Journal of Religion and Health (2019) 58:1770–1791
https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-019-00836-4

ORIGINAL PAPER

A Comparative Analysis on the Perspective of Sunni Theology and Hindu Tradition Regarding Euthanasia: The Impact of Belief in Resurrection and Reincarnation

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Published online: 24 May 2019

Abstract
The aim of this paper was to study the viewpoints of Sunni Islam and Hinduism on euthanasia to explore whether the Sunni tradition's belief in the hereafter and the Hindu culture's faith in reincarnation have any impact on these two religions' positions on the rejection or justification of euthanasia. Examining these two theologies' approaches demonstrated that Sunni Islam considers euthanasia suicide/homicide in light of the belief in the hereafter, whereas Hinduism can justify euthanasia through Gandhi's interpretation of ahimsa, on the condition that all methods to alleviate the patient's pain and suffering have been exhausted.

Keywords Euthanasia · Sunni Islam · Hinduism · Hereafter · Reincarnation

Introduction

End-of-life issues are essential ethical matters demanding religious attention as well. Furthermore, religious views on these issues have a remarkable influence on individuals, groups, and societies by shaping their ethical values, rules, and principles. Advances in public health and medicine have significantly increased the average lifespan in countries where these services are accessible to everyone. Even though this situation has provided people with longer lives, it has also led to an aging population suffering from incurable diseases. Due to the unbearable pain of some illnesses, suffering individuals have increasingly sought a painless death. Euthanasia, which is the injecting of lethal drugs into patients with incurable diseases in order to terminate their lives due to the unbearable pain they experience, is one of these means that gives such patients this opportunity.

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However, religious and cultural beliefs may either encourage or discourage patients to request a euthanasia-based solution. As two of the largest religions in the world, Islam creates a relationship between death and the belief in the hereafter, and Hinduism regards death as a segment of the rebirthing cycle. In this context, the aim of this paper is to examine the major ethical standpoints of Islam (through the Sunni tradition) and Hinduism on euthanasia to understand the impact of the belief in the hereafter and reincarnation.

Value of Human Life

Beginning-of-life and end-of-life issues are essential matters on which religious bioethics mostly focuses due to the importance religions attribute to human life.[1] Additionally, in general, different religions' death-related concerns are largely associated with their perception of the human beings and the value of human life. Therefore, instead of directly pointing out the two religions' stands regarding euthanasia, it would be beneficial to address their assessments concerning the relationship between human beings and the creator. In this sense, the Sunni and Hindu viewpoints about the value of human life will be examined to clarify the reasons why they allow or oppose euthanasia.

A "Trust" Given by God

The term "Islamic tradition" or "Islamic ethics" is an excessively broad concept. Without indicating denominations-based diversity, it would be difficult to make a thorough and accurate judgement about Islam-related matters. Abdullah Saeed classifies the Islamic schools into five categories, one of which is religio-political schools containing three major creeds: Sunnism, Shi'ism, and Kharijism.[2] While these schools share some commonalities, there are certain differences among them. Therefore, instead of making a generalization about Islamic bioethics, it would be more meaningful to concentrate on one school's unique position on ethical matters. For this reason, in this paper, euthanasia and the related subjects will be evaluated in light of the Sunni tradition, which is largely grounded in Ash'arite theology. This theology represents the traditionalist aspect of Islamic understanding and demonstrates an absolute compliance with the scriptural texts and does not attribute any merit to reason.[3] According to al-Ghazali who is an eleventh-century prominent jurist (Abu Hamid Muhammed ibn Muhammed al-Ghazali) born in Tus-Iran in

[1] Jonathan E. Brockopp, "Taking Life and Saving Life: The Islamic Context," in *Islamic Ethics of Life: Abortion, War, and Euthanasia*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 1.

[2] Abdullah Saeed, "Trends in Contemporary Islam: A Preliminary Attempt at a Classification," *the Muslim World* 97 (2007): 396.

[3] Abdulaziz Sachedina, "Islamic Ethics: Differentiations," in *the Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*, ed. William Schweiker (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 258.

1058 and died in Tus-Iran in 1111, there are four substantive sources of Islamic law, which is also known as the *Shari'a*: the book of God, the *Qur'an*; the words and doings of the Prophet, the *Sunna*; the consensus of the Prophet's *ummah* on religious issues, the *ijma*; and the rational proof. However, the last source, the rational proof, merely indicates the lack of a divine law in a particular area, and can be applied only when the aforementioned three sources do not exhibit an obvious position on a matter at hand.[4]

The term *Shari'a* plays a prominent role in Islamic ethics. *Shari'a* is an Arabic-originated term that literally means "way," but in religious literature, it is used as a synonym for the *Islamic law* or *divine law* that regulates every dimension of human life.[5] For this reason, the ethical aspect of the Islamic theology cannot be studied without analyzing the Islamic law.[6] According to al-Ghazali, in regard to human beings, the *Shari'a* has five objectives: to protect individuals' religion, life, reason, lineage, and property. The punishment for distorting the religion, the acceptance of the retaliation (*qisas*), the prohibition of consuming alcohol, the penalty for adultery, and the severe punishment for theft aim to preserve the five essential values, respectively.[7]

The *Qur'an* often advises Muslims to obey God and the Prophet to reach salvation in this world and the hereafter; "… whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly attained a great attainment" (33:71).[8] Furthermore, the *Qur'an* defines life in the world as a test for the hereafter: "I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me" (51:56); "[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed" (67:2).[9] In regard to the relationship between God and human beings, the individual is regarded as an *abd* who obeys God as a servant.[10] Al-Ghazali says that to become a good servant to God, the human being must heed the following principles: to pay attention to the command of the *Shari'a*; to consent to the predestination and destiny both good and bad given by God; and instead

[4] Abu Ḥamid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazali, *el-Mustasfa mim Ilmi Usul*, trans. Yunus Apaydın (Kayseri: Rey Yayıncılık, 1994), 147.

Jonathan E. Brockopp, "Taking Life and Saving Life: The Islamic Context," in *Islamic Ethics of Life: Abortion, War, and Euthanasia*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 14.

Abu Ḥamid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazali, *O Son*, trans. Lutfu Dogan (Istanbul: Bedir Yayınları, 1969), 3, 6.

[5] Thomas Eich and Jonathan E. Brockopp, "Introduction: Medical Ethics and Muslim Perspective," in *Muslim Medical Ethics*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp and Thomas Eich (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 3.

[6] Ebrahim Moosa, "Muslim Ethics?" in *the Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*, ed. William Schweiker (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 239.

[7] Abu Ḥamid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazali, *el-Mustasfa mim Ilmi Usul*, trans. Yunus Apaydın (Kayseri: Rey Yayıncılık, 1994), 332–333.

[8] The Qur'an, (33:71), accessed September 28, 2016, https://quran.com/33.

[9] The Qur'an, (51:56), accessed September 28, 2016, https://quran.com/51.

The Qur'an, (67:2), accessed September 28, 2016, https://quran.com/67.

[10] Frederick Mathewson Denny, "Muslim Ethical Trajectories in the Contemporary Period," in *the Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*, ed. William Schweiker (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 270.

of looking for his/her own desire, to seek God's request in whatsoever the person does.[11]

As can be understood from al-Ghazali's approach, life is one of the most significant values that need to be preserved. If human life is precious by itself, then a conclusion may be drawn that regardless of believing in God, every human life deserves praise and protection. However, it might be argued that al-Ghazali's view about disbelievers makes it difficult to reach the deduction that every human life is sacred. Al-Ghazali deems it appropriate to kill infidels for the sake of preserving the religion.[12]

God's omnipotent quality is an essential component of the Sunni tradition determining it evaluation concerning the sanctity of human life. God created human beings and appointed them as the trustees of their bodies to protect the wellbeing and integrity of their bodies .[13] As trusted trustees, human beings must be aware of God's absolute authority over human life and take necessary measures to maintain the mental and physical wellbeing of their bodies.[14] This requirement is also essential to be able to observe daily religious practices.[15] For this reason, the Sunni theology recognizes the significance of the sanctity of life and the quality of life. However, the sanctity of life has a higher priority over the quality of life.[16] In short, the Sunni tradition accepts life as a "trust" and a fundamental value that needs to be preserved by human beings. Nevertheless, this value stems from God's role in the creation of human beings and God's power over life rather than the intrinsic value of life.

Idea of *Ahimsa*

When outlining the Islamic approach to human life, the diversity of denominations or schools in the Islamic tradition is highlighted. The situation in Hinduism is even more complex than the Islamic variety. Even though the Islamic tradition encompasses several classification-based differences, there are various commonalities, such as the understanding of God, the authority of the Holy Book and the Prophet,

[11] Abu Ḥamid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazali, *O Son*, trans. Lutfu Dogan (Istanbul: Bedir Yayınları, 1969), 24, 18.

[12] Abu Ḥamid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazali, *el-Mustasfa mim Ilmi Usul*, trans. Yunus Apaydın (Kayseri: Rey Yayıncılık, 1994), 333–343.

[13] Sherine Hamdy, "Rethinking Islamic Legal Ethics in Egyp's Organ Transplant Debate," in *Muslim Medical Ethics*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp and Thomas Eich (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 80–84.

[14] Shabbir M. H. Alibhai and Michael Gordon, "A Comparative Analysis of Islamic and Jewish End-of-Life Ethics: A Case-Based Approach," in *Muslim Medical Ethics*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp and Thomas Eich (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 184.

[15] Stef Van Den Brandan and Bert Broeckaert, "Medication and God at Interplay," in *Muslim Medical Ethics*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp and Thomas Eich (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 196.

[16] Sherine Hamdy, "Rethinking Islamic Legal Ethics in Egyp's Organ Transplant Debate," in *Muslim Medical Ethics*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp and Thomas Eich (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 85.

and the implementation of religious practices among all the Islamic schools.[17] However, in the case of studying Hinduism, the first question is whether it is possible to describe Hinduism as a religion and whether there is a Hindu bioethics. Deepak Sarma is one of the authors scrutinizing this issue. Sarma underscores the absence of a founder or a prophet, a scripture text, like *the Qur'an* in Islam, and a comprehensively accepted teaching in Hinduism and reaches the following conclusion:

> Hinduism has no shared texts or doctrines. It does not offer a systematic account the way that religions such as Catholicism does. If I were to offer readers the purportedly "Hindu" perspective on face transplants and the like, I would be misleading readers and I would be fostering a fabrication. There is, then, no "Hindu" bioethics.[18]

Will Sweetman examines the same matter through similar arguments and explains this controversy by defining Hinduism as an implicit religion.[19] As also Sweetman quoted, R. N. Dandekar says:

> Hinduism does not insist on any particular religious practice as being obligatory, nor does it accept any doctrine as its dogma. Hinduism can also not be identified with a specific moral code. Hinduism, as a religion, does not convey any definite or unitary idea. There is no dogma or practice which can be said to be either universal or essential to Hinduism as a whole. Indeed, those who call themselves Hindus may not necessarily have much in common as regards faith or worship. What is essential for one section of the Hindu community may not be necessarily so for another.[20]

In this view, it is not easy to generalize a specific concept representing the whole Hindu teaching. Of course, Hinduism has the belief in a god or gods, possesses scriptures, and observes religious rituals and practices. However, all these are very different from the aforementioned religions' beliefs and observances. Additionally, the Hindu faith involves some characteristics derived from the social structure, such as the caste system.[21] Due to the lack of classic religious icons, like an absolute holy book, a founder or prophet, as well as the wide diversity of Hinduism, it is possible to deem it a culture rather than a religion. Nevertheless, the issue of whether Hinduism is a religion or not results from delineating Hinduism through a similar

[17] Abdullah Saeed, "Trends in Contemporary Islam: A Preliminary Attempt at a Classification," *the Muslim World* 97 (2007): 396.
Jonathan E. Brockopp, "Taking Life and Saving Life: The Islamic Context," in *Islamic Ethics of Life: Abortion, War, and Euthanasia*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 1–10.

[18] Deepak Sarma, ""Hindu" Bioethics?," *Religions and Cultures of East and West: Perspectives on Bioethics* (2008): 52.

[19] Will Sweetman, "Hinduism: An Implicit or Explicit Religion?," *Implicit Religion* 5, no. 1 (2002): 11–16.

[20] R. N. Dandekar, "Hinduism," in *Historia Religionum: Handbook for the History of Religions, Volume II-Religions of the Present*, ed. C. Joucu Bleeker and Geo Widengren (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 237.

[21] Kim Knott, *Hinduism: A very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 111.

perspective to how Judaism, Christianity, or Islam is described. It is thought that Hinduism should be evaluated with its own concepts and values, instead of being assessed by another religion's criteria. In this view, this paper counts Hinduism as a religion with its own unique characteristics.

According to Hinduism, human life has four goals, which are also known as the *purusharthas*: artha, kama, dharma, and moksha.[22] *Artha* denotes prosperity, *kama* points out pleasure, and *dharma* illustrates "observance of religious duties."[23] *Artha* aims to gain worldly possessions and luxuries, while *kama* requests acquiring sensual satisfaction including sexual pleasure. In comparison to *artha* and *kama*, *dharma* demonstrates a superior goal. S. S. Rama Rao Pappu defines *artha* and *kama* as "instrumental goods," whereas he regards *dharma* as "an intrinsic good."[24] However, the term *dharma* demonstrates a complex concept described by different sources through distinct aspects, such as "right conduct," "absolute, cosmic law," "divine law," "religion," and "moral and ethical duty."[25] The general inclination is to assess *dharma* as "the basis [for] any human morality and ethics" which has a direct relationship with *karma*.[26] Nevertheless, Pappu claims that in terms of conduct, *dharma* does not show explicit norms or principles binding every Hindu; individuals should determine their own *dharma* to be able to form a morally acceptable framework for themselves.[27]

The fourth goal, *Moksha,* is the ultimate one which refers to *liberation*. Nevertheless, the state of liberation is a contentious issue expounded upon in various forms, such as the state of "nirvana," "absence of pain and suffering," "merg[ing] with [B]rahman," "Infinite Bliss," and so on.[28] Swami Bhaskarananda argues that *moksha* "can be achieved through the realization of God" which indicates the level

[22] S. S. Rama Rao Pappu, "Hindu Ethics," in *Contemporary Hinduism: Ritual, Culture, and Practice*, ed. Robin Rinehart (Santa Barbara; Denver: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 158.

[23] Swami Bhaskarananda, *The Essentials of Hinduism: A comprehensive View of the World's Oldest Religion* (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishma Math, 1998), 7.

[24] S. S. Rama Rao Pappu, "Hindu Ethics," in *Contemporary Hinduism: Ritual, Culture, and Practice*, ed. Robin Rinehart (Santa Barbara; Denver: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 158.

[25] Constance A. Jones and James D. Ryan, *Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (New York: Facts On File, 2007), 150.

Herbert Ellinger, *Hinduism* (Harrisburgh: Trinity Press International, 1996), 5.

Swami Bhaskarananda, *The Essentials of Hinduism: A comprehensive View of the World's Oldest Religion* (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishma Math, 1998), 98.

[26] Herbert Ellinger, *Hinduism* (Harrisburgh: Trinity Press International, 1996), 5.

Swami Bhaskarananda, *The Essentials of Hinduism: A comprehensive View of the World's Oldest Religion* (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishma Math, 1998), 98.

Shirley Firth, "End-of-life: A Hindu View," *Lancet* 366 (2005): 682.

[27] S. S. Rama Rao Pappu, "Hindu Ethics," in *Contemporary Hinduism: Ritual, Culture, and Practice*, ed. Robin Rinehart (Santa Barbara; Denver: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 169.

[28] Herbert Ellinger, *Hinduism* (Harrisburgh: Trinity Press International, 1996), 6–7.

S. S. Rama Rao Pappu, "Hindu Ethics," in *Contemporary Hinduism: Ritual, Culture, and Practice*, ed. Robin Rinehart (Santa Barbara; Denver: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 161.

Swami Bhaskarananda, *The Essentials of Hinduism: A comprehensive View of the World's Oldest Religion* (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishma Math, 1998), 8.

of "directly experiencing God."[29] *Moksha* is not a concept that is only pertinent to death or the period after death; this goal can be accomplished in this world as well.[30] It implies the fulfillment of all desires on Earth and reaching the Divine Spirit which liberates people from worldly desires as well as the cycles of birth, death, and rebirth. This state of joining *Brahman* is also known as *nirvana* in the West, but the term *nirvana* mostly originates in Buddhism.[31]

These four essential goals of life do not directly provide any clues to appraise the value of human life. However, evaluating these goals, especially *dharma*, with the idea of *ahimsa* may generate a lucid insight. As mentioned above, even though *dharma* refers to the basis of the religion, morality, and ethics, there is not a particular way to specify how to fulfill this abstract discourse. Nevertheless, the acceptance and implementation of *ahimsa*, as a fundamental principle of life, might not only resolve this challenge, to some extent, but also give a limpid view on the value of human life. *Ahimsa* is a primary concept of Hinduism that has been used since 800 B.C.E by Jainism and Buddhism as well. *Ahimsa* literally means "not killing." *Ahimsa* originally focuses on not killing animals, but in practice, this principle is applied to all beings, including plants. The Hindu approach of not killing animals and refusing to consume meat as well as other animal products comes from the idea of *ahimsa* as a religious perspective.[32] Furthermore, "Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi expanded the notion of *ahimsa* to the interpersonal realm and developed it into a philosophy of personal action."[33] Gandhi does not tear *ahimsa* from its religious roots; on the contrary, he strengthens the spiritual background of the principle by associating it with God and God's love.[34] Gandhi underlines the framework of *ahimsa* as follows:

> Literally speaking, ahimsa means non-killing. But to me it has a world of meaning and takes me into realms much higher, infinitely higher, than the realm to which I would go, if I merely understood by ahimsa non-killing. Ahimsa really means that you may not offend anybody, … For one who follows the doctrine of ahimsa, there is no room for an enemy; he denies the existence of an enemy.[35]

[29] Swami Bhaskarananda, *The Essentials of Hinduism: A comprehensive View of the World's Oldest Religion* (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishma Math, 1998), 7–8.

[30] S. S. Rama Rao Pappu, "Hindu Ethics," in *Contemporary Hinduism: Ritual, Culture, and Practice*, ed. Robin Rinehart (Santa Barbara; Denver: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 161.

[31] Herbert Ellinger, *Hinduism* (Harrisburgh: Trinity Press International, 1996), 6–8.

[32] Constance A. Jones and James D. Ryan, *Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (New York: Facts On File, 2007), 18.

[33] Constance A. Jones and James D. Ryan, *Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (New York: Facts On File, 2007), 18.

[34] Joris Gielen, "Mahatma Gandhi's View on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide," *J Med Ethics* 38 (2012): 432.

[35] Mahatma Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* Vol. 15, accessed October 20, 2016, http://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/mahatma-gandhi-collected-works-volume-15.pdf, 168.

> I accept the interpretation of ahimsa, namely, that it is not merely a negative state of harmlessness but it is a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil-doer. But it does not mean helping the evil-doer to continue the wrong or tolerating it by passive acquiescence—on the contrary, love, the active state of ahimsa, requires you to resist the wrong-doer by dissociating yourself from him even though it may offend him or injure him physically.[36]
>
> The very essence of ahimsa lies in burning our anger and in cleansing the soul.[37]

As these statements prove, Gandhi transforms the view of "non-killing" into the principle of "non-violence," which not only refuses killing or harming, but also requires internalizing a state of love toward everyone. The principle of *ahimsa* encompasses both negative actions (as to avoid both harming and a sense of hatred) and positive actions (as to demonstrate love and compassion in acts, feelings, and thoughts to every creature). According to Gandhi, God loves and shows love to all beings; hence, the devotees of God should follow the same path and love humans and other creatures.[38] Therefore, in light of the principle of non-violence, human life is sacred, but this sacredness transcends human life by encompassing the sacredness of animals and plants as well. A Hindu's well-known ritual of offering their food to God results from this sacredness. They believe that harvesting plants and/or eating animal products exhibits an infringement of the principle of non-violence. They must "offer whatever they eat to God first, either mentally or ritually, in order to purify that food."[39] As a result, *ahimsa* suggests a lifestyle established on love toward all beings in every part of life rather than harm or hatred.

After Death

Aside from the perception concerning human life, the understanding of death and the period after death is another important point in a faith's position on euthanasia. As underscored above, both Sunni and Hindu traditions attribute a remarkable value to human life. Even though they use distinct clarifications, in the end, both associate the protection of life with God, either with the idea of "trust" given by God or with "God's love." In this section, the second crucial issue, the belief of the two traditions regarding what comes after death, will be elaborated.

[36] Mahatma Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* Vol. 21, accessed October 20, 2016, http://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/mahatma-gandhi-collected-works-volume-21.pdf, 199.

[37] Mahatma Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* Vol. 25, accessed October 20, 2016, http://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/mahatma-gandhi-collected-works-volume-25.pdf, 95.

[38] Joris Gielen, "Mahatma Gandhi's View on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide," *J Med Ethics* 38 (2012): 432.

[39] Swami Bhaskarananda, *The Essentials of Hinduism: A comprehensive View of the World's Oldest Religion* (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishma Math, 1998), 141.

Islam: Resurrection

In the belief of the Islamic theology, death is an inevitable end, not only for human beings but for every living being. The *Qur'an* says, "[e]very soul [living being] will taste death…" (3:185).[40] According to this verse, regardless of lifespan, all beings will face death sooner or later. In terms of human beings, Muslims believe that human life consists of the body and the soul, and death refers to the leaving of the soul from the body. The soul does not vanish by death; it only leaves the body until the Day of Resurrection.[41] Furthermore, in the world, the soul indicates the spiritual aspect of the human, while the body illustrates the material component of the human.[42] By death, the soul moves to another realm which means the person's lifetime is over in the world. The *Quran* describes the situation of individuals who do not comply with God's commands as much as expected by the following statements: "when death comes to one of them, he says, 'My Lord, send me back [t]hat I might do righteousness in that which I left behind.' No! It is only a word he is saying; and behind them is a barrier until the Day they are resurrected" (23:99-100).[43] In this view, it is obvious that when the soul departs from the world, there is no possibility for it to return to the world, under any circumstance. However, in the Sunni tradition, the condition in which the soul will be, during the period between death and the Day of Resurrection, is a controversial issue.

From this perspective, the term resurrection suggests reviving the person or giving the soul a body for the Judgement Day. According to al-Ghazali, resurrection does not denote the recreation or rebirth; it means to give the soul a body. He distinguishes the initial creation from the resurrection by calling the former a "first tour/period" and the latter a "second tour/period." Al-Ghazali states that, during the first period, there is neither a soul nor a body until, in birth, both the soul and body are created. However, during the resurrection, there will be no need to create the soul again because it will have already existed, as the same one it was in the world. The only need will be to give the soul a body, which is not required to be the same body that existed in the world because even in the world, the body constantly changes. The substantive component of the human being is the soul; the body is merely the carrier of the soul. Therefore, during the resurrection, the soul will receive a body in order to attend Judgement Day and continue existing after that day.[44]

The *Quran* manifests the connection between life and Judgement Day and emphasizes the importance of human beings' deeds in the world in the following verses: "[t]hat Day [Judgement Day], the people will depart separated [into categories] to be shown [the result of] their deeds. So whoever does an atom's weight of good will

[40] The Quran, (3:185), accessed October 16, 2016, https://quran.com/3.

[41] Abu Ḥamid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazali, *Death and Doomsday* (Istanbul: Saglam Yayınevi, 1999), 136.

[42] Dariusch Atighetchi, *Islamic Bioethics: Problems and Perspectives* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 269.

[43] The Quran, (23:99-100), accessed October 16, 2016, https://quran.com/23.

[44] Abu Ḥamid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazali, *Death and Doomsday* (Istanbul: Saglam Yayınevi, 1999), 136–138.

see it, [a]nd whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it" (99:6-8).[45] These verses prove that all actions of the person, both good and bad, will be taken into consideration on Judgement Day to determine the person's status in the eternal destination. This means that anyone who believes in God and Judgement Day is supposed to pay attention to all of his/her actions and even to the thoughts in the world, in accordance with the provisions of the divine law for the salvation in the hereafter.

Hinduism: Reincarnation

According to Hinduism, the human being is comprised of the physical body, which is mortal, and the soul, which is called *atman*. The *atman* is immortal and "stores all the thoughts, desires, and experiences one has had in every single life one has lived, and that carries the soul to its next destination at the time of death."[46] Death solely points out the end/termination of the physical body. The soul, which is eternal, "goes to a different plane of existence… [which] is called a *loka*."[47] In light of this perspective, in accordance with the person's *karma*, the soul goes to a higher *loka* to take pleasure or goes to a lower *loka* to suffer until returning to Earth in another body or form.[48] However, M. Jane Eshleman asserts that after death, the soul directly "enters the womb of another who is waiting to give him birth into another life," but she also says that "[s]ometimes there is an interval between the death and rebirth during which the soul occupies one of the Hells or Heavens."[49] Therefore, it seems that (as it is in Sunnism as well, in terms of the period between death and resurrection) in Hinduism, the period between the departure of the soul and its return to Earth is questionable, whether it stays in another realm for a certain time or directly passes to another body. This situation means that apart from the understanding of "the next destination," the Hindu and Sunni traditions have the same views on the components of the human being. Both consider the physical body a temporary element and the soul the substantive unit of the human; by death, the body dies, but the soul continues existing and travels to a new destination. In this view, both Hinduism and Sunnism identify the body as only a transitory vehicle or carrier of the soul.[50] However, in the case of the insight into "the next destination," Hinduism completely

[45] The Quran, (99:6-8), accessed October 16, 2016, https://quran.com/99.

[46] Vincent Barry, *Philosophical Thinking about Death and Dying*, (Canada: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007), 112.

[47] Swami Bhaskarananda, *The Essentials of Hinduism: A comprehensive View of the World's Oldest Religion* (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishma Math, 1998), 93.

[48] Swami Bhaskarananda, *The Essentials of Hinduism: A comprehensive View of the World's Oldest Religion* (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishma Math, 1998), 93–94.

[49] M. Jane Eshleman, "Death with Dignity: Significance of Religious Beliefs and Practices in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam," *Todays or Nurse* 14, no. 11 (1992): 21.

[50] Abu Ḥamid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazali, *Death and Doomsday* (Istanbul: Saglam Yayınevi, 1999), 136–138.

Vincent Barry, *Philosophical Thinking about Death and Dying*, (Canada: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007), 112.

differs from Sunnism's judgement day-oriented approach through its reincarnation-based teaching.

Reincarnation indicates the idea that the soul is reborn in a new body or form. Even though the general belief regarding the cycle of the soul's rebirth is to be reincarnated in the human body, there is another opinion that "a human soul may be born once or twice in a subhuman body to work out very bad Karma."[51] According to Bhaskarananda, the main reason behind rebirth is individuals' unsatisfied desires in the world. He notes that the cycle of reincarnation keeps going until the desires are entirely met. For this reason, reincarnation gives the opportunity to the soul to satisfy its worldly desires, but also it provides changes for spiritual improvement. Nevertheless, the ultimate aim of human beings is to achieve *moksha,* which means the liberation of the soul. The spiritual development enables individuals to overstep materialistic aspirations and reach the state of liberation, which represents the purification of the soul, *atman*, the union of the soul and God, and being freed from the cycle of birth and death.[52]

In the cycles of rebirth, the concept of *karma* has a prominent role in terms of human beings' doings and their consequences. The dictionary meaning of *karma* is "action" or "deed."[53] In the religious context, *karma* is a notion closely associated with *dharma*. As highlighted in the previous section, various definitions of *dharma* are available, but the most emphasized one is to acknowledge *dharma* as an all-inclusive concept containing all moral and ethical duties and obligations. In this sense, *karma* demonstrates an invisible system shaping individuals' past, present, and future lives, statuses, and castes. The level of obedience to *dharma* in the past determines the present life, whereas complying with *dharma* in the present will shape the future life and brings about some effects to the present life as well.[54] Eshleman says, "[i]n reincarnation, the status, condition, and caste of each life is determined by behavior in the past life; therefore, each person is responsible for who he is and what he does. This is karma."[55] This succinct statement clearly depicts the meaning and function of *karma*. However, from this clarification also emerges the question of whether this view encompasses any fatalistic implication: if it is all the karmic force directing a person's life and shaping his/her caste, status, and condition, then the role of the person in the world is called into question.

First of all, it is crucial to underline that it is the same soul which is reincarnated in different bodies or forms in the process of reincarnation. Maybe not the physical body, but the soul encounters both the desirable and undesirable consequences of

[51] Swami Bhaskarananda, *The Essentials of Hinduism: A comprehensive View of the World's Oldest Religion* (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishma Math, 1998), 95.

[52] Swami Bhaskarananda, *The Essentials of Hinduism: A comprehensive View of the World's Oldest Religion* (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishma Math, 1998), 91–95.

[53] Vincent Barry, *Philosophical Thinking about Death and Dying*, (Canada: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007), 112.

[54] S. S. Rama Rao Pappu, "Hindu Ethics," in *Contemporary Hinduism: Ritual, Culture, and Practice*, ed. Robin Rinehart (Santa Barbara; Denver: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 161–165.

[55] M. Jane Eshleman, "Death with Dignity: Significance of Religious Beliefs and Practices in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam," *Todays or Nurse* 14, no. 11 (1992): 21.

his/her own actions and deeds conducted during the previous life. In this view, it is not God or any other power or authority determining a person's whole fate; it is the person him/herself shaping his/her destiny through his/her decisions and actions. For this reason, according to Hinduism, "God is not responsible for the pleasure or pain of His creatures. It is the creatures who are responsible for their own enjoyment or suffering. They suffer or enjoy owing to the consequences of their own bad or good deeds."[56] Second, Bhaskarananda examines *karma*, categorized into three types: *sanchita*, *prarabdha*, and *kriyamana karma*. *Kriyamana karma* posits that certain actions, particularly actions which cause serious crimes show their consequences in the present life as well.[57] Thus, *karma* and some of its effects are also pertinent to a person's current life. Finally, Bhaskarananda claims that there are several forces influencing a person's life; karmic force is merely one of these forces. Even though these forces significantly impact the person's conditions, the person still has some room to behave in accordance with his/her choice. Additionally, it is possible to reduce or eliminate the consequences of *karma*, especially in the case of *kriyamana karma*.[58] As a result, in spite of creating substantial effects on the past, present, and future lives of individuals, the previous life-based *karma* is not the sole factor in the determination of human life. Individuals' actions have prominent effects on their lives and their *karmas* as well. Instead of surrendering to the influence of *karma*, an individual should obey his/her *dharma* in order to avoid the bad consequences of his/her *karma*, not only in the present life, but also in the future lives.

Perception of Euthanasia

End-of-life issues are associated with advanced disease processes and determine how to manage the severe effects of these diseases.[59] Euthanasia is one of these matters containing several ethical disputes in medicine, theology, and philosophy.

Euthanasia refers to "[t]he administration of lethal drugs in order to painlessly terminate the life of a patient suffering from an incurable condition deemed unbearable by the patient."[60] Voluntary euthanasia is a type of euthanasia which means that the euthanasia is carried out as a result of the patient's request.[61] Even though non-voluntary euthanasia and involuntary euthanasia are listed as two other forms of euthanasia by some sources, it is argued that if a morally acceptable form of euthanasia

[56] Swami Bhaskarananda, *The Essentials of Hinduism: A comprehensive View of the World's Oldest Religion* (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishma Math, 1998), 80.

[57] Swami Bhaskarananda, *The Essentials of Hinduism: A comprehensive View of the World's Oldest Religion* (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishma Math, 1998), 80–81.

[58] Swami Bhaskarananda, *The Essentials of Hinduism: A comprehensive View of the World's Oldest Religion* (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishma Math, 1998), 85.

[59] Bert Broeckaert, "Treatment Decisions in Advanced Disease: A Conceptual Framework," *Indian Journal of Palliative Care* 15, no. 1 (2009): 30.

[60] Bert Broeckaert, "Treatment Decisions in Advanced Disease: A Conceptual Framework," *Indian Journal of Palliative Care* 15, no. 1 (2009): 34.

[61] Bert Broeckaert, "Treatment Decisions in Advanced Disease: A Conceptual Framework," *Indian Journal of Palliative Care* 15, no. 1 (2009): 34.

exists, it would be voluntary euthanasia demanded by a capable patient through an autonomous decision-making process. For this reason, the present paper discusses euthanasia in light of voluntary euthanasia and disregards non-voluntary euthanasia and involuntary euthanasia.[62]

Sunni Theology

The theological background of the Sunni belief largely comes from Ash'arites, who are traditionalists exhibiting strong loyalty to the scriptural texts.[63] The Qur'an, Sunna, and ijma do not directly address the concept of euthanasia and the Islamic viewpoint on this matter. Additionally, the absence of an official authority to determine a specific religious position on bioethical issues make it difficult to declare an absolute Islamic view regarding the subjects on which the scriptural sources are silent.[64] However, the explicit stance of Islam on life, death, and the hereafter facilitates interpreting euthanasia from an Islamic perspective.

Islamic theology accepts human life not merely as sacred, but also as an entity required to be protected from harm; it is created as well as honored by God and given to human beings as a "trust." From this perspective, God is "the ultimate arbiter of life and death; the human duty [is] to protect life."[65] Like the beginning of life, the end of life depends on the volition of God; He is "the giver and taker of life;" and any action or attempt which harms or ceases the human body or life would be regarded as a misuse of the trust.[66] Therefore, it may not be surprising to emphasize that the Islamic tradition does not justify euthanasia under any circumstance, both in terms of the patient and healthcare professionals; the patient is responsible for securing the "trust" given to him/her, whereas the healthcare professionals, who comply with the divine law, are in charge of protecting the patient's life. *Kuwait Document (Islamic Code of Medical Ethics)*, considers euthanasia suicide and highlights the following provisions: "[h]uman life is sacred and should not be willfully taken…;" "[a] doctor shall not take away life even when motivated by mercy;" "[i]

[62] Dr. Jashwant A. Darji et al., "Euthanasia: Most Controversial and Debatable Topic," *NJIRM* 2, no. 3 (2011): 94.

Bert Broeckaert, "Treatment Decisions in Advanced Disease: A Conceptual Framework," *Indian Journal of Palliative Care* 15, no. 1 (2009): 35.

[63] Ebrahim Moosa, "Muslim Ethics?" in *the Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*, ed. William Schweiker (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 239–240.

[64] Jonathan E. Brockopp, "Taking Life and Saving Life: The Islamic Context," in *Islamic Ethics of Life: Abortion, War, and Euthanasia*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 10.

Abdulaziz Sachedina, *Islamic Biomedical Ethics Principles and Application* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7–8.

[65] Jonathan E. Brockopp, "Taking Life and Saving Life: The Islamic Context," in *Islamic Ethics of Life: Abortion, War, and Euthanasia*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 2.

[66] Jonathan E. Brockopp, "the "Good Death" in Islamic Theology and Law," in Islamic Ethics of Life: Abortion, War, and Euthanasia, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 177.

n any case, the Doctor shall not take a positive measure to terminate the patient's life;" and "[t]he Doctor shall do his best that what remains of the life of an incurable patient will be spent under good care, moral support and freedom from pain and misery."[67] In this view, as a trusted trustee, the human being must benefit from all available medical tools to make a recovery from illnesses and ease the pain and suffering if a full recovery is impossible. In respect of physicians, they must utilize their medical knowledge and experience as well as provide the patient with psychological and emotional support to alleviate his/her pain and suffering without terminating the patient's life. In other words, the patient is limited to looking for the recovery and relief, and the physician is limited to helping the patient to obtain recovery and relief.[68]

Al-Ghazali gives many examples from the *Sunna* to clarify that the Prophet Muhammed explicitly commanded Muslims not to desire death even under severe pain and desperation.[69] Death represents the end of the possibility of doing good deeds in the world and indicates the travel to the eternal life where good deeds will be decisive in the determination of the new life's way. In other words, as Brockopp points out, the Islamic tradition does not mainly concentrate on "pain and suffering of this world, but on God's promise of eternal life in paradise."[70] Islam deems the human being to be a mixture of the body and soul. The former refers to the physical entity, while the latter indicates the spiritual part of human.[71] Medical interventions intend to relieve the pain and suffering of the body. However, according to al-Ghazali, it is only the soul that is in pain during the dying process, and this pain is incomparably agonizing.[72] From this perspective, euthanasia can merely eliminate the pain and suffering of the body, not the soul.

In regard to incurable diseases with intolerable suffering, the concept of assenting destiny also has a pivotal function. Of course, this situation does not mean that Islam dignifies pain and suffering.[73] Assenting the destiny shows God's role and authority over human life because the destiny, either good or bad, is given by God, and the believer must assent it. Human beings must even accept their unbearable pain and suffering resulting from incurable diseases as the part of their destiny and endure their condition until God bestows a relief through recovery or a natural

[67] International Organization of Islamic Medicine, *Islamic Codes of Medical Ethics*, 1981, 64–68.

[68] Shabbir M. H. Alibhai and Michael Gordon, "A Comparative Analysis of Islamic and Jewish End-of-Life Ethics: A Case-Based Approach," in *Muslim Medical Ethics*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp and Thomas Eich (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 184.

[69] Abu Ḥamid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazali, *Death and Doomsday* (Istanbul: Saglam Yayınevi, 1999), 39–41.

[70] Jonathan E. Brockopp, "the "Good Death" in Islamic Theology and Law," in *Islamic Ethics of Life: Abortion, War, and Euthanasia*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 190.

[71] Dariusch Atighetchi, *Islamic Bioethics: Problems and Perspectives* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 269.

[72] Abu Ḥamid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazali, *Death and Doomsday* (Istanbul: Saglam Yayınevi, 1999), 19–21.

[73] Dariusch Atighetchi, *Islamic Bioethics: Problems and Perspectives* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 268.

death.[74] Additionally, the pain and suffering felt by the body are regarded as atonement for the person's sins. Therefore, some pious followers express a desire to have pain and suffering in this world in order to be liberated from the suffering and pain in the hereafter.[75]

Furthermore, the phrase "incurable disease" is subjective in terms of the traditional Islamic insight. The subjectivity is not related to the accuracy of medical knowledge; it is about the idea that God can heal an incurable disease whenever He wants because life is totally under the control and volition of God. For all these reasons, it may be stated that the Islamic theology refuses the unbearable pain and suffering-based moral justification of euthanasia. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that all these views do not mean that the Islamic theology opposes relieving pain and benefiting from medical improvements. On the contrary, it is a duty for Muslims to take advantage of medical, technological, and scientific breakthroughs unless they breach the fundamental rules and principles of the divine law.[76] Therefore, Muslims can utilize religiously acceptable means to mitigate pain and suffering, but euthanasia is not a religiously appropriate tool to apply, even under the circumstances of inevitable pain and suffering; Islam advises spiritual and emotional support instead of terminating the patient's life.

As a result, Sunni Islam considers euthanasia suicide in terms of the patient who consents to euthanasia and homicide in terms of the physician who carries out the use of lethal drugs. It is a primary tenet to protect life as best as possible and wish a long life. Life is the most valuable essence given to humans. Nevertheless, death is also a blessing. According to al-Ghazali, in the event of the prevalence of certain evils (like the breakdown in relationships among relatives, friends, and neighbors), praying to God for death is permissible.[77] However, this demand must be limited to a request from God, not from any human being and not as a positive action causing death. The life giver and taker is God; human beings must mentally and bodily perform good deeds until the time of their natural death for their salvation in the hereafter.

Hindu Tradition

Hindus do not have an official religious authority to dictate what is morally right or wrong.[78] Therefore, it is not possible to say explicitly whether Hinduism allows or opposes euthanasia. However, the religious, cultural, and historical background

[74] Abu Ḥamid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazali, *O Son*, trans. Lutfu Dogan (Istanbul: Bedir Yayınları, 1969), 24.

[75] Abu Ḥamid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazali, *Death and Doomsday* (Istanbul: Saglam Yayınevi, 1999), 59.

[76] Shabbir M. H. Alibhai and Michael Gordon, "A Comparative Analysis of Islamic and Jewish End-of-Life Ethics: A Case-Based Approach," in *Muslim Medical Ethics*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp and Thomas Eich (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 184.

[77] Abu Ḥamid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazali, *Death and Doomsday* (Istanbul: Saglam Yayınevi, 1999), 94, 45–53.

[78] John Renard, *Responses to 101 Questions on Hinduism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 66.

of this faith provides some clues when reaching a conclusion regarding euthanasia. Hinduism has five key principles: "purity, self-control, detachment, truth, and non-violence."[79] Truth and non-violence are two of the most significant values emerging in a close relationship with each other.[80] Due to the interconnection between these two main principles, Gandhi often used them together and even described the combination of truth (*satya*) and non-violence (*ahimsa*) as "the doctrine of satya and ahimsa."[81] S. Cromwell Crawford interprets *ahimsa* as an indispensable value of the five virtues and accepts it as the manifestation of non-violence and non-hatred with a universal scope.[82]

Hindus do not perceive death as an end. Death illustrates only the end of the physical body. The soul (*atman*), which is also known as the subtle body or the self, is immortal. By the death, the soul either fuses with *Brahman* as the result of liberation, or it is reborn in a new body in accordance with the person's *karma*. Death is a part of the soul's cycle of rebirth in different bodies until reaching liberation.[83] The ultimate goal for Hindus is *moksha*—the liberation of the soul. Hindus believe that in the case of all options, except liberation, "atman becomes a prisoner in an ongoing cycle of suffering, death, and rebirth."[84] In this sense, rebirth is an undesirable circumstance for Hindus; the essential aim is to achieve *moksha*. The issue is whether being reborn or joining God (Brahman) is determined by a person's individual actions in the scope of the karmic system. *Karma* indicates that "[m]orally good acts … produce good results and morally bad acts … produce bad results."[85] In this view, Hindus are expected to demonstrate good acts congruent with the requirements of their *dharma*.

Hinduism defines death as either a good death or a bad death. "A good death (*sumrtyu*) occurs in old age, at the right astrological time, and in the right place," while a bad death (*akal mrtyu*) refers to "violent, premature, and uncontrolled deaths in the wrong place and at the wrong time."[86] In light of this context, it may be deduced that any unnatural death, such as an accident and crime-based as well as suicide and euthanasia-driven deaths, could be regarded as bad death because of such deaths' violent and uncontrolled characteristics. However, some sources assert that it is not

[79] S. Cromwell Crawford, "Ethical Foundations for Hindu Bioethics," *Dialogue and Alliance* 17, no. 2 (2003/2004): 82.

[80] S. Cromwell Crawford, "Ethical Foundations for Hindu Bioethics," *Dialogue and Alliance* 17, no. 2 (2003/2004): 84.

[81] Mahatma Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* Vol. 17 and 16, accessed October 22, 2016, http://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/mahatma-gandhi-collected-works-volume-17.pdf, 17:445, 317, 455, 456, 16:195.

[82] S. Cromwell Crawford, "Ethical Foundations for Hindu Bioethics," *Dialogue and Alliance* 17, no. 2 (2003/2004): 84–85.

[83] Cromwell Crawford, "Hindu Bioethics," in *Religious Perspectives in Bioethics*, ed. John F. Peppin, Mark J. Cherry and Ana Iltis (Leiden: Taylor & Francis, 2004), 201.

[84] Cromwell Crawford, "Hindu Bioethics," in *Religious Perspectives in Bioethics*, ed. John F. Peppin, Mark J. Cherry and Ana Iltis (Leiden: Taylor & Francis, 2004), 201.

[85] R. N. Dandekar, "Hinduism," in *Historia Religionum: Handbook for the History of Religions, Volume II-Religions of the Present*, ed. C. Joucu Bleeker and Geo Widengren (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 318.

[86] Shirley Firth, "End-of-life: A Hindu View," *Lancet* 366 (2005): 683.

selfish reasons-oriented suicides, but religious reasons-based suicides, which are committed by fasting, drowning, burning or similar forms, which are morally allowable. Nevertheless, some other views refuse the acceptability of any type of suicide by remarking on God's role in death and the function of karmic forces. According to this perspective, the life-taker is God and suicide does not cease karmic forces, hence all forms of suicide are morally wrong.[87] The views justifying suicide on the ground of religious reasons focus on the Hindu tradition's intention- and motivation-related approach. In Hindu culture, circumstances, intentions, and motivations behind acts play a prominent role in the judgement of the actions' consequences.[88] This approach is very noticeable in the assessment of the principle of non-violence as well.

Joris Gielen examines Gandhi's non-violence principle (*ahimsa*) to discover whether it considers euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide morally permissible. Gielen explains the exceptions of *ahimsa* to show that non-violence is not an absolute value and highlights Gandhi's practical aspect to the realities of daily life. It is ideal to support and promote the protection of all beings from harm. However, conditions, concerns, and necessities of life require formulating certain exceptions of non-violence. Indeed, it is often inevitable to commit a sin in order to avoid greater sins. For instance, in principle, killing an animal is not acceptable, but killing an animal harming other animals or humans is not only admissible, but even an obligation, stemming from the implementation of *ahimsa*. Therefore, it is not merely the consequences of actions, but also the motivations and intentions behind these actions that are essential factors in the evaluation of the results which violate *ahimsa*.[89] From this perspective, in light of Gandhi's thoughts, Gielen emphasizes three criteria for the justification of killing a human being: "the absence of self-interest, the occurrence of uncontrollable suffering at the end of life and … consent of the patient if possible."[90] Shirley Firth calls attention to Gandhi's same view and underlines Gandhi's love and compassion-oriented approach regarding the permissibility of killing a being.[91] *Ahimsa* means non-violence and non-hatred, but it also indicates love and compassion.[92] For this reason, it may be underscored that killing or hastening the death of a human being who is unbearably suffering from an incurable disease, reflects the senses of love and compassion that comes from *ahimsa*. In other

[87] Cromwell Crawford, "Hindu Bioethics," in *Religious Perspectives in Bioethics*, ed. John F. Peppin, Mark J. Cherry and Ana Iltis (Leiden: Taylor & Francis, 2004), 202–203.
Shirley Firth, "End-of-life: A Hindu View," *Lancet* 366 (2005): 684.
Swami Bhaskarananda, *The Essentials of Hinduism: A comprehensive View of the World's Oldest Religion* (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishma Math, 1998), 82.

[88] Cromwell Crawford, "Hindu Bioethics," in *Religious Perspectives in Bioethics*, ed. John F. Peppin, Mark J. Cherry and Ana Iltis (Leiden: Taylor & Francis, 2004), 204.

[89] Joris Gielen, "Mahatma Gandhi's View on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide," *J Med Ethics* 38 (2012): 432.

[90] Joris Gielen, "Mahatma Gandhi's View on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide," *J Med Ethics* 38 (2012): 432.

[91] Shirley Firth, "End-of-life: A Hindu View," *Lancet* 366 (2005): 685.

[92] Joseph Prabhu, "Trajectories of Hindu Ethics," in *the Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*, ed. William Schweiker (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 363.

words, the moral acceptance of killing a human is pertinent to *ahimsa*'s love and compassion-oriented dimension rather than its non-violence- or non-hatred-driven aspect.

However, as Gielen details, in the case of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, it is a crucial criterion to provide the patient with all possible medical treatments. Euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide cannot be deemed morally acceptable without applying all medical opportunities available to alleviate the patient's pain and suffering.[93] Gandhi says:

> [A]n alternative has been suggested in the shape of confining even rabid dogs in a certain place and allowing them to die a slow death. Now, my idea of compassion makes this thing impossible for me. I cannot for a moment bear to see a dog, or for that matter any other living being, helplessly suffering the torture of a slow death. I do not kill a human being thus circumstanced because I have more hopeful remedies. I should kill a dog similarly situated, because in its case I am without a remedy. Should my child be attacked by rabies and there was no hopeful remedy to relieve his agony, I should consider it my duty to take his life. Fatalism has its limits. We leave things to Fate after exhausting all the remedies. One of the remedies, and the final one to relieve the agony of a tortured child, is to take his life.[94]

In this view, it is a requirement of *ahimsa* to protect not only the life of human beings, but all beings. In the event of the suffering of a being, including humans, all possible facilities must be utilized to mitigate the pain and keep the being alive. Nevertheless, if no remedy is available, instead of letting the being intolerably suffering until it dies by itself, killing the being is an obligation of love and compassion. In terms of euthanasia, it can be clearly emphasized that if the existing medical interventions cannot eliminate the patient's pain and suffering, euthanasia (both voluntary euthanasia and non-voluntary euthanasia) would be justifiable in the scope of *ahimsa*. Nonetheless, the demand for euthanasia, both from the patient and the family, should not be derived from selfish reasons, such as financial concerns, the unwillingness or tiredness of taking care of the patients, or the sense of burden on the family. From this perspective, in the Hindu view, euthanasia is allowable as long as the preconditions are met.

[93] Joris Gielen, "Mahatma Gandhi's View on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide," *J Med Ethics* 38 (2012): 433–434.

[94] Mahatma Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* Vol. 37, accessed October 22, 2016, http://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/mahatma-gandhi-collected-works-volume-37.pdf, 21–22.

Assessment of the Two Traditions

In general, many people may think Islam and Hinduism differ remarkably from each other due to their distinct backgrounds. Islam comes from the Abrahamic tradition and carries mostly already determined rules, values, and principles. On the other hand, Hinduism has several cultural and traditional features without a fully-formulated religious structure. However, as exhibited in the previous sections, these two faiths share several commonalities, but also naturally have certain differences. In this section, these similarities and distinctions will be appraised. Nevertheless, it is important to note that in this paper, the term similarity does not mean an absolute sameness; it merely means there is a noteworthy resemblance between the two faiths. Furthermore, in regard to religious aspects, some terms indicate comprehensive concepts. In this sense, addressing a similarity will only refer to a commonality in a general framework.

Similarities

In the previous sections, the two traditions' stances on the value of human life and the perception of death are elaborated to figure out how they assess euthanasia. The Sunni view was chiefly examined in the scope of al-Ghazali's thoughts, while the Hindu stand was delineated by utilizing Gandhi's principle of non-violence. In terms of the Sunni perspective, as detailed above, the Sunni theology grounds its view regarding euthanasia on the *Shari'a*. The *Shari'a* represents the divine law and shapes every aspect of human life. The *Shari'a* possesses (or is supposed to have) a certain view on every legal, moral, and social phenomenon. Therefore, it is difficult to study Islamic ethics without taking the *Shari'a* into consideration because it pervades all areas of human life from birth to death. A similar approach may be observed in Hinduism in terms of the idea of *dharma*. As explained in the past sections, different authors define *dharma* with distinct clarifications, but it is explicit enough that *dharma* denotes certain religious, moral, and ethical duties to which humans should pay attention throughout their lifetime. Perhaps the rules, values, and principles which *dharma* carries are not determined as exactly as the rules, values, and principles in the *Shari'a*, but both (the *Shari'a* and *dharma*) strive to provide guidelines to their followers to design every dimension of the followers' lives. The content of the *Shari'a* and *dharma* may not resemble each other, but their general frameworks do, especially in terms of their aims. Nonetheless, even though the *Shari'a* has a direct influence on the rejection of euthanasia, *dharma* does not engender such a substantial impact on the position concerning euthanasia.

Karma is another significant concept of Hinduism. Herbert Ellinger expounds *karma* as "an inexorable law of causality."[95] A person's *karma* shows the results of the person's actions; if the person does good deeds, he/she encounters good happenings, but if he/she does bad deeds, he/she experiences bad occurrences in the current

[95] Herbert Ellinger, *Hinduism* (Harrisburgh: Trinity Press International, 1996), 5.

life as well as in the next life. Additionally, the person's *karma,* which is shaped by his/her own actions determines his/her rebirth and its conditions. The Sunni tradition does not have a concept that is exactly equivalent to *karma*. Nevertheless, the tradition carries a similar belief that humans will be judged according to their own doings. The *Quran* promises that individuals will face the consequences every one of even their tiniest of good and bad deeds. Even though this belief is largely pertinent to Judgement Day, there are some verses declaring a parallel justice in this world's confrontations, like "[a]nd whatever strikes you of disaster - it is for what your hands have earned…" (42:30).[96] However, this does not indicate that humans encounter all the results of their actions in this world. There might be some effects during the current life, but the ultimate consequences will be seen in the hereafter. As a result, Sunni theology does not believe in rebirth, but acknowledges the role of individuals' actions in the results they will face on the Judgement Day as well as in some happenings they experience in this world. Nevertheless, the similarity between *karma* and the notion of fair judgement for actions in Sunnism has an indirect effect on the two faiths' stances about euthanasia; their influences on euthanasia occur through the connection between *karma* and *dharma* and the relationship between the *Shari'a* and the belief in the Judgement Day.

Another similarity between Sunnism and Hinduism is the importance of the intention and motivation behind actions. Prophet Muhammed says "[a]ctions are only (considered) according to (their) intentions, and everyone will have (nothing but the reward of) what they intended…"[97] In the Islamic view, all outcomes of actions must be evaluated with the intention of the actions. Therefore, Sunni Islam pays attention to consequences, but also takes intentions into account. In regard to euthanasia, the strict position of Sunnism does not leave any room for the intention. Nevertheless, in the case of other end-of-life issues, like palliative sedation, an intention-based approach may engender a more flexible viewpoint. On the other hand, in terms of Hinduism, Gandhi states that "[t]he essence of violence is that there must be a violent intention behind a thought, word, or act."[98] In light of this statement, it is not actions by themselves, but rather actions with violent intentions which lead to violence. This approach is a crucial point in the justification of euthanasia (if the preconditions are satisfied). According to this view, even though euthanasia denotes the killing of a person, the intention is to end the person's unbearable suffering which makes the action permissible. Similar to the aforementioned commonalities, the significance of intention and motivation does not necessarily make Sunnism and Hinduism completely agree on euthanasia. Even though the intention of actions is the central factor shaping the Hindu view on euthanasia, the rigorous control of the *Shari'a* regarding euthanasia precludes applying this element to the Sunni approach.

[96] The Qur'an, (42:30), accessed October 23, 2016, https://quran.com.

[97] Hadith, accessed October 23, 201, http://hadith.com/index.php?hid=1.

[98] Mahatma Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* Vol. 70, accessed October 23, 2016, http://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/mahatma-gandhi-collected-works-volume-70.pdf, 191.

Differences

In terms of euthanasia-related matters, one of the primary distinctions is about the flexibility of Sunni Islam and Hinduism. Sunnism represents the traditionalist aspect of the Islamic teaching which demonstrates a definite compliance with the religious sources. This situation overly circumscribes individual's freedom to decide what to do or how to do things. Individuals can pursue their wishes freely as long as they abide by the *Shari'a*. In the case of any conflict between the *Shari'a* and the actions of individuals, being a good *abd* requires relinquishing one's individual wishes. In regard to euthanasia, the limitation on individual preferences can clearly be seen. The *Quran* bans euthanasia and similar forms of killing, which means there is no room for individual preferences. However, in regard to euthanasia, Hinduism is not as strict as Sunni Islam. The concepts of *dharma* and *karma* require Hindus to comply with religious obligations. Nevertheless, there is not a consensus on religious rules to bring about a unique *dharma*. For this reason, as S. S. Rama Rao Pappu highlights, "[e]ach individual [Hindu] is … responsible to find out what one's dharma is and act accordingly."[99] This circumstance gives Hindus the chance to describe their beliefs in accordance with their individual religious insight. In the assessment of euthanasia, this position allows Hindus to build their own thoughts according to their particular conditions, intentions, and motivations.

Another key distinction between the Sunni and Hindu traditions is related to their understanding of death. Both faiths define a human being as the unification of a body and soul and distinguish the physical body from the soul. They agree that death only represents the end of the body, not the soul (Hindus call the soul the subtle body or the self). Nevertheless, Sunnis believe that by death the soul moves/travels to another realm and will never return to this world, whereas Hindus think that in accordance with the person's *karma*, the soul continues to be reborn in another body or form until it joins God through the liberation. In other words, death refers to an absolute and permanent leave from this world for Sunnis, but a temporary leave for Hindus. Therefore, believing in either resurrection or reincarnation is a key difference between the two traditions.

Sunni tradition formulates a direct connection between believing in the resurrection and the position on euthanasia. Hindu culture attributes a noticeable importance to reincarnation, but does not build its stance on euthanasia solely on the belief in reincarnation. Sunni Islam supports an authoritarian view by rejecting all kinds of interventions in dying. According to the Sunni perspective, human beings do not have any right to die; that is entirely under the control of God; and any interference in dying is regarded as an intervention in the authority of God. Moreover, suffering in this world is only transient, and ending this suffering through euthanasia may cause infinite suffering in the hereafter, due to not protecting the "trust" given to the person and violating the command of God. Hinduism recognizes the sacredness of human life and the negative karmic effects of breaching this sacredness as

[99] S. S. Rama Rao Pappu, "Hindu Ethics," in *Contemporary Hinduism: Ritual, Culture, and Practice*, ed. Robin Rinehart (Santa Barbara; Denver: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 169.

well. However, Hindus also accept, at least some, certain religious-oriented suicides. Moreover, in the case of the ahimsa-based justification of euthanasia, the actions which cause the killing of a person are not deemed a serious evil, but an inevitable sin. These mean that in Hinduism, avoiding euthanasia is not an absolute rule, but a prima facie principle.

Conclusion

The comparison between the Sunni and Hindu traditions on euthanasia demonstrates that the Sunni view directly and absolutely rejects euthanasia, while the Hindu perspective justifies it under some circumstances. The Sunni belief in resurrection and God's authority over life has a significant influence on its stand on euthanasia; the life giver and taker is only God, and any interference in this authority will bring about infinite suffering in the hereafter. On the other hand, the Hindu position on euthanasia largely relies on Gandhi's principle of non-violence which allows the termination of a patient's life by concentrating on the sense of love and compassion toward the patient who is suffering intolerably. According to the Hindu ethics, the demand for euthanasia and its administration must be grounded on love and compassion, not selfish reasoning. Moreover, the flexibility of Hinduism in the interpretation of religious rules gives the opportunity to focus on the good intention of euthanasia (that is, to avoid an unbearable and slow death). As a result, the belief in the hereafter plays a profound role in the assessment of euthanasia, whereas the belief in reincarnation is not a primary determinant of euthanasia.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest No conflict of interests.