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# Death - Not an Illusion but a Reality

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## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to highlight that death is a reality and not a deception and the day of reckoning will surely come. The cycle of nature in its appearance and disappearance is in its constant work. Therefore, we should keep up our prayers. Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him states through the Holy Quran that we should not associate anyone else with Allah Subhanahu wa ta'ala and we should take guidelines from the Holy Quran and the Ahl Al-Bayt. Imam Ali (The brother and Son-In-Law of Prophet Mohammad) guides us to believe in Towheed (Oneness of Allah as per the teachings of Islam), Nabuwat (Prophethood) and be pious. He also guides us to take up our responsibilities seriously and not evade them. (These responsibilities might be of personnel, familial or societal in nature.)

*Keywords:* death, towheed, nabuwat, piety, asceticism.

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# Death - Not an Illusion but a Reality

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper aims to highlight that death is a reality and not a deception and the day of reckoning will surely come. The cycle of nature in its appearance and disappearance is in its constant work. Therefore, we should keep up our prayers. Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him states through the Holy Quran that we should not associate anyone else with Allah Subhanahu wa ta'ala and we should take guidelines from the Holy Quran and the Ahl Al-Bayt. Imam Ali (The brother and Son-In-Law of Prophet Mohammad) guides us to believe in Towheed (Oneness of Allah as per the teachings of Islam), Nabuwat (Prophethood) and be pious. He also guides us to take up our responsibilities seriously and not evade them. (These responsibilities might be of personnel, familial or societal in nature.)*

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### Abbreviations

- Subhanahu wa ta'ala - Which means "Glory to Him, the Exalted" is written in short form as (s.w.t)
- Alaihis Salam -Which means "peace be upon him" is written as (a.s.)
- Ajjallahu ta'ala Faraja'ous shareef – Which means "May the Almighty Allah hasten his reappearance and relief" is written as (a.t.f.s). It is a belief of Shiite followers that the twelfth Imam Al-Mehdi is in Occultation and therefore they are awaiting his reappearance.

## I. PROLOGUE

Glorify Allah Subhanahu wa ta'ala in the dawn and in the dusk as he has fashioned you to praise him and his bounties. The entire creation with the galaxies, sky, earth, sun, moon, including the dense forests, elevated mountains with steep flanks, silvery rivulets full of colourful fishes in them glorifies Allah Subhanahu wa ta'ala. Green meadows with deep valleys and at places cascades of waterfalls are the bounties of Allah Subhanahu wa ta'ala which glorify him and his creation. Unfathomable sea beds with beautiful coral reefs of different shades all are the bounties of Allah (s.w.t). He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He likes; there is no God but He, the Mighty, the Wise (The Holy Quran 3: 6)<sup>1</sup>. He created us from dust therefore we are mortals and his best creation. He has created mates for us from ourselves that you may find rest in them. He created among you love and empathy. Most surely you can see in these signs of him for people to reflect. (The Holy Quran 30: 21)<sup>2</sup>

He has bestowed on you the night and day so that you can pray and praise him. He shows you the lightning and downpour of rain in flashes surely all these are the signs of our almighty Allah Subhanahu wa ta'ala. He (s.w.t) commands us to keep up our prayer and do not be among the polytheist. We should never associate anyone with our Lord Almighty. Seek his mercy and in need call his name, the exalted the omnipotent and omniscient. Believe in prophethood and remember death is not a deception but a reality and this world is just a passing phase. This paper aims to evaluate and discuss about death as a reality.

## II. AN UNDING REMINISCENCE

The door opened and He (a.s.) came out of his home, he was of medium height and a very

handsome countenance with fair complexion and broad forehead, he was sixty-two years old with powerful shoulders and arms, strong and roughened hands because of the hard work he did. His (a.s) eyes were very big, black and piercing. (Jaffery 8)<sup>3</sup> Eyes in which knowledge was evident, eyes which would see with love towards needy, orphaned and poor people. He was unable to forget the scene which he just left behind, his casual goodbye to his children, their pure and radiant faces were engraved in his eyes. A wave of pain left his heart for the thought of the suffering which is about to befall on his off spring's.

He looked at the sky it was twilight. Still a long time to go for the first ray of sunlight to appear on the horizon of sky. He looked at the dark cloudy sky and said, 'Be my witness, Ali in his lifetime, has never risen after the day break (not once) and has never missed a Salat (Prayer)' he moved further in the courtyard his pet geese, whom he pampered a lot, came cackling towards him and took the hem of his garment into their mouths and said to him in their bird language, master do not go; master do not go... today... to the mosque. A tyrant is waiting for you with his poisonous sword. Ali smiled at his geese and said, 'I have to go it is destined'. When Ali was leaving his abode, observes S. Ockley in his famous work, *The History of the Saracens*, the household birds began making a great noise and when one of Ali's servants attempted to quieten them, Ali said, "Leave them alone, for their cries are only lamentations foreboding my death." (Lalljee 259-260)<sup>4</sup>

Ali (a.s) reached into the great mosque of Kufa, and called Adhan (the call to prayer) it was a pleasant morning of 19<sup>th</sup> Ramadan 40 A.H. He roused those who were sleeping in the mosque. Amongst them was Abdul Rehman ibn Muljim Muradi. He was lying on his face and had hidden under his garment his sword, the blade of which had been poisoned. Imam Ali told him to wake up and told him it was an unhealthy way of sleeping as it hinders free breathing. He further told him to do the work for which he was here. Then he took his place in the alcove after calling everyone for the morning prayer and started the service. (Hasan 174)<sup>5</sup> The worshippers came and stood

behind him in serried ranks, and the prayer began. Standing in the front row was Abdur Rahman and his accomplices. They were watching Imam Ali's movements. When Ali (a.s)'s forehead touched the ground for Sajda, Abdur Rahman Ibn Muljim struck the fatal blow at his forehead with such deadly force that it split open.

The members of the congregation realized what had happened, the prayer was disturbed. Blood was oozing from Ali's (a.s.) forehead. The wound which was bleeding profusely, was attended to and with his blood drenched lips He said 'Fuztu-be-Rabbil' Ka'ba" By the Lord of Holy Ka'ba I have succeeded. Oh Allah! I thank you for rewarding me with Martyrdom. How generous are you Lord and how kind, may your Mercy further lead me to the dominion of your grace and benevolence? (Jaffery, 69)<sup>6</sup> He with the help of his son's Hasan and Hussain completed his second Sajda.

Maula Ali had a high level of self-restraint. In this hour of suffering when Sasa-Ibn-Sohan caught Abdul Rehman and brought him in front of Maula Ali, he saw his (Abdur Rahman's) hands tied-up at his back so tightly that they were cutting in his flesh. He (Maula Ali) forgot that the culprit standing in front of him with his head bend was his assassin. He was the very person who gave him the fatal wound. All Maula Ali knew was a human was subjected to inhuman treatment and thus he said to loosen his ropes and give him some water.

When the assassin heard the kind, treatment meted to him by Maula Ali he began to weep. A smile played on Maula Ali's lips and he said it is too late now to regret. Was I a bad Imam (leader) or an unkind ruler? The culprit hung his head in shame. Maula Ali advised his son Hasan ibn Ali, and the people around that if he dies the culprit should be killed in a blow as he has given him one blow and harsh treatment should not be meted to him. Maula taught us through his kindness and mercy towards his assassin that we should be merciful and kind towards the people around us in all the life's situations.

Maula Ali(a.s.) was brought back to his home by his son's Hasan, Hussain and few close friends.

For two days Maula Ali was in great pain whenever he used to gain consciousness, he used to advice everyone around to remember about the reality of upcoming death and to tread on the path of righteousness. He entrusted the Imamato to Imam Hasan with the related advice and breathed his last on 21<sup>st</sup> Ramadan 40 A.H. His martyrdom and death brought anguish and heartache for his family which is quite natural. *To Allah (Almighty God) we belong, and to Him is our return.*” (Qur'an 2:156)<sup>7</sup> Whenever a Muslim hears any loss, it should be the motto of his/her life to recite this verse of Quran. It is the brief expression of what all Islam means. We are His, being His, our duty should be short of absolute submission to His will. We are returning to Him, which infers that we have preceded from Him and that we are in our march towards Him and He is our destination.

### III. THE FACT ABOUT DEATH

In Islam death is the termination of worldly life and the commencement of the afterlife. It is perceived as the departure of the spirit or soul from the body and its transfer from this world to the next world. There is immense beauty in what is unknown. Death is unknown hence it appears beautiful and to some fearsome. If we do good deeds and is sure of reward, we may feel that our return to our Lord Almighty Allah (s.w.t) is delayed, we will be looking forward to die. On the other hand, if we do misdeeds, we have the fear of disgrace with it's visit. Our fourth Imam Zainul Abedien (a.s.) prays to Lord Almighty Allah in sermon 40<sup>th</sup> of Sahifat e Kamilah, 'And fix Death before our eyes, permanently (as a fixture) and let not our remembrance of it be intermittent. And let our service consist of good actions, (Mohani 118)<sup>8</sup> He further says in his 11<sup>th</sup> prayer, 'And when our days of our existence are finished, and the duration of our lives comes to an end, and Thy summons—which is inevitable and the obedience to which is unavoidable—is served upon us' (Mohani 52)<sup>9</sup> then oh Lord bless the pious family of Prophet Mohammad and accept our repentance and do not detain us for our sins and guilt.

Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him states the command of Allah from the Chapter Al-Anam

of the Holy Quran (6: 163): “No associate (is there) for Him; and this I am commanded, I am the first of the Muslims (i.e., those who submit to God)<sup>10</sup> The highest goal of every man and woman should be love of God; the believe in Towheed (Oneness of God). All other loves like self-love, love of family, love of children, possessions, currency, supremacy everything will be obsolete one day. If all these loves are motivated towards the cause of God than there cannot be anything more wonderful, outstanding and purer. Islam means complete submission to the will of God. The Holy Prophet and the Holy Ahl al-Bayt perfected this love. There every word and deed was generated only for the Love of God. Whether it was Hazrat Ali (a.s.) in Mosque of Kufa or Hazrat Ibrahim (a.s.) who was thrown in Namrood's fire or Hazrat Esa (a.s.) who was crucified or Hazrat Yousuf (a.s.) who was thrown into prison because of his strength of character. They all did it with the love of God. Or the Martyr of Martyrs Hussain ibn Ali(a.s.) who sacrificed his home, his children and everything he possessed for the love of God. Therefore, it is essential for us to devote all our energies towards the love of God.

In Nahjul Balagha Imam Ali Ibn Abi Talib(a.s.) says, next to sincere faith in the unity of God (Towheed) and the a postle hood (Nabuwat) of the Holy Prophet we should strive for piety. 'He wants us to realise that piety is not a juicy morsel to be swallowed easily nor it is a dip in a river to clean all the dirt and filth from the body. Piety means actions and those actions in beginning may be sour, harsh and painful to perform. Piety means to free oneself from vicious desires and wicked deeds. This freedom cannot be obtained but by constant efforts and end eavours' (Jaffery 85)<sup>11</sup>

Few things are forbidden to us but many things are allowed, Allah (s.w.t) has not barred us from normal relaxations, ease and comfort and from sober and harmless pleasures and pursuits. According to Maula Ali(a.s.): 'Asceticism was a sin against self' (Jaffery 85)<sup>12</sup> History cites many instances where he admonished the persons who had given up their homes and families, had severed every connection with society, had taken to a mosque, and had been praying, fasting and

reciting the Holy Book morning, noon and night. He sent them back to their homes and told them that their duties lie among their fellow beings, and what they had taken to is not piety but fanatic asceticism which is not allowed in Islam.

In Surah Naziaat Allah is swearing upon the angels who violently pull out the souls of the wicked and by those who gently pull out the souls of the blessed. (Holy Quran 79:1-2)<sup>13</sup> In these Ayats Allah swears upon the angels that he has created numerous bounties for us. He (s.w.t) has created the heaven at a height and then he put it in a right good state. He made the night dark and brought out light out of it to form the day. He expanded the earth and brought forth from it water and pasturage. He made the beautiful serene mountains that are firm. He made these mountains a provision for you and your cattle. But never forget after giving so many bounties Allah (s.w.t) reminds you to remember his bounties and go on praying and performing your duties towards your lord in the way he has taught you. Do not be greedy because the day of reckoning will not be far away. And the one who is extravagant in spending the bounties of Allah (s.w.t) and prefers the life of the world then surely for him/her is the hell. And the person who fears his lord and stands in the presence of his Lord and forbids the soul from low desires and surely for him will be the garden as his abode.

When we see the life of Maula Ali Ibn Abi Talib on various occasions we find how viciously he followed Allah's commands. Jurjy Zaidan (George Gordon) a famous historian says 'None can praise Ali to the extent that he deserves. So many instances of his piety and fear of God are cited that one starts loving and venerating him' (Jaffery, 10)<sup>14</sup> Maula Ali always used to carry his household goods himself and if anyone offered him to help, he would politely refuse. He never had servants and he never allowed his slaves to work hard. He was always fair in his dealings never deceived, misled or betray anyone. His deeds carried an aura of nobility, wisdom, bravery and principles. Each aspect of his life carried a lesson for us. He never wasted his bounties. As his followers we should learn to be fair and self-reliant as him.

In this mortal world we will be tested by different things by our Lord Almighty. Some will be tested by bestowing numerous boons and some will be tried by taking away boons. We will be tested with money, life, children, poverty, prosperity and different situations. In all these situations we have to tread with righteousness, stability and patience. Thank Allah (s.w.t) in every situation. When we profess to love someone than we do everything as per their wishes. Allah (s.w.t) likes people who are righteous, pious and who follow the laws stated by lord. Therefore, we should try hard to be pious, righteous and to follow the laws stated by him. In Surah Al-Anbiya Allah says: "Every soul shall taste of death; We try you with evil and (with)good (by way of) a test; and unto Us shall ye (all) be returned. (The Holy Quran 21:35)<sup>15</sup> Every nafs or soul (self) It obviously means death or extinction of life is destined even for the non-human souls like spirits and angels. It is said that before the day of final judgement the whole Universe along with the angels and the spirits will be ordered by God to go out of existence and then again everything will be brought to exist for the Final Judgement. Men are tested in this world through afflictions and prosperity to prove the reactions from the individuals as regards being faithful to God or getting lost in dejection or enjoyment. In whatever position you place yourself in this petite world in your petite life you are sure to return to your Lord for your reckoning.

Hazrat Ali Ibn Abi Talib says at the end of 67<sup>th</sup> Sermon "I pity negligent and unmindful people, because on the Day of Reckoning the very happenings of their lives will act as proof against their ill intentions and evil deeds, and lead them to Hell." (Jaffery, 163)<sup>16</sup> Thus, we should remember not to be beguiled by the worldly life and its various distractions.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Nothing in this world has been a perpetual existence. The process of extinction and revival is a mysterious, purposeful working of nature. The creative process is, in its constant course and the cycle of appearance and disappearance of the things in this world is continuously at its work.

You will be brought back again to life on the resurrection day. In Surah Al-e-Imran it is stated that we can make connection with the dead. They rejoice in the Grace from God and (His) bounty and in fact, God suflereth not to be lost the reward of the Believers. (The Holy Quran 3:171)<sup>17</sup> This verse establishes beyond all doubts, the immortality of those who lay down their lives in the way of God. They are alive in a more real sense than the rest of mankind. They are gifted with waking consciousness and know what goes on in the world behind them. The souls of the departed ones somehow exist, and can communicate and be communicated with, by us and can establish their identity beyond all reasonable doubt. Therefore, we should do good deeds; deeds which have been shown to us by Allah (s.w.t) in his Holy book and through his Ahl Al-Bayt. So that when our deeds are shown to the Imam of our time, Al-Mehdi (a.j.t.f), our Ahl Al-Bayt (a.s.), our parents, elders and loved ones they souls should feel happy and it should not be vice-versa.

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