Halaqa: Saturday, January 25 2014

Topic: 17th Word, pg 221

Any matter related to belief should not be for the sake of information. Rather, it should be for the sake of meaning my own life meaningful.

* Belief should make me have greater confidence in my own existence

We live in an age where our existence has no value other than its materialistic/superficial characteristics.

Not denying our existence is a good starting point BUT it is not sufficient

* We have to interpret creation in a way that it is connected to its Creator
* Otherwise, the void and our desire for eternity will still remain

We may say that the universe has been created by God, but explaining something in relation to God (while it might be true) without placing myself within the context of it, will not satisfy my existential questions.

We tend to say:

Chocolate is created by God; it is the grace of God

* The statement acknowledges reality BUT it does nothing for me, on a personal level
* I could say that chocolate is created by mother nature and it would be the same
* It is not particularly practical or useful to my belief

We have to be careful to not separate continuous existence (day-to-day interaction) and point of creation. In doing so, belief is ineffective and holds no real meaning.

* It becomes something external to my reality
* We have to experience the act of creation in our life at every moment to begin to grasp the reality of who we are

To achieve such a sense of convicted belief, I have to place myself at the center and relate experiences as originating from me NOT as originating from God.

* I receive the message (signs), make it my own and then return it back to God
* This is effective belief

Analogy: You tune the frequency on the radio to the point that you can receive a clear signal. Once you are able to receive the signal, you internalize the message that is broadcasted and use it by saying: On the radio, I heard XYZ.

Just by acknowledging that the radio broadcasts information has no real purpose for me because it has not affected my life in any way.

What we tend to do:

* Chocolate is created by God

SEPARATION

* I am going to pray, because it is my duty

What we should do:

* Chocolate is created by God
* I enjoy eating chocolates
* What is the point in enjoying it? What am I going to do with it?
* Why has this sense of enjoyment been given to me?
* Acknowledge the reality of the chocolate and my enjoyment of it by returning those feelings to God
  + Now when I go to prayer, there is a real connection

The purpose of the chocolate’s existence cannot be just so that I will enjoy the chocolate and that’s the end of it. It would be pointless because the chocolate will eventually be finished

* The sense of enjoyment was given to me so that I appreciate the chocolate
* Use the enjoyment to connect yourself to the One who has given it to you
* In connecting yourself to the Creator of the chocolate and of enjoyment, you experience Eternal enjoyment; what you really desire.

The Creator of this taste is the One who is teaching me who He is

* Taste comes from Him
* I acknowledge it
* I use the taste and process it to know Him
  + Full circle

All our senses have been given to us for ONE purpose

* To know your Lord

Don’t run away from the process of questioning your senses

* Ask: Why are the senses given to us?
  + They are tools that we have been equipped with so that we may respond back to the One who has given us these tools.

God gave this to me SO I should thank Him by praying – SEPARATE

* I have been given my sense to complete the process of connection
* Use the senses to respond back to its Source
* Experience belief so that you can truly make it yours

Example: While we are all so diverse, there is complete harmony is our enjoyment of tastes. We all enjoy chocolate.

* Evidently, there is a Divine Plan going on
* Everything is different but it is all complementary
* The order is so perfectly organized 🡪 A sign that the Creator is administering everything with perfection

We may experience different levels of enjoyment in our tasting of a piece of chocolate, but we all have the sense of enjoyment

* Diversity, technically should be the source of disorder
* But in the creation, although everything is different and diverse, the harmony and order is perfect
  + Proof that there is someone who is administering the whole order completely, all at the same time.

Through the message/sign/Creation we will acknowledge who the Creator is

Ways to explain the universe:

1. Everything is created by God. He is omnipotent.

* We don’t relate it back to the center (myself)
* We cannot experience that I am the product of the Absolute Source

1. **Everything is created by God. He is omnipotent AND I experience the creation within myself**

* Since I am here to know the qualities of the Absolute Creator, I can use my free will to acknowledge His Creation and in doing so experience His endless qualities

Everything in this world can only be explained in terms of His actions

* *Wa kutubihi:* This Creator guides me through His books
* *Wa rasulihi:* His guidance is reflected by His messengers; I can use my free will to choose ways and I should choose the way taught by the Messenger
  + Don’t just sit and memorize the names of the Prophets
  + Apply the teachings practically
* *Wa yawmil* akhir: This Creation is a witness that everything will end
* *Wal qadri khairihi:* Everything is determined according to His conscious choice

Although the Source of the Universe is Absolute, everything in this transient world is a witness to Him (they give us a sign and pass on)

* But because we desire eternity, we cannot find satisfaction in the transience
* I want to always experience the enjoyment of chocolate

The traditional way of teaching Islam is dangerous because we tend to hold on to the things we learn when we were five after becoming critical thinking adults.

* When we are young, we are being trained to hold on to an identity
* As we grow, we have to question the identities we have been made to hold on to
* What do the names we have learnt represent?
  + God’s speech
  + Question it and seek to either confirm or refute the claims you have been indoctrinated with

Why do we not learn how to reason about things associated with religion?

* Because we don’t do it, people tend to feel dissatisfied about their identity

We think: As a Muslim, I am expected to say that I believe in the angels and in the hereafter.

* If I don’t say it, I will be a heretic and heretics go to Hell
* I don’t want to go to Hell, so I’ll just say
* RESULT OF SEPARATIST THINKING

Rather, we have to train ourselves to submit to Islam

* In order to submit, we have to realize that religion needs to be at the core of my own reality
* I have to put myself at the center of my religious identity and make sense of my religious reasoning

God has blown His spirit into us, humans (*ruh).*

We have to connect this *ruh* back to Him (the Source of Everything).

- Only in doing so can we experience belief

All my human qualities have been given to me so that I may use them as tools to connect to the Lord.

* **I have to be at the center receiving the information and subsequently respond to the Sender**

We need to be careful in how we explain the Creator

* Don’t explain the world through God; *God created the animals*
  + My sense of humanity (consciousness) is not functioning
* Rather, get to know God through the world; *The cat is so cute. My sense of love for the cat has been given to me…… COMPLETE*
  + Use my qualities and consciousness to know God

In my religion, we believe in the hereafter (Silly statement)

* It has nothing to do with you.

Rather, we should train ourselves to say:

* I am confident that there is an Eternal Life and the Hereafter will take place.
* Become confident through your investigations in this world

We are from God and we have to return to Him (*inalilahi wa inailayhi rajeoon)*

* We have to complete the circle
* God has breathed into human beings from His own spirit
  + This spirit has to go back to Him

My enjoyment of chocolate is from Him. Return your taste back to Him.

All our actions ought to be directly connected to our belief NOT to our borrowed heritage.

* Belief cannot be imitation; It is personal and internalized
* Belief requisites a sense of confirmation and confidence in what you are claiming
* We cannot have common beliefs; We can have common values and morals NOT beliefs

My Creator is speaking to ME and is telling Me the story in order to guide me to come to my own conclusion

Explain things within one’s own belief system

* Unless you are able to personally confirm the statements, there is no point in blindly following injunctions

In our religion, we pray five times a day : This is not a result of our personal convictions

* I should pray as a result of my personal belief

Don’t read religious books as though we are watching advertisements

* They are not meant to make us merely ‘buy’ what they are saying
* We have to use them as signs and messages

We hide ourselves behind our ignorance and say: I don’t know, so I won’t question or deny it.

- I shall just follow blindly

- We have to step away from such a way of thinking and question that which we do not know

Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Jewish community – They are all believers to some extend. How are we different?

* Religion is not a community identity
* It has to be your personal conviction
* You need to know your Lord

American culture: Individual values

* What would you like?
* What would you prefer do?
* The products of this culture will definitely ask: What would I like about my belief?
  + They are not going to blindly follow the cultural group-think
* If we don’t teach religion as an individual identity, the growing communities will be a threat for the future because they haven’t been taught religion in a way that is in synchrony with the rest of their upbringing.

While we are studying, pay attention: We are establishing personal, faith- based religion.