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| **Date** | Wednesday, May 04, 2016 |
| **Topic** | Belief in Prophethood: The Purpose in Reading the Quran |
| **Part** | 3 |

Making sense of Judicial matters through belief approach:

**The judicial approach takes the source of guidance (scriptures) as granted to be accepted as “The Truth.”**

* The questions that may be asked are limited to the following scope: Is the rule driven from the source based according to the Arabic rule? Has the speaker’s chain of authenticity been verified?
* This approach never questions the legitimacy of the source that is referred to.
* This approach only questions the reason of the ruling, for example: Is fasting ordered in the Qur’an or in the practice of the Prophet? *What is the benefit in fasting?*

**Whereas, belief approach questions the legitimacy of the source, whether it makes sense or not to the reader. In doing so, the acceptability of the source is questioned.**

* Intellectual 🡪Practical i.e. how to make sense of jurisprudential matters (practical side) after being convinced about the source rationally with proper reasoning and evidence.

**Belief approach follows theses stages:**

1. **The readers have questions about their existence and life, etc.**

* Without questioning the purpose of one’s existence, we cannot truly explain the reason behind our actions and come to a conclusion about our reality.

1. **To look at the universe, the things around and try to understand the meaning of everything happening around them, including my own senses and emotions.**

* I need to question my human qualities as well: How is it that I go through various feelings such as joy, sadness, excitement and despair? *Why do I feel tired and feel better after getting rest? Why do trees blossom in spring and die in autumn? What does it mean for night and day to exist? What is the purpose in these types of creation? Why do I eat and experience enjoyment etc.?*

1. **If they find that the universe is meaningful, they start investigating what the meaning of existence could be.**

* We cannot just stare at the universe and expect a verbally expressed answer from the physical world. Where then should we search for a meaningful answer?

1. **They ask questions. However, the universe speaks only through physical substances. The universe does not respond through SPEECH, verbal expression.**

* Since human beings are created with the ability to speak and understand the speech, the One who created them with this quality must be the One Who is the Source of this quality, **the Speaking Creator.** This Creator must respond verbally to the investigations of the people about the meaning of existence and life.

1. **The readers hear that there have been many different traditions in history that some people claimed that the Creator of the universe has revealed Personal Speech to them to be conveyed to other human beings.**

* Human beings communicate through speech. Your Maker has enabled you to converse and express your thoughts through communication. Otherwise, if the Creator (your Maker) does not communicate with you through speech, then what is the point in your being given endless feelings? As a human being, I have questions such as: *What is the purpose of my life? Why do I have fear or worry in my life?* It cannot be just to worry daily and then perish. ***Why do I have the ability to speak?*** It cannot be to just speak to people and then to perish. *Why do I have the ability to enjoy?* It cannot be to enjoy in my daily life and then to perish. ***Are we given existence to worry and die?*** The One who made you with the desire to acquire something and get pleasure from it, or gave you the sense of worrying about your future, family and finances, these are given to you ultimately for one reason i.e. **TO QUESTION THE EXISTENCE of those senses.** We call it consciousness: I am conscious that I like nice food. I am conscious that I have the ability to question. ***Why would the One who creates me give me this consciousness if I were to die and disappear?***  ***Why have I been endowed with these endless feelings?*** Whatever abilities and feelings/senses I find myself with, I also find myself with the consciousness to question their existence. ***What is the point in communicating with the universe if I were to die?*** It must have a meaning which will make sense to me and satisfy me. Example: If my enjoyment of food is going to disappear when my life in this world ends, then enjoyment is worthless because my end is death. However, my Maker endowed me with these feelings so that I may question the existence of these feelings with respect to my Maker. Through experiencing the enjoyment of taste, I will become conscious that my Maker gave me the sense of taste. **The point is not to get the taste or the enjoyment from the taste; on the contrary, through experiencing the taste and getting enjoyment from it, I will be conscious of my Maker that It is the source of all beautiful tastes that I experience.** I may come to the realization that He is the Source of All Beauty. He is the Creator of all my desires within me. These senses/feelings are given to me in order to make me conscious of the qualities of my Maker and thus I attribute my existence to It. It is the Creator of the worries and the desires I experience. It is the One who enables me to perceive my desires and the ability to question these desires. All these feelings are given to me to make me realize the Source of my existence (i.e. I have a Maker) and so I yearn to be with the Source eternally. There is no Eternity here but I have the sense of wanting Eternity. Eternity is only possible if I attribute my feelings to the Source of their existence, the Creator. I have to understand that the feelings are given to me in order to make me conscious of my Maker’s qualities. Attribute the existence of all these qualities to It and define It: It is the Creator of all the universe!

If I do not accept that the universe must be created, then I am not using my consciousness to question the Source of its existence. From the above point, I am conscious that I want verbal communication that addresses my questions. I am conscious that I seek enjoyment and it should have no end. I am conscious that I have the ability to question the existence of these abilities.

* **Our journey must start from questioning the existence of a Source.** **Only once I become aware that a source must exist can I continue my search for guidance.** Because I find myself equipped with questions, I begin a search for answers.
* I should find myself in a space where I NEED speech from my Creator. The One who created me must speak to me. ***HAVE I EVER FELT THIS?***
* Prior to seeking guidance, I must come to the conclusion through my own investigation that there must be a Source giving existence. Since I cannot find this Source in the universe, whatever guidance (scripture) I consult or gain access to in this universe, it should help me confirm or deny my conclusion.
* I am made with the ability to feel the presence of the Source of my existence in my being, not in physical terms but rationally. That is why the Source is referred to as unidentifiable with the qualities of the universe, as with conclusion: there must be a Source or a Necessarily Existent Being (*wajibul wujud*). The whole universe is subject to its order/will. It is the Maker of the universe about which I can have no knowledge but I am sure it exists.

We need to question and utilize our human qualities instead of wasting them. Pharaoh was identified as being wasteful. ***What does it mean to be wasteful?*** We are often advised against wasting food/water/resources, etc. **However, wastefulness is acutely evident when we do not return the ownership of each moment to the Creator.**

* The real waste, exemplified in the character of Pharaoh, is the wastefulness of our human qualities. When we ‘imitate’ we are not using our human qualities, and thus we are wasting them!
* ***How to avoid being wasteful?*** Do not just ‘accept’ or ‘preach’ religious activities without tapping into our human qualities. We have to use our human values to question our existential values. Who is the One who created us with the ability to taste? With the ability to remember taste?
* ***How is wastefulness manifested in our daily lives?***
* By not questioning my human qualities.
* By not seeing the qualities manifested in the universe correctly.
* By not reflecting on all the experiences observed.
* We have to use our human qualities to question the existence of whatever we experience.

1. **They take any scripture and start reading whether this Scripture is the Speech of the Creator of the universe. They want to see the compatibility of the scripture with their being**

* Read the scripture alongside with experiencing the universe. That is, what we experience from our interaction with the universe must be compatible with what the Speech of the Creator conveys. Otherwise, there is a contradiction with the universe being given existence and our purpose of existence here.

It is human nature to seek for the speech of his/her Maker. My Maker must explain to my consciousness verbally, because He enabled me to speak and to understand verbal expressions. Through my intellectual capacities, I am able to understand that my Maker is the Source of eternal speech because my Maker is Absolute. He is the Absolute Source of Speech. *If He does not speak, why did He make me able to speak?* Taking my abilities as a starting point, I outstretch my thoughts to the universe from within. Since I find myself with these questions and the ability to question, I seek out an answer from the One who made me with this sense of inquiry. It is necessary that He communicates with me in a way that I am able to perceive. This is why the existence of human beings is so important because humans are able to grasp the concept of existence and confirm the Creator with consciousness.

1. **Their approach is always CRITICAL in the sense of confirmation. As if they ask: Are you really the Word of the Creator? (If it is, it should not contradict human understanding)**

* The idea is not to be critical towards the Speaker but towards its Speech. “Are you the Speech of the Maker of the universe?” “If you (the Speaker in the Scripture) claim to be the Creator of this Universe, you must tell me about your universe that I observe.” “If You are as You claim to be the Creator of the pigeon, then you are the Creator of everything I observe, including myself as well.” That is why the scripture mentions more than hundreds of times about creation (heaven, earth…), requesting the readers to pay attention to their creation.
* Being critical occurs when human consciousness seeks to test what it reads in the scripture with what is observed. Example: Someone claims, ‘I am the programmer of this machine’. To be sure that he is being truthful, the programmer must be able to explain how it works. Only if there is no contradiction in what the programmer says, and what I experience with the machine, then can I be sure that he is the programmer.

The evidence presented in the text needs to be tested with our observations of the universe. We have to learn to separate the concept of the Creator and a scripture that claims to be Its Speech. When we investigate the scripture, we are not criticizing the Speaker but we are critically investigating the ‘speech’ offered in the scripture. Example: If you were born in a Buddhist family, you will be presented with its text. **As a human being with consciousness, you have to ask the text/scripture you are presented with:**

* **STAGE 1: Are you the speech of the Creator of the universe?**
* **STAGE 2: Are you the speech of my Creator?**

Question: What kind of characteristics are to be found in the text to say it’s compatible?

* Fundamentally, the text claims that I am God speaking to you and describes God with Its qualities. These qualities must be confirmed by evidence I see in the universe. I need to confirm it that it is the word of God, otherwise I cannot believe it. It’s so simple!
* We find it difficult to understand because we have never been introduced to critically reading the Quran. Every group is proud of its scripture, Quran says it. The Quran always brings evidence from the universe and always challenges blind imitation, says no to it. Quran criticizes blindly following your ancestors and the culture you are born in.
* We have to question the culture that we are born in. As a child one cannot but when he starts growing up, he starts questioning. Just as a good student studies the textbook to make sure that he understands it by confirming it, similarly, we need to have the same approach to the scripture that I am convinced with the legitimacy of the text as it claims to be. I am convinced that there is a Creator and It must have spoken to some people. Now, I am inquiring into that option to see if it speaks to me as well.
* Enveloped in the investigation is a search within ourselves: “If you are the Creator of this universe, then you must be the Creator of me. I must not see any contradiction in Its speech with the qualities I find within me, (which are given to me by Him.)

Analogy: A teacher says I am going to teach you about the concept of zero. It is a new concept that you have not thought about but you cannot ignore its validity unless you hear the whole lecture.

* Similarly, rather than throwing away the whole text (scripture) because a certain point (verse) did not make sense, we should continue reading the whole text and then return to the point of contention and see if it makes sense now.
* If it doesn’t conform to human reality, then leave the text because it is contradicting the purpose of your existence but one should never pretend to agree with it as it would be imitation, false claim and cheating oneself.
* If the text seems correct, as it claims to be (i.e. text is consistent with what it claims to be), then you will be able to understand the areas in which you found some trouble initially.
* **Every verse of the Quran should be understood in context of its whole message.**
* We have to see the big picture and educate ourselves. We are all students here and we are growing, hence we have to study!
* Make sure that you are free from biases when agreeing/rejecting with the text. Often previous understanding leads to blind acceptance or disagreement. Also, disagreement is good as it causes you to question and research further.

I need to have a worldview where the Creator of the universe speaks in general. Quran is a universal Speech. The purpose of the speech of the Quran is to make us realize who our Lord is and that this world is transient. This Owner must speak to us through representatives. What are they? The speech is one of them. My ear must always be open to the speech of the Creator. The speech of the Creator must be universalized and not localized or historicized to a certain culture or time-space. If you cannot universalize the messages in the Quran and in the Prophet’s teachings, you will limit your understanding to the stories/rituals/explanations offered, and thus reduce these sources as being historical materials.

Being critical towards reading scriptures helps one develop a right approach to utilizing the universe and oneself. That is, if I do not use myself (my human qualities), I lose the universe. One human being is capable of manifesting endless human qualities in the universe.

***Are you really the word of the Creator of the universe?*** If you are the Speech of the Creator of the universe, then you are my Creator as well and I should not see any contradiction in your speech, your act of creation and myself.

My experiences must be universalized, just as a sentence in a book makes sense within the context of the whole book. That is, if the book makes sense, the sentence will make sense. This methodology of approaching the text is uncommon; hence we need to revive it. We have to step out of historicizing the text and start reviewing what we are reading critically in the age in which we are created.

* Constantly question and experience each changing moment. Within each moment, I have to experience the Absoluteness of the Creator. For example: You may perform Hajj once physically but you should be in a ‘pilgrimage’ i.e. circumambulating around Absoluteness of the Creator (***tawheed***) at every moment.

Renew yourself **continuously**, not in one moment of Hajj or one month of Ramadan but throughout each passing moment. **DOESN’T MATTER HOW OLD YOU ARE OR WHETHER YOU ARE SINGLE, MARRIED OR A GRANDPA, NO ONE CAN SAY THAT THEY ARE DONE WITH LIFE!!!** I have to try to find myself in the presence of my Lord at each opportunity. By commemorating the Prophets through Hajj (a historical event), it helps me understand and refresh the mission of Prophethood in my life now.

* If you can universalize the message, you will be able to carry the message all the time.

1. **If the reader has somehow confidence in the fundamental teachings of the text, then their critical reading is to be turned to their understanding: *“Does my understanding go along with the aim of the text”?***

* If you find the right text for you, you will find that its speech makes sense to you because the right Speech speaks truthfully to your existence.
* **ASK:** *What is the aim in your speech to me? Why do you speak to me?* *Does this sentence fit into the aim of the text?* *Does my understanding go along with the aim of the text?*
* The aim of the text is to teach me that I am a created being, I have a Creator and this universe is transient. We should give meaning to the word of the Quran according to the aim of the Quran, not our culture.
* If a text says that I am the Speech of the Creator, then what am I going to expect from this text?
* I will expect the text to speak to me.

In summary, only when the belief and judicial approach converge, can the performance of rituals make sense. Otherwise, we will find ourselves imitating just because ‘According to my religion, God said it, so I am doing it”.

We are constantly experiencing new events and moments, so that we may use each moment to renew and learn something new. If we are not using each moment to learn, then that moment has been lost and **wasted**.

* Wastefulness is the worst thing we can do to ourselves.
* We are created with a universal capacity. As I see, my Creator, also the Creator of this universe, constantly renews the demonstration of His act.
* I am given the ability to question everything I experience. I have to use this ability!