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| **Date** | Wednesday, March 16, 2016 |
| **Topic** | Me and the Other: Overcoming Loneliness |
| **Part** | 1 |

Most of us grow up knowing that the universe is created. The Creator of the universe created me and at the same time tells me that It is beyond my reach, that I will not be able to comprehend It. As a result of this dilemma, my emotions and feelings that constitute my overall being are left alone. I am left with saying to myself that if there must be a Creator, what does it have to do with me? My relationship with the Creator is superficial, ritualistic obligations similar to paying yearly taxes, i.e. I do my rituals and continue on with my regular life routines. Again, I am left alone. I cannot know what God is really. I cannot give it a shape or form. I cannot personify It either not because some verse says so but the whole idea of imagining God seems impossible. ***How do I find God then?*** It really seems alien to me. Again, I am left all alone.

If I question the effect of my belief, it is bringing no value to my current existence. Even if I force myself to feel God through various meditation techniques, It is still alien to me. ***How then on earth can I feel the presence of God in myself?*** There must be a practical way of feeling It and interacting with It. First, I need to understand that God’s existence is absolute through the following analogy: A painter paints a painting. I interact with the painting. It is impossible for me to find the painter in the painting because it is not of the nature of the painting. Similarly, the Creator is not of the nature of this universe.

Contrary to popular belief, dispelling loneliness has little to do with being around family, friends, community and gatherings. Some may even think that having companionship may solve their loneliness. As soon as the party leaves, the pain of loneliness takes its toll which means that the events/objects do not satisfy me as far as my existence is concerned. We have to be honest to ourselves and STOP running away from our reality. The more we cover up this pain, the more it grows. These are temporary fixes that do not establish firm ***confidence*** within me. If I were to have a live and relatable contact with my Absolute Creator, then I would not experience pain from separation and loneliness.

***The biggest question is really how to solve the problem of loneliness?***

If I feel lonely at times, it means that I am created with the ability to feel lonely. If it is part of my creation, then there must be a solution to it. Just as there is a solution to every situation that I encounter, for instance when I am thirsty, there is water available to quench my thirst. My thirst is the evidence of the existence of the liquid. Similarly, if I experience loneliness and I do not want it, then it is the sign that there must be a way to overcome it. **I have to understand that my need, my impotence is the sign of the existence of a solution i.e. a Source that fulfills my needs.**

Analogy: A child feels secure when his parents are in his vicinity. As soon as the parents are out of his vicinity, the child feels lonely and cries because he does not feel secure. Similarly, a grown human is supposed to feel secure when he feels the presence of his Lord. Otherwise, he feels lonely.

The child’s feeling in the analogy is my feeling. That is how the Creator has encoded me to experience disliking loneliness when I do not feel the Creator’s presence within me. In other words, unbelief is something unbearable to my existence. If I am not aware of what I mean by “God”, then I can never experience what the child goes through when the parents are not around. As soon as the child realizes that the parents are next to her, she is relieved from loneliness. Similarly, if I realize and feel that I am always with my Creator that is ***imaan* (belief)**.

Experiencing creation lets me admit that God exists. That is how I experience the effect of belief which the Quran refers to, that I want to feel. Quran teaches us how to establish the sense of feeling secure in our existence. The very concept of “orphan” in the Quran means not having a point of reference to refer to in order to feel secure in one’s existence. **When I am in a state of “unbelief”, I am an orphan.** Every unbeliever is an orphan. It is known that the Prophet (pbuh) fed the orphans. That is, he helped them see the reality and opened the door of “belief’ for them which got them out of “loneliness” and got them to unite under one God.

* **When I am aware that I have a Protector, I can relate my existence to It, then I am not an orphan anymore.**

Unlike the child, I have to intellectually establish a relationship between me and my Creator. My personal experience says that I can have a relation between myself and the Creator through the creation demonstrated in front of me. Then I can communicate through this demonstration and reach out the Creator without giving any shape/form to It but understand who He is through studying and communicating Its work, the universe (where It manifests Itself). ***How am I going to do that?*** By reflecting on creation. Usually, when we reflect on creation, we forget that we are part of creation and conclude that others are being created. After that stage, I realize that I must be created as well. Through the others, I get to know me.

***How should I communicate with creation in order to get close to the Creator?***

Here are the stages or levels that human beings undergo:

1. **Reflections of the dense physical objects (the reflection of a tree in the mirror). The tree’s outward’s shape is reflecting in the mirror. (Unbelievers see the tree as matter only or a living object at the most).**

* At this stage, since we see this world within its physical aspect only, we see objects within their physical aspect as well. Example: here is a tree, plant, man… We start seeing physical objects and start questioning the nature of the physical objects. That is how we start our communication with the world. How we perceive the objects reflects in our minds and senses. If I see a tree as just wood, then it reflects in my mirror. According to this stage of reflection, I communicate with the physical bodies of the objects.

1. **Reflection of Physical luminous objects. (The sun light in the mirror). The tree is reflecting the qualities of its Creator (Believer).**

* At this stage, sunlight in the mirror reflects not only the sun but also light, heat, color… This type of reflection is also related to meanings I get from the objects. Example: This is a cat, I like it, I don’t like it. This is a pear; I love the taste of it. I start relating meanings extracted to my sensual world. I start communicating with the physical object through its non-physical aspect or qualities.

1. **Reflections of luminous spirit. 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”.**

* Understand that we are within the physical world. We have to communicate with the physical world. This is the real world, not imaginary.
* Meaning that a book carries to me is not coming from the paper and ink. Similarly, the quality of art manifested in a painting excites me. None of these have anything to do with the physical matters of the objects but I can only communicate with the meaning if and only if I communicate with the physical object.

I can communicate with the quality of art and get to know the artist. If I do not look at his work, how am I going to communicate with the artist? I can only communicate with the artist through his work. The Artist says: “I am truth (*haaq*)”. I inquire what is the truth? It means that you cannot imagine It in physical form but you can communicate with It as the One who is the Owner of this art.