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| **Date** | Saturday, November 14, 2015 |
| **Topic** | Ninth Word |
| **Part** | 11 |

While interacting with the universe, we develop certain feelings towards creation. Sunset time has a special meaning for the conscious being as it calls to mind the end of the day, end of season and end of our life. In other words, it reminds me that everything is transient. *What is the wisdom in objects/events being transient?* The ability to do an introspective analysis of the self is within us. As a result of our experience and observation, we respond back.

*Recap:* Prayer is a response towards creation (including myself in it). If we take religion as an external acquisition, it’s a pitfall rendering prayers as “burdensome”. Looking for Paradise is not a fable; on the contrary, the ability to experience Paradise is within us. The author of this text is helping us do that through finding the meaning of prayers:

* *What do I get from sunset time?*
* *How do I evaluate my emotional state of being?*

**Religion must be the result of my own conclusion**. Only when I agree that there is a purpose in my creation, do I get to experience the sunset time. Everything in the universe brings news for me from beyond. At sunset, I get messages via creation i.e. I understand that sunset (or any act of creation) cannot come from the sun (or any particle) itself.

I can only communicate with the Creator through creation. I am in prefect harmony with the universe; I am deliberately posited in this universe. My consciousness is also provided by it. Now, I have to use my “feelings” and “thoughts” to derive conclusion, which is the way I am created. **I have questions and I am searching for answers.** The direction, sense of guidance that I am looking for comes from the inside. If my questions cannot be answered within the settings of the universe, then my being given existence is meaningless.

* **First question:** *how come I exist?*
* If I understand that my existence is not accidental, then the
* **Second question** is: *why am I here?*

My intellectual ability forces me to search for an answer from the One that creates me and the rest of the universe, the Creator. Think about it: If I have the ability to ask the question and I do not have the ability to get an answer to the question, then it contradicts my being given existence. Example: I need air, it’s there. I need answers to my questions. The One who made me must answer my question. Human intellect forces us to realize that this Creator is not doing anything in vain.

* The One who creates me, must answer my questions pertaining to my existence.

***How does guidance work?***

* By applying what I read in the universe and what prophets (messengers) say about life and see if it resonates with what I observe in the universe.
* Taking the messengers as the source of the message reduces the value of messengers. They are not “messengers” any more; they are “authors” of the work they present.
* Messengers are employed to help me solidify my belief in the existence of the Source.
* What the messenger is saying is what I need to evaluate: *Can this really be true?*
* Our conclusions with respect to belief matters must be a result of our independent will because we have been created free:
* If we merely follow the rules of an externalized religion, we enslave ourselves.
* Once we enslave ourselves, we can be easily manipulated by those who claim authority in religion.
* Blind following stems from laziness and disinterest to investigate our reality.

***What is the antidote for “laziness”?***

* We are responsible for our life because we have been given all these faculties to use them freely.
* To counter laziness, we have to choose to be laborious i.e. engage ourselves “critically”.
* Institutionalized religions claim to offer an antidote. They say to be on the safe side, imitate these actions. However, if we investigate we will realize that while we may seem physically 'busy' the actions are meaningless and unfulfilling.
* My critical thinking is what makes me human: I cannot just hear and obey. Rather when I hear something, I have to investigate it. **Only after I can conclude that my observations make sense can I obey.**

I need to experience and witness that everything is provided by the Creator, just as I am a creation of the Creator. For example, whenever we see a star, we should train ourselves to question its existence just like Prophet Abraham did.

* Ask: *Can the star be the source of its own existence?*
* Experience: It cannot be its own Source of existence. It must have a Creator
* I have to reach a point where I automatically question everything I encounter. With training, these questioning processes will become second nature and happen within seconds. It will confirm and re-confirm our belief of an All- Powering Creator.

We should not cut ourselves off from questioning and as a result resign from critical thinking. Some say: I cannot keep questioning because there are so many layers of questions. However, **our ability and intelligence has been given to us for this responsibility.** We should not relegate it to the back seat. Physical activities (working, cooking, workout etc.) are so much easier to be engaged in as compared to critical thinking.

* I need to be brave enough and admit that I do not want to engage in critical thinking because of my own “laziness”.
* Do not take the easy way out!
* Stop wasting your intellectual abilities!

***What does sunset prayer mean for me?***

When I look at the sunset, I should stop and ponder. It ought to remind me of the 'end' of something (day, year, century, epoch, this life). There are endless signs for the impending end of this universe. The sunset should not simply make us pray. Rather, I should reflect: **The sunset cannot happen accidentally. It is the result of a conscious design and reminds me of my death. This world cannot be the originator of its own existence. There must be a Creator of this universe and I worship this Creator because I witness the connection.**

* In such a reflective process, my prayer is a result of my experience and not merely an act of imitation.

**The Words, Ninth Word, Fifth Point (page 55, end of 7th paragraph):** “***Through declaring: You alone do we worship and from You alone we seek help, he proclaims his worship for and seeks help from His unassisted dominicality, His unpartnered Godhead, His unshared sovereignty. Then he bows, and through declaring together with all the universe his weakness and impotence, his poverty and baseness before the infinite majesty, the limitless power and utter mightiness of the Enduring Eternal One, he says: All glory to My Mighty Sustainer, and glorifies his Sublime Sustainer. And prostrating before the undying Beauty of His essence…”***

Everything in this universe is meaningfully arranged and communicates with my given feelings and my intellect. When I observe sunset, I have the potentiality to get excited. The excitement is in me. When it comes out, I need to question the feeling that I experience and tie it to what I observe in creation: ***Where does the quality of excitement come from? Can I explain the existence of anything by its own self?*** *When I am hungry where is the hunger coming from?* In general, I need to question the qualities (hard, soft, cold…) of any matter: *Does the matter (cell) create its own quality?* More so, *do I create my own qualities* *or is it given to me?*

* **Messengers come to apprise conscious beings that matter (and its qualities) cannot make itself.**
* **I am given the ability to question matter and understand the source of its existence.**

Sunset time is time to remember the source of my existence, to extract the meaning the Creator of this event is conveying to me i.e. **everything is transient and nothing is the Source of its own existence.**  Only the One giving existence to the events/objects in the universe is Absolute. If I see events/objects/order as the source of producing results, then I need not worship the Creator because in my conclusion, everything is happening by itself.

* Nothing can happen by itself (*lailaha*)
* I must be here for a purpose; this act of Creation must be here for a purpose.

When I communicate with Creation, I feel recharged. I need to reflect on my emotions and experiences. Accordingly, I am made to RESPOND to these given emotions. Therefore, reflect (without bias) on your emotions when you interact with Creation and RESPOND after questioning the existence of these emotions:

1. *Who is the Creator of the sunset?*
2. *Can the sunset be a result of its own creation?*
3. *Who is the giver of my excitement and enjoyment?*
4. *Where did these feelings come from?*

All of these lead me to conclude that only the Creator of the universe can be the Source of existence: “I admire the maker of the sunset and the maker of my emotions”. As a result I respond back. I see no other reason for this beautiful scenery. **In my conclusion, I say: “We worship you alone and we seek you alone”.**

* *Eyyaka na’budu*: “I am acknowledging the Creator as the only One giving existence to everything in the universe”.
* *Waeyyaka nasta’een:* “I am aware that everything is provided by You, O Existence Giver!”

We, along with all other beings, are made to feel good when others share this conclusion with us. Example: “We” all enjoy our existence, and for human beings and animals, delicious food; “We” are awed by the beauty and magnificence of sunset/sunrise. The practical expression of my response is based on guidance given in the texts.

***Why does that text tell me to say, “we” worship instead of “I”?***

“You alone we worship” is **“my conclusion”**. If it was not my conclusion, then how would I acknowledge that everything worships it? My conclusion must be inclusive of acknowledging other created beings (in the universe) as being created. My mind and imagination must be all inclusive when I understand and proclaim: “I worship the One that creates me and everything that I come in contact with”.

1. I present **my conclusion** that everything in this world (we all together) are impotent and poor because of what I have witnessed in this Creation.
2. I have no power and neither does the sun, moon, statuses, cells, EVERYTHING!
3. Everything in this universe is like me.
4. We are all dependent

Nothing can be the source of its own existence *(****lailaha****)*. If I am not sure about it, I have to investigate further so I can conclude (*illalah, there must be a Source giving existence to everything.*) Asking questions is my reality. That is the only way I can come to my personal conclusion. Therefore, when it comes to identify my religion, **I cannot say “we” because I follow my own conclusion.** My conclusion says that I have a Creator that employs an instructor for me to help me communicate with creation and guide me. **There is nothing external in religion. Religion must be based on “I”, extremely important for my “belief”:**

1. I am the one experiencing it.
2. I am the one to conclude it.
3. I understand and I am convinced.
4. I feel satisfied that is why I am consistent.

Without using my human qualities, I cannot have any religion. Something within me causes me to respond to the act of creation. After all, the feeling cannot be its own Cause of existence because in order to be there, it would need to exist before its own creation and this does not really make sense. ***What is this Source within me causing me to respond?***  The existence of the Cause that I am looking for, its existence is “essential” to my being. The existence of this Cause cannot be contingent.

**Questioning existence is a must for any human being:** When I conclude that my Creator must give me the answers to my questions, guidance from the Creator comes in the form of answers.

We need to go step by step and be patient in this process that is why we are given life. As long as we are given life, it must be for a purpose. Therefore, carry on finding the meaning of your life.

* Train yourself to question the Source of existence of the **qualities** (qualities such as motion, feelings, texture, action) you witness and experience within yourself! It is the very reason of our existence.
* The process of questioning may seem arduous but that is the only meaningful purpose of our life!
* We often say: The cell is producing. But we must investigate further: *Can the cell create its own production quality?* The cells have been **given** these qualities.
* **Taking existence for granted is the source of “atheism”**. Hence atheists do not acknowledge the Creator. Similarly, performing actions and rituals without questioning the source equates to taking existence for granted. The ritualistic religious practices which are performed on a taken for granted base without being aware of what the practitioner is really doing in some ways akin to atheism.

Any understanding that is not founded firmly on the questioning of its existence is baseless. **If I do not have the questions, answers can never makes sense for me.** Analogy: Most test preparation books have an answer key at the back. ***Is it useful to memorize answer key without studying the text?***

* NEVER! Memorizing answer key leads me towards failure. I need to study the text, understand and learn by doing the exercises. Then I need to check the answer key and compare my answers with it.
* Similarly, in order to practice religion, I need to understand the universe, creation and my being. I need to work within myself and confirm what I experience in the universe i.e. what I conclude is right as it matches the answer key.
* **Religion must be experiential, based on my own conclusion.**
* If the answer key does not match my conclusion, I need to go back to the text, read it and practice the exercises again. It means my whole process on reflecting on the matter needs to start afresh.
* If the answer key does not seem to be right for me (i.e. a typo or author made a mistake), then I cannot reject my reality, and imitate the answer key. As a result, I do not follow any religious source if its the answer key does not match my results yet or perhaps what was presented to me as the answer key maybe wrong too.
* Either way, there is no way to escape from our reality.
* **The answer key itself is not important, what is important is the understanding of the text i.e. the learning process.**
* We have to listen to the teacher and do the homework to verify our understanding of the subject that is how we grow. We cannot simply obey the teacher as it would be akin to imitation. I need to confirm everything for myself and see if I come in agreement with the teacher.
* Without understanding what they represent, obeying commands is not religion/belief.
* Do not fall into the trap of obeying self-appointed religious authority.
* Learn from others but ultimately, any conclusion you draw must be yours and only.
* There is no end to this process. *Is there any Absolute conclusion?*
* No, there is no Absoluteness for us within this type of creation. Absoluteness belongs to the Creator of the universe only. In the universe nothing is Absolute. Keep investigating!

Again, without teachers we cannot educate ourselves. We cannot learn and progress. The universe is our laboratory. The teacher is our Creator and the prophets are our instructors. The lab constantly presents us opportunities to reflect.

* **Question your emotions otherwise you will just be imitating.**
* If you see something beautiful, question: *how come I am excited at the sight of this beautiful baby?*
* **This questioning process is the start of religion.**
* Loving the baby teaches me something i.e. the Creator of the baby is telling me that the baby is created for me in order to make me realize the Source of my feelings.

I am given consciousness within me letting me know that everything is a deliberate act of creation i.e. I am expected to acknowledge the Source of existence of my feelings. If I do not then I am denying my reality. By denying reality, *can anyone follow religion?* Keep questioning as the consciousness of the Source will become an immediate reaction. My worship encompasses acknowledging the worship of the whole universe. The consciousness of this acknowledgment is given by the Most Beauteous One.

In summary, I am made to make use of my human qualities, so I should not choose to ignore my reality. I should use my power of choice (freewill) given to me not to ignore my reality. Through communicating with the universe, I find that everything is inclusive i.e. coming into existence together. Example: the Maker of the sunlight and the Maker of my feelings is the same. The Maker of the universe is making me respond back to creation, I say while observing sunset: “I admire your Maker, I admire the Maker of my abilities to admire you”. That is my conclusion, nothing more, nothing less. Sunset time is a quick revision of my reality; it cannot happen by itself it’s a perfect design, conscious act of creation. It reminds me that this universe is created in such a way that it will come to an end (i.e. my life here will come to an end as any other being in this universe).