

PHYSICS AND METAPHYSICS OF ISLAMIC
ESCHATOLOGY IN THE LIGHT
OF SURAH-AL-RAHMAN

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ABSTRACT

After the doctrine of Oneness of Allah Almighty (Tawhid) and finality of Prophethood (Risalah) in Islamic philosophy, the creed of Eschatology (Aakhirah) has been the epitome of discussions like two other Abrahamic religions with their own realm and limitations. In the present era, with the advancement of knowledge, one may be able to understand realities associated with the Scripture rationally, which have historically been the conceptual dilemma from layman to intellectual approach. This paper is an attempt to explore various dimensions of thought among physics, metaphysics and Islamic religious domains that show the purpose of human journey towards ultimate destination and rationale behind it. In this study, a quantitative method has been employed regarding scientific approach while at some other places we have taken the support of qualitative technique for the metaphysical domain. In the light of Surah al-Rahman, this article encompasses only the major discussions regarding eschatology and the end of the universe. This study also finds some scientific and metaphysical stances concerning Lord's Omnipresence and His Might and Power. These are the mutually linked discourses showing a fact that how the whole system is being governed with good-looking hierarchy and a fine-tuned mechanism that ultimately invigorate and strengthen one's thought towards the Ultimate Reality. It may be called an Islamic philosophy regarding Absolute Reality to whom human nature is deeply concerned with.

The predictions concerning future events have been an interesting discussion in human history. In this article, the religious data regarding the ultimate end of the universal system, as well as some scientific and metaphysical investigations have been constructed to investigate the real purpose of life. This study has been divided into two main spheres along with religious Scripture, especially from Surah Al-Rahman.

The first part of the study is charged with the scientific aspects in which some advancement regarding a concept of the end of the universe like the second law of thermodynamics, entropy, Big Crunch and Cosmic Background Microwaves Radiations are the main topics of elaboration. The second part of the article incorporates metaphysical concerns in which the ends of universe and man have been mentioned in the light of philosophical and mystical data offered by different scholars, where Quranic Scripture, especially Surah Al-Rahman has also been discussed regarding *Barzakh*, heavenly bodies and human creation etc.

Some relevant discussions of Eschatology have also been excluded like data regarding the appearance of al-Dajjal (The Antichrist), Gog and Magog, the descent of Jesus (A.S) from heaven and even the last chapter of Surah regarding paradises and their descriptions are also out of the domain of the article.

What was unknown to humanity before is being exposed because of the development and advancement of knowledge. There are some elaborations scientifically and metaphysically regarding the eschatological domain, which are not so obvious apparently. But their existence cannot be denied either rationally or from the viewpoint of Scripture. To proceed further, we may visit the fundamental concept of eschatology from Islamic perspectives.

What is meant by Islamic Eschatology?

The word Eschatology has been taken from the Greek words 'eschos' meaning 'last' or 'end' and logos means 'study'. It is also called as (معاد) 'return' or 'place of return' like the word (مبدأ) is used for 'origin' or the 'place of origin'. Dr Jamal Sliba stated about eschatology that it is the study of the ultimate end of the system and it includes

the question of death, judgment, Paradise and Hell, also known as علم الآخرة or علم المعاد i.e. 'Resurrection'.¹

So, it is the study of the life of the Hereafter, the final destiny of the soul and humankind. Eschatology is the doctrine of the final and ultimate end of things, either the end of an individual life or the end of the world. It indicates the appearance of some events before the occurrence of Hour. Noticeably, after the concept of Oneness of Allah Almighty and finality of Prophethood, Resurrection is the central Islamic belief.

Surah Al-Rahman: An Eschatological Study

Observing eschatological data, anthropo-cosmic end will be discussed delimiting study to macrocosmic and microcosmic domains. There are scientific shreds of evidence that the universe had a beginning and is therefore finite. It is important to note that statement of Surah Al-Rahman, ﴿وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ﴾, that is: "And the Firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the Balance (of Justice)".²

In which to raise the heaven or the stability of the system is mentioned while in *Surah Al-Anbya* (21:104), the eschatological aspect of the universe is stated as:

﴿يَوْمَ نَطْوِي السَّمَاءَ كَطَيِّ السِّجِلِ لِلْكِتَابِ كَمَا بَدَأْنَا أَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ نُعِيدُهُ وَعِندَنَا عَلَيْهَا أِنَّا كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ﴾

The Day when We shall roll up the heaven as recorder rolleth up a written scroll. As We begin the first creation, We shall repeat it. (It is) promise (binding) upon us. Lo! We are to perform it.³

From these references, scientists may comparatively observe that the raising of heaven ﴿وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا﴾ as well as its rolling up ﴿نَطْوِي السَّمَاءَ﴾ in relation to the eschatological process of the universe. We may contemplate, how beautifully mentioned in the Holy Quran fourteen hundred years ago. Likewise due to the establishment of the balance Surah Al-Rahman (55:05) states: ﴿السَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ بِحُسْبَانٍ﴾, 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali translated: "The sun and moon follow courses (exactly) computed."⁴

It expresses the punctuality of the heavenly bodies and the Hadith quoted in Bukhari again communicates the eschatological trend from heavenly bodies as stated in the verse. Imam Bukhari transmitted:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ ، رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ قَالَ : السَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ مُكْوَرَانِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ .⁵

According to Dr Muhammad Tahir ul Qadri, it indicates the scientific eschatological data. The word *Mukawaran* (مُكْوَرَانِ), mentioned in the Hadith signifies three meanings. First, stars will collide with each other and overlap. Second, their light will be extinguished and thirdly, not only the sun and moon but all of the heavenly bodies would undergo a gravitational collapse. He further adds that we find an incredible similarity and congruity of the

modern knowledge of science with Holy Quran in respect of the catastrophic collapse of the universe.⁶ Surah Al-Rahman further narrates:

﴿كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ﴾

Every thing that is thereon will pass away. There remaineth but the countenance of thy Lord of Might and Glory.⁷

It is also argued scientifically regarding **Macrocosm** that unknown physical forces will cause the Big Crunch to stop the system at some unbelievable density, causing the Universe to ‘bounce’ back again into another cycle of expansion and contraction, followed by next, next and next, so on up to infinity as added by Sultan Bashir Mahmood. Regarding the concept of *Pulsating Universe*. However, this type of repetition is not acceptable by the Holy Quran. He further added that, according to Quranic Scripture, after the end of the universe, a new universe will be created, which will remain forever.⁸

The phenomenon of two easts and two wests has also been stated in the Surah Al-Rahman: ﴿رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ وَرَبُّ الْمَغْرِبَيْنِ﴾ i.e.” (He is) Lord of the two Easts and Lord of the two Wests”⁹

It can be noticed that the sun does not always rise and set in the same point, therefore, with the change of seasons we do not have one east and one west but relatively several points from which the sun rises and several places from which the sunsets. We may correlate the verse with Prophetic Saying.

Hadith of Prophet (Peace and mercy be upon him) regarding the major sign of the Hour and Resurrection also indicates the sun will change its course that is the rising of sun from its setting place,¹⁰ east will change with west and vice versa, the verse of two easts and two wests may also be read with the concept of eschatological sign stated in the Hadith ﴿طُلُوعُ الشَّمْسِ مِنْ مَغْرِبِهَا﴾.¹¹

In the case of the **Microcosmic** study, the chemical composition of the human body demonstrates the relation between man and clay. Plants are the major food resources of man, which shows the link between humans and clay. Dr Zaghoul El Najjar stated the percentage of different elements in the human body giving an important comparison of the sounding clay to that of decomposed body constituents. According to him, the process continued when soil mixed with water and then it becomes mud, where the water of mud dissolves the substances of the soil then a more special extract can be found in the unit of that clay. He proceeded with the following Quranic references.¹² By the process of vaporizing, we found the ‘sticky clay’ Quran states in the Surah Al-Safat (37:11):

﴿فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ أَهُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمْ مَنِ خَلَقْنَا مِنْ خَلْفَانَا إِنَّ خَلْقَنَا مِنْ طِينٍ لَازِبٍ﴾

“When Just ask their opinion: are they the most difficult to create, or the other being We have created out of sticky clay!”¹³ When this clay turned to dry gradually, it turns black and rotten as stated in Surah Al-Hijr (15:28), ﴿إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمِإٍ مَسْنُونٍ﴾, i.e., “Behold! Thy Lord said to the angels: ‘I am about to create man, from sounding clay from mud moulded into shape.’”¹⁴ That is ‘sounding clay of altered black smooth mud’ after that when dryness process increases it develops into ‘Sounding Clay’ or (صَلْصَالٍ). ﴿خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ كَالْفَخَّارِ﴾, i.e., “He created man from sounding clay like unto pottery.”¹⁵

For final human’s shape, God breathes into it His soul after that it has been named as the man (Adam), father of the whole humankind. After death, the question of the rebirth of the human body is stated by Dr Zaghoul where he quoted Holy Saying of the Holy Prophet (Peace and Mercy be upon Him) that on the Day of Judgment, Allah (SWT) will cause water to descend from the sky and people will sprout from their coccyx, like plants from their seeds. He added that “The body’s water content evaporates, and the body becomes part of the soil and merges with it, except for the coccyx that Allah (SWT) preserves with His mighty power until resurrection on the Day of Judgment.”¹⁶

This anthropo-cosmic discussion, Surah Al-Rahman also conveys eschatological view, especially the persecution of culprits in the Hell and the rewards and favours of the Paradise for God-fearing. There are some references in the Quran sketching the physical picture of the Paradise. Islamic Paradise has flowing streams, running spring, beautiful place for living, shading trees, pure drinks, the fruit of choice, beautiful sketch of reclining and sitting of people of Paradise on the exquisite rug and brocades. This presents the ultimate cause, objectives of human life and purposeful living in this world.

Islamic Eschatology: A Scientific Approach

Scientifically, the subject of rolling up of the universe (معاد) may be dealt with the concepts from the following areas of discussion.

Second law of Thermodynamics (Entropy)

The second law of thermodynamics deals with the natural direction of energy processes. This law expresses the amount of energy for useful work decrease with time in any closed physical system. In other words, it can also be stated that the entropy or disorder of the system increases with the passage of time. The extended statement of the second law of thermodynamics states that in a closed system when changes take place, entropy increases during

the processes known as irreversible¹⁷ or entropy of the system remains constant when processes is reversible. So, it shows that the entropy of system subject to increase.”¹⁸ That is the system of the universe instead of return back, will go ahead towards the end.

The Second Law of Thermodynamics projecting that the universe is running due to usable energy. It may also be stated as the scientific prediction of the ending of the universe. In other words, it is burning up and will eventually end with a cold death. The main implication of this is, as one physicist put as, *“The universe cannot have existed forever. Otherwise, it would have already reached its equilibrium end state an infinite time ago. Conclusion: The universe did not always exist.”*¹⁹ The second law of thermodynamics gives rise to scientific assumptions about the ultimate fortune of the universe.

From Big Bang to Big Crunch

It is the consensus of scientists about this cosmological theory regarding the origin of the universe. The theory of Big Bang states that there was a singularity at the beginning of the universe about 10 to 20 billion years ago. The universe came into existence by an explosion when time, space and energy all came together at a certain point in the state of extreme density and temperature. According to Sparke, Linda S. and John S. Gallagher:

There recession speed, as measured by the Doppler shift of a galaxy’s spectral lines, is larger for more distant galaxies. We can extrapolate this motion back into the past, to estimate when the Universe had its beginning in the Big Bang.²⁰

If, it is accepted that the universe was created by a Big Bang. Then, there must be a beginning, and as such the universe must be limited in time. This cruise, from starting to the end can be understood with the following discussions regarding expansion of the universe and the cosmic microwaves background radiation..

Expansion of the Universe: An Evidence of Universal End

The concept of expansion of the universe deduced by the Edwin Hubble during the observation of galaxies. He came to know that Milky Way composed of hundreds of billions of stars and their types of movement. According to Hubble, galaxies are moving away from the respective other galaxies and from us, and due to increase in their distance from us, the *‘Recessional Speed’* also increased.”²¹

This stated relation²² by him has *‘H’* as proportionality constant known as Hubble parameter having the dimensions of inverse time. Scientific estimate of the age of the universe is 15×10^{19} years by the Hubble law while due to uncertainty of the value of *‘H’*, the true age is said to be less than the deduced value of H^{-1} . So, the age of the

universe is 10×10^{19} to 19×10^{19} years which is an expression of the ultimate end of the universe. Edwin Hubble's discovery in 1929 of a phenomenon called "*red shift*," which postulates that space is expanding and the bodies are moving further away from each other in term of '*Doppler Effect*'.²³

On the basis of expansion, scientists predict that in future cosmologists may reach to the point that:

The galaxies rushing together as the universe "heats up" and galaxies come together, eventually reaching a single point a Big Crunch.²⁴

Stephen Hawking in '*A Brief History of Time*', regarding the creation of universe by God, especially non static conduct, indicates the beginning of the universe as, if the universe is expanding, which gives physical reasons of its beginning. It can be considered that the universe was created by God at the moment of the Big Bang or later... but it is pointless to believe that it was fashioned before the Big Bang. An expanding universe does not neglect the Creator.²⁵ Although the scientific findings are changed from time to time but these may provide a clue towards the religious concepts with fresh meaning up to some extents.

Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation: Microscopic affirmation of Universal End

The Cosmic Background Microwave Radiations are uniform in all directions and indicate the temperature for the current universe, it was first discovered in 1964. This radiation supplements the concept of Big Bang theory. Further implications of the microwave background were first described by Peebles (1965). The Cosmic Microwaves Background Radiation (*CMBR*) is often described as "*the afterglow of the Big Bang*". The frequency of the photons observed today is much less than their frequency at the time when they decoupled, that is photons have been redshifted by the expansion of the Universe. This is completely analogous to the '*Doppler Effect*'.²⁶

Photons from distant galaxies are all redshifted instead of violet shift. The further away from the galaxy the greater its '*red-shift*'.²⁷ This redshift is caused by the expansion of the universe which is also an evidence for a Big Bang. All galaxies are moving away from each other as a result of the Big Bang. It is mentioned by Stephen Hawking in '*A Brief History of Time*' that:

Roger Penrose and I showed that Einstein's general theory of relativity implied that the universe must have a beginning and, possibly, an end.²⁸

Religio-scientific view of Ted Peter indicates the link of creation and Creator, he added that the content of time zero ($t = 0$) in the Big Bang Theory, is an interpretation of '*creation*' and dependency of the universe on God.²⁹ Furthermore, William Craig also stated that the

Big Bang is a powerful statement that the universe has a Creator.³⁰ So, Second Law of Thermodynamics and Big Bang theory cancelled the view that universe has been existing and will exist forever, the concept which is far off from religious teaching.

Religio-Scientific Trend

Some trends have also been stated in the beginning of the article now we proceed with a few more religio-scientific modes as:

Barzakh may be stated as an important source for explaining the metaphysical realm of the life of the Hereafter. The physical aspect of the phenomenon is also obvious due to modern knowledge that has been exposed the barrier between the waters of two rivers flowing together, Shaykh Muhammad Matwalli al-Sha'rawi added as:

” نجد أن وسائل العلم الحديثة قد وصلت الى تصوير البرزخ بين البحرين، وبينت معنى لا يبيغان، بأن مياه بحر حين تدخل الى البحر الآخر عن طريق البرزخ، فانها تأخذ وقت دخولها خصائص البحر الذي تدخل فيه، فلا تبغي مياه بحر على مياه بحر آخر فتغيرها“³¹

Muhammad bin 'Umar al-Razi gave the comprehensive concept of Divine Omnipresence, His authority and control everywhere either in the sea or at the land. The eschatological aspect and its indication toward the earth ﴿كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ﴾, is easy to grasp and nearer to realize intellectually. He said about the verse ﴿وَلَهُ الْجَوَارِ﴾ as one may feel more consciously that his soul, body and luggage during the voyage stayed in the control of Lord at the surface of the water. A beautiful and symmetric discourse is given by al-Razi stating eschatological domains on the land (earth) as well as at the surface of the water (sea). He put as:

”ولا شك في أن كل من فيها إلى الفناء أقرب فكيف يمكنه إنكار كونه في ملك الله تعالى وهو لا يملك لنفسه في تلك الحالة نفعاً ولا ضرراً وقوله تعالى فَاِنَّ وَبَيْتِي وَجْهَ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ“³²

He further stated eschatological expressions of earth and sky simultaneously as:

”كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ إشارة إلى سكان الأرض ، قال بعد ذلك : فَإِذَا انشَقَّتِ السَّمَاءُ بيانا لحال سكان السماء.“³³

Shaykh al-Sha'rawi also stated the disintegration and rupture of heaven is the eschatological sign mentioned in the following verse:

﴿فَإِذَا انشَقَّتِ السَّمَاءُ فَكَانَتْ وَرْدَةً كَالدِّهَانِ﴾

And when the heaven splitteth asunder and becometh rosy like red hide.³⁴

In the light of this verse “*Cat's Eye Nebula*” has also been discussed which need a critical appraisal.³⁵ Furthermore, Tantavi divided Surah Al-Rahman into three main discourses and this verse

had been taken as the line of demarcation regarding wonders of eschatological knowledge.³⁶

Abu Bakar Kallabazi elaborating the verse 26 of Surah Al-Rahman added a catastrophic sketch when trumpet will be blown as:

“كل من عليها فان ويبقى وجه ربك: فهذا الوعد إنما يأتيها إذا نفخ في الصور فصعق من في السموات الآية فإذا انتشرت النجوم تفتطرت السماء وصعق من فيها.”³⁷

The evildoers will be recognized by the darkness of their faces stated by Surah Al-Rahman (55:41), Ali bin Nayf stated eschatological expression of wrongdoers and their suffering of anxiety and dismay with respect to this verse as:

”وتناولت السورة أهوال القيامة، فتحدثت عن حال الأشقياء المجرمين، وما يلاقونه من الفرع والشدائد في ذلك اليوم العصيب، يُعرف المجرمون بسيمائهم فيؤخذ بالتواصي والأقدام“.³⁸

We may observe another verse of Surah 55 in this regard:

﴿فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَا يُسْأَلُ عَنْ ذَنْبِهِ إِنْسٌ وَلَا جَانٌّ﴾

Shaykh al-Sha'rawi links verse 37 as condition and 39 as answer and then he counters the claim of orientalist that verse 39 runs against the other statements of Quran that *'they will be questioned'* for example as stated Surah Al-Safat (37:24): ﴿وَقَفُّهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ مَسْئُولُونَ﴾ i.e., “*And stop them, for they must be questioned.*”³⁹

He replied, this is the beauty and relish of the utterance of Arabic language that methodology of question subject to two reasons either to know ‘what is right’, when asked by student and when asked by teacher, it means to affirm and establish reality. He further said that one’s whole actions have been preserved and recorded by His angle no need to ask.⁴⁰

It may also be added that this Surah is the Surah mentioning several natural phenomena, which is itself an expression of that reality what it consists of? So, in this sense, man’s appearance will be self-explanatory regarding what has been done by him in this World of action and deed. Therefore, the Islamic philosophy of eschatology provides a piece of full-fledged information and guidance for human betterment.

The upshot of Scientific Sketch

It can be concluded from the scientific study of natural phenomena stated in the Surah Al-Rahman , that working force behind them can never be more than one because contemplating and gazing at anthropo-cosmic glimpse we may be able to know the unique and identical flow everywhere without any disruption. In a stable system, more than one, authorities may cause failure, especially where *entropy* is also involved. It may also be assumed as a ‘double

check' that the whole cosmic system either at the macroscopic level or at the level of atomic structure, is running with finely-tuned order, that is enough to accept satisfactorily the One Creator that is Ultimate Reality.

As time goes on, the mentioned things in the Scripture are being elaborated rationally. After the phase of basic understanding, it becomes very obvious that everything in the universe invites us to draw our attention towards the truth and reality, again and again, repeatedly, a lesson from the Surah, one may be able to get his mind opened towards Ultimate Reality. This study tells about the *Zero Defect Strategy* of the well-organized universal system and to take lesson from the various aspects of the nature and its hierarchy which reveals the signs of the supreme power Who created this system and evolving it towards its end is associated with His Control.

Besides, the stated topics regarding eschatology with respect to scientific stance the concept of the God particle or Higgs Boson which is known as the mass provider to the other sub-atomic particles like *Top Quark*, may also be reviewed about the end of the system.

Islamic Eschatology: A Metaphysical Approach

To know the subject metaphysically, we proceed in the light of different views of Islamic scholars and some verses of Surah Al-Rahman. For example, '*Barzakh*' is an intermediate reality and ontological realm that demarcates the metaphysical world from that of the physical world.

Surah Al-Rahman states: ﴿مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيَانِ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخٌ لَا يَبْغِيَانِ﴾ that is, "He has let free the two bodies of flowing water, meeting together: Between them is a Barrier which they do not transgress."⁴¹

This verse regarding '*Isthmus*' or '*Barzakh*' has also been the central theme of discussion for Islamic scholars in order to understand the eschatological aspects and link between this corporeal world and the world of the Hereafter. According to W C Chittick, "*It Shares corporeal shapes, form and numbers as well as immaterial world of spirit.*"⁴² He further added that '*Isthmus*' at microscopic level without the animal soul, the rational soul could not govern man's body. It is ontological nexus between spiritual and corporeal realities.⁴³

Sadar ud Din Sherazi also known as Mulla Sadra Summarized this discussion in a philosophical term as the soul is the 'junction of the two seas' as stated in of corporeal and spiritual thing.⁴⁴ Concerning the life of the Hereafter he said that, when the present shape of time and space will be wiped out which is responsible for spreading and

scattering of people, all of them will come together in the same place. In his philosophy, life in that world is not different from this world except in its substance, matter, existence, and time. However, apparently appearance of the objects will be the same as in this world.⁴⁵

According to Shah Wali Allah, the stage of grave concerned to the microcosmic i.e. subjective form of the Imaginal World, while Day of Judgment is the objective and real macrocosmic form. Like the subjective world of the dream, the day of resurrection will be observed as of objective and real character.⁴⁶

The process of man descending from the Lord and again his return to the Ultimate Reality that is towards the Creator, beautifully stated by Shah Wali Allah in which, pneuma (*nasmah*) that is the subtleties for the pure Intellect, processed towards the material form through imaginal world and Sublime Assembly (الملاء الاعلى). At an appointed time when he comes towards the material world in physical shape. After that, in the eschatology of Shah Wali Ullah one has to be returned again to the Lord, during the process in grave the pneuma (*nasmah*) again disintegrated, in order to get rid of improper habits and impurities due to wrong-doings in this world, which results to change its properties into “Universals.” He stated regarding the journey of man that one ascends by the same procedure, he had descended from, till he attains the same position. During that, he takes out the impure form, from himself and becomes the same pure intellect as he initially was at the very beginning.⁴⁷ Fuad S. Naem also expressed that the views of Mulla Sadra are similar to that of Shah Wali Allah as in his objective and subjective concept of Imaginal World.⁴⁸

Izutsu examination shows the phenomena of sheer denial behaviour of people of Makkah with their response. For example, the Surah Yasin states: ﴿مَنْ يُحْيِي الْعِظَامَ وَهِيَ رَمِيمٌ﴾, i.e. “Who will revive these bones when they have rotted away?”⁴⁹ And Surah Al-Anbya (21:05), also states: ﴿نَبَأَ قَالُوا أَضْغَاثُ أَخْلَامٍ بَلِ افْتَرَاهُ﴾, i.e. “Nay, say they, [these are but] muddled dreams; nay, he hath but invented it”⁵⁰

And repeatedly expressed in the Holy Quran أساطير الأولين⁵¹ are very obvious about the creed of the Hereafter. Although, the concept of rebirth had also been well-known notion in the poetry of ignorance time, but not a solid view regarding the eschatology. He commented on the situation of rebuttal by the people of that time in the words: “At bottom there is deep tone of nihilism here; nihilism coming from the keenest consciousness, that there can be nothing beyond the grave.”⁵²

The denial behaviour was so absorbed in their mind, they rejected it. It was necessary for them to get awareness of threats given by the Quran due to their refutation of the Hereafter as well as to tell them the realities of the reward and pleasure as the message of the last chapter of the Surah Al-Rahman.

Regarding the teaching of Quran about the Hereafter, Dr Fazal ur Rahman remarked that when the Hour 'الساعة' of the Hereafter will be taken place, everyone will become aware of deeds he will have done, rightly, wrongly or not done. He will face exactly his own doings and he will accept the judgment upon him as necessary result (sequel).⁵³ According to him verses 26 and 27 of Surah Al-Rahman are related to two themes. First that the universe contents, not the whole universe will be questioned of completely destroy but only transformation and rearrangement with a view of creating new form of life and new level of being. Secondly, both verses indicate the absolute and eternal Majesty of Allah Almighty.

He also criticized the Mutazilite theologian's theory of *quid pro quo* that is to give or take something against something else, where they set a limit the limitless mercy of God. He further declared: "Instead of accepting God's infinite mercy as real and as seriously modifying their *quid pro quo* theory of retribution, they did grave violence to religion in trying to get it and explain it away."⁵⁴ He also pointed out the concept of Divine Mercy what encompasses everything. Furthermore, one can imagine the beautiful picture of mercy given by the Surah Al-Rahman. According to Islamic philosophical views, Mercy of God is a significant theme regarding the soteriological matters.

The question, whether life exists after death and if exists then, what the characteristics that life has? Regarding this dilemma, Ibn Khaldun stated in *Muqaddimah* the tyrannical behaviour of kings. He narrated that they put the people into the drum of sesame oil for forty days, where they feed them with figs and nuts till flesh is gone and skull remains. They expose them to open air for drying, and ask them about the next happenings i.e. the life of the Hereafter. On the other hand, the kings used to behead and decapitate the prisoners so that they may be able to judge about the future occurrence i.e. to employ a metaphysical assessment they came to know that the utterance of a similar nature appears from them who were on the verge of death and about to be executed, at the instant when their heads were being cut and removed from their bodies. The information what they left during the death was unpleasant.⁵⁵

Sultan Bashir Mahmood on the subject of human development and its purposeful end stated that, "The stay of earthly life, is said to be a

*proof and evidence for eligibility of human existence in Paradise.*⁵⁶ Syed Hussain Nasr also remarked as, “*The return of man to God by way of knowledge and purification, which is reverse tendency of cosmic manifestation, conforms to the nature of things and entelechy that is the reality of existence.*”⁵⁷

The eschatological concept of Kant and his moral law⁵⁸ that ethical conscious informs us the clash of right and wrong, good and bad are active in this material world, justice demands the reward for goodness and punishment for bad actions, according to him, this ethical law cannot be executed in this world. So, the next world is necessary. Iqbal criticized the view and remarked that this concept creates disappointment about this world. In Iqbal’s eschatological vision, he declared the journey for the continuous evolution of ego and unbroken struggle to uplift its grades towards the destination of man.⁵⁹

The research analysis of Dr R.A Moody is also an important data regarding the similar questions about life of the Hereafter. The term “Near-Death Experience” (NDE) was also made up by Him.⁶⁰

This research may also be stated as a clue about the ongoing discussion, that something exists beyond, metaphysically, which is unable to perceive apparently. Surbhi Khanna and Bruce Greyson concluded: “*We hope that further investigation into NDEs (Near-Death Experience) may provide access to aspects of consciousness that have been to this date difficult to evaluate in scientific terms but that may illuminate ways of enhancing quality of life.*”⁶¹

We can scan from this discussion that it is being exposed by the research that the physical as well as metaphysical realities of God’s creations and one may incline rationally to accept the metaphysical realities informed by Holy Scriptures.

When the human soul get rid of side effects of materiality, it becomes able to return to God, the Creator of the man and cosmos. So, from these metaphysical approaches regarding human journey, from this world to the eternal life or from subjectivity to objectivity and eventually towards Allah is the final goal of man’s life, spiritual journey towards the nearness of Lord. Surah Al-Rahman beautiful narrates: ﴿وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ﴾ i.e. “*There remaineth but the countenance of thy Lord of Might and Glory.*”⁶²

It is stated by al-Nasafi quoting following Hadith and statement of Yahya bin Ma‘az:

”وروي أنه عليه السلام مر برجل وهو يصلي ويقول يا ذا الجلال والإكرام فقال: قد استجيب لك {فَبَآئِءٌ آلَاءُ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ} والنعمة في الفناء باعتبار أن المؤمنين به يصلون إلى النعيم السرمد. وقال يحيى بن معاذ: حبذا الموت فهو الذي يقرب الحبيب إلى الحبيب“⁶³

The everlasting favours may also be called as eschatological rewards. One of the most important objectives is to get nearness and closeness towards Ultimate Reality due to which death has been given praise and paid tribute.

The upshot of Metaphysical Sketch

This Surah has an expression of compassion regarding eschatological matters. No doubt His Mercy subdues the Wrath in order to bestow His favour upon humanity and to relief His devotee. His mercy can't be comprehended by man that protects him at every instant from very beginning to the destination where human's soul becomes satisfied with his Lord, where one may rationally feel content and peace. We should focus on our existence and His limitless Grace and Mercy.

One may become rationally satisfied with the sketch of metaphysical aspects of the Islamic doctrines (e.g. Oneness of Almighty Allah and the Hereafter otherwise it is just to throw oneself into *the cul-de-sac* to know inaccessible mysteries existing beyond the domains of intellectual faculties). Here, only the full-fledged guidance of Prophet is a real panacea in this regard. Metaphysical discussion of some topics of Surah indicates the expression of Oneness in the whole universe, for example, the ontological aspects of His mercy the manifestation of Divine Name al-Rahman, which may be stated as a cause for the existence of every existent.

Conclusion

The scientific and metaphysical pieces of information, concerning the doctrine of eschatology, has been studied in the various contextual domains. One's thought may incline towards the end of the system due to what is being exposed by the modern-day research in this regard. The Quran proclaimed centuries ago demanding the pious deeds in this life believing in the creed of reward and punishment in the life Hereafter. This investigation in the context of the 'end time study', looks like the compelling factor to believe in the Hereafter. After this worldly life, there are various causes, may become the root of the end for this universal system abruptly. Where very open invitation of universal behaviour for humanity to define one's way of life with the concept that they are being observed by their Lord and only His protection will save them from the hazardous effects of cosmic reactions and 'The Universal Shift'. No doubt, man's utmost needs in the life of the Hereafter may be saturated by Divine Mercy as well as Divine Nearness. It is an unwise and irrational approach passing the moments of worldly life, without His remembrance and obedience.

From this study, it is also obvious that this whole system is related to the service of mankind that is being served. Certainly, it shows the purpose and objectives of one's living before him. This constructs the lines of relations towards the cosmos and the Creator. One way for a source of recognition from natural phenomena and the other way towards the ultimate destination that is the gnosis (*ma'rifah*) of Allah Almighty. It is also concluded that advancement of knowledge gave rise to scientific assumptions about the end of the universe, ultimately the rational evidence of God's existence, either a purposeful expression of this world with the hierarchy of various systems or to believe in the life of the Hereafter a very beautiful continuity, where everything is being controlled and watched by the Creator. Thus, Islamic philosophical insight provides guidance towards eschatological matters, whom human nature is deeply concerned with.

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