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The Scenic Picture of Underworld Presented in *the Spanish Tragedy*: From Islamic Perspective

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The Scenic Picture of Underworld Presented in *the Spanish Tragedy*: From Islamic Perspective

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Abstract- The picture of underworld in *The Spanish Tragedy* (Act-1, scene-1) by Thomas Kyd may be encountered with Islamic view. In this text, this picture is extracted from Greek Mythology where the writer shows how after death a person has to toil to attain the Ferry to enter into the realm of Hades or underworld, then how a person faces a trial to get settled in eternal world, the terrible furies on way to the King's palace, the unbearable punishment of some miscreants etc. Al-Qur'an and Al-Hadith also provide the picture of a dying person and his reaction, the interior period to pass, the Final Day of Judgment, the process of trial and finally a person's last destination. This article is an attempt to compare and contrast between the pictures of the underworld stated in Al-Qur'an and Al Hadith and in the Text "The Spanish Tragedy –Act I – Scene I".

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I. INTRODUCTION

While dealing with the theme of revenge in the *Spanish Tragedy*, the author Thomas Kyd represents Revenge as a character. He sketches a vivid picture of underworld where we find how a soul faces his trial and witnesses a thousands of horrible scenes taking place there. Though Kyd never mentions these pictures of underworld with the motive of relating it to the main plot of story development, he refers to the underworld only to establish Revenge as an influential character to create an atmosphere of taking revenge. Whatever his motto might be, we can pick it up as a topic of comparative study.

Islam presents a clear conception about temporal as well as eternal life. In Al-Quran Allah says, 'What is the life of this world But amusement and play? But, surely, the Home in the Hereafter---that is Life indeed, if they but knew (29:64). Islam depicts a very vivid picture of life Hereafter in order to inspire human being to yearn for the best place for eternal living. The pictures of judgment, reward and punishment of invisible world provided in Al-Quran and the evidence experienced by the messenger of Allah(SWT) , Hazrat Muhammed (Sm) in the night of *miraj* (a miraculous journey to upper world) have similarities to some extent

and with some distinguishing differences as related in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* , Act-1, scene-1.

A believer's soul vehemently shapes an imaginary picture of life Hereafter moulded by his religious faith. Death, a natural phenomenon, embraces all-both believer or nonbeliever. Some view death as the total extinction of existence and some believe death never completely ends life. To a believer death, a bridge between mortal and eternal life, is considered to be the gateway of final destination –either heaven or hell created by only Lord. No matter by whatever attribution He is worshipped, the believers' souls always earnestly yearn for having His mercy with hope and fear. 'Call on your Lord humbly and secretly' (Al-Quran:7:55). Certainly the contemplation of death as the wages of sin and passage to another world is holy and religious, but the fear of it, as a tribute due unto nature, is weak. (Of-Death, Francis Bacon, p 64). Through the ages each religion sketches the picture of this invisible world in accordance of its respective ideology.

a) *Picture of Under World in The Spanish Tragedy Act - 1, Scene - I*

We see Andrea, a pagan and a great warrior is fighting in the battle field until he is charged, hurt and slain by Balthazar. As a result, he is to die with a full stop of his earthly life.

"Death's winter ripped the blossoms of my bliss,
Forcing divorce betwixt my love and me."

Then the soul, eternal substance, departs from his wanton flesh and starts journey towards eternal world. As he reaches the point of entrance, he is interrupted as he gets failed to show the passport, a document of entrance. According to Pagan Religion after death having a funeral festival and ritual ceremonies are mandatory for entering the regions of death. As stated in Text –

When I was slain, my soul descended straight
To pass the flowing stream of Acheron.
But Churlish Charon, only boatman there,
Said that my rites of burial not performed,
I might not sit amongst his passengers (18-22)

When Andrea's corpse gets a burial with funeral festival, the ferryman is satisfied. He is launching to the

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lower regions. The boatman, Charon, enables him to cross the foul waters of the hellish lake of Avernus, the entrance of under-world. Yet here he is to manage the guardian of the under-world Cerberus, the three headed dog.

According to the text

“There, pleasing Cerberus with honeyed speech, I passed the perils of the foremost porch.” (Line: 30-31)

Then, at a short distance he meets three judges, amidst of soul multitudes, named Minos, Aeacus and Rhadamanth. As he approaches to get a passport to obtain a position in everlasting world, Minos one of the judges took out an earthly record. Judges are different at their opinion. Aeacus suggests to send him in the area of dead lover whereas Rhadamanth pleads to send him to the regions of the souls of Warriors. Minos settles it by sending him to the court of Pluto, the king of the internal regions. In the terrifying eternal darkness he has to cross the way where he sees horrible sights impossible to tell.

He sees three roads in front of him. *Right hand* path leads into a field meant for the dead lovers and souls of dead warriors with demarcated territories. *The left hand* path slopes down into a gulf and reaches to the deepest corner of hell. He there witnesses blood thirsty Furies keep flourishing their steel whips. He also has the eye witness of punishment. Ixion is punished with unending labour of turning a wheel as he is condemned to win other's wife's love. Usurers are choked with melted gold in hell-fire. He also watches the punishment of women of loose morals being embraced by horrible snakes. The murderers get the painful unending wounds. The perjured weights *sealed* in boiling lead. The foul sins are punished with agonizing tortures.

“Twist these two ways I trod the middle path”. Andrea follows the middle path of green valley to reach *Elysium* with brass-wall and diamonds gate. Here resides Pluto with his queen Proserpine. Having heard everything the queen becomes sympathized with Andrea and allow him to go back again on earth to learn the consequence of his premature death so that his dissatisfied heart can be pacified.

This conception of underworld in *The Spanish Tragedy* is extracted from Greek Mythology. Ancient Greeks believed that an individual would enter the realm of Hades after death. ‘Generally the underworld is the realm of the dead, the destination of Human souls in the afterlife’ (online). Homer's *Odyssey* says that Death

‘is the way of mortals whenever one of them should die, for the tendons no longer hold flesh and bones together, but the strong might of blazing fire destroys these things as soon as the spirit has left the white bones, and the soul, having flown away like a dream, hovers about.’ (p.218-222, trans. Jeff Adams)

On earth they worship many gods and goddesses for fulfilling their expectations of their lives though they believe the unique, omnipotent and omniscient Almighty destines everybody's fate. From such a belief they want to satisfy all of the goddesses of air, land and water. Three judges would lead the final judgment upon which an individual would have to reside forever either in Elysium or Asphodel Fields or Tarturus.

The obtainer of Elysium and Asphodel Fields were treated as fortunate one where as the inhabitants of Tarturus were supposed to be undone and wretched forever. Elysium would offer place for those who were righteous, good and legendary heroes in worldly life. Asphodel Fields would denote the land of neutrality offering to get shelter for those who were either neutral or whose good and bad deeds are about equal. Tarturus, the deepest realm of Hades, would absorb those wicked performers in the world.

On the above description a vivid picture is sketched where we get an evidence how a pagan would meet underworld and difficulties those he would have to face there.

II. ISLAMIC VIEW

According to Muslim view both on earth and in underworld (hereafter) ‘*Ilah*’, Authority and Judge is unique and one. Muslim calls Him ‘Allah’ the Almighty. This unique Lord possesses diversity of qualities. Once He is soft (*Ar-Rahman & Ar-Rahim* - He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful) (Al-Quran:59 -22). On earthly life He manifests His such quality upon all creations specially for Human being until the death period comes. Again He is strong and strict (*Azabun Alim*). In after world He is so serious against the accused one. Allah says, ‘Great is the penalty they incur.’ (Al-Quran:2:7). In both of the cases He declares Himself *Ahkamul Hakimin* ‘He declares the Truth, He is the best of judges’ (Al-Quran:6:57) and as Mighty one *Azizul Hakim* ‘And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise’ – (Al-Quran:59:24).

Now, again Islam declares man's life in this world only for one time. Earthly life is short and Hereafter life refers eternal leaving no chance of renewal, no chance of return. Man will reside there in accordance of his worldly performance. ‘Ad-dunia mazratul Akhirat’ (Hadith). Only can increase and decrease his efforts through his worldly successors. In Islamic Myth (Ahmad, Musnadu Ahmed:18534-, Albani, Mishkat:1630, Mina1542.) there remains a Tree in ‘Baitul Mamur’ bearing the names of all human beings on its leaves. When death beckons one, the leaf becomes pale and falls from the tree. Azrail, the angel for death, appears before man. A good doer is congratulated and evil doer is threatened by the angel. When the soul of a good doer is taken away by this angel it gets less pain and becomes happy as he is going to meet his creator. Now they begin to hover over the sky until they are

interrupted by the guard of first stage of upper world. The soul is asked by his name and then is allowed to fly again and at one point it reaches to 'illiyin', the interior place for the good doers where they will observe the peace of Heaven (Jannah), till last judgment day. Now comes the question for the evil doer. At death the period the angel pains him and the person shrinks and trembles as he disobeys his Lord throughout his life. He will try to escape but will fail. The angel taking away the soul begins to fly to reach the upper world. But from enquiry when the guard comes to learn his name as bad doer will close down the gate. The soul falls down and reaches to *Sijjin*, the place for the evil doers to get the taste of Hell-Fire till final judgment day.

Here in both cases on earth after a funeral the dead body is engraved. Allah says, 'Then He causes Him to die, And puts him in his Grave (Al-Quran:80:21). Then the soul is infused in heart and is asked three questions by another angel about Creator, Messenger and Code of life. *Illiyin* welcomes who answers appropriately and *Sijjin* curses who fails to answer and offers sufferings. The period Staying at *Illiyin* and *sijjin* is known as the life of *Borjokh*. Allah says, '---Before them is a partition till the Day they are raised up (Al-Quran:23:100).

Now, according to Muslim View, *Qiyamah*, The Doomsday is obvious. One day the whole universe will perish but only Almighty will exist. Allah says, 'To Allah belongs the Mystery of the heavens and the earth. And the Decision of the Hour is as the twinkling of an eye, or even quicker: For Allah has power over all things (Al-Quran:16:77). This *Qiyamah* will happen in two phases. In first phase, the angel for destruction *Israfil* will blow the whistle and every creation except the angel himself and the crown bearer of Almighty will die within twinkling of an eye. There after everything will be perished and waiting for Final Judgment day. Then again trumpet will be sounded and ever body will get up as it were and rush towards judgment field. Allah Says, 'The Trumpet will (just) be sounded, when all that are in the heavens and on earth will swoon, except such as it will please Allah(to exempt). Then will a second one be sounded, when, behold, they will be standing and looking on!' (Al-Quran:39:68). Hazrat Abdullah Ibn Abbas picked up two words from the verses of Al-Qur'an of *Surah An-Nazi'at* as *RAJEFA* and *RADHEFA* which denotes First trumpet and Second trumpet as well. (Bukhari; Abu Abdullah, As - Sahih. Vol-12, page 530).

Thereafter with the direction of the Lord, the Almighty Allah, everybody will get up with their bodily figure. Allah says, 'The trumpet shall be sounded, when behold! From the sepulchers (men) will rush forth to their Lord!'(Al-Quran:). All of the souls will be in front of the trumpet of angel and as soon as it will be rung all of the souls will be inserted into their respective bodily figures. (Ibn Katheer, sura Al Qasaas)

It is the time when all will rush to the judgment place *Hashr* and face the final judgment. Here Allah (SWT) will be the unique judge *Maliki Eaomiddin*(Al-Qur'an:1:4). Each and every deed will be counted one by one by the Lord and everybody has to face his own trail. Then an individual will make his room either in *Jannah* (Heaven) or in *Jahannam* (Hell-Fire). In between the two places there remains another place named *Araf*, a place of neutrality. *Jannah* is prepared with all sorts of enjoyment for the good doers. Allah says, 'For Muslim men and women –For Believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast, for men and women who guard their chastity and for men and women who engage much in Allah's praise—for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward (Al-Qur'an:33:35) . *Jahannam* is a place for punishing the various miscreants. Allah says, 'The Day they will be dragged through the Fire on their faces, (they will hear:) "Taste you the touch of Hell!"(Al-Qur'an:54:48). *Araf* is an interior place for those whose good and bad deeds will be equal. Allah says, 'and on the Heights will be those who would know everyone by his marks: they will call out to the dwellers of paradise, "Peace on you."They will have hope [to enter it] (Al-Qur'an: 7:46)

The owners of *Jannah* and *Araf* get saved and is regarded as fortunate where as the dwellers of *Jahannam* are regarded as damned. Those whose *Mijan* regards equal of sin and betterment is the inhabitant of *Araf*, a place of neutrality from where they will be able to observe the punishment of Hell-Fire and the peace of Heaven and will earnestly pray to Almighty 'O Lord! Don't take us at Hell-Fire.'

The religious book of Muslim 'Al-Quran' reveals the punishment of Hell-Fire*. The Muslim also gains some evidence of symbol-punishment in unseen world through, the last Messenger of Allah, Hazrat Muhammad (SM) and from his Miracle visit known as '*Mai'raaj*'. He saw punishment being meted out to backbiters. When, during that night, the Messenger of Allah (SWT) saw people eating corpses, Jibreel informed him about them, saying, 'These are the ones that eat the flesh of people (i.e., backbiters) (*Al-Fath Arr-Rabbaanee*, by As-Saa'aate said, 'Al-Haafiz Ibn Katheer declared that its chain is authentic.'

He (SM) witnessed people being punished for wrongly eating the wealth of orphan. The Messenger of Allah (SWT) saw men with lips that were big like the lips of camels; in their hands were pieces of fire that were like stones. They would cast them into their mouths, and the pieces would then come out of their buttocks. Jibreel informed the Prophet (SM) about them, saying, 'these are ones who wrongfully eat the wealth of orphans.'

(*Seerah Ibn Hishaam*, chapter the story of *Al-Mai'raaj* – p.103.)

Regarding the punishment for those who eat from the proceeds of usury, the prophet (SM) passed by, during his night journey, a group of people whose stomachs were like houses, and inside of them were snakes. From the outside, their insides could be seen. Jibreel said to the Prophet (SM), 'these are the eaters of usury'. (Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 4/274)

Other narrations (Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudree) mentioned the punishment of fornicators, of people who refuse to pay *Zakaat*, of speakers who cause *Fitnah*, and of people who are negligent and carefree when it comes to being trustworthy. (*Tafseer At Tabaree*: 15/7, and *Al-Fath Ar-Rabbaanee*: 20/257)

He (SM) also saw a group of people who rejected the highest quality of meat and choose the rotten meat instead. Jibreel says, 'these are those men who were involved with others wives though they themselves had their wives' (*Seerah Ibn Hishaam*: p.104).

III. COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Allah (SWT) says, 'all are from the first man Adam' so it is by no means a matter of dispute if there exists similarities. Rather it's a blessing for humanity. In fact every religion regards having faith upon the existence of Almighty, the Supreme, is mandatory and fundamental of the essence of religion.

The Greeks believed on the Almighty as Supreme power and also believed fate is destined from this Supreme power. On the other hand the Christian believed in Trinity, yet all of them had a trust upon the Holly Father – Almighty. At the same time the Hindus called Almighty, the unique power as *Bhagaban*. With this unique ideology both Islam and Pagan religion get some similarities given below:

- i. Belief in after death is fundamental in both these religions. The Greeks calls *under world* whereas the Muslims says *after world*.
- ii. Souls of the dead are led to the underworld by others. We get Quranic reference as an individual angel named *Ajraiel(sm)* is assigned with this task . 'Say: "The Angel of Death ,Put in charge of you ,Will(duly)take your souls: Then shall you be brought back to your Lord." (Al-Quran:32:11)
- iii. In both of the religions good doers are appreciated, praised and are offered rewards for their good deeds.
- iv. The norms and ethical values are almost same as to differentiate between good and evil.
- v. In both of the religions judgment is operated based on the records of worldly life.
- vi. Almighty, Allah (SW), places Himself unbiased. At the same time Judges of Underworld of Pagan

religion also have established themselves as impartial.

- vii. In Islam from Quranic reference three dwelling places namely, *Jannat*, *Jahannam* and *Araf* , are ascertained for human being in after world. In Pagan religion there are also three demarcated dwelling places namely, *Elysium*, *Asphodel Field* and *Tarturus* in under world.
- viii. Both religion mention three categories information. In Greek underworld one will find three roads going towards different direction e.g. Right hand side road shows the way to Elysium, left hand side road ends into the depth of ocean and front road draws one towards the palace of the king of underworld. In Al-Quran we find people of right hand side as fortunate group, people of left hand side as wretched group and the front as progressive group.
- ix. The punishment are also same for some unpardonable crimes in both of the religions.
- x. Both religion offer a neutral place .In Al-Quran *Araf* is destined for those Who equally perform good and commit crime and finally will be blessed by Allah(SWT).
- xi. In both religion River plays an important role. Crossing river is a mandatory though in different time.
- xii. Heroes are celebrated in both religion and are congratulated with gift and reward from Almighty.
- xiii. Both religion locates hell under the deepest part of earth.
- xiv. The souls in underworld will not age or really change in any sense. The messenger of Allah says, 'No Heaven dweller will be aged. Everybody will be gifted with same young age.' (Al-Hadith).

All through these similarities we certainly can inscribe a shadow of picture of a unique God, Almighty, as the creator, cherisher, savior and the Lord of final judgment day. Yet in some cases Islam extremely differs with the Greek Religion that we can trace as follows:

1. In Greek Mythology we get a notice of having funeral festival as essential for the dead one as regards to the gateway for entering into eternal world. After completion of funeral festival by the relatives of the dead one, the soul will be capable to get into the board destined for under world. Here ferryman checks the authenticity of getting funeral and in case of failure the soul will get no place on board and will be deprived in getting place in under world leaving it only for roaming on earth as ghost.

On the other hand, the Muslim views funeral festival from different perspective. The Messenger of Allah Mohammad (SM) stated a Hadith- 'Seven right of your brother ----- . take participation in *Janaja* (funeral congregassion) and engrave the dead. Here, getting *Janaja* is determined as a right of Muslim from his other Muslim brothers and taking participation in

- Janaja Salah* is mandatory (*Fadr e kefaiah*) for the alive. Again, in this case the alive will be responsible incase of their failure to perform *Janaja* for the dead one. The soul of dead one cannot be barred to start his journey on way to after world. Rather Allah says, 'If you become dust or mingle with water or become change into water I will again create you and you have to face me'.
2. The Greeks face three judges under the supervision of the king of underworld. Normally these three judges deal the trail of all souls whereas the critical one is submitted to the Lord God Pluto. Sometimes he is influence by the queen Proserpine. On the contrary, the Muslim directly face the unique, unparallel, uninfluenced, unbiased Superpower Allah (SWT).
 3. In Greek mythology we get a notice of one phase judgment system. As soon as a soul enters into underworld, he has to face judges and a dwelling place is fixed and here he is to stay forever.

On the other hand, the Muslim believe in two phase judgment systems, eg. i. temporary ii. Final. Just after death and *Janaja* a soul gets place either in *Illin* or in *Sizzin* where this soul is to live temporarily till the end of the world. Then the day of final judgment will appear and all of the souls with their bodily figure will face the only judge Allah (SWT) and an eternal place will be fixed for all where all will remain forever.
 4. The Greeks believe that judgment is completed on a soul whereas the Muslim know that worldly body-figure with soul will appear before almighty.
 5. The Muslim trusts that the dwellers of *Jannah* and *Jahannam* will talk to each other. The inhabitant of *Jahannam* will regret and request the dwellers of *Jannah* to help them and long for a second chance to return on earth so that they can perform good deeds to ensure *Jannah* in after-life. Then the dwellers of *Jannah* will smile and will remind them of their past misbehavior and torture that they used to imply upon the dwellers of *Jannah*. What a revenge!
 6. According to Greek mythology Love and Valor is celebrated and these souls of celebrities are appreciated as well. If a lover sacrifices his life for obtaining the heart of his beloved will be rewarded as a warrior or a great fighter sacrifices his life for saving the honor of his country.
 7. In Greek myth the guardian of underworld is easily manageable and any eloquent soul can convince him to enter the invisible eternal world. 'charon will receive into his boat only the souls of those upon whose lips the passage money was placed when they died'(Hamilton, p.49). On the other hand, in Islam, the angels possess no power to be blackmailed by others. So, a soul by no means can pass even first sky unsystematically.
 8. The Greek believe reentering on earthly life is sometime possible. Legendary figure Thesus before his death visited Hades to help his friend. Harcules had endeavoured on underworld .Whereas a muslim spends no effort to visit eternal. No living being can go there and after death there is no return. Rather Almighty allows every dead to learn what is happening on earth with their influential consequences staying at eternal world.
 9. In Al-Quran it is noted that every person has to cross over the bridge which is known as Pulsirat to reach Jannah. Jahannam is located just as the same river over which the pulsirat is built. It is also mentioned that the speed of crossing the bridge will depend on collection of good deeds of each people and if good deeds ends up before crossing at once he will slip and will sink into the oblivion of eternal darkness to be burnt forever.
 10. Al-Quran declares trail for all creeds as Almighty claims Himself the creator of all. The Greek gods and goddesses have the concern for those who are regarded as their follower.
 11. Allah is worshipped by all Muslims humbly where as The Pagan satisfy their god by sacrifice only for avoiding their rages and furies.
 12. The followers of Al-Quran believe that one cannot return from invisible world though the myrters will long for return so that they can repeatedly sacrifice lives for satisfying Allah. The dwellers of Hell-fire also beg to return on earth so that they can gain some capital for obtaining mercy from Allah. But Allah clearly says they will reside there forever. On the other hand a pagan gets option to return on earth after being granted Elysium. It is a chance to be upgraded as a god because if anyone consecutively obtains Elysium for three times he will be included in god's world.

IV. CONCLUSION

At last one may note that invisible world is the fulfillment of earthly life. For establishing justice life in Hereafter is obvious. It also minimizes the sorrow of victims and build a satisfactory bridge between Haves and Have not as well. If an honest is deprived on earth, he will be rewarded in eternal life. Furthermore not to be misguided by Satan, inspiration is essential. Slipping nature of human being may be checked with the imagination of better future. Death is always beckoning and we are to decide.

Again taking decision to follow the order of a religion human being must have some criteria. The rules of religion which is smooth, closely attached to life, rational, reasonable and straightforward may prove wise to follow. From the above comparative study Islam represents more rational view upon the fact. To be guided by One is better than to be commanded by

many. One can easily satisfy one God but it is far more difficult to obtain recognition from many gods. About life and death Islam offers a straightforward guideline. Allah says, 'We have indeed made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember: Then is there any that will receive admonition? (Al-Qur'an:54:32). Also Al-Qur'an demands its completion and challenges other religions. Allah says, 'They are invited to the Book of Allah, To settle their dispute, But a party of them Turn back and decline (The arbitration)' (Al-Quran:3:23). So an appeal to rethink is recommended.

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