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| **Date** | Saturday, October 3, 2015 |
| **Topic** | Ninth Word (third and fourth point) |
| **Part** | 5 |

**THIRD POINT:**

“*Just as man is an example in miniature of the greater world and Sura al-Fatiha a shining sample of the Qur’an of Mighty Stature, so are the prescribed prayers a comprehensive, luminous index of all varieties of worship, and a sacred map pointing to all the shades of worship of all the classes of creatures*.”
 ***What is the purpose in the existence of the universe?***Well, everyone has their own view on that. However, if we start off with observing the different qualities we see and experience around us, we realize that this universe is an art demonstrating the qualities of the artist.

When I observe the universe, I realize the different qualities manifested in it. My immediate conclusion is that this universe must have a Creator. Then I realize that I am part of this universe and so I must have a Creator. This process must be established within ourselves before we can start working on belief.

Quran provides us guidance as follows:

1. Observing the manifestations in the universe🡪 human being.
2. Human beings logically conclude that there must be a Creator🡪personal conclusion.
3. Getting excited with the manifestations around me 🡪prostration🡪belief.

Starting off the belief process with conclusions is the wrong start. The Quran is guidance, i.e. I can only read it in order to confirm what it claims by experiencing the universe and coming to a conclusion that there must be a Creator. The Quran teaches this methodology but it is not well interpreted by the readers. We are usually not accustomed to the language of the Quran. God speaks from His perspective and I as the reader have to read it from the opposite, i.e. back to front, from an addressee/created being perspective.

Using value laden language in presenting religion and not following the proper methodology sets the stage for denying the truth and justifying one’s stand (Atheism).

Methodology used in the Quran teaches us how to become a believer. Without the methodology, the speech may sound like a list of commands and one may not feel the need to prostrate because they have never realized the manifestations in the universe correctly. Example of the Quranic language: “Only believers will admire the manifestations of the signs.”

* Wrong way to interpret: I am a believer; so I must feel the admiration...
* Correct way to interpret: If I really admire the manifestations of the qualities of the Creator, then I become a believer. Yay, let’s try that!

**Essential principle in reading the Quran:** One does not have to be a believer in order to prostrate. First, I have to see that there is something admirable out there. The Qur’an’s mentioning of signs and qualities out there is guidance for me. The feelings that I accumulate as a result of understanding the existence of the universe leads to prostration. If that realization acknowledges that the qualities must belong to a Conscious Being who is manifesting His Artistry, then it is belief in Him. **Therefore, one prostrates as a result of observation and conclusion.**

*How can I be a sample miniature of the created world?*

I have the ability to relate myself to the manifestations in the universe. I am at the center: I am given qualities to detect the qualities of the art displayed in the universe by its Artist (see analogy below). Without our abilities, our existence would have no purpose. **I have a Maker and this Maker is speaking to me. I get all excited and try to discover more about this Maker.** Therefore, we have to use ourselves, our given qualities to discover more qualities of this Maker all around us.

* Analogy: Artist performs for the audience. If the audience was not able to appreciate and benefit from his demonstrations, will the artist be willing to perform? The presence of the audience is the reason for the artist to demonstrate his talent. Thus, audience must be there to appreciate the performance.
* Creator= artist; universe= performance; human beings= audience.
* Similarly, if we were not conscious beings, equipped with endless abilities to discover the manifestations around us, the existence of the universe would mean nothing to us.
* Manifestation keeps happening means that there are beings appreciating it.
* The sense of excitement is within us.

**Quranic message is summarized in Sura-al Fatiha.**

* Read the Quran through the lens of Sura-al-Fatiha.
* This method can help see the message clearly (i.e. free from biases influenced by culture).
* We ask for guidance (i.e. we want to be guided and become comfortable in our existence).
* *Maghdoob:* usually translated as “those who earned God’s wrath” but some serious scholars translate it as “those who are rejected”. (*Ghadab* is rejection.) People, who reject guidance, i.e. do things that do not fit human nature. For example the car engine needs motor oil and I put in water. The engine rejects the water and fails to function, the whole order is disturbed. The engine failing to function is depriving myself of guidance provided to me that what I am doing is against my nature.
* We ask to not be the ones who reject what befits our nature, therefore be rejected by The Guide, God.
* Da’aleen: continuously doing something against our nature. Despite knowing that something is harmful and does not fit my human nature, I do it against my human nature. For example, knowing that water will harm the car engine, I still force it in.
* The jihad/war is the struggle within me; it has nothing to do with anything else. Unfortunately the societal understanding has been injected into the Quranic sphere by defining the term as “sacred war”, killing in the name of religion. This is the societal understanding. For example, personal interests of a country, for its benefit and sovereignty, it declares wars on other nations. This is what we observe in the society. **The Quranic view should not be confused with the societal understanding.** Killing the unbelievers means killing the unbelief idea within me or others. When the truth is shown, the unbelief dies away, which is what the Quran is presenting to us.

***Just as the Fatiha is the summary of the Quran, man is the summary of the universe. Can we equate the Quran to the whole universe?***
Yes. The Quran, the universe and my own being are transferring the same message to me. In other words, the same author is performing through three venues.

1. The universe: the demonstration of the Speech of the Creator.
2. Quran (Revelation): the verbal speech of the Creator.
3. Myself: equipped with the sample tools enabling me to understand these two forms of the Speech of God mentioned above, 1 and 2.

Through each of these channels, I get to know the Creator. Through my qualities I appreciate the speech of the Creator. The Creator manifests His qualities to me through my being. By equipping me with the abilities to become aware of His qualities, I get to know the Creator. Through consciousness, I am able to conclude that my Creator is Wise, Knowledgeable, Merciful... I become the manifestation place where the Absolute Knowledge is manifesting and I become aware of it. **Thus through the universe, the speech and myself do I become aware of the Creator.** Once we discover the compatibility between these venues, we feel comfortable in our existence.

* The universe belongs to it, my qualities belong to it, and therefore, I belong to it, the Creator.

**Worship is what the creatures are demonstrating in the universe.** The singer is performing; I see and hear the performance through air waves i.e. they transfer the message to me. The quality of the performance is what I hear and see which does not belong to the air and its waves. Air waves convey the quality of the singer to me; similarly the creatures convey the qualities of their Maker to me. **Through creatures, I understand the qualities manifested in the universe. We are expected to do the same thing with our qualities i.e. transfer the qualities of our Maker back to its source, that is worship**. Example: the ability to think is given to me and I need to acknowledge that it is not mine but it is given to me. Similarly, when I look at the universe, I realize that there is a perfect order in existence. This order does not belong to the creatures themselves. The creatures are employed to do an act, which is their worship. Air waves are employed to transfer the performance of the artist to me. **My duty is to refer the qualities of the creatures (air waves) to their real Owner, and not to the creatures themselves. That is worship.**

Performing rituals can be made into worship. The performances in the rituals are to be used as vehicles to recognize the reality that I experience within myself i.e. nothing belongs to me. Universe reflects that the qualities that I observe do not belong to the creatures. The creatures in their worship declare that they are employed to declare the qualities of the artist; this is how we perceive. We have to join the other creatures and declare: I am not the source of my human qualities.

* Worship is acknowledgment with consciousness that nothing belongs to me.
* Without the consciousness, I am lacking the spirit of worship.
* Spirit of worship= acknowledgment= consciousness= the correspondence between the Creator and my being.

While performing prayers, I am expressing my reality. Example: By reflecting on my ability to see, I realize that “sight” is given to me to realize the Source of the power of sight in my being and other creatures. As a result I respond back to the reality that the Source of power of sight is Absolute. Similarly, the Source of the power of tasting, smelling… is Absolute.

There are various vehicles to express and declare our reality. **Rituals are vehicles to practice this consciousness.** While fasting, giving charity… the spirit of worship is the same. Celebration of rituals is an expansion to my understanding of my reality. **When we consciously return qualities back to its original Source, we admit the reality that the qualities have been given to us.**

Returning everything back to God (*worship*) i.e. while eating, transfer the action of eating into worship; while breathing, transfer the act of breathing into worship. While prostrating, I turn the consciousness into prayers by physically expressing my impotence to the Source i.e. if You would not have created me, I would be nothing.

**FOURTH POINT:**

*(fourth paragraph)* “*The time of* ***Asr****, afternoon: This is like autumn, old age, and the time of the Final Prophet (PBUH), known as the Era of Bliss, and recalls the Divine acts and favors of the All-Merciful One present in them.*”

* This moment is a reminder that I received the explanatory Speech of the Maker through the Final Prophet.
* I receive *Asr* (era) as a last warning to check my reality.
* The reminder about the warning is important and therefore we should stop quarreling about who the Final Prophet is.

(*fifth paragraph*) “*The time of* ***Maghrib****, sunset: Through recalling the departure of many creatures at the end of autumn, and man’s death, and the destruction of the world at the commencement of the resurrection, this time puts in mind the manifestations of Divine glory and sublimity, and rouses man from his slumbers of heedlessness.”*

* This moment is a reminder that a day will come when I will die.
* Every year, I am getting older and coming closer to the sunset. This is a stage in my yearly reality.
* While I am living, I go to sleep and lose the consciousness of my own existence. This is a stage in my daily reality.
* According to this reality, I respond back.

*(sixth paragraph)* “*The time of* ***Isha****, nightfall: As for this time, by calling to mind the world of darkness veiling all the objects of the day time world with a black shroud, and winter hiding the face of the dead earth with its white cerement, and even the remaining works of departed men and dying and passing beneath the veil of oblivion, and this world, the arena of examination, being shut up and closed down for ever, it proclaims the awesome and mighty disposals of the All-Glorious and Compelling Subduer*.”

* This moment is a reminder that I will be taken away from this life.
* While sleeping and dreaming, I am not in a state of consciousness.
* I wake up with a state of consciousness with a brand new day given to me.
* This daily routine is a beautiful demonstration that death will be given to me.
* It is also a reminder that my life will come to an end but I will not lose my existence.

The clock keeps ticking i.e. every moment is given existence with all its qualities. We experience the beginning and end of day i.e. night and day are separated equally, the northern and southern hemisphere are equally coming into existence. The moment itself is not important but what it signifies in its existence or what it teaches me is important. In the Quran, the word “*yaum*” which means “day” is used for every period/epoch/time/era. *Yaum ul akhira abada:* after experiencing resurrection every moment, we are given eternity through our acknowledgment of the Absolute Source of our existence.

 In conclusion, one day summarizes our life on earth. It reminds us of the beginning and the end of the whole universe. Let us benefit from the opportunities.