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| **Date** | Saturday, December 5, 2015 |
| **Topic** | Ninth Word |
| **Part** | 13 |

***(The Words, page 56, second paragraph) “At the time of Isha, at nightfall, the last traces of the day remaining on the horizon disappear, and the world of night enfolds the universe. As the All-Powerful and Glorious One, The Changer of Night and Day, turns the white page of day into the black page of night through the mighty disposals of His dominicality, it recalls the Divine activities of that All-Wise One of Perfection, The Subduer of the Sun and the Moon, turning the green-adorned…”***

At night, everything turns into darkness. The Qurans speaks to human beings within their practical experiences. When it is dark at night, it causes sadness because I am made to want light. However, if I pay attention to the solar system, only the part of the earth that I am living in turns into darkness, the rest is bright. As far as my side of the globe is concerned, it is dark.*What does this signify for me?*

* **The teachings of the Quran speak to human conditions:**

1. That which I am experiencing is “my practical life”.
2. I have to experience my practical life and accordingly I have to respond back.

In my practical life, I am experiencing darkness at nightfall. My being is experiencing an undesired and gloomy feeling which causes ambiguity or uncertainty in my existence. I don’t know what will happen to me the next moment because it’s dark and I want light.

* Darkness= ignorance, fear of the unknown.

I am made with a desire to know what is going on in creation. Unknown future conditions about my existence make me hesitant and uncomfortable in my being. I am created with the desire to have a secure existence. Darkness at night time carries a message letting me know that I am made not to like darkness, i.e. things coming to an end, and therefore I have to analyze these feelings.

Revelation/God’s speech/guidance comes to me according to my conditions. One of the main principles of reading the Quran is to take my conditions into consideration, not the Speaker’s conditions. **God speaks to me according to my conditions (if and only if I want to communicate with God through its speech)**. The One who gives me existence puts me in these conditions and so it should speak to me according to my capacity i.e. language that I understand. Otherwise, my existence will be meaningless. I should only be concerned with the meaning that scripture gives to me about how to benefit from creation to make sense of my existence. When the scripture talks about certain historical events that took place thousands of years ago, I need to analyze those events according to my conditions. I am not given existence to confirm “historical” events.

* The historicity of the event has nothing to do with my being, my conditions.
* **Whether the historical events happened or not should not be my concern.**
* Historical narrations can be learned from historians or good history books, which is usually their interpretation of the events!
* Example: From the narration we hear that during Prophetic time “slavery” was practiced everywhere. Even if there was no slavery practiced at that time, I have to be mindful of slavery and understand that slavery is a horrible act and is rejected by my God within my conditions.
* **Quran must make a big revolution in MY LIFE** *instead of events that took place 1400 years ago in a community!!!*
* I simply have to look at the scripture within my own conditions and would realize that the Speaker in the scripture knows everything about me at all times with no space-time limitation. This realization only happens when I read with an open mind, free from biases and cultural influences i.e. when I relate it to my own existence.

While establishing the methodology of reading the Quran, another point needs to be focused on, i.e. the position of the Messenger. ***Who is the “Messenger” that brings the scripture to me?*** I cannot isolate the message from the Messenger **because the Messenger is the one who brings the message to me in my human language, which in turn helps me hear the word of God**. It becomes possible for me to understand the Word of God when it is stated in the language that I understand, i.e. of a human being.

* Messenger= must be the one who brings the message to me + experiences the message within his own historical context.
* *How did the Prophet practice the message which is universal within his historical and geographical context?*
* The *hadith* narrations (Prophetic practice of the message) will help me understand what Messengership is.

Narration mentions the Prophet migrating from Mecca to Medina averting the risk of being persecuted.

* *In my condition, how can I apply this migration in my life as stated in the Quran which is the universal message?*
* As far as I am concerned, I need to “migrate” from my faulty perception/understanding in my given conditions to the meaningful true understanding as best as I can. Example: In the classroom or at a meeting, I need to turn off my phone in order to avoid being distracted with text messages/emails that keep coming. By turning off the phone or keeping it silent my migration happens and I am better able to concentrate in class. When I change my habits to save my being, that is when my migration happens.
* In the Quran, migration is universally ordered and is advised to be declared before war i.e. make your migration first and then fight. It would be a silly act to cause insurgence in the society and then migrate. One has to first secure his/her conditions and if afterwards someone attacks you, defend yourself within your conditions.

By reading the universal message literally, I am justifying the claims by critics that reject the legitimacy of the Quran.

* Read the Quran within the context of its own definition not its historical revelation time.
* Quran’s definition: “I am the speech of your Creator. I am speaking to you to guide you on how to make sense of your existence. In order to give you the opportunity to educate yourself in the best way and make the most of these conditions.”
* I cannot interpret the text without applying this definition to it.
* Again, the universality of the message has nothing to do with history!
* **The root problem for the followers of most monotheistic religions is the inability to reflect on existence and thus not being able to define the purpose of revelation according to its definition: *Why is there Speech of God/ revelation out there?* *Who is speaking to me and what is it saying?***

That is how we should approach scriptures. Try to see what the Speaker is conveying to me and for what purpose. I have to see the consistency in its claim. The Speaker tells us that it is speaking to us to guide us how to make the most of our interactions with the universe in order to fulfill the purpose of our existence. We have not been given existence to know about the future or reminisce about the past. The past and future is not within our experience at this given moment.

Going back to the migration example, when there is a conflict, one has to migrate. Again, it must be related to the purpose of my existence. If I feel something contradictory is happening in the way I am created, something that puts me at unease, is an indication that the Speaker is guiding me to migrate. (Turning the phone off is a migration from one condition of existence to another). Similarly, one has to migrate from the pollution prevalent in most family structures; specifically, if the conditions clash with the purpose of my existence.

Always look for the universal message in every condition. Every messenger practiced the message within his/her own conditions. Every community within itself has been appointed a messenger for them.

**وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولاً أَنِ اعْبُدُواْ اللّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُواْ الطَّاغُوتَ**

**“*And indeed, within every community have We raised up an apostle [entrusted with this message]: "Worship God, and shun the powers of evil!*.." *Nahl 16: 36***

***What does it mean?*** Within the conditions of any community, Prophets come and demonstrate by practice the teachings of the Creator of the universe. We pay attention to the Prophet’s exemplary practice because we are in his era. His message is meant for everyone who fall within his scope of Messengership. Previous people were responsible to take lessons from their own Prophet’s life. Now we are responsible to take lesson from Muhammad’s exemplary life.

* ***What does it mean to be in the era of Muhammad?*** Unlike other scriptures, the Quran is a direct word of the Creator of the universe due to its originality of the text which has been preserved. As a result, I can directly put myself in front of the Creator of the universe speaking to me. This speech is conveyed to me by an appointee from my Creator (Prophet Muhammad pbuh). That is the only way I see whether the scripture is keeping consistency in its own claim.
* ***What does it mean that the scripture is keeping consistency in its own claim?*** Scripture conveys: “I am the word of your Creator, the Creator of the universe from the beginning to the end. Everything belongs to me. I know your conditions right now i.e. everything deep in your heart, including your expectations.” If I see this claim to be resonating with my being, then there is consistency between what the scripture says and what I experience in my being. In other words, if I find myself being convinced with what I conclude from that which the scripture is conveying to me, as well as what I conclude from my interaction with the universe, then I should find myself confirming the scripture. Therefore, the scripture is keeping consistency in its own claim. Furthermore, if something is irrelevant to my being then it is not scripture for me then.

Prophet’s life is used as an example in practice of the teachings of the Creator of the universe. Example: In the life of the Prophet, slavery has been abolished. Prophet came and apprised people to treat slaves as you would treat your brothers.

* Quran’s declaration of (abd) to the meaning of “worshipper of God” makes one realize the center of authority i.e. I only obey the Creator of the universe and the one (apostle) appointed by it that introduces me to it. I have to obey God only and since it is only God to be obeyed, consequently, neither can I declare myself as a master to be obeyed. Thus the concept of slavery has automatically been abolished.
* In and of itself, Slavery is a mentality.
* Prophets came to eradicate the “slavery” mentality.
* Prophet is representing the message in his time for me. I have to take the universal message from it that applies to me in my situation.

In the *hadith* narrations, unlike the Quran, I cannot put myself directly in front of God because it is a historical event narrated. The Prophet is employed to represent the message within his own time conditions representing the Quranic message.

While reading *hadith* narrations, I have to bear in mind the following:

1. The historical context of Muhammad’s life.
2. Through #1, there is always a universal message because we are in the era of the prophethood of Muhammad.

We need to define the Quran first and then my relationship with the Quran. When I read the scripture as the Source of the universal message, I can apply it to every aspect of my life bearing in mind that this is guidance from my Creator. I should be mindful not to take my inherited religion for granted as that is the biggest mistake for any conscious human being. I have to define the Quran and my relationship with it as follows:

* ***What is expected of me when I read the Quran****?*
* I have to clean myself from my biases. Without cleansing myself from pre-developed ideas, I cannot read scriptures as my misunderstandings and misconceptions harm me.
* ***What is the Quran?***
* Speech of the Creator (who has Absolute knowledge) speaking to me right now.
* It knows that a certain individual named (*please insert your name*) at this particular time (time is our concept) will be experiencing some conditions. This certain individual will be thinking about this matter, will read Abraham’s story and will be guided.

The characteristics of all the famous characters in scriptures are within us (Abraham, Pharaoh…). These characters represent qualities within us. Abraham gives the best example of interacting with people using clear arguments. It tells me that I have the ability to present clear arguments, reject an idea from an authority or society if it does not resonate with my being. Similarly, Nimrod or Pharaoh represents our characteristic traits when we are not willing to accept our faults. We usually try to defend ourselves on a false base and may behave like them.

Therefore, one has to have human questions to seek guidance. The answers should come accordingly. One has to first free themselves from any previous baseless understandings irrelevant to existence.

* In order to experience freedom one has to start his own journey from scratch.
* Go step by step.
* Question is yours, the answer you get from the teachings of the Qur’an is yours.
* Learn how to question, and then try to get answers and see consistency between answers you get from the Quran along with your experience with the universe and your conviction.
* I can only find answers to my “human questions” when I do not fall into historicizing the message.