

The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

SUFFERING AND ADVERSITY

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The rabid cancer appeared unexpectedly as a harbinger of death and overtook rampantly without mercy. Someone who meant the world to me, whom I had always adored so deeply, was now painfully in the clutches of darkness. It was to make my dearest suffer almost uncontrollably, eating away at life with excruciating agony.

However, minutes turned to hours, unexpected weeks turned to months and many months just ebbed away in unrelenting pain.

Many undoubtedly would relate to my experiences all too well.

The question of suffering seems to be so deeply entrenched in the human psyche that even the most faithful were not exempt from feeling its torment, often bringing them to their knees.

002.214

"Or do you think that you shall enter the Garden (of bliss) without such (trials) as came to those who passed away before you? they encountered suffering and adversity, and were so shaken in spirit that even the Messenger and those of faith who were with him cried: "When will the help of God come?" Ah! Indeed, the help of God is (always) near!"

Any worthwhile attempt at reaching a coherent understanding would certainly have to penetrate deep, tugging at the very epicentre of our emotions, questioning the very purpose of our existence.

Why indeed were we created?

067.002

"The One Who created Death and Life, that He may test you, which of you is best in deed: and He is the Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving"

In a constant state of struggle, humans survive and evolve facing challenges so that their choices have meaning and purpose.

090.004

"Certainly We have created man into toil / struggle hardship (Arabic: kabad)"

Situations will no doubt be created to test our resolve, to enable us to make the best decisions or to bear with patience.

047.031

"And We shall try you until We make evident those who strive among you and persevere in patience; and We shall test your affairs"

Our health, children and wealth are only but a trial and not exempt as tools, manufacturing conditions to test our resolve.

008.028

"And know that your wealth and your children are but a trial; and that it is God with Whom lies your highest reward.

003.186

"Ye shall certainly be tried and tested in your wealth and in yourselves; and ye shall certainly hear much that will grieve you, from those who received the Book before you and from those who worship many gods. But if ye persevere patiently, and guard against evil, then that will be a determining factor in all affairs"

002.155

"And surely We will test you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere"

Indeed, many questions are pertinent here. Without ever tasting any adversity or any knowledge of what it may mean, would the feeling of respite and comfort become meaningless? Without misery, would joy and happiness lose meaning? How would one know how to truly appreciate happiness if they had never felt sadness?

How would any trial have purpose if there were no conditions in which one would be tested? How could we sense justice, feel at peace in altruism and nurture our soul in giving, if there was an absence of injustice, selfishness or helplessness?

Is this all a part of an evident reality, an evolutionary cycle through which the living evolve and in the process where our choices are judged?

If there was no choice, we would be naught but automatons. But with the gift of choice comes answerability. With answerability comes recompense. There is no other justifiable option.

We often lose sight of the finite nature of our temporal existence. After all, we have not only been presented on Earth for mere sport, but to be trialed.

Given the fine order of the Universe, our adversity juts out as an anomaly evident of the circumstances being fashioned to test our mettle.

075.036

"Does man think that he will be left aimless / in vain / uncontrolled (without a purpose) (**Arabic: Suda(n)**)?"

After all, these close relationships we uphold so dearly in this transient life, that seem so innate within us and fear so much to lose are only destined to cease.

They will have no bearing on the Day when we are raised where even a pregnant mother will be eager to drop her load (22:2), one will be prepared to ransom one's child, spouse, brother, kindred or one that even sheltered them, if it could but save one from any impending doom. (70.8-14).

Of course, this does not mean we lose focus of our responsibilities in this transient life, but we must also keep our lives in context of an inevitable future.

SUFFERING AND CALAMITY

Certainly, no calamity can occur without the will of God.

064:011

"No kind of disaster (**Arabic: Musibatin**) can occur, except by the permission of God: and if any one believes in God, He guides his heart: for God knows all things"

These disasters even befell the Prophet.

009:050-1

If good befalls you, it grieves them, and if disaster (**Arabic: Musibatun**) afflicts you, they say: Indeed we had taken care of our affair before; and they turn back and are glad. Say: "Nothing will happen to us except what God has decreed for us: He is our protector": and on God let the Believers put their trust.

006:065

"Say: He has the power that He should send on you a chastisement from above you or from beneath your feet, or that He should throw you into confusion, (making you) of different parties; and make some of you taste the fighting of others. See how We repeat the communications that they may understand"

Some of them will be clearly due to what we have earned.

004.078-79

"Wherever you are, death will find you out, even if ye are in towers built up strong and high!" If some good befalls them, they say, "This is from God"; but if evil, they say, "This is from thee" (O Prophet). Say: "All things are from God." But what has come to these people, that they fail to understand a single fact? "Whatever good, (O man!) happens to you, is from God; but whatever evil happens to you, is from thy (own) soul and We have sent thee as a messenger to (instruct) mankind. And enough is God for a witness"

Calamities will also not fall exclusively on the unrighteous, but also the righteous.

008:025

"And fear against a chastisement / trial which cannot afflict exclusively those of you who do wrong, and know that God is severe in punishment"

IN HARDSHIP, WE MUST PERSEVERE WITH PATIENCE

Luqman's advice to his son:

031:017

"O my son! keep up prayer and enjoin the good and forbid the evil, and bear patiently that which befalls you; surely these acts require courage"

011:010-11

"And if We make him taste a favour after distress has afflicted him, he will certainly say: The evils are gone away from me. Most surely he is exulting, boasting; Except those who are patient and do good, they shall have forgiveness and a great reward"

THROUGHOUT OUR TRIALS WE MUST CONTINUE TO REMEMBER GOD AND WE MUST NOT WORSHIP HIM ON A NARROW MARGIN

022.011

"And among mankind is he who worships God on the verge so that if good befalls him he is content with it, but if a trial befalls him, he falls away utterly. He loses both the world and the Hereafter. That is the sheer loss"

WITH EVERY DIFFICULTY, THERE WILL BE RELIEF

094.005

"So, indeed, with every difficulty, there is relief"

094.006

"Indeed, with every difficulty there is relief"

CAN WE EVEN BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND GOD'S WIDER SCHEME?

Could Prophet Moses ^(pbuh) ever understand the apparent mindless slaughter of a boy (18:74), or the wisdom behind a marred boat (18:71)?

But God's plan was firm (18:82). How could we ever begin to understand God's wisdom when our knowledge extends no further than our present?

Would it have been more comforting to learn the hypothetical slaughter of an Austrian born child in the late 19th century, if we had known that one day he would grow to become the leader of the National Socialist German Workers Party (a.k.a. Nazi Party)? Would that knowledge have changed the perception of the hypothetical slaughter of young Adolf?

Of course this does not suggest that the death of any child is explained by the above crude example. Indeed not. But we have no absolute capacity or any justifiable right to question God's purpose. Indeed, how could we even begin to, given our almost pathetic limitations?

"Suffering has been a great teacher, cultivating and culturing our conduct. It develops and refines sensibilities, teaches humility and in more than one way, prepares humans to be able to turn to God. It awakens the need for search and exploration and creates that necessity which is the mother of all inventions. Remove suffering as a causative factor in developing man's potential and the wheel of progress would turn back a hundred thousand times. Man may try his hand at altering the plan of things, but frustration would be all he will achieve. Thus, the question of apportioning blame for the existence of suffering upon the Creator should not arise. Suffering, to play its subtle creative role in the scheme of things, is indeed a blessing in disguise" [1]

002:177 (Part)

"...and those who are patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity and throughout all periods of panic / stress. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing"

FINAL THOUGHTS

As the last breaths of my loved one were drawn that day, I remember clearly clutching at the hands that had always held mine when I needed them most. As life ebbed away and then finally stopped, with tears in my eyes, maybe I finally came to realise through all that had transpired, the true meaning behind the statement,

"...Indeed! to God we belong and indeed to Him is our return" (2:156)

Related Articles:

- (1) [We will be Tested](#)
- (2) [Indeed to God We Belong and Indeed to Him is Our Return - 'inna-lillahi-wa'inna-ilayhi rajiun'](#)
- (3) [A Purpose to Creation - The Power of Truth](#)
- (4) [Understanding Our Trials - Why Me?](#)

REFERENCES

[1] AL ISLAM, Available at [online] http://www.alislam.org/library/books/revelation/part_2_section_6.html, [Accessed] 2nd February 2011

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