Chapter Seven
CHAPTER SEVEN

7. CONCLUSION

"The blessing of the Lord is the reward of the pious" Sirach 11:22

7.1 Introduction

On the basis of the analysis made, observations and findings drawn and illustrations provided in the body of the thesis, the concluding chapter presents an evaluation of the theme of suffering and salvation in the life of Job. It also aims to point out the significance and the need for faith, humility, patience and submission in a person’s life to surmount the adversities of life.

The mystery of suffering is a global problem. Human suffering is real and inescapable. The Book of Job sheds light on the suffering of Job and imparts partial knowledge about the suffering of the innocent.

7.2 Self Evaluation of the Study

A self evaluation of the Book of Job presented here is based on the findings and observations made through the analysis. An elaborate study is undertaken in the Book of Job to discover significant truths about suffering - the attitudes and moods, and responses of the sufferer in times of affliction. The study aims to explore and to discover the essential qualities required by an individual to overcome the tragedies in life and obtain salvation.
The Book of Job clearly distinguishes between human wisdom and divine wisdom. An attempt is made to learn about the source of wisdom. As part of wisdom literature, the Book of Job provides illumination on this subject.

The Book of Job towers in ethical excellence (Ch. 31). Observations are made to discover and state the moral truths to be emulated by both individuals and societies. With its epic proportions, the Book of Job deals with man, God and the universe. An attempt is made to get a new perspective of God’s nature from the story of Job. The Book of Job provides insights on psychological truths. The fears of Job are identified and analysed (Ch. 3:25 - 26).

Observations are made to procure a better understanding of the meaning and purpose of life from the life of Job. An attempt is undertaken to convey the message of the book to the global society.

The Book of Job has exerted great influence on many writers with its sublime and ageless theme of suffering. The Book of Job is a rich storehouse of wisdom and instruction for the future writers and research scholars.

7.3 *Hidden Pearls of Rare Price*

7.3.1 Truths about Suffering

1. Suffering is universal:

   “Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble” (Ch. 14:1).

2. Suffering is not exempted from any human being (Ch. 4:7 – 21),
(Ch. 15: 14 – 16). Pain must be borne. Satan in Paradise Lost retorts to Gabriel. “Lives there who loves his pain?”

Suffering will never cease from this world till the world ceases to be. C.S. Lewis agrees with this view for he comments in The Problem of Pain, “if tribulation is a necessary element in redemption, we must anticipate that it will never cease till God sees that world to be either redeemed or no further redeemable.”

Job did not understand that his tribulation was part of God’s plan.

3. Suffering is personal; in the life of Job his suffering was never shared by any one. He had to undergo physical and mental pain. His grief was immense.

4. Suffering is not always penal; Job’s three friends held the traditional retributive theory that sinners were afflicted. In the case of Job, his suffering was inflicted on him as a test of his character.

5. External force like Satan is also responsible for causing sorrow (Ch. 1 – 2).

6. Sufferings are part of life. Our bodies and minds are susceptible to suffering.

7. Suffering shatters self esteem and escalates to depression and rejection (Ch. 19:19).

8. Suffering does not last a lifetime (Ch. 42:10).

9. In the life of Job, he did not suffer through out his life. History abounds with examples of good people who had suffered till the end of life (Amy Carmichael is one among the millions).
10. In the lives of godly men, suffering leads to the revelation of God and self-discovery (Ch. 40:4).

11. Suffering is a disciplinary measure of God, to bring a soul from the pit (Ch. 3:27). Despite of his uprightness Job had a sense of pride in his righteousness. His speeches disclosed them. “Job needed to be brought to the end of himself, the end of self righteousness and self vindication”.

7.4 Job’s Reaction to Pain – the Lessons from the Hero of Faith

In the trial of his character, Job initially accepted pain with submission and adoration (Ch. 1:21) - a rare and remarkable reaction.

As James Martin remarks, “what matters most is not what happens to us in our journey through life, nor how well we understood what is happening to us at any given time. What matters most is our reaction to what happens”.

Reactions of sufferers might differ; some suffering individuals become victims of depression and gloom. Job was sad, angry, lonely and dejected, but he never cast away his confidence. He held fast to his righteousness (Ch. 27:7). He questioned God’s justice in his life for permitting such unbearable calamities in his life; but he never denied his faith in God. He clung to God in faith (Ch. 13:15).

The attitudes of Job changed due to the judgemental friends and their unkind criticism. Job the patient sufferer (Ch. 1:21) became an angry and defensive fighter for his innocence.
The reaction of the three friends to the suffering of Job depicts them as callous and inhuman. They behaved like judges and condemned Job as a hypocrite. They should be condemned as heartless and miserable. They brought no healing words to Job.

Elihu, the gentle young man, reacted like a brother mildly reminding him of his secret pride. Pity should be shown to sufferers. The young man spoke like an oracle of God and prepared Job for his healing and salvation.

7.5 The Uses of Suffering

Can a person suffering from cancer or any incurable disease find any benefit in suffering? Obviously, the answer will be in the negative; but there is a tremendous truth that God revealed Himself to Job in his pain. Neither his wife nor his friends brought him any consolation or relief; but in his agony, God’s presence brought (peace of mind) salvation that he was even oblivious of his pain. He was satisfied with the Creator’s concern for him. God reveals Himself to people in pain.

1. In affliction God’s presence is revealed.

2. In his adversity Job’s patience was perfected and he was listed as a hero of patience (James 5:11).

3. Suffering is a reminder of the vanity and the fleeting nature of life (Ch. 6:9).
4. Job’s faith was strengthened (Ch. 42:2). Faith is strengthened in grief.

5. Suffering leads to self-discovery and self-knowledge (Ch. 40:4 - 5). Job could entrust his life to the omnipotent God who cares for His creations.

6. Suffering helps to prove the real worth of a man.

As David F. Hinson rightly points out, “truly righteous people do not live righteously for the sake of rewards of wealth, family happiness, or health. They do so because of their relation with God, which continues in adversity as well as in prosperity.”5 (Job 1:21; 2:10). Job had silenced Satan, the accuser, by his undivided devotion to God.

7. Affliction provided an opportunity for Job to prove Satan that he served God for the love of God, and not for any benefit.

7.6 Job’s Pathway of Suffering and Job’s Attainment of Salvation

In his affliction, Job was preoccupied with self-vindication. His encounter with God exposed his ignorance and irreverent talk. Job committed himself to God, which caused him to triumph in his tragedy. Job had lost his dignity (Ch. 30:9 - 10). God had treated him like a friend and restored it (Ch. 38:3). Job had lost the fellowship of God; he could regain the happiness of his Creator’s favour (Ch. 42:4 - 5). Job was even equipped with a personal knowledge of God that he realized that his sufferings had been magnified. If
the friends had not visited him, Job’s reaction might have been a silent submission to his fate. In the awesome presence of God, he gave no importance to his sufferings. With the satisfaction of His presence, he confessed and submitted himself to the sovereign will of God.

Jane Grayshon, a suffering individual in wheelchair, expresses her total surrender to God. Like Job, this woman of faith finds consolation in her total surrender to God. “This was my conviction, my healing. To abandon myself completely into his hands, no matter what pain that caused in me, allowing Him to perform a deep and thorough healing. To follow him obediently - even to the furnace for him to purify me...”.

Job was appointed as an intercessor for his three unsympathetic friends, and Job’s former glory was restored to him when he prayed for them (Ch. 42:10).

7.7 Insights on Wisdom

Book of Job is part of the wisdom literature. In the words of Alton C. Capps, “wisdom literature concerns itself with everything. It has specific observations or precepts in matters of the administration of the law, the training of the family, the ordering of the household, industry and management, honesty, sobriety, public policy, friendship, the problem of suffering, the question of whether life is worthwhile and many other subjects.” As observed by Alton C. Capps wisdom literature deals with the observation of the wise men on life and other human activities. The Joban writer, a man of great erudition edified his readers with his immense knowledge of God and human behaviour.
In the beautiful hymn to wisdom, the poet probes into the source of wisdom. "Where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?" (Ch. 28:12).

True wisdom is not found in this world. Man does not know the value of wisdom. It is hidden from the eyes of all living creatures. The significant truth is that only God knows the way to wisdom and He is the source of wisdom (Ch. 28:23). It comes from His creative power (Ch. 28:25 - 27). The man who fears God will be gifted with practical wisdom to handle his affairs.

In the story of Job, the three friends misunderstood and misinterpreted the sufferings of Job without knowledge of God's perspectives and designs in Job's suffering. They lacked the knowledge to discern it. Job was endowed with human wisdom. He could clearly distinguish between the knowledge of God and all other knowledge. His awareness of the futility of human wisdom is remarkable (Ch. 12:2). His encounter with God furnished him with more personal knowledge of God (Ch. 42:2).

Wisdom is found only in the practice of true religion. This truly wise and genuinely religious man offers the sagacious suggestions to the seekers of wisdom. "... Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (Ch. 28:28).

A man, who fears the Lord, wisely acknowledges the divine rule in this universe and his activities are governed by this truth. Such a man is described as a wise man in the Book of Job.
7.8 The Ethics of Job

Job's ethical standards were high and noble. He vigilantly guarded himself against the desires of the flesh and the world. He never turned away from the way of justice and fair dealings (Ch. 31:1 - 6).

Job was always compassionate to the poor - the widows, the fatherless and the destitute (Ch. 31:16 - 20). Job never made gold his God but God was his gold.

He never worshipped the heavenly bodies (Ch. 31:24 - 27). In his oath of innocence, he solemnly asserted that he was not guilty of hypocrisy, cowardice or oppression of the poor (Ch. 31:28 - 31). By his innate goodness, Job kept himself pure in thought (Ch. 31:1), in speech (Ch. 31:30) and in action (Ch. 31:16 - 21).

The high and sublime moral principles of Job are highly commended by many Bible scholars. Robert. H. Pfeiffer comments, "the ethical standards presupposed by Job's oath of clearance in this chapter are nobler than those of the ten commandments and the other codes in Pentateuch, nay more spiritual even than the teachings of the prophets". 8

The basic truths of morality embedded in the Book of Job, if made relevant to the present society, the world will be a better place to dwell. The exemplary life of Job is a source of inspiration for godly living.
7.8 Adam and Job - A Comparison

After the fall, Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of the Lord (Gen. 3:8, 10) for shame and fear. Adam dreaded the encounter with God. While Job longed for a conference with God for his vindication. In the course of His divine discourses, Job attained self-knowledge about his insignificance and vile nature. In the awesome presence of God he acknowledged God’s sovereignty in the universe and his own life. His humility and faith in God geared the action of repentance, but Adam did not express his remorse or repentance. God chased Adam out of Eden for Eve’s lust for the forbidden fruit of knowledge (God’s wisdom) and punished him for sharing the evil desire of his wife to “be as gods”. Job’s fear of the Lord (wisdom) was his strength and he was duly rewarded with double portion of His blessings.

Job was the ideal man chosen from the whole of mankind to be certified by God as perfect and upright. In the words of Clearance Edward Macartney, “The pre-eminence of Job is that he was chosen by God to show to the world that there was at least one man who would serve God for nought”.9

Job won the confidence of God and He permitted the afflictions in the life of Job.

7.10 Job - The Man Who Gained God’s Confidence

Satan challenged God about Job’s integrity of character and about his devotion. God’s faith in Job was not lost as Job proved his steadfastness and won the case against Satan (Ch. 1:12, 2:6).
Job was commended by God. In their unkind censure of Job, the three friends argued that his suffering was penal. Job blamed them for misinterpreting God's ways (Ch. 13:7 - 8). God accepted Job's views and commended his speech (Ch. 42:7).

7.10.1 God and the Friends of Job

The three friends pretended to have a thorough knowledge of God. As Timothy J. Gorringe points out, "they have studied God as a subject to be analysed, predicted and understood". They failed to understand the designs of God in Job's adversity. They serve as a foil to Job's piety. In their attempt to justify God's actions, they merited His displeasure (Ch. 42:8).

Elihu the fourth friend gently reminded Job of God's greatness who is beyond human comprehension. He presented God to Job in his affliction, and instructed Job to accept his suffering and to give up strife against the Almighty. As a spokesman of God, he explained to Job of His freedom of action (Ch. 33:13).

As R. Ceresko observes, "implicit in this discussion as well is the question of theological language or god talk, that is, whether or not, it is possible in the last analysis for the human mind with human words and concepts explain God and God's actions. The Book of Job provides a clear negative to the question and in doing so affirms divine freedom and preserves the ultimate mystery that inevitably separates the transcendent Creator from mortal creatures".11
7.10.2 Job’s Plea for Vindication

Job pleaded for vindication of his innocence; God honoured his faithful servant by His appearance and vindicated his name (Ch. 42:7). Victims of injustice can plead to God for His justice and vindication.

7.11 Significant Traits of Job

Job was a perfect and an upright man. The fear of God was the guiding principle of his life (Ch. 1:1). Job was a family man and continually sanctified his family to preserve their holiness to avoid divine displeasure. His family enjoyed harmony and affection (Ch. 1:5). A good society needs a strong foundation, which is laid in close knit families. Broken homes and broken relations can only develop a weak community. Job is a good illustration of a responsible parent.

Job was portrayed as a prosperous man (Ch. 1:3). His prosperity was no hindrance to his purity but added lustre to his social life. He served the poor and needy with his substance (Ch. 29:1 – 7). The love of money is the root of evil but with money people can serve the poor and the downtrodden.

Job was a worthy man of authority among the men of the East; and enjoyed the worship and the honour of the people (Ch. 29:13 – 17). The glory of service is the pride and virtue of authority.
Job was a generous ruler. "I was eye to the blind and feet to the lame; I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not I searched out" (Ch. 29:15 - 16). Job's life was a sermon on generosity.

Job was a man of right priorities. He never made gold his God, but God was his gold and glory. In his affliction he thought that he had lost the precious relationship with his Creator. In his encounter with God, he was restored to God's fellowship and discovered his golden moment. Job was a man of patience and implicit faith in God. Inspite of his laments and complaints (Ch. 3) he clung to God in faith (Ch. 13:15). His magnificent victory in the trials of his life was accomplished by his heroic faith. Great struggles of life demand great faith.

In Milton's Paradise Regained Book Three, the Son of God answers the query of the Tempter (Satan) regarding the true glory of God. God seeks it from man and in his reference to Job sums up the greatness of Job's character in the following lines:

"This is true glory and renown, when God
Looking on the earth, with approbation marks.
The just man, and divulged him through heaven
To all his angels who with true applause
Recount his praises thus he did to Job
When to extend his fame through heaven and earth
As thou to thy reproach may'st well remember
He asked thee, 'hast thou seen my servant Job?
Famous he was in heaven on earth less known'."
Lovers of modernity appreciate and admire excellence in science, sports, music and other human activities. The book of Job holds an appeal to seekers of excellence in character in the world.

7.12 The Psychological Insights

In the path of suffering, pity and sympathy should he shown to the suffering individuals. The three friends came with the good intentions of comforting Job, but they lacked the skill to counsel him properly. Multiplicity of words in the form of armchair philosophy will not console the broken spirit and will impede true counselling. People in grief do not need lectures; silence can speak volumes of comfort. In the strife of tongues there is more agony and resentment.

Elihu was genuine and gentle. His kind approach to the sufferer was more appealing and instructive than the profuse verbiage of friends. The world stands in need of gentle Elihus who could liberate them from depression and lead them to God who is the source of all comfort and consolation.

7.12.1 The Fears of Job

Job had nurtured fears of the unknown (Ch. 3:25). This was part of his defeat and calamity. He harboured secret fears and anxious thoughts about the death of his children, loss of his wealth, health, mockery of his wife, desertion of friends and dereliction. This is a fine example of the disaster of negative thinking. It is food for all ages, and a lesson on positive thinking.
7.13 The Revelation of God to Job

Job was an innocent sufferer. As J.I. Anderson observes, "as an innocent sufferer, Job is the companion of God". 13

His deep devotion certainly endeared him to God that his plea for vindication of his innocence was honoured by God. Though Job never got any explanation for his suffering, he was satisfied with the thought that God was not against him. In his pain, he discovered the presence of God. Any suffering individual with a plea for His aid will experience His presence.

In His discourses, God revealed His omnipotence, His omniscience and dominion and concern for His creation.

Job attained knowledge of God and knowledge of his insignificance in the awesome presence of an Almighty God. He knew God as the source of all creation. As Jessie Penn Lewis remarks, "To Job the Lord is revealed as the great first cause, the central spring or pivot ... of all creation. The one who directs and moves all things from his throne". 14

Job acknowledged God’s sovereignty in nature and history. He understood that human minds could not comprehend God’s greatness. He had treated God as an equal but realizing his folly, he attained knowledge that God was his daysman and vindicator. God had the freedom to do his will; He gives no account of his plan. “Why does thou strive against him? For he giveth not account of any of his matters” (Ch. 33:13). The choice of obedience or disobedience was open to Job as much as it was to Adam. Job could have decried God as his wife ordered him. But he chose to exalt God by not blaming
him and continued his worship. His faith in immortality and resurrection is confirmed in (Ch. 19:25-26). “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”

God is also the source of wisdom (Ch. 28:23). Fear of the Lord is wisdom. Thus the Book of Job leads the reader to the heart of religion through the experience of Job.

7.14 *Book of Job and the Ministry of Intercession*

The study of the Book of Job furnishes us with moral truths and spiritual values. It teaches the significance of forgiveness and intercession. Job forgave his three friends with nobility of heart for Job had cognition of the rare virtue of forgiveness,

“the rarer action is.

In virtue than in vengeance”.

Job was restored to his former glory when he prayed for his friends (Ch. 42:10).

7.15 *Book Of Job - A Source Of Comfort And Solace*

The Book of Job serves as a source of comfort and consolation to the broken hearted. Job’s moral courage is exemplary and inspiring. Sympathy must be shown to the suffering individuals. The Book of Job is a universal book and it speaks to the aching hearts. The Book also insists on the need for
‘social support’ to be given to the distressed. Sidney Cobb has defined social support, “as information that leads some one to believe that he or she is cared for, loved or respected and part of a network of communication and mutual obligation”.16

Job lacked, 'social support'. The ailing humanity needs ‘social support’ from its fellow citizens.

7.15.1 Social Message of the Book

Job realized that he was not the only individual to experience the pang of unjust suffering (Ch. 24:2 - 11). Millions and millions of innocent sufferers are groaning from outside the city.

“Men groan from out of the city and the soul of the wounded crieth out” (Ch. 24:12).

The Book of Job appeals to the modern man to bring liberation to the victims of injustice, the groaning humanity. Suffering individuals like Joni Earekson have gained strength, comfort and inner healing by the reading of this book.

7.16 Book of Job - And the Meaning of Life

The Book of Job is considered to be a monument of theology. The endearing quality of moral good and the deformity of evil are portrayed adroitly with realism and clarity of expression.
The meaning of life is well brought out in Chapter 28, a hymn to wisdom. Job ponders on some of the ways of men. Man knows everything but the secret of living – which is to fear God and to shun evil. The man who finds a meaning in life follows the wise precepts handed down by God. As opposed to this, a fatalistic philosophy plunges man into negativism and tragedy as in the often quoted Shakespearean lines:

“As flies to wanton boys
Are we to Gods”. 17

Human beings believe that their actions can transform God’s acts; or they imagine like Job that God would explain His actions; unfortunately the modern man has no need for God. He is his own God.

As Peter Kreeft explains, “to the typically modern mind the secular mind, life as a whole is meaningless... though the parts may be meaningful. For the secular mind discounts supernatural meaning.... God-made meanings, and is left only with man-made meanings.... For man-made meanings are the meanings we put into the things we do or invent.... If there is a meaning to our very lives, and our very selves, it must be there by nature not by art, ... it must be divine art, not human art, God-made, not man-made. The meaning of life therefore requires a God”. 18

What is the meaning of life? Man’s relationship with God provides a meaning to life. This relationship was broken by Adam's act of disobedience but the individual who lives in harmony and a proper relationship with his Maker understands the meaning of life. For Job, God was all-important to him; there was a meaning in his life, and even a purpose in his suffering (Ch. 23:10). The nobility of the theme of suffering and grand moral truths embedded in this Book of Job make it endearing to its readers.
7.17 The Book of Job and its Tragic Emotions

The writer of the Book of Job presents us with a noble character of gentle piety. The story of Job evokes "pity and fear" in the minds of the reader. The intensity of his suffering arouses pity. According to Humphry House, "Pity and fear are derived from the self regarding instinct and pity springs from the feeling that a similar suffering might happen to ourselves...".\(^{19}\)

The study of the Book of Job arouses pity for Job, and fear for the individual; it purges the emotions of the reader and enriches, and empowers him with the better understanding of the meaning of life which is the heart of the matter of this book.

The Book of Job is a masterpiece of literary art. Thomas Carlyle has paid a great tribute to the greatness of the book. He remarks, "I call [it] apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written with pen.... It is our first... statement of ... man's destiny and God's ways with him here in this earth... grand in its sincerity, in its simplicity; in its epic, melody and repose of reconcilement... sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation; oldest choral melody as of the heart or mind - so soft and great; as the summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars! There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit".\(^{20}\)

The Book Job of has exerted influence on many thinkers and writers of different countries.
The Book of Job is a rich source of wisdom with its universal theme of suffering and its depiction of the triumph of faith.

On the basis of the present study, it can be stated that the future research scholar can find it a rich storehouse of profound truths and look into the following areas of writing.

1. The suffering of innocent sufferers - Cordelia, St. Joan.
2. The suffering of King Lear or Samson Agonistes.
4. The Book of Job as wisdom literature.
5. Prometheus Bound and Job - a study in comparison
6. The Book of Job and Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress.
7. The Book of Job as literature.
8. The study of Harichandra and the Book of Job and the concept of suffering.
13. The Book of Job and the dialogue form.
14. The Book of Job as a dramatic poem.
It is therefore earnestly believed that there is enormous scope for future research studies in the area of comparative study and it is believed that the investigation will enrich and enhance the research analysis.
REFERENCE

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2) Lewis, 114.


8) Pfeiffer, 691.

9) Macartney, 11.

10) Garringe, 25.


13) Anderson, 73.


16) Fedorko, 332.

17) Verity, 4.1.36.


20) Buttrick, 906.