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| **Date** | Wednesday, March 23, 2016 |
| **Topic** | “Me and the Other”- How to overcome Loneliness |
| **Part** | 2 |

Recap: God describes Himself as Supreme and as beyond my perception. Since He is Supreme and beyond my perception, what should I do then? I need to solve this problem. How? Well, first of all, it is extremely important to understand that the universe is created, it has a Creator and I am created and I have a Creator called “God”. This is the beginning. Now what?

The major understanding of religion among most people is that God has sent a religion to human beings through the Prophets. It is correct but it does not help me much in solving my problem of loneliness. I cannot reduce religion to learning what to do at certain times and what to avoid in certain situations. Again, my problems remain unsolved. I have endless expectations that are left unfulfilled.

***Who am “I” and who is the “other”?***

* Me= Who I am?
* Other= what the universe is all about?

Since I cannot overcome my expectations, I suffer from loneliness which can never be solved if I keep covering it up with external activities (employment, marriage, meet ups, unconscious religious rituals, addiction to smoking, drinking alcohol are all of the same nature etc. They all are nothing but external attempts to run away from our feeling lonely). When a class or gathering is over, I am all alone. As I am sitting alone in my life, I never feel satisfied in my being. That is the problem. Similarly, I may find myself indecisive in certain life situations because I am always presented with alternatives. Since everything seems so attractive, I can never be sure which alternative is better. One may think they would be better off if they get married or get employed… Again, these are external factors which never satisfy anyone. I may make choices based on these external factors but I am always left to wonder the end result. As an unsatisfied person, I still remain alone.

My decisions on objects/events are based on my perceptions and expectations. Example: When I go to the store, as a fashionista I get attracted to the latest trend. In such a case, my expectations are pointed towards what is attractive. My expectations make me decide what is good or bad for me, not because one object is better than the other. **It all comes down to how do I perceive my life and what matters do I value?**

* Loneliness is not external, it is an internal problem.
* Loneliness has to do with my perception of existence.
* External factors have no effect on me.
* Since loneliness is an internal problem, the solution for it also must be internal.

The universe is always carrying a message to me and I may chose or not chose to listen to it. Just as I select a particular TV channel to watch, I make decisions based on my expectations. *Why doesn’t this work?* Because I am expecting external factors to satisfy me and they do not. We all have different expectations. Example: I may expect a promotion at work or seek a higher salary. For someone else, that same amount of money may meet his/her expectations. If I want to solve my problems, I need to solve them from within myself i.e. ***how am I perceiving the world?***

Analogy: If a child is unhappy by nature, at the end of the day he never gets satisfied despite the fact that you keep giving him a new toy every day. It is an internal problem, not external. You can teach and educate him to find satisfaction in his own being and not by giving him the toys. Similarly, human beings quarrel within their own selves because of trying to meet their expectations, i.e, by getting different kind of “toys” for grownups.

* Don’t look for external factors to meet your expectations.
* In order to meet my expectations, I have to change my perception of the world.

My perception of my own existence depends on how I perceive the world. I have to think about what I mean when I say “I believe in God”. I cannot relate God to myself if I do not change the direction of my expectations. Be careful!

Last week we discussed how seeing an object with only its physical form is a materialistic view (please refer to the notes dated 03/16/16). Then, we discussed seeing the object as a reflection of its Creator’s qualities. For instance, sun’s reflection in the mirror reflects light, heat, color.

* Believer= one who believes that he is created and the universe is created.
* **Conscious believer**= the best believer is more conscious of what belief requires of her/him. In his/her eyes, the tree is created and it is demonstrating the qualities of its Creator.
* Example: I see the tree is created and reflects the qualities of its Creator. Tree is a mirror reflecting physical luminous characteristics or meaning.

A materialist looks at the tree as a physical created object (**first stage**). Believer looks at the tree as created by God (**second stage**). A conscious believer further expands his view by recognizing that the Creator of the tree who is God, is presenting His Mercy directly to me through the tree (**third stage**). Let us now delve into the third type of reflection, the deepest one.

1. **Reflections of luminous spirits. The meanings of the tree’s qualities consciously represented by conscious beings. The meaning of the qualities of the tree is consciously conversing with the conscious observers (human beings). These conscious conversations are carried to human beings by some vessels which are called “angels”.**

It is a known Prophetic narration that every drop of rain is Mercy brought down by an angel. *What does it mean?* We need to go beyond the second stage to understand that Mercy is coming down. Example: When food is ready in front of me, the Nourisher God is introducing Itself to me. This is God’s Mercy presented to me INSTEAD of saying that it is natural, happened to be accidentally developed by itself as it is, or prepared by your spouse/parent/chef/friend.

Analogy: You receive a letter from a loved one. Some may view it as a piece of paper with something written on it while understanding only the literal meaning of the text written. You may view it as a “source” of meaning being transferred by the author of the text (your loved ones). The text is the refection of the ideas of its author and I just directly connect with the mind and the feelings of the author of the text towards me.

* Similarly, this world reflects attributes of God. My perception of the letter reflects my mirror of existence.

In the tree example (above), the meaning of the qualities of the tree is consciously conversing with the conscious observers (human beings). This conscious conversation is carried to human beings by some vessels called “angels” (abstract meaning I get from creation).

Materialists are mostly illiterate in front of creation. They may look at a statue and may just notice the substance it is made of. Everyone admires the statue’s beauty. For some, the statue may represent the qualities of the sculptor, an abstract notion. That is how a believer observes the universe. **Our belief should be internal based on logical conclusions.**

For example, I can swim in the sea realizing that I am in water unlike the fish which is already in the water, its living environment. The fish just sees and lives in water unaware of the outside world. We are mostly living like the fish here on earth where our atmosphere of living is air. We don’t usually realize the conditions we live in, that we cannot isolate our lives from the atmosphere we are in. In other words, I cannot get out of existence. These are my given conditions in the universe. I may change by external conditions by relocating to a new place but at the end of the day, I am still given existence under the same sky which is beautiful.

Our sad reality is that the third stage never occurs in our lives that is why we are lonely. Materialists see a tree as living cells. Believers are able to make the connection to the Source of their existence. **When a believer gets nourishment/fruits from the tree, he sees God’s Mercy in it.** With this methodology, we can bet that the Prophet (pbuh) did not only look at the tree as an object but also as a direct source of meaning coming through its Creator. The perception of seeing nothing but all the qualities communicating with one’s being. All of my senses should detect the qualities that are manifesting in the tree. **The only way for me to solve the problem is to understand the meaning directly carried to me consciously.** Following this methodology I am never alone. I am always with my Creator under every circumstance. **With this realization, I can never feel lonely because everything is a means of bringing news to me from the Creator. My perception of existence changes with this realization since everything around me is a means of communicating with the Creator.** If I am not aware of the meaning being transmitted, I am missing on the conversation with the Creator. The more I know this means of communication, the more I communicate with the “sculptor”.

Everything around me is a vessel of communication with the Creator. **These vessels of communication are conscious beings that are consciously communicating with me.** That is how I become aware of what really matters and how I perceive things around me. Any meaning that is transferred to me is like a luminous spirit, directly communicating with me. The Quran refers to these beings as “angels”. **Thus, nothing bothers a person that is directly communicating with the Creator through these vessels carrying meaning called “angels”.**

When I look at an old painting, I may not appreciate it as much as an art appraiser who is an expert would. I may see the material, the colors and the designs and even I may accept that it is done by and artist at most whereas the expert would see the qualities in the art and would relate the whole background of the artist, what influenced the artist, etc. Just as this art expert has developed his/her potentialities, I have to work on my senses to directly communicate with the things around me and see the qualities manifested of their Creator. Those things are carrying meanings through which I communicate with their Creator.

***“Verily, God and His angels bless the Prophet. O you who believe bless him and give yourselves up [to his guidance] in utter self-surrender.” Azhab (33):56***

Any meaning that is carried to me, the carrier is the angel. How do I communicate with the meaning? We never question this phenomenon. I just say I am reading and I understand. In reality, we are always communicating through angels (vessels as mentioned above) that carries messages to us. Whether we are conscious of them or not depends on our perception of the world. **We need to be aware that there are non-physical beings carrying the message that allows me, a conscious human being, to communicate with the Creator.**

* Ability to smell, taste, hear, perceive, imagine, dream…all the meanings I experience through my senses and feelings are carried to me through angels.
* The meanings of the qualities of the tiniest particle, atom, is carried by angels.

***What does “bless” in the above verse mean?***We usually just utter the words conveying our blessings to the Prophet (pbuh). We may not actually realize what we mean when we utter the words, a huge reduction of the verse. This is a huge statement that “God and his angels bless the Prophet”. I can ask that since God created the prophet: why does He need to bless him? *What does it mean when God blesses the Prophet?*
Further questions arises that what does the Prophet represent for me? If I see him as a physical entity then he is no longer present for me in my life. **However the Prophet is represented by the message he brings which should always be alive in my life.**

* Blessings to the Prophet means that I am aware that I am accepting the teaching brought by the Prophet (pbuh) and so I ask to be blessed in seeking this path as I am in full conformity with the message. When I agree with one behavior or statement of the Prophet, that much I support his message, in my companionship to him. **When I agree with his entire message then I support his message fully and become the best companion. We need to practice living with the prophet and communicating through the angels with God right now.**