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| **Date** | Saturday, September 5, 2015 |
| **Topic** | The Ninth Word |
| **Part** | 1 |

***In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.  
So glorify God when you reach evening and when you rise in the morning; for all praise is His in the heavens and on earth, and towards the end of the day and when you have reached noon.*   
Rum (30:17-18)**

Generally, this verse is known as referring to the five time daily prayers in respect to the variations in their timings. If we study carefully, we will get to know that we cannot make sense of any religious context isolated from our existence. The word “prayer” (***salaat***) is not mentioned in the verse but “specific time periods” are mentioned which describe the real meaning of ***salaat***.

*What is the verse asking us to do?*

* To glorify and praise God.

The verse emphasizes that we cannot glorify and praise God in a vacuum i.e. without any physical connection or experience. The glorification and praise (which are our conclusions) must be real within our existence. It must organically be cultivated as a result of our observation and experience. We communicate with God through manifestations of His qualities. **We need to use our human faculties as the manifestations of the qualities of God.**

Analogy: If a famous singer, one we have never seen in person but whose music we enjoy walks into the room introducing himself, would we be sure that he is a musician? Not really. How can we know that he is the singer whose song we have been actually listening to? When he performs, only then can we be sure of him being the singer otherwise we do not know.

* Similarly, we can know God only through His manifestations. The essence (***zaat***) does not mean anything to us. Even if 'God' presented himself physically, we wouldn't know it was Him.
* We can only recognize the Artist through His Art. Artist himself is nothing as far as my acknowledgment is concerned.
* As far as humans are concerned, 'seeing' God does not add anything to our conviction in Him. **We need to only be concerned with His Art because** **it is only through the art that I come to know the Artist.**

Therefore, worship cannot be a figment of one's imagination. It needs to be rooted in a physical connection and experience. In the analogy above, the singer's imagined appearance will add nothing to our appreciation of the song. **We cannot imagine God and worship Him through that imagination UNLESS we know Him through His manifestations**.

We have to be sure about the nature of our belief i.e. we are created beings and we can communicate with God only through created beings. **Any relationship with the Creator of the universe which does not go through its creation is “imagination”.** Some people develop an intense feeling of love for God (also known as *Ishq e ilahi*) as a result of this imagination. This usually happens when someone passionately loves the art of an artist and starts fantasizing the artist but in reality, they are in love with the art.

Most problems of belief matters derive from misrepresentation of belief in God. We mostly start talking about God and explain things from God’s perspective which is illogical. **We can know God only through His qualities and manifestations.** Our relationship with God can only be established through our life experiences.

* ***How do you know that God is All-Merciful?***  
   - Because the Quran says so (false reasoning because it doesn't establish conviction)  
   -I see Mercy in the creation around me and therefore I can KNOW that the Creator God is merciful.

The story of Khidr and Moses in the Quran is a call for us to see the bigger picture of events happening to us. When we conclude something, it must be within the whole purpose of the universe. **In the story “Khidr” is not our teacher but “Moses” is the teacher.** We have to follow the teacher, Moses. We cannot follow the way Khidr is represented in the story, it is beyond human capacity.

It is in our human innate disposition (fitrat) to want to see God. If we refer to the analogy above, we gain nothing from seeing God. The want to “see” God can only be satisfied through looking at His manifestations, and, at the end, we conclude that **what I am seeing points to the qualities of their Creator that deserve to be glorified.**

When I experience night or day, I need to conclude that the Owner of this manifestation deserves to be praised. I glorify God because I communicate with night, day… Our human qualities demands an explanation of the phenomenon observed… Without using our human qualities, we do not get anywhere. **We need to develop our potentialities in order to appreciate the manifested art.** In this process of developing, we need guidance (The Scripture revealed by God) and a teacher (Messenger employed by God to teach us.) The teacher helps us improve what is already in us.

***How do we explain the existence of enjoyment?*** Example: I am eating a cake. As a human being, I enjoy it. This enjoyment of the cake either gets attributed to the cake itself or the one who made the cake.

* We should always question: *what is the Cause of existence of the taste? Does the cake itself taste good or is it given taste?* *Do the particles have the qualities to give existence to the taste?*
* We seriously need to question: *Who am I glorifying, what am I praising?*

**It is human logic to search for the origin of something.** We have to question not because it is our religious duty but it is part of our humanity. Be wary that some people question to justify their atheistic understanding.

What I experience is a material in my hand to work on. As a result of my experience in this universe, I conclude that the Creator of the cake must not be of the nature of this universe. Ultimately, my glorification will be within the capacity of my own conclusion; I cannot go beyond my own conclusion. **Our experience has endless degrees as long as we expect that we are students, the class continues and we learn step by step.** **The purpose of my being in this world never stops.**

* I can come to a conclusion only through observing the universe.

***How do particles communicate with each other*?** Particles have no qualities to communicate with one another, although they seem to be communicating by themselves. They don’t have anything that would qualify them as the cause of existence of communication. They have no quality to communicate; every part of the cell is an independent created being. Someone who must be able to bring the particles together is what is needed for the existence of the cake (in the example above).

***What is the Source of this phenomenon of communicating?*** We have to question all the terminology presented to us. Sense of gratification must be questioned as well. We are usually taught not to question the Source of existence of any phenomenon.

We need to bring our curiosity out and question without which we cannot become a believer. **Belief can only happen after questioning. Belief is the answer to our questions.** **What we experience and conclude is important.**  A religious explanation that is not driven by the physical (anything which exists in this universe, including the meanings that we extract from the things, human senses, feelings etc.) experience is dogma just as a scientific explanation that is based on meaningless interpretation of the facts.

From historical events, we need to understand that people questioned. Even the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) did not blindly follow him. It took quite some time after his receiving revelation for people to actually confirm the message. The believers slowly confirmed during his 23 years of prophecy. Only after 20 years and on did the number of believers confirming the message skyrocket. Therefore, **we need to investigate** **every claim and not just take them blindly.** Even the hadiths (narrations) need to be verified within ourselves. Example: When the Prophet ascended (***miraaj***), he shared this experience with his people in his community. Some people came to Abu Bakr, one of the closest friends of the Prophet, telling him that Muhammad has become a lunatic saying that he had a journey through the heavens. Abu Bakr knew that whenever Muhammad said something, it carries a meaning and so he investigated the meaning of this news of “miraaj” within himself. He has experienced on many occasions that the Prophet always meant something which was not accustomed by the culture of his contemporaries.

* **Lesson:** we cannot trust the claim of another person if we have not experienced it within ourselves. We need to have our personal evidence to establish conviction within ourselves. **Without “personal evidence” we cannot confirm anything**.

Similarly, narrations of miracles can only make sense when we see that these events can take place in this world. We need to ask ourselves *why the event is narrated.* **It must mean something to us.** In the miracle of Moses’s staff which turned into a serpent swallowing all other serpents, we need to ask: *What does it mean for me?* **In reality, if I question the Source of existence of everything, my questioning swallows all the snakes (false, illogical claims.)**

We are not tested here on whether we confirm the real occurrence of the narration in history. Confirming the physical occurrence of something that happened some 1500 years ago is irrelevant to my reality. **The Creator does not test me on something which is beyond my power of perception (understanding) or my capacity of experiencing it.**

* All the narrations have to do with something within my capacity of understanding and so I have to develop myself and learn the meaning of the message which is relevant to my life.

*What does Noah’s Ark represent?*

It means I have to get on the ark i.e. secure myself with the message of the scripture; I am thus saved from the flood of all corrupted way of life. This interpretation depends on how we define the speech of God i.e. scripture. What do we make out of what is being said to us is the concern. Remember: **The definition of the Quran is God’s speech to me right now.**