-A'raf (7): 160

Al-Maturidi exegetes the verse (١٦٠) which referred to the foods from heaven, known as "manna" and "salwa", as well as other foods that are good. 

This description clarify that, the good food is comes from the best food, that judged under the aspects of good in nutrient and taste, and both types of foods mentioned earlier, were clearly defined as the best food made by Him and originally derived from heaven. Although, the existing food available in this world also can not be able to compete with other food from heaven, so at least the closest definition of the term best food is evaluated based on its flavour and nutrition’s.

In other hand, the concept of halal, according to al-Maturidi interpretation also can be seen in Surah Al-Anfal, verse 69;

Eat of what you have taken from the spoils; such is lawful and good, and fear Allah. Allah is Forgiving and Most Merciful.

Surah al-Anfal (8): 69

Some of Muslim scholars indicates that, both clauses (فحَّلوا من طَيَّبَاتٍ)(٦٩) have a same meanings, whatever which is halal is good, while every each or haram is bad and illegal. This commentary is supported with the evidence that clearly related to what has been addressed by Allah SWT that point out from the word (حلالاً)(٦٩) must be halal, based on syar’ie and (طيباً) good, under to the common custom. Meanwhile, the opposite of it, is derived from the word haram (illegal), thus must be haram based on syar’ie and bad according to the common custom. Definition of good also included with something related with a good feeling, but not makes it as a habit, because feeling worried if the habit could probably make the

19 Ibid., ch.5, pg.67.
20 Ibid., ch.5, pg.264.
familiarity and the comfort that supposed to have disappeared. This matter is closely related with something that also promoted in Islam among Muslim people, due to practice the concept of moderate, not excessive or extreme in every action taken, including when dealing with halal, good and tasty foods.

Beside that, under the category of good deeds also mentioned about the group of polytheism people who take others property without any permission, as well as, collects the property through the non-halal way such as corruption and bribery. Hence, they hate to take from them (polytheism people), because they do not want to be abetting with them, as well as do not want to rearing and collect properties to be their own, from the bad act of bribery. It is because of their hearts were touched with the good deeds mentioned from the word of Allah SWT (طَنُّبَاءَ). Indeed, there is a dalil, where they should exchange and do transaction of purchasing (buy-sell) of fasad with taken into account the good of purchasing (buy-sell). If they also considered the causes of faulty or broken items sold, in which occurred after the agreement (akad), hence the first opinion shall be considered and stick with what has been described by us. There are also a few evidences, that indicates that the unbelievers is not measured by their actions, in which caused them to be infidels, and also not because of their neglect to obey to Allah SWT (leaves the worship/prayers), but it is measured and evaluated based on their doctrine/belief.

In addition, the use of the halal word also can be seen in Surah Taha, verse 81:

'eat of the good things with which we have provided you and do not transgress therein lest my anger should fall upon you, and upon whosoever my anger falls has assuredly fallen.

Surah Taha (20): 81

According to the verse of Allah SWT (كُلُوُّا مَنْ طَبَّابِثَ مَا زَفَءَكُمْ وَلَا تَطَفِّؤَا فِيهِ فَيَحْلُلَ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبِي وَمَنْ يَحْلُلَ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِي فَقَدْ هَوَى), there are 2 point of views denoted by Al-Maturidi. First, this verse carried the meaning, that all halal rezqi (sustenance) given and provided by Allah SWT to mankind, and there is also some description which clarify that it is also include the type of non-halal rezqi. Second, what is good for the individual Muslim, because there is a dalil states that, we need to choose which food is much better, except something that already beneficial to individual Muslim. Meanwhile, Allah SWT clearly states (ولَا تَطَفِّؤَا فِيهِ), which is al-tughyan; that defined as exceed the limit specified, for example takes the good rezqi through the way that not supposed to, and need to take it with the appropriate rate or manner.

Similar command that closely related and same about the benefits of halal can be found in verse 51, Surah al-Mukminun:

21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid, j.7, h.297
25 Ibid.
Meaning:

Messengers! Eat of that which is good and do good deeds; I have knowledge of the things you do.

Surah al-Mukminun (23): 51

Generally, all exegesis members were agreed that this verse is clearly stated by Allah SWT, which directly dedicated to Prophet Muhammad PBUH only, but the meaning also necessary to be here, highlight particularly towards all the followers of Prophet Muhammad PBUH. However, this verse also addressed to all the apostles, because this verse is intended to all of them, focus particularly on the aspects of good nutrition and good deeds in Islam, in general form of order. Eat whatever is halal and not the haram food, is it you see that Allah SWT already said (واعملوا صالحا), required them to worship to Allah and do the good deeds of Islam, and don’t do the bad things. Before that, Allah SWT says from His verse (واعملوا صالحا), which is eating something halal, and do not eat something haram and bad. This command contains the tests, as been test the other half of it with commandments and prohibitions. Also included from His verse (واعملوا صالحا) what is good and tasty for yourself, because if other than that, it has been excluded from the line of what should be (voluntary act) and rukhsah (given relief), as well as something that do not included in the instruction, which means: ‘You shall eat the good food for yourself, and you should also be beneficial to others’. Although this sentence contains the commands, but in it also contained orders, including prohibitions and only Allah SWT knows.

4. Conclusion

These orders and commands are consistently followed by brief explanations that are more operational oriented, which refers to the type or particular culture of food intake. Despite, the description of those cultures did not mentioned in the Qur’an in details, but the main meaning requested can be understandable without cover it with any possibilities of using the cultural meaning, while it is still applied in social life. The most important thing for Muslim, all the food consumes and intake must compliance with Islam's dietary laws.

5. Bibliography


26 Ibid.j.7.h.472.
27 Ibid.


