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| **Date** | Saturday, August 13 2016 |
| **Topic** | Why bother praying? |
| **Part** | 1 |

***If we are not expecting anything in return, why do we pray then?***

Example: When you are ill, you pray or ask the Creator to cure you. The text (below) says that praying to get something is a wrong attitude; it is a misunderstanding of prayer or the sense of worship. The author is going to give reasoning why it is wrong. When I am in need of something, yes, I should turn to God but not to expect any result. ***So what is the point in worship, supplication or praying?***

**24th Word, Fifth Branch—SECOND FRUIT (page 369):**

**“O soul! Worship is not the introduction to additional rewards but the result of previous bounties. Yes, we have received our wage, and are accordingly charged with the duties of service i.e. worship.”**

Let us try to understand how the human being is made. ***What is soul?***

1. The egotistic side of human being that expects to take credit for everything given (example: these are mine).
2. The egotistic side of human being that appropriates qualities given to oneself (example: I am the best).
3. The egotistic side of human being that wants everything for itself (example: I deserve it).
4. The egotistic side of human being that attributes qualities of the things to themselves (example: they are natural).

Human Beings have another side called spirit, which is the real side. The “soul” (egoistic side of human beings) is the alternative side to the spirit which is pure and has the capacity to recognize its Owner.

* **Only when you recognize something, you are inclined to acknowledge it.**

The author of this text is addressing to the egotistic side of the human being alerting us to re-orient our expectations. In other words, it is a shout: “Watch out (please insert your name), what you are doing is not right”. The ability to realize this reality is within our capacity. Yes, we can understand this. We are not robot like creatures not knowing what is going on within and around us.

* **You have the ability to discern between what is right and what is wrong.**

The second sentence of the text (above) is the main idea behind the subject under discussion. ***What are previous bounties?*** Example: I am ill and I prefer health. *How do I know about health?* Well, I know about health because I have experienced health before. Hence, I want health.

When I am ill, I compare the illness with health. Even if I was born with an illness, I still would know that health exists because I see other healthy individuals around me. Thus, I need to pay attention to the Source of Existence of the things that I want.

* ***Why do I want health? Why do I need health? How come I prefer health?***

I understand that I am given the sense of preferring the health and I am aware of the existence of health. I need to emphasize on:

* ***Since I prefer health, where did health come from?***

In other words, *what is the Source of existence of health*? I can only question this when I am made to experience illness. **Hence, existence of illness is necessary in this universe.** That is, only through realizing the existence of Illness do I realize that health exists. **Otherwise I would not realize existence of health.** **That is how I am made:** I operate within the order established in the universe.

For my expectations, health is a positive quality and illness is a negative quality. **But in Absolute sense, the creation of both illness and health is good.** But I prefer health over illness, a very human desire. **At the same time, I need illness in order to understand that health exists.** This is the fundamental frame of thinking. If one misses this point, they cannot solve any problems.

Illness and health is just an example to understand how the order in this universe is established where human beings usually look to contrast things. Example: If I were only exposed to a certain color in creation, I would not know that a myriad of colors exist out there including the color I am exposed to. Becoming aware of such creation makes me wonder about the Source of existence of my favorite color.

***Ask yourself: Have I worked on what is the Source of existence of health?***

***When Illness comes, what do I want?*** I want health. To me, illness is perceived as a calamity in contrast to a preferable type of event. Calamities are not calamities it is really my expectations of not preferring one event over another which is how I am encoded. **When I experience a non-preferable event which I call “calamity”, it means that the opposite is what I want.** It reminds me of the Source of Existence of health. That is, in fact illness is only lack of health.

**Non-existence of any quality does not exist.** Hence, non-existence of health or illness does not exist. Less appearance of health exists (ranging from 1% to 99%).

* **Illness is less manifestation of health.**

We want more manifestation of health. Practically, we want to recover health. We need to work on the Source of existence of health. ***How come health exists?*** Scenario: When you are ill, you go to the doctor. If you are convinced that health is coming from the doctor or medicine, then that is your belief. However, **if you think that health is created by the Creator of the universe, you now turn to the Creator to state, admit and confess your own understanding that:** **“You are my Creator, the Creator of health, I am in need of health and I turn to you”.**

* **Your turning to God aka “Prayer” should not have anything to do with receiving health in return to your prayer. It has everything to do with acknowledging the Source of Existence of health and admitting your reality and neediness as above.**

**Acknowledging the Source of existence of whatever you feel in need of is worship,** which is contrary to common thinking where people think that:

1. God is not responding, He is horrible and torturing me. This attitude is prevalent among people who only remember God when they are made to experience a calamity. They may even curse God.
2. This existence is horrible. Sometimes I am healthy and when illness happens, that is bad luck. This attitude is prevalent among people who think that everything happens naturally. They may even curse nature.

Instead of criticizing anything, we need to go back to the beginning i.e. ***where did I get the awareness of health?***

When I acknowledge that the Source of existence of health is the Creator of the universe and the health manifested in my being is less than what I would like it to be, only then do I have the right to go back to God saying that I come to you because I acknowledge that you are the health giver. “I am not bargaining with you, just admitting that you are the Creator of health because I understand that when less health is manifested, I am not happy. I do not want to be unhappy, please give me health”.

* ACKNOWLEDGMENT IS EVERYTHING!!!
* Turning to God with acknowledgment and confession of previous experiences is the RIGHT attitude.
* I am praying to You to secure the health, please give me health is BARGAIN!

**Worship means acknowledgment.** It is SO SIMPLE!!! We are here to acknowledge the Source of existence of everything. Prayer/Fasting/giving to charity is a means of acknowledgment. Even asking for health is a means of acknowledgment where I am taught that my Creator is the Creator of the universe and Its Order in creation makes me know that when I explore and investigate further, I get to know how the Creator of the universe creates health. When I go and search for a cure, it must be in form of acknowledgment because the order in creation belongs to It. My duty is to connect the order of the universe to its Source of existence. That is the crux of worship.

Example: Your praying to God will be verbally and your going to the doctor is worship if you are aware that the Creator of the Order in the universe is teaching you how He creates health. If you think that you prayed for health but now you have to go to the doctor, then that is not worship because it lacks the acknowledgment that going to the doctor is the order in creation. In other words, going to the doctor or hospital is a means of worship. With this awareness, one can turn all simple daily life into worship.

* One can be a worshipper of God in any occasion while driving, shopping, going to doctor, eating, drinking water…
* Even turning the air-conditioning on can be transformed into an act of worship if you acknowledge that you are obeying Creator’s order in creation.

With acknowledgment, everything becomes a means of worship. And you become a perfect worshipper of God and fulfill your mission in this universe. Otherwise, you waste your time which is a punishment from yourself because you are depriving yourself of being a worshipper in any case. It means that you are not fulfilling your mission to the fullest, just less. Similarly, if a person just zooms in on the illness, it does not mean that s/he is completely heedless, this person is missing the value of her/his human qualities.

Comment: It seems that every interaction is a means to renew your covenant with the Source of your existence. We are given endless bounties that need to be acknowledged at every moment.

Question: Since everything is given to us as a bounty, aren’t we all deserving of the bounties?

Answer: No. We do not deserve anything. The sheer fact that I am given existence is a sign that I am preferred to be given existence by Someone. Now, that I am given existence, I find myself needy at every moment. Example: when I am thirsty, I realize that I am given thirst. Hence, I go look for water realizing that the One that has put me in this situation must provide water for me. **I am not deserving of water, I am in need of water.** Definitely, the one who puts me in any situation must the One Who provides its solution accessible for me here otherwise my existence would not continue and be futile. In the example above, we experience that we are made in need water and the water is prepared for us. When I am needy, I search for the One that can satisfy my need. We cannot claim that we are **deserving** of anything because let’s say that one day I am hungry and there is no food available. Then I will be bound to conclude that it is God’s mistake for not providing me with food since I **deserve** to be fed. This understanding spoils my relationship with God. In other words, thinking that I am deserving of the bounties puts me in a position where I can damage my relationship with the Source of my existence when I do not get anything.

Cultural religion has distorted the concept of God. For example, in tradition, it is encouraged to pray the “istikhara” prayer with the hope that God will give you a sign to make a decision when you are presented with options. Mostly people use it for big life decisions such as marriage, job prospects or relocation. Ultimately, you are the one who has to make the decision. **The point of the “istikhara” prayer is for you to acknowledge your neediness and that the options are presented to you by God and that you cannot access to anything from Its Absolute Knowledge.** All you have to do is supplicate i.e. ask the Creator to give you the best satisfaction: “I know that You know, I realize that I am needy and only You create the result. Now that You have presented me with options, please make the option that I am going to choose in your name, good for me”.

Hence, whenever we make a decision, we know that we are only asking for the result to be created. Before making a decision, it is very human to consult experts (*ishtishara*) to get insights into the options. That is, you utilize your freewill when making an assessment between options and you choose the best one as far as you are concerned. Please be advised that some consultation can be a waste of time if there is no consciousness of the Creator in it.

*What is wage?*

* It is the bounties that we are constantly receiving.
* Since we have been receiving them and they are being renewed at every moment, the onus lies on us to thank the sender. The author refers that to the duties of service i.e. worship.

Finally, when it comes to my relationship with the Creator, I ought to acknowledge that I am in need to be given existence. “Everything in this universe is in need of You, the One that gives existence. Only You can satisfy everyone’s, every thing’s need”. “You alone we worship, only from You we seek Help.” (Chapter Fatiha, verse 4 is the conclusion that we express daily)