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| **Date** | Saturday, November 21, 2015 |
| **Topic** | Ninth Word |
| **Part** | 12 |

When we read to understand the scripture, it should resonate with our being. In order to strengthen one’s belief, the conscious being needs to free himself from cultural and societal influences. Everyone should be free to accept or reject the message based on their being “free individuals”.

***The Words, Ninth Word, Fifth Point (continuation): “Then he testifies to God’s unity and the prophethood of Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him). He sits and on his account offers as a gift to the Undying All-Beauteous One, the Enduring All-Glorious One, the blessed and salutations and benedictions of all creatures. And through greeting God’s Most Noble Messenger, he renews his allegiance to him and proclaims his obedience to his command…”***

* Worship🡪testify.
* If I am convinced that creation must have a Creator, I can testify its accurateness for myself.
* Example: Cruising around a beautiful landscape, I am left with feeling mesmerized that this is the work of the One who creates the whole universe.
* After my observation, I am declaring my conclusion (testify).
* *While I am praying, what does prophet Muhammad have to do with my life, why do I have to testify to the Prophethood of Muhammad?*
* I testify that Muhammad is His messenger and worshipper.
* We should not take the Prophet as a wise man as we would be historicizing the message. Seerah (biography) books mainly discuss historicized life of the prophet.
* The Prophet claimed to be an illiterate man and declared to be conveying only what he was taught by the Creator.

Following the mass culture without questioning the reality is not submission. On the contrary, it leads to bigotry because one cannot defend himself when faced with reality. Reactionary psychology (mostly prevalent in any kind of religious communities) comes from uncertainty because of baseless religious claims. I need to be comfortable in my conclusion within my own self.

Islam teaches not to turn objects/events into deity. In order to declare oneself a believer in the teachings of the Qur’an, one has to give **testimony** which includes:

1. God is the Creator of the universe
2. Muhammad is his messenger

Description of God may vary within religions. Deniers claim that everything is “natural”. As soon as one accepts that the universe must be created, there must be a Creator is a step forward to the testimony.

*Why is there sensitivity towards other similar religious institutions* *rather than the ones that deny religion completely?* Perhaps, one is insecure in what he/she believes in. We are mostly sensitive not as a result of our consciousness but as a result of our tradition. We may identify ourselves with a certain religious group not necessarily as a result of consciousness, but as an alternative to the other groups. We are indoctrinated from people who educate us, shape our minds to become religious nationalists. Example: In a Muslim community, if someone speaks about the nature of Jesus as sacred, the whole community gets alarmed. The insecurity leads to the fear of falling into another neighboring religious group. The same sensitivity is not seen when exposed to the prevalent secular and materialistic understanding of the universe. Instead of reasoning and trying to make sense of the issue, we shut ourselves from upgrading our understandings of the religion itself.

**In the life circle of the whole universe, anything that has a beginning must have an end**.

* Example: evening is the end of day; fall is the end of summer season.
* Similarly, the epochs in the creation of the world also change, empires are born and die. On a larger scale, my life will come to an end. If I am born, I must die.
* The universe came into existence and it will be given death.
* Universe is not static; it consists of “motion”.
* If sun rises, it means “revolving (motion)” takes place. If motion starts, it must stop. That is logical, that is what we learn from observing the universe.

Any act of creation (motion) cannot be infinite. **Anything infinite must have an infinite beginning**. The universe cannot be infinite but only finite, simply because it is subject to constant change.

* Anything finite must be subject to change without its choice.
* Atom is subject to change not as a result of its will.
* Atom is set by the One who puts it in motion, making it move.
* **Motion is more important than substance.** **Without motion the universe will cease to exist.** **Only through the motions do we experience the continuous demonstration of the qualities of its Maker.** **There is no alternate particle which is not subject to change in this universe.** This is a clear evident sign for us that everything is subject to the will of Something else (Source) and not its own will. This Something else is moving my hands from one point to another because I cannot be the source of existence of my own motion otherwise I can do what I want.
* Example: I cannot stop aging; I cannot own the motion of my cells. Cells themselves cannot own their motion.

When I think of existence, creation, universe, I need to see existence of motion at every moment.

* In my observation, the sun rose, later it sets which means there is motion.
* During this observation, **I need to present my conclusion/gift to the Creator of this motion**: “**I am happy with this beautiful manifestation of the universe O my Creator”**.
* My conclusion is drawn from what I received through creatures in the universe.
* I understood the purpose of existence from creatures through the meaning they transfer to me.
* Creatures transfer the meaning to me; I understand that they are purposefully designed to carry meaningful messages.
* The messages are coming from beyond the matter, which is the building brick of this universe.

***What does Salaat (benedictions) and Salaam (salutation) mean?*** It is said that one has to pay salutation and benediction to the Prophet when his name is mentioned. From my experience of the reality of the creatures out there, I say Salaam to the Prophet. I sit in prayers and send greetings to the Messenger. *What does this greeting have to do with my worship?*

* **By greeting God’s noble messenger, I renew my allegiance to the Source of my being:**

1. I first presented my gift to the Creator from what I gathered from creation. Example: Sunrise/sunset has different meanings and I respond back based on what I concluded.
2. While presenting my conclusion/gift to God, I am renewing my allegiance to the Messenger by declaring peace (*Assalamualika ayyuhannabiyyu*). Here are the two stages:
3. I declare that I am in peace and not going to be in conflict with your message, O Messenger. I am not going to be in war with you.
4. I declare You as the host and I submit to your conditions O God. I am going to respect Your hospitality i.e. submission to Your rule in the universe. This is implied within #1.

When I observe sunset, I need to declare my conclusion: I am not going to be in conflict with this new manifestation and I am going to be respectful to the Creator of this motion. By applying the above two conditions, I submit to the Creator of the sunset. Every prayer is an opportunity to renew my allegiance to the Prophet: **“I am happy with the message you brought to me O Messenger!”**

***How does the acknowledgment process actually take place?*** As I am seeing and getting messages from creatures (sunset is a deliberate act of creation) presenting news about their Creator to me, the Messenger comes and says the same thing to me in verbal form. My duty is to look at the sunset and get the meaning out of it and respond back to its Creator and say: “You are the Creator of this demonstration that I see and I am also Your creation. This message resonates with my being. My duty is to also acknowledge the Prophet as the one guiding me/teaching me this conclusion in the form of a “human being”. I get meaning from the universe in two forms:

1. **Functional explanation**: speech from the Act of creation.
2. I don’t worship the sunset; I worship the meaning that I get from the sunset which points to its Maker.
3. **Verbal explanation:** speech from the Creator
4. I don’t worship Muhammad himself, I search for the meaning that I get from his teaching which points to its Maker and worship that Maker.

In my allegiance, I speak to the Creator that this person guided me as a teacher and I agree with his message. Muhammad is the representative, the Messenger of God in my time. There must be a Messenger when human beings ask questions and need a teacher. **We don’t worship teachers as the source of knowledge but the conveyors of knowledge.**

* **Messengers:** the ones who do not claim that the message belongs to them.
* **Philosophers:** the ones who claim to own their thoughts do not acknowledge that they are employed to convey the message to human beings in the form of a teacher.

***Do I agree with the meaning of the message while witnessing the sunset?*** My conclusion at sunset was that all things which I may perceive as beautiful or ugly are from God Almighty*.* Prior to that, I heard the message from the Messenger. Both functional and verbal speech goes along together, in congruence with each other. They convey the same thing and I agree with that.

* “Yeah I agree and I present my worship to the Creator”.
* “I worship the meaning of the message I extract from creature and messenger”.

In a particular Christian theology, it is said that the first word *(“Logos”* which means “the Word, which is Jesus”) exists before the universe. Quran says: If God wills something to exists, it says *kun* (be) and *fayakun* (beings appear in existence). When I look at this universe, I conclude that it must be the result of a Conscious Will.

* Will exists before everything.
* Will is represented in speech form as ‘be” (*kun*).
* **Be (*kun*) =word of God which represents His will.** It is a metaphorical teaching of the process of what we observe. When I experience the universe, I conclude that it must be the result of a conscious will. There must be a will exercised before the existence of this universe. This is my conclusion from my observation of this universe, every action of which demonstrates that it is the result of Will; it cannot be eternal, neither can it be accidental.

The words transferred to us through the messengers are words transferred to us in the scriptures i.e. messages of the Messengers. These words explain the real essence of this creation i.e. the Creator describes when he wills the universe to exist, it was His plan.

* Analogy: Architect says that she has a beautiful plan. I can only understand this plan when she puts it into practice i.e. builds the monument. After looking at the building, I understand what the architect had in her mind.
* Similarly, if I don’t see the universe, I can never understand the message. If I do not observe creation, I can never understand what the word of God is telling me.
* **Without referring to the witnessing of the universe, scriptures cannot be understood properly.**
* Teacher comes and tells me this is what is in the mind of “the architect”.

Muhammad practiced the message in his time frame. The message was exercised by a human being, called Muhammad. *muhammadun abduhu wa rasooluhu*, implies that Muhammad, himself practiced this message in his life.

* Message is universal.
* Practice of Muhammad is ‘historical’ but to be taken as a ‘universal example’. It means whatever example I see through the life of Muhammad must be seen, through the historical context filter.
* In order to understand the Prophetic message, I need to contextualize the message. Otherwise, I cannot understand the *hadith narrations*.
* I may miss the universality of the message by following seerah (biography) books simply because they are just presented to us by historians narrating their own perceptions; not necessarily narrating the real life experience of the Prophet himself. (This point makes the difference between seerah books and hadith narrations.)

***lailaha illallah muhammadun rasoolullah***: I am indirectly expressing to the Source of my being: “I am thankful for this teacher, Muhammad (pbuh) you employed to teach me your message, O Creator”.

* This allegiance at every opportunity helps one make progress in understanding the reality of their existence.

Finally, getting rid of cultural influences is the most important element to strengthen “belief”. Cultural norms are the hindrance to understanding religion. First requirement to getting the “truth” is to be a free human being. Freedom comes before belief.