

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

# Submitters Perspective

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## Life after Death

Since time immemorial, humans have wondered whether death terminates our life or if it carries on subsequently. To arrive at the proper conclusion is of fundamental significance as it decides our conduct throughout this life. If living did come to an end with death and there was nothing ahead, some people would feel that *“we only live once and so let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die”* - Luke 12:19, Ecclesiastes 8:15, 1 Corinthians 15:32. These would be the ones who think that the here and now is the be-all and end-all and that it may be okay to believe that the end would justify the means. But we know this is not so. [45:24-26] *They said, “We only live this life; we live and die and only time causes our death!” They have no sure knowledge about this; they only conjecture. When our revelations are recited to them, clearly, their only argument is to say, “Bring back our forefathers, if you are truthful.” Say, “GOD has granted you life, then He puts you to death, then He will summon you to the Day of Resurrection, which is inevitable. But most people do not know.”*

There has always been a strong concept of resurrection. Hindus have a

conviction that they will be reborn in accordance with their quality of life, of reincarnation of souls, a continuous sequence of birth and rebirth till they accomplish “moksha”. The Egyptian Pharaohs were entombed in colossal pyramids with all their jewellery and valuable possessions to be used by them after resurrection. The ancient Greeks believed in a netherworld called Hades, the dwelling of the dead as well as a sinister purgatory. Some Jews believed in Heaven and Hell with the notion they would endure the anguish of Hell for only a restricted phase. In the Christian New Testament—the Book of Revelations—there is an explicit portrayal of six angels blowing the trumpets, one after the other which will obliterate the cosmos, and finally the Seventh angel’s trumpet (Rev. 11:18) will announce the achievement of “God’s secret plan,” the Ark of the Covenant is seen, the four Horsemen of the Apocalypse appear (Rev. 6), while the 24 elders declare that the time of judgment has come.

Among today’s Muslims, most believe that their saints, religious leaders, Pirs and Awliyas will intercede on their behalf and escort them to Heav-

en. We know that there is no intercession. *Satan’s Most Effective Bait: The Myth of Intercession [9:80] Whether you ask forgiveness for them, or do not ask forgiveness for them — even if you ask forgiveness for them seventy times — GOD will not forgive them. This is because they disbelieve in GOD and His messenger. GOD does not guide the wicked people.*

Billions are duped into idol worship in this manner. We know Abraham could not intercede for his father. [9:113] *Neither the prophet, nor those who believe shall ask forgiveness for the idol worshipers, even if they were their nearest of kin, once they realize that they are destined for Hell.* Nor could Noah for his son [11:46] *He said, “O Noah, he is not of your family. It is unrighteous to ask Me for something you do not know. I enlighten you, lest you be like the ignorant.”*

The Quran teaches us the concept of the Hereafter in an entirely different style from the mythological divulgence of other beliefs. First, we are elucidated as to why we are here, what our duties and responsibilities are and why answerability is obligatory.

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[36:77] *Does the human being not see that we created him from a tiny drop, then he turns into an ardent enemy? [36:78] He raises a question to us — while forgetting his initial creation — “Who can resurrect the bones after they had rotted?”* The answer is given in the next verse: [36:79] *Say, “The One who initiated them in the first place will resurrect them. He is fully aware of every creation.”*

One of the primary attributes mentioned in the very first Sura of the Quran is that God is the Master of the Day of Judgment. If we truthfully recognise this, we should act in the most upright way during our life knowing that we are answerable about our deeds after death. [83:10-12] *Woe on that day to the rejectors. They do not believe in the Day of Judgment. None disbelieves therein except the transgressor, the sinful.*

We believe in the Hereafter because God says so. We reason it out because as humans we should be conscientious and therefore accountable to our Maker for all our actions. We know that this life at hand is transient and that it is ordained to conclude on an Hour known only to God. We also know that all our winning or losing in the next life is not derived from our ability to obtain riches, power and influence here. [6:164] *Say, “Shall I seek other than GOD as a lord, when He is the Lord of all things? No soul benefits except from its own works, and none bears the burden of another. Ultimately, you return to your Lord, then He informs you regarding all your disputes.”*

We know that this earth will be replaced with a new earth and that all humankind will be recreated afresh and gathered round for judgment. It will be done for each and every soul in the most accurate and just manner. Those deemed by God as moral will be in enjoyable, pleasing and enduring surroundings in the Gardens of Eden while those pronounced as sinful by God will find themselves in a position of eternal suffering called Hell.

God has promised us very fair dealings. *The Best Deal [40:40] Whoever commits a sin is requited for just that, and whoever works righteousness— male or female—while believing, these will enter Paradise wherein they receive provisions without any limits. [4:173] As for those who believe and lead a righteous life, He will fully recompense them, and shower them with His grace. As for those who disdain and turn arrogant, He will commit them to painful retribution. They will find no lord beside GOD, nor a savior.*

God has His angels register all our acts in a faultless document. [21:110] *“He is fully aware of your public utterances, and He is fully aware of everything you conceal. [45:28-29] You will see every community kneeling. Every community will be called to view their record. Today, you get paid for everything you have done. This is our record; it utters the truth about you. We have been recording everything you did. [58:6] The day will come when GOD will resurrect them all, then inform them of everything they had done. GOD has recorded everything, while they have forgotten it. GOD witnesses all things.*

If we place our hand in fire, we will get burned. This is what is so exclusive in the Quran—the understanding that we are answerable for our own actions. This is why we can say with conviction: [2:139] *Say, “Do you argue with us about GOD, when He is our Lord and your Lord? We are responsible for our deeds, and you are responsible for your deeds. To Him alone we are devoted.” [34:25] Say, “You are not responsible for our crimes, nor are we responsible for what you do. [109:6] “To you is your religion, and to me is my religion.”*

Our entire life is being tracked on a hard drive which can never be contested. It cannot be viewed by us now but will be released on the Day of Judgment when we will be told: [17:13-14] *We have recorded the fate of every human being; it is tied to his neck. On the Day of Resurrection we will hand him a record that is accessible. Read your own record. Today, you suffice as your own reckoner.*

Most will want to escape all responsibility by hiding behind petty excuses. Many will try to blame God.

[3:116] *Those who disbelieved can never be helped by their money or their children against GOD. They have incurred Hell, wherein they abide forever. [10:47] To each community, a messenger. After their messenger comes, they are judged equitably, without the least injustice.*

We have civil laws without which the social order cannot operate suitably. By nature we are insensitive, egocentric and quite competent in infringing on the rights of others for individual benefit. We know that the law of the land may punish us for contravening the rules. Nevertheless, we see that even in a well administered state many criminals go scot-free and sometimes people who are not guilty are unfairly convicted and penalised. No laws we make can ever be perfect. Enactment of justice here, though well intentioned, will never be without some bias. But God's law is such that all our activities regardless how insignificant will have their positive or negative final results. [21:94] *As for those who work righteousness, while believing, their work will not go to waste; we are recording it. [2:281] Beware of the day when you are returned to GOD, and every soul is paid for everything it had done, without the least injustice.*

[10:4] *To Him is your ultimate return, all of you. This is GOD's truthful promise. He initiates the creation, then repeats it, in order to reward those who believe and lead a righteous life, equitably. As for those who disbelieve, they incur hellish drinks, and a painful retribution for their disbelieving.*

[16:39] *He will then point out to everyone all the things they had disputed, and will let those who disbelieved know that they were liars.*

[99:6-8] *On that day, the people will issue from every direction, to be shown their works. Whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it. And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.*

## Fine-tuning our Submission

I was watching in the last Winter Olympics the Ice Dancing competition. Two phrases used by the commentators during the competition caught my attention. One phrase—"the elite of the elite"—was used about the athletes being judged more exactly because they were Olympians. The other phrase—"they need to fine-tune their program"—was used about a pair that had been dancing together only a short while, though both were experienced skaters. They were said to have done well with the major aspects of their routine, but needed to fine-tune such details as synchronization and relating better to each other during the dance.

I knew I had seen "elite of the elite" in the Quran (56:10) relating to the high heaven. I knew "fine-tuning" wasn't in the Quran, but I couldn't get over the feeling that it also referred to the Quran in some way. One morning when I was reading Quran at dawn, I came upon these verses: [41:34] *Not equal is the good response and the bad response. You shall resort to the nicest possible response. Thus, the one who used to be your enemy, may become your best friend.* [41:35] *None can attain this except those who steadfastly persevere. None can attain this except those who are extremely fortunate.*

The phrase "fine-tuning" immediately came to mind. It seemed that God was letting us know that only those who can control their egos to this extent can achieve the state of being "extremely fortunate." I recalled the use of the word fortunate in 11:108: *As for the fortunate ones, they will be in Paradise. Eternally they abide therein, for as long as the heavens and the earth endure, in accordance with the will of your Lord—an everlasting reward.* God says here that the fortunate ones will be in Paradise.

We are familiar with the Five Pillars of Islam. It's an expression used to describe the major rites of our religion: 1) the worship of God alone (*La Elaaha EllaaAl-lah*), 2) observing the five daily contact prayers (*Salat*), 3) the obligatory charity (*Zakat*), 4) fasting during the month of Ramadan, and 5) the Hajj pilgrimage. These rites are the mainstay of the religion, and as stated in Appendix 15:

When Abraham implored God in 14:40, he did not ask for wealth or health; the gift he implored for was: "Please God, make me one who observes the contact prayers (*Salat*)." The religious duties instituted by God are in fact a great gift from Him. They constitute the nourishment required for the growth and development of our souls. Without such nourishment, we cannot survive the immense energy associated with God's physical presence on the Day of Judgment. Belief in God does not by itself guarantee our redemption; we must also nourish our souls (6:158, 10:90-92). Additionally, 15:99 states that observing the religious duties instituted by God is our means of attaining certainty: "Worship your Lord in order to attain certainty."

Seemingly, if we all performed the required practices equally, we would attain the same rank in heaven. But there is a great difference between the Low and High Heaven, namely the closeness to God, as noted in 56:10-11: *Then there is the elite of the elite. They are those who will be closest (to God).*

Once again, my thought processes led me back to "fine-tuning." The dictionary definition of "fine-tune" is "to make minor adjustments so as to produce stability or improvement." The tweaking of the ego seemed to be indicated. My question to myself is how can I tweak my ego to make myself worthy of the High Heaven? Let me say that I do not mean to be presumptuous. I pray fervently to even be worthy of the Low Heaven. [3:185] *Every person tastes death, then you receive your recompense on the Day of Resurrec-*

*tion. Whoever misses Hell, barely, and makes it to Paradise, has attained a great triumph. The life of this world is no more than an illusion. I will be deliriously happy to be admitted to the Low Heaven. But I want to strive for the High Heaven because I want to be as close to God as I can. So, I continued my research and what I've been able to find is the importance of our reactions and responses to situations we are confronted with and how our egos respond and react. We must control our egos, not allow our egos to control us. There are so many verses encouraging this that I could not include them all.*

[25:63] *The worshipers of the Most Gracious are those who tread the earth gently, and when the ignorant speak to them, they only utter peace.*

[42:37] *They avoid gross sins and vice, and when angered they forgive.*

[42:43] *Resorting to patience and forgiveness reflects a true strength of character.*

[16:126-127] *And if you punish, you shall inflict an equivalent punishment. But if you resort to patience (instead of revenge), it would be better for the patient ones. You shall resort to patience—and your patience is attainable only with GOD's help. Do not grieve over them, and do not be annoyed by their schemes.*

[3:133-134] *You should eagerly race towards forgiveness from your Lord and a Paradise whose width encompasses the heavens and the earth; it awaits the righteous, who give to charity during the good times, as well as the bad times. They are suppressors of anger, and pardoners of the people. GOD loves the charitable.*

[4:149] *If you work righteousness—either declared or concealed—or pardon a transgression, GOD is Pardoner, Omnipotent.*

[7:199] *You shall resort to pardon, advocate tolerance, and disregard the ignorant.*

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[23:96] *Therefore, counter their evil works with goodness; we are fully aware of their claims.*

[28:54-55] *To these we grant twice the reward, because they steadfastly persevere. They counter evil works with good works, and from our provisions to them, they give. When they come across vain talk, they disregard it and say, "We are responsible for our deeds, and you are responsible for your deeds. Peace be upon you. We do not wish to behave like the ignorant ones."*

[90:11-18] *He should choose the difficult path. Which one is the difficult path? The freeing of slaves. Feeding, during the time of hardship. Orphans who are related. Or the poor who is in need. And being one of those who believe, and exhorting one another to be steadfast, and exhorting one another to be kind. These have deserved happiness.*

[13:22] *They steadfastly persevere in seeking their Lord, observe the Contact Prayers (Salat), spend from our provisions to them secretly and publicly, and counter evil with good. These have deserved the best abode.*

THE BEST ABODE—that is what I strive for, because that is where I can be closest to God for eternity. All these verses indicate that we must fine-tune our egos to always respond in the BEST POSSIBLE MANNER.

These Quran verses bring to mind two beautiful Bible verses in Romans 12:17 & 21: "Repay no one evil for evil." "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." If we respond to our tests in the best possible manner, and tweak our egos sincerely intending to overcome evil with good, then, maybe, we will deserve, by God's infinite grace and mercy, the BEST ABODE, the HIGH HEAVEN. This is what I pray for myself and for all of us who strive.

Lory

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