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| **Date** | Saturday, June 25 2016 |
| **Topic** | Creation is Love |
| **Part** | 5 |

 **The 24th Word- (continuation)**

**“Indeed, man loves firstly himself, then his relations, then his nation, then living creatures, then the universe, and the world. He is connected with all these spheres. He may receive pleasures at their pleasure and pain at their pain. However, since nothing is stable in this world of upheavals and revolutions swift as the wind, man’s wretched heart is constantly wounded.”**

***What is the Quranic definition of “nation”?*** Those people who follow the journey of questioning the signs in the universe, and arrive at the conclusion that **they are indeed created, and their Creator must be The Creator of the whole Universe, who *must be* Absolute and Infinite, are part of One Nation; the Nation of Abraham.** According to the Qur’an, all of those who follow this Abrahamic tradition, including Moses, Jesus, and all of the Prophets of God, are One Nation. (*“ummah”* is a common term used now among the Muslim community)

From the above definition, we can deduce that a person who believes in God as the sole Creator is a believer. **The religion of a believer is his innate being (*fitrah*). In other words, “uncorrupted” human nature is referred to as *“fitrah”.***  When human nature gets corrupted, a person gets deviated from the religion of Abraham. Thus, the understanding of appropriate human nature is my belief, as far as I am concerned. Those who have preserved their human nature share the same belief and thus constitute a “nation.”

***What is a Muslim?*** In the Quran, the term Muslim is not a “title” but an attitude i.e. one who submits his/her being to acknowledge the truth of his/her existence. That is, always coming to the conclusion: “**I am MADE and I have a Maker who is The Creator of the whole universe and I plan on committing to this Truth and submitting myself to it until death.** When you find the truth, you submit yourself to it.

***What is religion?*** My understanding of life which comprises my worldview i.e. the values I base my life on. That is, coming to the conclusion: “**I am acting according to my consciousness that I am made, I have a Maker who is The Creator of The Whole Universe.”** (*“deen”* is the term used to refer to what you believe in.)

Religion has nothing to do with acquiring a title or following a constitution. People who reject the religion of their society (mostly referred to as Agnostics) eliminate whatever they are told about religion and deem it to be wrong. At least they are brave to disassociate themselves from their inherited ancestral religion that makes no sense and gives a 'fake identity'.  Anyone in an agnostic situation is bound to search for answers and is on the right track. **Searching for answers to our human questions is part of our human nature (*fitrah*).** One has to start with at least having a general understanding of this universe and the purpose of its existence. **I have to discover my real nature and the true nature of the universe in order to understand 'religion'**. Unfortunately the term religion is used in religious institutions according to secular views without much questioning what it really means at the level of human existence. If we were to follow Abraham's religion (*millat-e-Ibrahim*), then as a nation, we need to have one purpose and share the same values where we come to an understanding that we are created beings belonging to an Absolute Creator.

***Do you love living beings?***

Answer: Yes, I find life attractive. It satisfies my human expectations.

***Are you a self-worshipper?***

Answer: No.

There is a contradiction. The person loves living creatures to satisfy his expectations and at the same time claims not to be a self-worshipper.

***In our understanding of ourselves, the universe and living beings, we need to relate everything to the purpose of our existence.***

Example: An inanimate being by itself is just matter but when it is given life, it becomes animate and suddenly all qualities of its Creator are manifested in it. As a result, of being amazed with all of creation around me, I realize endless qualities of its Creator. **This** **admiration of the Creator drives me closer to the Creator,** which leads me to conclude that the Creator is Absolute i.e. not of the nature of this universe. I cannot attribute the existence of these living beings to anything in the universe.

Let’s take some examples: A flower blossoming, a seed coming out of a fruit, a green leaf turning yellow. ***How can I attribute the qualities that I observe and experience to the elements themselves which also are in need to be given existence?*** The more I observe and experience different qualities in the universe, the more I get familiar with these qualities because I am given the ability to feel them. Hence, I get excited with the Maker of these qualities.

We love human beings first and then we love other living beings; that is how we are made. **My consciousness starts from reflecting on my own existence:**

1. Understand yourself: I am made to like myself first, then my relatives, then all other living beings.
2. Question the sense: Why do I love my child, friends, mom/dad…?
* Babies are a beautiful act of creation. Until one does not have a child, they cannot realize the attachment that takes place between parents and their children.
* Did my bodily elements change suddenly?
* Are elements emitting some power on me?

The sense of being amazed at every act of creation is “religion”. Fulfilling religious obligations is not “religion”. Without proper consciousness, no one can attain satisfaction in their life. I cannot explain the relationship with my relatives in a material sense. **Ask:** *What can be the source of existence the qualities exist in me to care about others?* *Why am I given qualities to care about others? Why am I given qualities to investigate the act of creation? Am I given existence to get a profession, get married, have children and live here for 85 years and then die?* There has got to be more to my existence here. I need to find out the true value of my existence.

**The society injects its values on us.** **We need to question the societal values**. Example: The society labels a person as rich, poor, single, widow, married, divorced, engineer, doctor etc. **Ask:** what does it mean for my human nature, my existence, my purpose? These are just societal values which do not define me as a human being. That is why **we have to strive to come back to our *fitrah* (natural state) and thus give priority to our human values.** You will soon find out that societal values have nothing to do with your reality or your true status in this universe. Every society has different values. Some 200 years ago, being married at 18 years of age was the norm. Today, people may think that 18 years old is too young and immature to tie the marriage knot. We need to develop our own values based on our *fitrah* i.e*. who I am? What am I doing here? What is my status in this universe?* **We have to THINK.** If someone does not reflect to understand the reality of his own existence, there is no hope for such a person. **We ought to take the reality of our own existence SERIOUSLY.**

* Question the values of society.
* Question the “legitimacy” of what is being presented in these discussions. Otherwise, you will keep imitating.
* Is it true what this author is saying?
* Let me think.
* **When you question, you start investigating.**
* **That is the way to establishing your belief system.**
* It is simple BUT it needs consistency!

**Do not sell your lives for promises that you are not satisfied with.** Example: if you stay up at night to pray during Ramadan, you will be rewarded. Are you satisfied with this? ***Well, how can I be satisfied with it if I have not THOUGHT about it?*** In order to be satisfied, you need to question. As you question, answers come. Otherwise you are bound to imitate societal/cultural religious values. Even if I come across true religious values, without questioning it, I cannot be satisfied because it will not hold true for me as I have not internalized it. Example: A person comes and says to me that ***lailaha*** (nothing in this universe has the power to create) is his principle. I feel that the person seems honest enough and so I follow his principle. Since the principle is not my own personal conclusion, I am on the path to imitating this person. Although, the person may be an envoy of God and presenting the truth, ***lailaha*** is still not my personal conclusion. If I myself have not questioned and I am not satisfied with the answers, that is not my belief. I can listen to people, but I myself need to digest it with my own questioning and finding the satisfactory answers to it.

Each sphere (category in creation) is connected with each other. Each sphere has the same message to convey to us and helps us realize who we are and what we are doing in this universe. Just as in every class, we learn something then we get to the next class and learn something else. **Similarly, every connection with our environment is a means of learning, reaching a higher realization and becoming more aware of our reality.** We cannot just stop when we reach a certain societal aim (profession, marital status or religious status). Human beings are not created with static qualities to reach such aims because our human qualities, they all are dynamic, they have no end. We have to UTILIZE our human qualities.

In any sphere of study, there is no end. The deeper you go, the more you realize that there is more to discover. This universe is a treasure with no end. The deeper you investigate creation and its existence, the more you unravel the qualities in existence. That is how human beings are made (***fitrah***) and that is why externalizing religion is out of our *fitrah* (human nature). External religion is no different than societal values which call human beings to come and do something instead of calling them to discover their unlimited potentialities. External religion does not remind you that you have to discover yourself at an existential level and that you have to reflect on your own being. **To avoid externalization, we need to refer the message of the Quran to our own being/position.**

Let’s say you have a cat as your pet and it is wounded, can you ignore it? No. Why? I find myself possessing qualities where I cannot ignore the wounded cat. Which kind of human qualities do you have which gets you interested in helping the cat? Who can be the Source of existence of these feelings to help a cat? These qualities are engrained in us to know who the Creator is. Even the animals matter to me. That is, I am connected with every constituent of the different spheres that I am encircled with. It is as if I am at the center of all these circles and I am given qualities to be interested in the constituent parts i.e. getting pleasure at their pleasure and getting pain at their pain.

* *What can be the cause of existence of these feelings?* My particles? No, they have no Conscious Will.
* Only after questioning my feelings do I become aware of the Source of existence of my being.
* This understanding is religion.

Let’s take another example. A loved one dies. You feel grieved. What is the cause of existence of these feelings? Does the heart give existence to such feelings? Did the elements of the food you ate last night trigger this feeling? It is inhumane to think that the feelings evolve by itself. It is similar to saying that matter happens by itself. Can the universe happen to be given existence by itself? What I am experiencing here (act of creation) cannot be the result of something simple. How can I reduce it to accidental happening (natural occurring)? The death of a loved one is a deliberate act of creation given deliberately to me in order to experience certain feelings and question the Source of existence of these feelings.

**If I reduce existence to matter only, then I see matter as having the qualities to produce these feelings.** Matter does not have the power to give existence to any qualities.

**Everything is a deliberate act of creation given to you by the One who gives existence.**  The reason why we struggle in grasping this is because the way religion is presented (mostly in the form of commandments), makes the human heart cling to scientific explanations which makes sense at the material level (not the interpretation of material and their qualities e.g. technology works) and seems consistent as compared to religious explanations. That is why religion is losing its value in the eyes of the people who do not investigate religion per se.

Scientists would physically demonstrate that something is made but in their interpretation, they would say that the phenomenon happened accidentally or something caused something else to happen. How can the universal order, which encompasses each being in it, accidentally come into existence by itself? That is why we need to question everything otherwise we will be exploited by the religion that we inherited. Example: if I do not fast, I will not be rewarded, hence I better fast.

Uttering: “I testify there is no God but God and Muhammad is Its Messenger” is NOT belief itself, but it can only serve as a starting point for further investigation. ***How can you believe in something you heard, without realizing what you believe in?***  In other words, without being convinced and personally feeling it, I cannot pretend to testify. I have to witness within my own nature.

Going back to the example of the wounded pet, as soon as I question my feeling to wanting to help the cat, I witness that I am given such a feeling and this feeling cannot happen by itself. In order to testify something, I must first experience it, be convinced with it and then I can comfortably utter: “I witness that the One who made me makes me with this quality”. If you are not witnessing it, why do you utter the above given uttering?

*It is so simple so why don’t we practice it?* Well, **we are trained not to question our inherited religion although we question everything else in our worldly life.** Religion is mostly presented to us by people who have not questioned themselves.

We have to study “the missing dimension” of religion that has been presented to us. *Why do you believe in what you believe in?* The missing dimension must be revived. Without establishing the belief foundations, I cannot jump to making sense of rituals. Memorizing rules is not religion. Doing rituals as in following imitatively the Prophetic tradition (Sunnah) without trying to establish the belief base is not religion. One has to reconcile: *What does Prophethood mean to you?*

Scenario: After a day of helping out in a homeless shelter, you may feel great the next few days. Unfortunately, we are conditioned to think that when we do our best at something, we feel great. However, without questioning the existence of the sense of doing something by using our human qualities to the best of our abilities and then attributing that sense of feeling great to the Creator and becoming aware of the qualities of the Creator and uttering: “**I am the creature of this Creator, It is my Lord**”, I can never feel satisfied permanently.

* My consciousness must make me feel comfortable within my own nature. Our love for our own self, family, relatives and nation must connect us to the Source of our existence, so we may identify ourselves i.e. “who am I.” When I utter: “God is Great”, there is only one way to feel that this is the right statement: when I confirm it fully and I am aware that the Creator of this universe is great (it means not of the nature of this universe), I belong to It. **If I have gone through these foundations (belief acknowledgment/awareness) and now when I pray or perform an action, it refreshes my connection with the Creator i.e. I am satisfied within myself. This belief must be the source of pleasure.** Establishing this reality= worship of God. Since praying is part of my *fitrah*, when I pray, I am reestablishing the connection with the Source of my existence for my own conviction to make it part of my human nature i.e. I witness this reality. **As a result of experiencing this reality within ourselves i.e. doing something according to my nature, pleasure comes. This is true pleasure. Now, I can feel satisfied permanently.**
* The other type of pleasure is not from within as I am feeling pleased because **I am under the impression that I did something good**, not bad, although I may think that my Creator is making me feel pleased.

Everyone has some sort of belief. The question is whether that belief makes you feel secure in your existence. **Only the personal satisfaction within my own being, as far as the relationship between me and my Creator is established (within me) guarantees satisfaction. That is the *fitrah* of God.** We have to admit that people who engage in humanitarian or charitable activities (mostly atheists) are doing a noble act as oppose to people who do not engage in such activities. However, it does not mean that these people have fulfilled their purpose of existence, that is, worship of God or established their reality. **The question is:** ***Did I become aware of my Creator while volunteering at a charitable event and did I confirm my reality of existence in this universe?***

* This questioning helps us establish the foundations; as a result, all actions become essentially meaningful. Otherwise anyone who does any good action, let’s say cleaning the toilet feels happy.
* Cleanliness is natural to us which is a quality given to us to know that my Creator has endowed me with this sense of liking cleanliness so I may know that It is the Cleanser.
* Cleaning the toilet is a means to acknowledge It, the Owner of the universe.

**Happiness lies in God Consciousness:** My existence belongs to It, my existence is from It, It is the Absolute One that gives existence to the whole universe, This awareness guarantees Eternal existence. If I become aware of God by acknowledging God, I become aware that the Source of existence of pleasure is endless.

Foundations must be given priority. Always question the existence of your feelings and desires. You may like to help someone. Yes, we are made with the feeling to help others. Why is this sense given to us? In order to become a believer in the reality that this sense to help others is given to me by the Creator of the universe. It is the One who loves to help and this sense is given to me to acknowledge It. I belong to It. Realizing the Source of existence of this feeling makes me feel secure in my existence: I belong to It and there is no end to my existence with death. That is called “God consciousness”.

***How come this sense exists?*** Use the sense to get to know the Creator. Its purpose is not to help somebody only; on the contrary, the sense must be the means of realizing the Source of this sense.

When humans and animals get hungry, they eat food and feel satisfied. **Ask:** *Am I happy like an animal or happy like a human being?* That is, my animal side is happy because stomach is full, the human side is happy to acknowledge the Provider of the food and my need. I acknowledge the One who makes Itself known to me. So the next time that you pray, ask yourself: have I satisfied my humanity or animalistic side while praying? Are we aware of the difference between humanity and animalistic side?

**A mother is given loads of compassion: *why would a mother never throw her baby in the fire?***

* Answer #1: If I am a materialist, I would say that compassion is mine and it happened through accidental developments in the course of billion years to be there not to throw the baby in fire= Atheistic understanding.
* Answer #2: If I am a believer, I would use compassion to know the Owner of compassion= Quranic worldview.

We do not see that religion has to do with this type of questioning: what is the source of existence of this sense? Quran encourages its reader to question.

***What is the difference between benefitting from an event as an atheist or human being?***

* Answer #1 gives me satisfaction until I die.
* Answer #2 gives me Eternal satisfaction.

My human side wants Eternal Happiness, and that requires investigating further i.e. what is the Source of existence of this feeling? Why is this feeling given to me? How am I going to use it? Evaluating my feelings as a human being will eventually lead to the Eternal Source of Satisfaction. Since this Source cannot be described within the conditions of this universe (***lailaha***), it must be Absolute (***illallah***).