Halaqa: Saturday, July 12 2014

Topic: Cryings of the heart

**O my ignorant soul! Know that the world and its beings are certainly ephemeral, but you may find a way leading to permanence in each ephemeral thing, and may see two flashes, two mysteries, of the manifestations of the Undying Beloved’s Beauty.**

We have to acknowledge that someone else is operating my being

* My existence does not depend on my expectations
* I have been placed in this universe and my existence subject to His plan
  + Without acknowledging this reality, I will rebel against my Creator’s rules
* Once we submit to the Creator, living becomes easy because we have nothing to claim ownership over
  + All our actions will be in His name

Lying, stealing, and gambling are vices frowned upon.

* Everyone knows it; regardless of one’s religiosity
* The Quran commands against these once or at most twice

Commands that are constantly repeated in the Quran: Stay away from shirk (ascribing divine power to anything of this universe)

* Religion is NOT an alternative to our innate human qualities
* Rather, religion elevates our human qualities so that our existence becomes meaningful

Man’s ego strives to achieve a position of superiority over others

* But do we ponder about the existence of the qualities that seem to make us superior?
* Are we going to be the best by submitting to our reality OR by claiming ownership of our qualities?
  + Reality: All the qualities have been given, as a trust, so that we may know who the Creator is

Qualities of tidiness, cleanliness, etc are given so that we may know who our Creator is

* These qualities are not given to us to compete with each other.
* We should be aware that we are NOT competing for recognition amongst one another
* Rather, we should be using them in order to get to know who their Source is. He must have these qualities in the Absolute degree, for He provides every creature with them all at once with no difficulty and conflict.

We have to train ourselves to not act like animals, they use their abilities but they do not think what they are for.

* Our free will has been given so that we may make choices
* How are we going to choose?
  + Most people avoid smoking, eating bacon, drinking because they know it is bad for their health
  + Similarly non-religious people also teach their children against lying and stealing
  + But where we have to be different is in the REASON FOR OUR CHOICE
    - By acknowledging our created reality, we have to use our innate qualities in the Name of their Creator.

I cannot be proud of being a tidy person

* I can only be grateful to my Creator who taught me how to be tidy because in reality, it is He who is the real and only tidy One.

The main battle in our life is NOT discerning whether we should lie OR not lie

* Human beings have been equipped with an innate sense of morality
* Rather, the battle lies in attributing the quality of speaking the truth to the Creator instead of claiming false ownership over it

When I claim ownership over my truth-telling personality, I am saying:

* I AM TRUTHFUL
  + But it ignores the reality: Who am I apart from the qualities that I have been GIVEN?
  + I am claiming ownership over a quality BUT its existence has no basis unless I meaningfully explain the existence of my being.

Rather, when I act in a truthful manner, I should say:

* I chose to be truthful because I am aware of my reality as a created being
* The qualities and emotions I experience are a trust given to me, so that I may act on them in order to acknowledge the Giver)

I must be honest

* This sense is GIVEN to me
  + When I act honestly, it is not about God ‘favoring’ one person over the other
* I am given the free will to chose to be honest or not
  + According to my choices, God creates the result

If I fail to acknowledge the qualities as belonging to the Creator, I will attribute them to myself, resulting in arrogance

* Example: Pharaoh and the manner in which he fed the people of his tribe
  + He claimed ‘lordship’ over the people

*Munkir:* Has 2 elements

1. Denying the truth
2. Being ungrateful

The more we claim ownership and deny the fact that we are created, the more we become ungrateful

* In doing so, we falsely inflate our egos

Revelation teaches us that we have to avoid being overtaken by this ‘misconception of ownership’ regardless how small the field of ‘ownership’ might be

* It does not matter whether you claim that you are the owner of the world OR of a small tree
* The mistake/false conception is the same

When we wear ‘branded’ items of clothing

* It could be a way of showing off INSTEAD of being grateful to the One who has granted us the ‘wealth’ OR ‘intellect’ to study at certain institutions
* Ego is a blessing, in reality, because it is a way to make us aware when we fail to be grateful
  + Only by using our free will can we truly come to know the truth
  + Without this power of choice, we behave like animals (no conscious choice)

When a mother feeds a child, there are 2 ways she can perceive it as a result of her free will:

1. I am a good mother
2. This feeling is created in me and it is God’s grace. I am just fulfilling His trust and thus coming to know through this act of feeding that God is the Nourisher.

Animals, however, act without a consciousness

* They do not claim ownership over the qualities

Difference between an animal and a human feeding the child

* Both will produce food; that is by the will of God
  + If a human chooses to NOT feed the child, the human is even worse than an animal
* But unlike animals, humans have the ability to become aware of the Giver of food and to acknowledge the true Sustainer.

**Know that the world and its beings are certainly ephemeral…**

* We ALL know that we are transient BUT there is an option in front of us that does not want to be conscious of this reality

**But you may find a way leading to permanence in each ephemeral thing…**

* Human beings know that they want permanence BUT if they choose not to submit to the their reality, they may see death as the end of existence and thus become despaired.
  + However, we have to teach it to submit (because we have been given the free will to do so)
    - It was a process that required education and constant reminders
* We have to be realistic with our true desires instead of ignoring them

**And may see two flashes, two mysteries, of the manifestations of the Undying Beloved’s Beauty.**

* Two flashes:
  + Example: A house with a beautiful garden
    - Flash 1- Human beings are aware of the beauty
    - The human free will ought to interfere and ask:
      * Where does this beauty come from?
      * Why do I enjoy the beauty?
      * Why is it attractive to me?
    - Flash 2- We are also innately aware that the beauty does not belong to the garden itself (a result of using free will)
      * Rather the beauty belongs to the Creator

We desire beauty

* Step 1: Every human being loves beauty and appreciates it.
* Step 2: Should I pursue beauty, since that is that what I find myself desiring OR should I pursue the Source of the beauty, the One who created that thing beautifully.
  + The desire for beauty is given to us to find the Eternally Beautiful One.

We have to train ourselves to question for what end we should use our desires OTHERWISE we are wasting away our human qualities!

**Yes, it is within the bounty that the bestowal is to be seen and the favor of the Most Merciful perceived.**

* We are created with the love for beauty so that we may be grateful to the Beautiful Creator.
* Do not just see and enjoy the beauty BUT we have to connect ourselves to the Permanent Beautiful Creator.

**If you pass from bounty to bestowal, you will see the Bestower.**

* First, we have to recognize the beauty (bounty – *ni’ma)*
* Next, we have to see the deliberate act of creation (qualities that have been bestowed- *in’aam*)
* Only then can we search for the Creator (Bestower-*mun’im*)

Where we may slip:

* We see the bounty and jump directly to praising the Creator (*alhamdolillah)*
* We fail to reflect on the qualities that have been bestowed
  + Everybody stands on equal footing in their ability to perceive the bounty
    - We all enjoy beauty and good food
  + If we find ourselves in a religious tradition, we invoke the name of our Lord without contemplating on the bounty itself
    - A result of taking religion and the bounties of God for granted

Without reflecting on the qualities of the bestowed, we are filled with a huge vacuum of meaninglessness!

* We may say *alhamdolillah* and praise God but we may still not be satisfied
* There is no contemplation on the bounty and the act of bestowing
  + Our belief may be an incomplete process if we have failed to connect the BOUNTY with the BESTOWER

Taken for granted (universe) 🡪 Taken for granted (belief)

Universe: Materialists/scientists Belief: Religious studies

We need to connect the two

Example: Eating a loaf of bread

* I enjoy bread
  + Missing step: Reflection on the bounty in front of me
    - How does the bread come to be?
    - Who creates the grain, water, heat, soil?
    - The entire process must be the result of an Absolute Creator
* I am grateful to the bread’s Creator because I am convinced (through a process of introspection) that the bread needs to be created.

When I say *bismillah* before eating, it is a result of my awareness (INTROSPECTION/REFLECTION) of that the food must be created by the Absolute Creator

* I do not just say *bismillah* because I am a religious person
* Rather, I eat in the name of God because I am aware that the food is a result of His Creation
  + There is no way for me to deny this reality

**Also, each work of the Eternally Besought One makes known the All-Glorious Maker’s Names like a missive.**

* Every step in the process of creation points to the Eternally Besought One (*as-samad)*
  + The Creator creates through a particular process not because He needs to follow an order in order to create(besought)
  + Rather, it is so that human beings may see the orderly process and deliberation in every action
* No chain/link in the order can be a ‘cause’
  + Can the soil consciously contribute to the creation of the wheat?
    - No.
  + The Eternally Besought One is creating it
    - He does not need the order, but He creates it within an order so that I may know the steps in the process and gain unlimited degrees of awareness through these unlimited steps

The order in the universe reveals His qualities, like a missive

* Each act is an alphabet in the message
* He introduces Himself to us, conscious beings, in a detailed process
  + Through His act of creation I know Him and His attributes
    - The Creator is All-Powerful NOT because I was told so BUT because I witness so

**If you pass from the decoration to the meaning, you will find the one signified by way of His Names.**

* Decoration: Beauty
* Meaning: Why do I like it? Why are things beautiful to me?
* His Names: We can only know His Names/qualities by self-examination and self- reflection
  + The beauty I observe can only come from the Beautiful One
  + The One who created the object, must be the Absolutely Knowledgeable One because everything is created so perfectly in unison

**Since you can find the kernel, the essence, of these ephemeral beings, obtain it.**

* If we employ our conscious will to seek out the Creator’s qualities, we will find the permanence
  + In finding the permanence in the ephemeral, our heart is at peace because the heart in reality is seeking permanence
  + We have to use our human qualities to train our ego to submit.
    - See the mercy and wisdom in the creation of our desires
      * The sense of desire has been created to take you to your destination (permanence)
      * But, if you do not use the desire for its purpose, it will control you
      * Analogy: Reins on a horse
        + Either use the reins to control the horse so that it may take you to your destination
        + Or, have it be in control and gallop where it may please.

There is gold in the ephemeral! Find it.

**Then without pity you can throw away their meaningless shells and externals onto the flood of ephemerality.**

* Instead of getting obsessed with the beautiful garden, you will renounce the heart’s attachment to it because you are connected to the Permanent Source of the beautiful garden. Then while your body is in a beautiful garden your heart will be joyful in the presence of the Eternally Beautiful One, God the Creator. When your body is taken away from this beautifully created garden your heart will not feel the pain because it is already with the Eternal Beauty.