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| **Date** | Wednesday, December 9, 2015 |
| **Topic** | ***How to read the scripture within its own proper definition?*** |
| **Part** |  |

The reader of any scripture should not start reading the text by arguing about its content. Primarily, the approach to reading the scripture is what needs elaboration. If I read the scripture as a book written by a wise man, I can never benefit from its teachings as a universal guide to penetrate into the meaning of existence. In this case, the wise man is historical, bound within time and space and I read his writings according to his capacity of understanding and conditions.  All my expectations will be according to his conditions and I will never seek from this text a guidance to realize who I am here and now.  That is how the content of the scripture loses its significance. On the other hand, if I read the scripture as the Word of the Creator of the universe that is not bound to time space, as it claims to be, I may be on my way to making sense of its claims within the conditions my present existence, for the Speaker claims to be Omnipresent and expects to give guidance to my human inquiries.  The requisite here is to **approach** the scripture with a fresh mind with no bias.

The text speaks to me directly not historically.  I need to see the consistency in its claim.  After I read and analyze it, I must be able to see the consistency between what it claims to be, what I extracted from it and my overall experience with the universe.  If all three coincide with each other, only then can I confirm: “Yes it is the Word of a One that has Absolute knowledge and knows me right now.  This One is the Creator of the universe and is my Creator and its claim in the scripture does not contradict my human senses.” Otherwise, if something contradicts my reality, then I can reject that this is not the Word of the Creator.

* The pre-assumed notion of believing in a Creator is irrelevant when reading scriptures.
* Any pre-assumed expectations that I have does not mean that I have to necessarily confirm it.
* Reading the text as it claims to be is different than reading the text to believe in it.
* I need to read the text as it claims to be.  As a result, I may establish confidence in the truthfulness of its claim to be the Guiding Speech of my Creator within myself, if only it satisfies my human abilities.

Analogy:  Someone presents me with a book claiming that it is a chemistry book.  After studying it, I come to the conclusion that it is not a chemistry book but a law book.   However, I started reading it as a chemistry book (regular reasoning process) because that is how it was presented to me.

* Similarly, someone presents me with a book claiming that it is from the Creator of the universe. I start reading the book as being the Speech from the Creator of the universe. Additionally, I may not have any prior concept of the Creator of the universe.
* My studying and analyzing the book may lead me to confirm or not confirm the initial claim.
* If I am able to confirm the initial claim, it means that I am convinced with what the text claims to be as it resonates with my being.
* If I am not able to confirm the initial claim, there are two options:

1.       My **approach** is wrong.

2.       The text is not consistent with its claim.

* Without being convinced about the content of the text, I cannot confirm what the Speaker claims to be my Creator.
* Imitation is not belief!!!

My **approach** is based on my assumption which is nothing but my perception of how I see the universe and my being in it.  In other words, my worldview is important as it changes everything.

* My perception changes everything in my relationship with the object (scripture).
* When I am reading the Quran that claims to be the Word of the Creator of the universe, my **approach** to the Quran will be according to my perception of it.
* Example:  A computer is presented to me as a computer. But, my perception is that it is a microwave machine. I try to heat my lunch in it and it does not work. Then, I will reject this “microwave machine,” which is my perception of it, and claim that it is no good for anything. In fact, it is a computer machine and it should be used to send emails, not heating lunch! Even if we initially do not confirm it to be a computer, we should treat it as it says that it is a computer. After trying we experience that whether it works as a computer or not. Only then can we confirm it that it is a computer. And if it does not work as a computer, then we reject its claim to be a computer.
* Perception is essential in analyzing any matter!

Scenario: Jack and Mary are both eating an orange.

* Jack’s perception of the orange is a present from the Creator of the universe.  For Jack, the orange is a message bearer bringing news: “I am from the Creator of the universe, It acknowledges you and is the One treating you with me.”
* Maria’s perception of the orange is that it is a delicious fruit harvested in California and costs only a couple of cents.
* When Jack peels the orange, his eyes are full of tears as he realizes that his Creator really communicates with him. Maria asks Jack why he is crying.  Jack replies: “I did not realize that I am a precious being”.  My Creator acknowledges me through many means and I am experiencing it.  In Maria’s perception, the orange is just like any other ordinary being; a fruit grown naturally and we eat it.  That is how naturalists perceive the world.
* As long as Maria and Jack do not examine the orange from each other’s perspective, i.e. Maria examines the orange as to be the manifested Mercy of its Creator, and Jack examines the orange as to be a natural thing happened to be an orange by chance, and then both conclude whether their examinations resulted in a positive or negative experience, they will not be able to understand each other. They can never share the common values among themselves and establish a confirmed view of their lives. They may pretend to be respectful to each other’s views although there will be no real love between them. Their tolerance to each other will remain nothing more than “hypocrisy.”

Similar to Jack and Mary’s scenario above, I communicate with the scripture based on the perception I have of objects/events in the universe.  If I insist on my perception and approach the text without paying attention to what the text itself claims to be and read it, I will never be able to penetrate into the content of the text. I will always remain alien to it.

On the other hand, I may approach the text as it claims to be but never question the content of the text whether it is consistent with what it claims to be or not, just accept what it says and imitatively follow the content. In this approach, too, I will never be able to penetrate into the content of the text. I will always remain alien to it.

The human requisite is: To approach the text as it claims to be and then read and see whether the content is consistent with what it claims to be.

Most people read the Quran in two ways:

1. Book by Muhammad, as an extension to other books.
2. Word of God that one has to accept and confirm without questioning.

One has to read the Quran with a free mind to see the consistency in its claim. Thus, my approach to the text is more important than my belief in the text. Most commentators of the Quran are not emphasizing this important approach.  Human beings must first work on their approach and adjust their understanding accordingly.

Quran claims: “I am the word of God, I know you. I am the Creator of your senses and the space-time you are in. I know what you need, you need guidance right now. This is my guidance to you, treat me accordingly and see in my content if I am consistent or not in my claim.  Only when you have a right approach in your own search, you will see whether I am consistent or not in my claim.”

The scripture itself claims that whatever I hear from the Speaker, I shall find it not contradicting my reality. “We hear and we obey” (*sa’mina wa’taana*) is not a command but a call that I can follow that which is presented to me. This particular verse must be understood: “O reader! You should read me and find yourself satisfied with what you read and only then can you obey me. Otherwise, your obedience cannot be obedience.

* My responsibility is to be consistent within myself.

One extracts meanings from scriptures based on their worldview. Let us take the example of the following verse:



***“And slay them wherever you may come upon them, and drive them away from wherever they drove you away ...” (Al-Baqara 2:191)***

Here are some interpretations of this verse based on one’s perception of the universe:

1. The followers of this book will find me and kill me because I am not a Muslim.   In order to defend myself, I have to kill as well. Obviously, if one describes themselves as an animate being only, then one is concerned with defending the body only.
2. If I do not have enmity with anyone, then this verse does not apply to me.
3. I have to drive outsiders away from my state as it belongs to my forefathers.
4. I have to push back anyone coming from the North Pole back to the North Pole.

**Now, let us analyze this verse based on a fresh approach as discussed earlier.** **The Speaker in the text says:** “I am speaking to you right now in order to give you guidance that you have to defend yourself from the attacker wherever it comes to you. You have to drive it back from the way it drew you back”.

* I come across a statement (advertisement): “things are happening naturally”.
* I am human being consisting of body and my human qualities, all of which is called “humanity”. My body is not under attack right now. But the Qur’an claims that it is speaking to me related to my reality right now. I have to understand this statement as far as not my body is concerned because it is not under attack but my humanity is. This statement is saying that I am a natural thing, happened to be with no purpose, no meaning? *Am I?*
* I have to question it as there is an attack on me now: *Can things really happen naturally?*
* Quran claims that attributing things to “nature” is a “false ideology”.
* Let me investigate what the Quran claims by questioning it.
* When questioning it, know that advertisements are based on findings from laboratory experiments.
* Laboratory experiment is a completely different phenomenon than its interpretation.
* This statement claims that things are happening naturally but how can I prove the existence of “natural”.
* If I cannot confirm the content of the above statement I will find it attacking my worldview. In order to defend my worldview I have to kill this attack wherever I find it!
* This is an attack on my being. I need to attack back i.e. question it in order to defend my worldview and drive this idea back to where it came from.

From the above points, we realize that our approach to the text is crucial to the guidance we extract from it. If you perceive creation to be consisting of only animate beings, you are bound to interpret the scripture accordingly. Additionally, reading it historically confines the One speaking (Creator of the universe) to a particular time frame only.

Therefore, approach the text freely here and now as it claims to be coming from my Creator here and now. Perception will settle in accordingly. Freeing yourself from prior misconceptions, biases is a pre-requisite to belief.

* **Freedom comes before belief.**

We usually do not hear this type of freedom in the mainstream religions. What we hear is that “you got to have faith to believe!” or “as long as you belong to this community, you are saved”.

* It is easy to call people to believe as opposed to calling people to investigate and freely think about a concept.

Studying the above verse helps us understand how the arguments put forth in mainstream media are based on the wrong approach. People define killing in terms of “body” only. Why aren’t we defining killing in terms of ideas and lies (kill the lie)? We never think deeply about our being in this universe (existence).

What makes me a human being is my body, human senses, capacity and understanding.

* The one speaking to me in the Quran is not speaking to my body but human capacity.

Let us look into another verse:

In Chapter Ma’idah (5): 32 reads in a rough English translation as follows:

“*If one saves a life, it should be as though he had saved the lives of all mankind. If one slays a human being, it should be as though he has slain all mankind*.”

* If I give hope to one person in despair, then that would imply that the cure is applicable to all human beings looking to get out of despair.
* If I put one person in despair letting him/her know that life is meaningless, it means that I have put all human beings in despair because this way of interpreting life is wrong and puts every human being in a despaired feeling.

Reading the Quran according to my perception of the universe and not according to the definition of the Quran itself is misleading. In this case, I will be applying my perception to the words of the Quran. I may even refer to dictionary meanings and try to get guidance (dictionary meaning of “killing” can be very misleading). That is why most do not prefer going back in time as they feel that the Quran is more valuable without referring to dictionary meanings that have developed over time. **Regardless, the Quran alongside the universe is always a new revelation.**

* Example: the dictionary meaning of “*kufr*” is unbelief. An unbeliever does not consist of body only. Human beings are housed inside a body that is given to them. The body itself is an act of creation.
* Narration: There was a funeral and some people were carrying the body of a hypocrite person and the Prophet (pbuh) stood up to pay respect. One person stated that the funeral is that of a hypocrite (*munafiq*). The reply was that “hypocrisy” is dead, what is left is the body which is innocent as it glorifies its Maker.

Summary:

* Quran is the speech of the Creator.
* My body is not under attack right now.
* If I see my being as consisting of body only, I am bound to reject the Quran.
* If no one is harming my body right now how do I practice retribution?
* I can do that by demonstrating the reality of the Creator right now (that is retribution)
* Every day I am under attack with secular atheist ideas all around me in the form of public media, education institutions, advertisements, secular civilizations etc.
* All these verses are related to my real conditions right now.
* If my **approach** to the Quran is wrong, the definition that I give to it will be wrong, as it will contradict my reality and based according to my worldview, which is, for example, I am what my body is. Although the scripture claims to be the speech of my Creator speaking to me, I may find it not related to my reality “now”. When I read the above verse, for instance, I will understand that the verse is commanding me to kill the body of the unbelievers anywhere I find them. This commandment contradicts my reality. Thus, it must be rejected. I must question my understanding of “human being” from the very beginning. The Qur’an’s presentation of the idea of “human being” is not body almost at all, but whole human qualities.
* Change your **approach**: Read the Quran exactly as you are now. You will find the relevance in its claim.
* We ought to read the word of God!

To be in constant renewal of our being is the definition of a “human being”. In order to make sense of any matter, it is imperative that we start questioning our very own being. When I am struck with a feeling, are my cells by themselves producing the feelings? I need to question and search for the answers. Through giving me certain feelings, the Creator of the universe that happens to be my Creator as well introduces itself to me: “I am the One who is the Creator of this feeling as well as your cells within a certain order.” The Speaker in the Quran suggests to me whether I can ascribe the existence of this feeling to anything else other than It. The existence of everything belongs to It. Even the existence of my imagination belongs to It, the Creator of the universe. **The existence of my feelings is evidence that everything is created by the Creator of the universe.**

* The Creator is speaking to you right now at this very moment while you are given existence by It right now.