Wednesday 04/15/15 and 04/22/15
Topic: ***Are you judgmental?*** *(part 1 and 2)*

If we are looking to be happy in our existence, we need to stop passing negative judgments towards creation. We need to change our attitude in order to find solutions the right way. We need to establish belief within ourselves. Quran is a universal message which emphasizes on the importance of this matter and helps human beings confirm their belief. It provides guidance to humanity regardless of ethnic or cultural religious background. Although, in the scripture we may see some verses alluding to certain religious groups, they are used to depict the ideologies or attitude one needs to stay away from. We can only dislike the unbelief idea but not the unbeliever because they are created by the one who creates us.

* **When a wrong idea is presented to us, there are two aspects to it:**
1. The abstract idea itself.
2. The person presenting it has been given existence.

It is one thing to not agree with a specific idea/behavior and it is another thing to criticize existence. Not being critical towards existence is the best attitude that one can take. Just as the Prophet (pbuh) stood at the burial of an unbeliever as a token of appreciation and acknowledgment towards the body which is a creation of God, similarly, we need to be cognizant of acknowledging His act of creation and not being judgmental towards creation just because a wrong idea has been presented. Example: I may not like a person’s idea being presented to me. I have to develop my consciousness in a way that puts me on guard towards creation i.e. the person is a created being. Therefore, we should not develop any negative feelings towards that particular person. However, it is normal to be critical towards the idea presented and so we are given the freewill to reject that person’s idea.

When we think about every matter from the mission of its Speaker, then it is the only way that we get to value creation. Everything that exists is purposefully created and thus carries a message from its Creator. We need to acknowledge the existence Giver every step of the way. In reality, an atom exists because its Creator prefers it to exist; the atom demonstrates how wonderfully its Creator has made it. Objects in the universe are performing their duties under the command of a Conscious Will, conveying the qualities of the Creator to conscious beings. Unfortunately, our minds may be under the influence of secular way of thinking and we (without realizing) may not respect creation as it is.

The prevalent culture is a secular one. We exploit creation, may gossip about them, and we may not get the real message from them. Instead, we look at creation and loose ourselves in its embellishments. Similarly, secular books (Physics, Science) gossip about the materialistic interpretations of events. Example: description of size, shape and matter of the object. Matter has been created not to be exploited and talked about its physical qualities, but to take notice of the message it carries from the Creator to human beings. Along the same line, we also backbite about the formation of the smallest particle of matter, atom. In this regard, the atom is innocent as it cannot defend itself. That is how secular sciences have indoctrinated us.

We need to work on ourselves instead of occupying ourselves with matter itself or other people. Media is the biggest gossiper of all times. Quran strongly encourages us to not gossip and backbite. Let us study the following verse and see what is happening within us:



***“O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion, indeed some suspicions are sins. And spy not, neither backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it. And be conscious of God. For God is an Acceptor of repentance and Merciful”. Hujurat (49):12***

Quranic verses that literally sound like a commanding statement should never be read as a commanding one. The Creator is just offering us something for us to decide about. Read the Quran like this and your understanding will change; by no means is the Quran a book of code.

If a verse starts with “**O you who believe**”, it actually discloses what is expected from us to understand about the meaning of the content of the verse through belief perspective. If a verse starts with “**O Human Beings**”, it encourages us to use our human qualities. In this regard, everything in existence is created for our benefit. Our human qualities are given to us to be utilized in the name of the Giver. If we use them, we benefit from them. The Creator provides us with guidance on how to live life; by no means does He command us to do anything. He teaches us that if we pray, we will benefit (we will live in a Paradise life in this world without contradicting our own reality). The choice is ours. If we do not take the advice, we ourselves face the consequences i.e. we suffer and that is similar to punishing ourselves in this world. Pain is the result of us harming ourselves. The punishment in the hereafter is another matter. We are talking about the result of our choices here on earth.

* Analogy: A student does not study, gets an F grade and starts complaining that the teacher failed him. The teacher did not fail him but the student failed himself; he learned nothing. **The result of learning nothing is a failure in life.**
* Similarly, our Creator is the Educator. He is teaching us that if we do not use our human qualities to attach our existence to Him, we lose the benefit of belonging to an Absolute Source and turn our own existence into a futile being. As a result, we create our own Hell. It is not punishment from God.

Let us look into the topics covered in the verse above:

1. **Suspicion-**

We can free ourselves from any negative attitude (suspicion, fear…) towards creation if we read the scripture by extracting the right guidance. The Prophet (pbuh) once narrated in a hadith: “A time will come when a woman will travel alone from one corner of this land to the other without any fear”. That is the sign that “***imaan***” which is belief will prevail on earth.

* **Lesson:** In our journey of life, when we trust the Creator, we avoid many **suspicions**. “Traveling without fear” means to free ourselves from any negative feelings or attitude. This, in turn leads to a full positive outlook towards life.

To enhance our understanding of the subject which seems to be of great importance at the societal and individual level, let us look into the following short scenario (that was presented as a survey in a class of approximately 50 students).

Scenario: Three friends, A, B, C are sitting in a room. B walks out and leaves his iPhone on the table. There are only two people in the room now. The room is such that no one else can get in. When B gets back, his iPhone is not on the table anymore. He asks A and C if any of them has taken his iPhone. None of them confesses to have taken the iPhone. Someone surely has taken it.

* *What do you think?* Please fill in the blank: “One friend is surely\_\_\_”.

The possible answers to this scenario (above) are:

1. One friend is “lying”.
2. One friend is “innocent”.

As a result of this survey, only 5% of the students gave a positive response (innocent.) 95% of the students replied “lying.” The positive attitude demonstrates itself in the answer that one of them is innocent. But since he does not know who is innocent, so he will take a positive attitude towards both of them. This person will always be living with innocent people as far as he is concerned. Whereas, those people who replied with “lying” do not know who is lying, so they will be treating both of them as possible liars. These students will be living with lying people as far as they live with them. Consequently, their attitude towards this world will be as the world is bad. Thus, regarding the Creator of this world is the One Who Created a bad world for them.

This shows that **we need to shift our attitude towards creation i.e. respect the existence of His act of creation.** We need to trust people in general unless we have obvious evidence. If we have evidence, we need to take it to the court. A judge by profession judges according to the evidence that is provided to him. A judge does not have any personal interest with the subject matter. Thus, if we are not a judge, we cannot make judgments about other people’s act. And so, if evidence is presented against a certain individual or event, we are to always maintain a non-judgmental attitude towards the event or individual. Example: If my neighbor steals, should I respect the existence of the neighbor? Yes, but I need to reject “the act of stealing”.

* When we have a positive attitude towards creation, we will ultimately trust the Creator more.

If everything around us is negative, we will be **suspicious** towards the universe. Again, everything in the universe is working for our benefit. We cannot come up with any evidence that something is working against our benefit. Even death needs to be looked at with a positive lens as it is a transformation from one stage of existence to another. Without criticizing the creation, we have to take our responsibility towards the creation. Avoid death, but do not criticize the existence of death. Avoid harmful things but do not criticize their existence. Example: Lava erupts from a volcano. If I got the evidence that lava can kill me, then I need to take precautions and stay away from it. By no means should I develop a negative attitude towards volcano.

* THINK: *Which kind of attitude am I taking towards creation?*

Quran’s advice is to maintain a positive attitude and love creation; only then can we love its Creator. In the essence of creation, goodness lies. There is Mercy and purpose in the existence of every created thing. Spider, rats…are all here for a purpose. If someone says: “I love God but I hate rats”. This person is insulting His creation and thus the Creator. There is a contradiction here i.e. we cannot love God and not love His creation. In order to respect the Creator, we have to be respectful towards creation. This can only take place if we believe that the things are created. If we do not believe that something is created, then we will not value it because it will carry no meaning for us due to its transient nature. On the other hand, if we believe that something is created, then it has a Creator. Only when we are sure that things have a Creator, we try to see the wisdom in its existence, rather than coming to a quick conclusion that it is bad just because I am created with the sense of disliking it, and respecting its existence, consequently respecting His creation. **A person is a believer when he/she respects creation.**

1. **Sinning-**

**Sinning** is doing something wrong which eventually harms us. While sinning, we are doing something against the Will of the Creator and so we are being disobedient. But, by doing something against the Will of the Creator and disobeying Him we are not harming Him. In fact, by not benefitting from the guidance of our Creator we are harming ourselves; we contradict the way we are made. **Example:** If I put my hand on fire, my hand burns and it hurts. Now I realized that I made a mistake but I still respect the creation of fire and my burnt hand. One should just admit their wrongdoing and repent without criticizing the creation of the event.

1. **Spying-**

**Spying** is to look for any means to find a fault in a person. When we spy, it hurts because we will end up having a judgmental attitude towards that person. Eventually, we will disrespect creation (as discussed above). We need to work with whatever the Creator shows in front of us. Quran exclusively emphasizes on not to spy.

1. **Backbiting-**

Mostly, if we do not accept that things are created with a purpose, we usually backbite about them. We have to acknowledge the right of existence of everything. **Backbiting** occurs while we are making a negative judgment about someone’s attitude behind their presence. They are not there, they cannot defend themselves, and at that moment, they are dead for us. It is as if we have obliterated them from our existence (or we are eating them). If we are criticizing one characteristic of that person, we are eating one attribute of their existence. 1% of that person is dead for us. **“Flesh”** means that we have partially killed that person’s existence in our world.

**Brothers** are all creatures, coming from the same Source; anything which brings news from the Creator. We have to learn how to be brothers to anything which exists. Lie does not exist but a liar exists. Unbelief does not exist but unbeliever exists. Evil does not exist but a person’s evil act (wrong choice) exists. Non-existence is evil and so it has no existence.

We also **backbite** about our own self when we say: “I am a bad man, I cannot do this”. It is as if our Creator has not created us perfect. With this attitude, we are gossiping about God that He has not done a good job in creating us. In this way, we are gossiping about some of His attributes. **That’s why we got to have a positive attitude towards anything which exists** because everything is given existence by the Creator, and existence is for a good purpose bringing us news about their Creator. In secular psychology, this is called *positive energy*. There is no negative energy in creation; there is only negative attitude by us.

Universe is an orphan and we need to make sure not to eat the rights of the orphan. We have to learn how to respect creation in order to be honest with our conclusion that we believe in God Who is the Creator of every thing. We need to learn to apply this consciousness in our lives. This is religion, much needed to establish our belief.

1. **God Consciousness-**

Bottom line, we have to respect creation and be conscious of the Creator. That was the mission of the Prophet (pbuh) to teach us how to connect with God in our daily lives.

* Prophetic mission is in place to help us see and read the Creator’s manifestation in our own lives.

We are created with the ability to make mistakes, therefore we have to repent. When we repent, we value our existence. Instead of criticizing our creation, we need acknowledge our wrong doings and decide not to repeat it ever again. Learn from the mistakes, educate yourself not to repeat them, do not backbite nor interpret them according to your own worldview. The door to repentance is always open.

In conclusion, any perception carrying a negative connotation about an event falls under suspicion and backbiting. Unhealthy society produces unhealthy people. If there is one thief at a place, it does not mean that everyone is a thief in that place. Similarly, a person may avoid every type of interaction with the universe in order to avoid catching germs found at a certain place. With such restrictions, it is as if a person puts himself in a cage. If we are suspicious about everything, we create our own enemy. This attitude towards creation sows seeds of hatred towards God. We need to interact with creation with a positive attitude that is the only way to establish a healthy relationship with the Creator.