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| **Date** | Wednesday, September 2, 2015 |
| **Topic** | In the footsteps of the Prophet Abraham: The Patriarch of Monotheistic Religion |
| **Part** | 7 |




***“AND SO, set your face steadfastly towards the [one ever-true] faith, turning away from all that is false, in accordance with the natural (innate) disposition which God has instilled into man: [for,] not to allow any change to corrupt what God has thus created this is the ever-true faith; but most people know it not.”* Rum (30):30**

*What is deen/religion?*

* The meaning I give to my existence and everything around me makes my religion.
* A conscious activity makes up religion.
* This conscious activity includes our preferences, freewill (choosing).
* This consciousness must be directly in tune with our innate disposition (***fitrat***). That is how we can follow the Abrahamic religion and become ***haneefan***  (turn away from all that is wrong).
* **My Consciousness makes religion**. If there is no consciousness, there is no religion.
* Religion means my awareness.

In this regard, religion is defined as the consciousness that one attaches to his/her actions.

* **THINK:** *Why did I eat breakfast today?* If such thought did not occur, it means that you were unconscious and you did not attach meaning to your actions. Generally, we do not think of where our feelings (hunger in the example) are coming from. Once things become a routine, we usually just act without any consciousness.
* Whatever the reason for my eating is my religion. Hence, if we eat just to stay healthy, that becomes our religion.

The meaning one attaches to religion points to either nature, meaninglessness or to something else.

* Example A: *What is this universe?* It is nature. *Where did it come from?* It is natural.
* Example B: *Who made this universe?* It happened haphazardly. *Where did it come from?* A random act.

In both examples, there is a lack of searching for the truth. There is no substantiated evidence to logically prove the claim.

* **THINK:** *How can I explain my existence?*

If someone questions their existence seriously, accidental existence makes no sense. Attributing existence to nature needs explanation as to what nature is. What remains as an option is attributing existence to a conscious existence giver. One can value their existence in this form: the value of my existence comes from the choice of an Existence Giver, I am a product of his preference otherwise I would not be able to explain my existence.

* As per the verse, I can logically attribute my existence as to be the work of a conscious existence giver. All qualities are instilled in me from Him. I cannot come into existence by myself. **My consciousness/awareness is required which forms my religion.**
* With this awareness, every other claim out there should be reasonably questioned: *Is Agnosticism really a right religion? Am I claiming an “identity” because in reality, I do not know who I am?*
* We need to use our given abilities to apply our consciousness to our being.If we are not conscious of our reality, there is no religion. When we are not in the moment, we are not aware of our consciousness i.e. we do not attach any value to that moment.

The verse is encouraging us to search for our innate disposition**.** **While searching for our innate disposition, we are trying to understand WHAT WE ARE & WHO WE ARE. This is practicing religion.** While I am conscious I am practicing my freewill. **Generally speaking, people’s definition of religion is reduced to external performance**. Anything external is not my reality. Let us take daily prayers as an example, i.e. let us observe its external and internal application.

External: I am a Muslim; I am expected to pray to please my Creator.

* Anything external is not the “right” religion. (We will define that later)

Internal: I am praying because my Creator has sent me a guide, the Prophet who helps me understand how to communicate/respond back to my Creator.

* Being aware of the meaning of my actions is important.

We have to be conscious of the meaning of what we are doing within the context of believing that:

* **I have a Creator; this Creator guides me in many ways and employs instructors (Prophets) to teach me my reality.**

Innate disposition (*fitrat*) = awareness of my reality= my conclusion= my consciousness about myself.

***How do we define right/wrong religion?***

Under the guidance of this verse, we have to follow/look for the innate disposition we are endowed with. The right conclusion comes after an analysis that fits our innate disposition.

* **ASK:** *Is my conclusion influenced by external factors?*
* Escaping from realities is not part of my innate disposition.
* In my own being I have the ability to conclude the right/wrong way, which is part of my natural disposition.
* I need to consult myself.

When scriptures say something along the line: “…most people are not aware of it…” the common understanding is that we should thank God for letting us know about something. **Instead**, it means that it is possible that we may miss the meaning of something and so we should pay attention to not neglect our innate disposition. In other words, it’s a call for us to be conscious of our own reality which is our objective.

No one is perfect at every moment. If we fall into a mistake, we should not despair. **Instead**, we should just acknowledge the mistake and correct it. That is how education is taking place. We need guidance all the time.

* When we choose our consciousness to be in tune with our inner qualities, we are in tune with the Creator’s will.

When our religion is internal, we go back to the Creator. ***Wailayhi turjaoon*** (return everything back to the Source). Every moment we are making a covenant (***mithaq***) with the Creator. The covenant is in our innate disposition. By being aware of out reality, we renew this covenant and go back to the Source.

We have to work on being consistent within ourselves and not deviate from the awareness of our existence. Consistency only happens when I respect my own existence: the One who gives me existence has given me human qualities to interact with the universe.

* When we are consistent with our own existence, we are with the Creator.

There is a saying in the Sufi tradition: “only God knows who God is.” This saying should not be taken at face value. In reality, the Creator is speaking to us and we need to internalize it as follows: if I know myself, I know my Creator but myself is from Him. **We can know God only through what God has given me.** We have to search for consistency in our existence. Always bear in mind that when I use my abilities, I am using the tools given by the Creator. They are a trust (***amana***) and they do not belong to me.

When we believe, it is because of the manifestation of the qualities of God, one of which is ***al***-***mu’min*** (one who believes). When I believe it means I positively acknowledge His existence through Him. We connect ourselves back to Him, it’s a reciprocal relationship. **The realization that external concepts carry no meaning is from Him and I should be thankful for it.** After all, I can make no claim of ownership over anything.