Halaqa: Wednesday, January 22

Topic: Challenges of living with belief

What are some of the challenges of living with belief?

* Forgetting the purpose of our existence
* Taking existence for granted

Why is it challenging to maintain belief?

Belief is defined as your conclusion but because we might not have established our belief (we base it on the continuation of culture), when we encounter a challenging situation, we are unable to defend our unfounded beliefs.

* It is challenging to maintain our beliefs BECAUSE we fail to found our beliefs on strong, confirmed foundations.
* Our beliefs have no strong substantial base
  + As a result when we encounter other perceptions/understandings of existence, we get startled
  + We utter what we think we believe but are not able to make a convincing point because we were never convinced in the first place
  + In such a scenario, we have to return back to our foundations and establish that first.

Oft-quoted statement: The universe has been created by God

* In daily circumstances, this statement is not something I can experience and apply
* Rather, we have to establish our belief on strong foundations in a way where we can be convinced of our claims.
* The foundation (strong or weak) will have implications on the way you perceive life and daily occurrences.

**Practical example**

Founded belief - I believe in God as the Creator

How: You investigate creation and realize that the things cannot create themselves and must have a Creator

Degrees of belief: The extent to which you have an awareness of God as the Creator

* Creator of my body
* Creator of my senses
* Creator of my organs
* Creator of my perceptions

If I don’t have confidence in my ‘founded belief’, I will experience challenges in my belief.

* Just like how we never forget that we have 2 hands and 2 legs, how can we forget that this universe is coming into existence by the will, mercy and power of the One who creates everything?
* **We forget because we don’t have confidence in our belief in the Creator!**

Do we ever forget our identity (student, professional, mother, daughter, etc)? No.

Why then do we forget that we have a Creator?

* The lack of foundation in our belief

We end up becoming very inclusive and exclusivist with our own communities because we are unable to defend our ‘claims’ as a means of protection.

Establishing a belief methodology:

You are owned by somebody

You are not the product of nature or accident

You subscribe to the message of the Prophets which say that you are the product of the Omnipotent One

* At this point you start seeking guidance
* You see that everything is coming into existence as a result of His conscious will
* You then seek guidance on how to use your free will; This is the product of your belief.
  + Whether you use your free will in accordance to your reality OR not, that is up to you

We should be able to see the Conscious Will of the Creator behind everything in existence

* Snow, Food, Cold, Happiness; everything is the conscious will of the Creator
* Once we have established this, we should live according to this belief foundation

If I want to follow the Prophetic message, I must define this universe in a way that requisites guidance from the Creator.

* First, use your free will to come a conclusion about the reality of existence

I choose between the presence of the Creator’s will in an event OR the absence of the Creator’s will in the event

Analogy: Drinking water

* Am I aware that the Creator as a result of His Conscious Will directly creates the state of me drinking the glass of water?
* If someone drinks water without realizing that it is the conscious will of the Creator, his belief has not penetrated into that aspect of creation

We have to develop our consciousness to ask:

* Who is the Creator of the water?
* Who is the Creator of my desire for water?

If we don’t ask these questions, we end up following cultural assumptions that the universe is created by God AND not a convinced point of understanding about His Creatorship.

What we do: We restrict the use of our free will to what culture tells me

* When we look at the weather, when we are eating, drinking, etc we don’t see God
* When it comes to religious injunctions, (fasting, riba, prayer), we perform the action that we think God wants us to do WITHOUT having any foundation in the action

In most cases, we take belief for granted.

* Just because I was born in a Muslim community, I identify myself as a Muslim
* Don’t make religion an identity! It needs to be one’s confirmation

The Creator of the Universe cannot discriminate; that would be ironical to the nature of the Creator

* Just by being born into a community CANNOT give anyone an advantage (a birth right)
* Religion has to be established and founded
* We have to ask why we are doing what we are doing

Why do you pray 5 times a day? Answering it by quoting the Quran would be terrible flaw!

Rather, we have to establish our actions based on our foundation. So we should start from the very bottom:

* Who are you?
* How do you define yourself?
* How do you regard your existence?

Don’t be afraid to shake yourself up and establish everything from the beginning

* Only then can we be confident in our own belief

How do we reconcile having a firm, confirmed belief in all our affairs while at the same time practicing actions without yet having the confirmed belief?

* Your actions will gain value in accordance to your belief
* Any action we perform, definitely has some basis
* Don’t blindly follow (that is the point of critical thinking)
* The more confident you are of your conclusion, the more meaningful your actions will become
* It is a journey/process

Don’t skip the importance of establishing belief

* Belief is not just about generalized statements
* Belief must be practical

Why do you want to be a good person?

* If we don’t search for essential answers to the question, we provide superficial statements

*All questions always lead back to the core of realizing who we really are and our purpose here in this life!*

Don’t pretend to have established your reality just because you belong to a certain community

* As a human being, how do you see yourself?

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http://allahsquran.com/read/images/chapters/29/29_2.gif

*Do human beings think that they will be left alone on saying, “We believe”, and that they will not be tested?”*

Just saying ‘I believe in God’ is not the be all and end all of my testimony

* We will have plenty of tests

There is no annhiliation. We need to live with the awareness of His presence and His will in creating us at every moment.

- It is not easy just to