

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Second Insight

The second insight concerning the life after death which the Holy Quran has set forth is that in the Hereafter, all the spiritual conditions of this world will be manifested physically, both in the intermediate state and in the resurrection. In this context one verse is:

وَمَنْ كَانَ فِي هَذِهِ أَعْمَىٰ فَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ أَعْمَىٰ وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ۝¹⁹⁶

That is, he who continues blind in this life will be blind in the Hereafter and even more astray. This means that the spiritual blindness of this life will be manifested and felt physically in the Hereafter.

In another verse it is said:

حُدُّوهُ فَعَلُّوهُ ۝ ثُمَّ الْجَحِيمَ صَلُّوهُ ۝ ثُمَّ فِي سِلْسِلَةٍ ذَرْعُهَا
سَبْعُونَ ذِرَاعًا فَاسْلُكُوهُ ۝¹⁹⁷

That is, seize this hellish one and put a collar round his neck and burn him in hell and bind him in a chain the length of which is seventy cubits. These verses show that the spiritual torment of this world will be manifested physically in the Hereafter. For instance, the collar of worldly ambition which had bent his head towards the earth will become physically perceptible in

196. But whoso is blind in this world will be blind in the Hereafter, and even more astray from the way. (The Holy Quran, Banī Isrā'īl 17:73)

197. 'Seize him and fetter him, 'Then cast him into Hell. 'Then put him into a chain the length of which is seventy cubits; (The Holy Quran, al-Hāqqah 69:31-33)

the life after death. Similarly the chain of worldly preoccupations will become visible round his feet, and the fire of worldly desires will appear in full blaze.

A vicious person conceals a whole hell of worldly greed and desires inside himself, and perceives the burning sensation of this hell at the time of his failures and frustrations. So when he is cast away from his mortal desires and becomes subject to eternal despair, God Almighty will cause his sorrow to be manifested physically in the shape of fire; as is said:

وَحِيلَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ مَا يَشْتَهُونَ¹⁹⁸

That is, a barrier will be placed between them and that which they yearn after, and that will be the root of their torment. The chain of seventy cubits is an indication that a wicked one often attains the age of seventy years and sometimes, leaving aside his years of childhood and extreme old age, he is granted a period of seventy years which he could employ for work wisely and with good sense. But an unfortunate one spends these seventy years caught in the coil of worldly preoccupations and does not desire to be free of them. Thus God Almighty affirms in this verse that the seventy years that such a one spends in worldly pursuits will be manifested as a chain of seventy cubits in the Hereafter, one cubit for each year. It must be kept in

198. And a barrier will be placed between them and that which they long for, (The Holy Quran, Sabā' 34:55)

mind in this connection that God Almighty does not afflict any creature of His with a misfortune from Himself. He merely confronts a person with his own evil deeds.

At another place He has said:

199 $\text{اَنْطَلِقُوا إِلَى ظِلٍّ ذِي ثَلَاثِ شُعَبٍ ۝ لَا ظَلِيلٍ وَلَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْهَبِّ ۝}$

O the wicked! The errant proceed towards three pronged shadow which has three branches they can neither provide shelter nor can they protect from scorching heat. The three branches mentioned here represent bestiality, savageness and wild imagination. In the case of those who do not regulate these faculties and thus convert them into moral qualities, they will manifest themselves in the Hereafter as three branches of a tree which are bare of leaves and can afford no shade or protection against fire, so that such people would be consumed by the fire. As a contrast, God Almighty has said concerning the dwellers of heaven:

$\text{يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَسْعَى نُورُهُمْ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَ}$
 $\text{بِأَيْمَانِهِمْ}^{200}$

That is, on that day you will see that the light of the

199. 'Aye, move on towards a shadow which has three sections, 'Neither affording shade, nor protecting from the flame.' (The Holy Quran, al-Mursalāt 77:31-32)

200. And *think* of the day when you will see the believing men and the believing women, their light running before them and on their right hands, (The Holy Quran, al-Ḥadid 57:13)

believers which remain hidden in the world will manifest itself by, running before them and on their right hands; and in another verse it is said:

يَوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوهٌُ وَتَسْوَدُّ وُجُوهٌُ 201

That is, on that day some faces will be bright and others will be dark. A third verse sets out:

مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وُعدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ 1 فِيهَا أَنْهَارٌ مِنْ مَاءٍ غَيْرِ آسِنٍ 2
وَأَنْهَارٍ مِنْ لَبَنٍ لَمْ يَتَغَيَّرْ طَعْمُهُ 3 وَأَنْهَارٍ مِنْ خَمْرٍ لَذَّةٍ لِلشَّارِبِينَ 4
وَأَنْهَارٍ مِنْ عَسَلٍ مُصَفًّى 5 202

That is, the Garden promised to the righteous is as if it has rivers of water that corrupts not; and rivers of milk of which the taste changes not; and rivers of wine, which do not inebriate, a delight for those who drink; and rivers of pure honey, which has no impurity. It is clearly stated here that heaven should be understood as metaphorically comprising inexhaustible streams of these bounties. This means that the water of life which a person of spiritual understanding drinks in this life will be manifested visibly in the Hereafter. The spiritual milk

201. On the day when some faces shall be white, and some faces shall be black. (The Holy Quran, Āl-e-ʿImrān 3:107)

202. A description of the Garden promised to the righteous: therein are rivers of water which corrupts not; and rivers of milk of which the taste changes not; and rivers of wine, a delight to those who drink, and rivers of clarified honey. (The Holy Quran, Muḥammad 47:16)

by which he is sustained, like a suckling in this life, will become physically visible in heaven. The wine of God's love which inebriated him all the time spiritually in this life, will be manifested in the shape of rivers in heaven. The honey of the sweetness of faith which a person possessing spiritual understanding swallowed spiritually in this world will be manifested and felt physically in heaven. Every dweller of heaven will proclaim his spiritual condition openly through his gardens and rivers. God will unveil Himself on that day for the dwellers of heaven. In short, spiritual conditions will not remain hidden in the Hereafter but will be physically visible and perceptible.

Third Insight

The third insight concerning the Hereafter is that there will be unlimited progress therein, as God Almighty has said:

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَىٰ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَ بَأْيَمَانِهِمْ
 يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا نُورَنَا وَ اغْفِرْ لَنَا إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ²⁰³

That is, the light of the believers will run before them and on their right hands. They will supplicate:

203. Those who have believed with him. Their light will run before them and on their right hands. They will say, 'Our Lord, perfect our light for us and forgive us; surely You have power over all things.' (The Holy Quran, at-Tahrim 66:9)

Lord, perfect our light for us and cover us with Thy grace, surely Thou hast power over all things. Their supplication that their light may be perfected is an indication of limitless progress. It means that when they have arrived at one stage of illumination, they will perceive a higher stage ahead of them and viewing it they will consider the stage in which they are as being inferior and will supplicate for the attainment of the higher stage, and when they arrive at that stage they will perceive a still higher third stage ahead of them and they will supplicate for its achievement. Thus their yearning for constant progress is indicated by the expression: Do Thou perfect our light. In short, this chain of progress will continue indefinitely. There will be no falling away, nor will they be expelled from heaven, but will daily advance further forward.

It may be asked that as they will have entered heaven and all their sins would have been forgiven then what further need would there be for supplicating for forgiveness: The answer is that the true meaning of *maghfirat* (seeking forgiveness), is to suppress and cover up an imperfect or defective condition. Thus the dwellers of heaven will seek the attainment of perfection and their complete absorption in light. Observing a higher condition they will consider their condition defective and would desire its suppression,

and then observing a still higher condition they would desire that their lower condition should be covered up and thus they will continuously seek unlimited *maghfirat*. This seeking of *maghfirat* or *istighfār* is sometimes made the basis of adverse criticism of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. I trust that now it will have become clear that the desire for *maghfirat* is a matter of pride for man. He who is born of woman and does not make *istighfār* his habit, is a worm and not man, he is blind and not seeing, he is unclean and not pure.

In short, according to the Holy Quran, hell and heaven are both reflections of a man's life, and are not something new that comes from outside. It is true that in the Hereafter they will be manifested physically, but they will be reflections of the spiritual conditions of man in this life. We do not conceive of heaven as containing material trees, nor of hell as full of brimstone and sulphur. According to Islamic teachings heaven and hell are the reflections of the actions that a person carries out in this world.

THIRD QUESTION

The Object of Man's Life and the Means of its Attainment

The answer to this question is that different people, being short-sighted and lacking high resolve, appoint different purposes for their lives and limit themselves to worldly goals and ambitions. But the purpose that God Almighty has appointed for man in His Holy Word is as follows:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ۚ

That is, I have created jinn and men so that they may know Me and worship Me. Thus the true purpose of man's life is the worship of God, His understanding and complete devotion to Him.

It is obvious that man is not in a position to appoint the purpose of his own life, for he does not come into the world of his own accord, nor will he depart therefrom of his own will. He is a creature and the One Who created him and invested him with better and higher faculties than those of all other animals, has also

204. And I have not created the Jinn and the men but that they may worship Me. (The Holy Quran, adh-Dhāriyāt 51:57)

appointed a purpose for his life. Whether anyone penetrates to it or not, the purpose of man's creation without a doubt is the worship and the understanding of God and complete devotion to Him. At another place God Almighty has said in the Holy Quran:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ²⁰⁵
فَظَرَّتْ اللَّهُ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ²⁰⁶

That is, the religion which provides true understanding of God and prescribes His true worship is Islam. Islam is inherent in man's nature and man has been created in accord with Islam. That is the everlasting faith. This means that God has desired that man should devote himself to His worship and obedience and love with all his faculties. That is why He has bestowed on man all the faculties that are appropriate for Islam.

These verses have very wide meaning, a part of which we have set out in the third part of the answer to the first question. Here we wish to state briefly that the true purpose of the internal and external limbs and faculties that have been bestowed on man is the understanding of God and His worship and His love. That is why, despite occupying himself with diverse

205. Surely, the *true* religion with Allāh is Islām (complete submission). (The Holy Quran, Āl-e-‘Imrān 3:20)

206. Follow the nature made by Allāh— the nature in which He has created mankind.....That is the right religion. (The Holy Quran, ar-Rūm 30:31)

projects in this life, man does not find his true welfare except in God. Having had great wealth, having held high office, having become a great merchant, having ruled a great kingdom, having been known as a great philosopher, in the end he departs from all these involvements with great regret. His heart constantly rebukes him on his total preoccupation with worldly affairs and his conscience never approves his cunning and deceit and illicit activities. An intelligent person can appreciate this problem in this way also, that the purpose of everything is to be determined by its highest performance beyond which its faculties cannot operate. For instance, the highest function of a bullock is ploughing or irrigation or transportation. Its faculties are not adapted to anything else. Therefore, the purpose of a bullock's life are just these three things. It has no power to do anything else. But when we look into the faculties of man and try to discover what is their highest reach, we find that he seeks after God, the Exalted. He desires to become so devoted to God that he should keep nothing as his own and all that is his should become God's. He shares with the other animals his natural urge towards eating, sleeping etc. In industry some animals are far ahead of him. Indeed the bees extracting the essence of different types of flowers produce such excellent honey that man has not yet

been able to match them. It is obvious, therefore, that the highest reach of man's faculties is to meet God, the Exalted. Thus the true purpose of his life is that the window of his heart should open towards God.

Means of the Attainment of Man's Purpose

It may be asked how can this purpose be achieved and through what means can a person find God? The very *first* means of achieving this goal is to recognize God Almighty correctly and to believe in the True God. For if the very first step is not right, for instance, if a person believes in a bird, or an animal, or in the elements, or in the issue of a human being, as god, there can be no hope of his treading along the straight path in his further progress towards God. The True God helps His seekers, but how can a dead god help the dead? In this context God the Glorious has set forth an excellent illustration:

لَهُ دَعْوَةُ الْحَقِّ وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُونَ لَهُمْ
بِشَيْءٍ إِلَّا كِبَاسٌ كَفِّهِ إِلَى الْمَاءِ يَبْتَلِعُ فَأَهُوَ بِأَلْعِهِ وَمَا
دُعَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ 207

207. Unto Him is the true prayer. And those on whom they call beside Him answer them not at all, except as he *is answered* who stretches forth his two

That is, unto Him alone is the true prayer, as He has the power to do all things. Those on whom they call beside Him, do not respond to them at all. Their case is like that of one who stretches forth his hand towards water that it may reach his mouth, but it reaches it not. The prayers of those who are unaware of the True God are but a delusion.

The *second* means is to be informed of the perfect beauty of God Almighty; for the heart is naturally drawn to beauty, the observation of which generates love in the heart. God's beauty is His Unity and His Greatness and His Majesty and His other attributes, as the Holy Quran has said:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ۝ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ۝ لَمْ يَلِدْ ۝ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ۝ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ
كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ۝²⁰⁸

That is, God is One in His being and His attributes and His glory. He has no partner. All are dependent upon Him. He bestows life on every particle. He is the source of grace for everything and is not in need of grace from any. He is neither a son nor a father for He

hands toward water that it may reach his mouth, but it reaches it not. And the prayer of the disbelievers is but a thing wasted. (The Holy Quran, ar-Ra'd 13:15)

208. Say, 'He is Allāh, the One; 'Allāh, the Independent and Besought of all. 'He begets not, nor is He begotten; 'And there is none like unto Him.' (The Holy Quran, al-Ikhlaṣ 112:2-5)

has no equal and no one is like unto Him. The Quran repeatedly draws attention to God's greatness and grandeur and thus impresses upon the minds of men that only such a God can be the desired objective of the heart, and not any dead or weak or pitiless or powerless being.

The *third* means of approach to God is knowledge of His beneficence; for beauty and beneficence are the two incentives of love. The beneficent attributes of God are summed up in Surah Fāṭīḥah as follows:

أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝
 مَلِكٌ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ۝ 209

That is, to say God creates His servants from nothing, out of perfect Beneficence and His Providence is available to them all the time. He is the support of everything and every type of His beneficence has been manifested for His creatures. His benevolence is without limit as it is said:

وَإِنْ تَعَدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ لَا تَحْصُوهَا ۗ 210

That is, if you try to count the bounties of Allah you would not be able to number them.

209. All praise belongs to Allāh, Lord of all the worlds, The Gracious, the Merciful, Master of the Day of Judgment. (The Holy Quran, al-Fāṭīḥah 1:2-4)

210. And if you *try* to count the favours of Allāh, you will not be able to number them. (The Holy Quran, Ibrāhīm 14:35)

The **fourth** means of achieving the true purpose of life appointed by God Almighty is supplication, as He has said:

ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ²¹¹

That is, call on Me, I shall respond to you. We are repeatedly urged to supplicate so that we should find God, not through our power but through God's power.

The **fifth** means of achieving the purpose of life appointed by God Almighty, is striving in His cause; that is to say, we should seek God by spending our wealth in His cause, and by employing all our faculties in furthering His cause, and by laying down our lives in His cause and by employing our reason in His cause; as it is said:

جَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ²¹²

وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ²¹³

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا²¹⁴

Strive in His way with your wealth and your lives

211. Pray unto Me; I will answer your *prayer*. (The Holy Quran, al-Mu'min 40:61)

212. Strive with your property and your persons in the cause of Allāh. That is better for you, if only you knew. (The Holy Quran, at-Taubah 9:41)

213. And spend out of what We have provided for them; (The Holy Quran, al-Baqarah 2:4)

214. And *as for* those who strive in Our path—We will surely guide them in Our ways. (The Holy Quran, al-'Ankabūt 29:70)

and with all your faculties; and: Whatever We have bestowed upon you of intelligence and knowledge and understanding and art, employ it in Our cause. We surely guide along Our ways those who strive after Us.

The *sixth* means of achieving this purpose has been described as steadfastness, meaning that a seeker should not get tired or disheartened and should not be afraid of being tried, as God has said:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا
تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ ۝ نَحْنُ
أَوْلِيَاكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ ۚ

That is, upon those who affirm: God is our Lord, and turn away from false gods and are steadfast, that is to say, remain firm under trials and calamities, descend angels, reassuring them: Fear not nor grieve, and be filled with happiness; and rejoice that you have inherited the joy that you had been promised. We are your friends in this life and in the Hereafter. These verses indicate that steadfastness wins the pleasure of God Almighty. It is true, as has been said, that steadfastness is more than a miracle. The perfection of steadfastness is that when one is encircled by calamities and life and honour and

215. *As for* those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah,' and then remain steadfast, the angels descend on them, *saying*: 'Fear you not, nor grieve; and rejoice in the Garden that you were promised. 'We are your friends in this life and in the Hereafter. (The Holy Quran, Ḥā Mim as-Sajdah 41:31-32)