Halaqa: Wednesday, July 2 2014

Topic: What is Worship? (Part 7)

**“Among His signs are the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. Adore not the sun or the moon, but prostrate yourselves in adoration before God, who has created them – if it is Him whom you worship.”**

**Fussilat (41):37**

Worship is commonly understood only in the form of rituals BUT worship itself encompasses a much larger scope of understanding.

Quran claims that it is presenting the word of God

* We have to investigate if its claims are true because the Quran does not speak to the ‘addressee’ with a taken-for-granted perspective.
  + The text speaks on behalf of the Creator and says: *Here are my signs*
* The message of the Quran is open to humanity
* We have to read the speech in the Quran with our (given) human qualities
  + I don’t already have to be a believer when I start reading the Quran
  + I just have to approach the Quran from an unbiased perspective and allow for my given human qualities to be spoken to
  + The Quran should make me a believer

The Prophet SAW received revelation although he was an uneducated man

* We use the fact that the Prophet was illiterate to justify the claim that the Quran cannot be his word but must be Divine speech
* But beyond that, it points to the fact that the message does not require one to be literate in order to understand the Quran

Night, day, sun, moon – Constantly changing elements that we are exposed to

* The reader’s attention is being drawn to the ‘time-dimension’ of this universe
* We are being guided to contemplate about the changes we observe
* Night/day/sun/moon are the most obvious changes we observe in our day-to-day interactions
* How are these changes happening?

The Quran does not argue about the essential reality of things themselves

* It does not discuss/confirm/reject claims about the earth’s shape, age, etc
* Rather, we are simply being directed to CHANGES that are happening
* These changes are something we cannot deny

Relevance of the word *ayah* (sign)

* Some translations, translate the word *ayah* to mean miracle
* The changes we observe are miracles
* Through understanding the changes in the universe, we will inadvertently be led to conclude that there is an Absolute Creator who causes the changes we observe.
* Why?
  + Because unconscious particles (atoms and molecules) cannot be responsible for existence

The Quran will only make sense if the speech is referred to a speaker who is Absolute

* We have to bear in mind this context when we read the text
* We are free to then accept or reject this claim of context when we read the Quran
* Otherwise, we risk reading the Quran solely as a historical text

**His signs**: Anything that points to the qualities of the Absolute Creator

* Everything in this universe is a miracle because nothing can be GIVEN EXISTENCE by anything in this world
* Every single speck is GIVEN EXISTENCE/ CREATED by a One whose qualities must be Absolute
  + Otherwise, there is no way for me to comprehend the existence of objects
* We use terms like ‘otherworldly’ to describe the Creator but what does it mean?
  + There is nothing that exists apart from the Absolute One that creates

Absolute: The One that cannot be described within the language and conditions of this universe because every tiny particularity in this universe must have been given existence by a Creator

* We cannot describe the essence of what it means to be Absolute; that is the very nature of the word Absolute
* The argument that there might be ‘two gods’ makes no sense because we are trying to describe the Absolute within the language constraints of this universe
* By definition, Absolute cannot be defined, thus, cannot be thought of “one” or “two.” Absolute is absolute, period.

All of His signs, at the smallest micro-level, display the dynamic (changing) nature of its creation

* Everything is created with a fundamental characteristic of change. Change means continuously being given a “new existence”
* Who/what is responsible for this change?
* Amongst these changes, the ones we observe most obviously are the sun/moon/day/night

**“Adore not the sun or the moon”:**

What does adoration mean?

* When you look at the sun/moon, stay away from proclaiming only how wonderful they are
  + Rather, be aware that the sun/moon are CREATED and you observe that they are indicating the unceasing change in their existence.
  + The sun/moon have been made wonderful and have been made to function in a certain way

Example: The laptop is not smart

* The creator/engineer of the laptop is smart because the laptop and all its components have no ability to create itself and to piece themselves together

Instead of adoring the sun/moon, admire the Creator of them

* In order for the sun/moon to come into existence, there requires an Absolute Creator
* Adoring them is futile because in and of themselves, the sun/moon have no power over any aspect of themselves. They are unconscious elements
  + What makes the sun/moon/nature beautiful is the fact that they have been given these qualities
  + Adore and worship the maker NOT the objects

Can a flower beautify itself OR is it made beautiful for you?

Is the weather comfortable OR has the weather been made comfortable for you?

Is a meal delicious OR has it been made delicious for you?

Is the child cute/pretty OR has it been made cute/pretty?

We have to caution ourselves against worshipping the objects/qualities in the objects in and of themselves.

* We may get lost in apparent causes but if we investigate deeply, we will see that nothing in this universe can create anything else
* Do not attribute the beauty of a painting to the painting itself. Rather, attribute its beauty to the artist.

**“but prostrate yourselves in adoration before God, who has created them”:**

The Quran is teaching us whom we should adore:

* When we say *subhanAllah (*glory be to God) we are proclaiming that the qualities we observe all belong to Him
* Do not adore the sun/moon but have adoration only before God, the Creator of the universe
  + Some people may be quick to refer the adoration of the sun/moon to the sun/moon worshippers of the past
  + But we have to remember that the Quran is beyond time and space limitations
  + While the Quran was revealed to the Prophet SAW in specific conditions, the Quran claims to be guidance for all of mankind
    - So while the Quran’s messages (its belief aspects) were true and valid during the time of the Prophet SAW, it is as valid and true for the current period

This verse is guiding us to see the parallel between the ‘signs’ and the ‘act of creation’

*Khalaqa:* Creating (giving existence) to something that did not exist before

* We have to think of everything in terms of its coming into existence
* At every moment, everything is being given existence and is created anew
* Everything is a miracle because they are miraculously brought into existence

**“if it is Him whom you worship.”:**

This awareness of Creation is the core of worship!