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Lesson 5: Once Again the Philosophy of Signs and Catastrophes

Because of the fact that a discussion about signs, catastrophes, sudden events and unpleasant events is a very difficult and complicated one and is most often discussed in the area of ontology and monotheism we are obligated to the student to study this issue further from another point of view which is more readily understandable by the general reader.

5. Difficulties and Ups and Downs give Spirit to Life

Perhaps it is difficult for some people to understand that if life was only filled with blessings, it would lose its value.

It has been proven today that if you place an object in the middle of a room, and you give it a strong, uniform light from all directions and the object and the room both be completely smooth, we will not be able to see the object because when shadows are placed next to light, the dimension of the form is made clear and the shadow separates the object from the light and then we can see it.

The value of the gifts of life as well as the weak or strong shadows of difficulties cannot be seen. If throughout life, there were no such thing as sickness; the pleasure of health would never be sensed. Following a night of a high fever and the morning dawn, when the fever breaks, the memory of such a night, when one regains one's health and thinks back on that night of fever and pain, one realizes what a jewel good health is.

In general, a uniform kind of life, even the most comfortable kind of life is tiresome, spiritless and death like. It has often been seen that individuals, because of a comfortable life, empty of any kind of difficulties, find it so boring that they attempt to commit suicide or else they continuously complain about their life.

You will find no architect with taste who will design the walls of a large room to be totally smooth and

uniform. Rather, he carves curves and lines into it.

Why is the world of nature so beautiful? Why is the view of jungles which fill the sides of mountains and streams with twists and turns among the small and large trees so interesting and attractive?

One reason is the lack of uniformity. The order of light and darkness and the coming and going of day and night which the Holy Qur'an emphasizes in various verses, has a great effect upon ending any kind of a tiresome life of human beings, why?

Because if the sun continuously be in one place in the sky and uniformly give light to the earth, if its position never changed and night would never come, in addition to the other problems this would have, in a short period of time, all human beings would get tired.

It is because of this that we must accept that at least most of the problems caused by unforeseen events give a spirit to life, making it sweet and bearable. It manifests the values of blessings and gives the human being the possibility to benefit from the gifts to the extent possible.

6. Difficulties one makes for one's self

Another point which we feel it is necessary to mention at the end of this discussion is that many people fall into error in their reckoning of the causes and effects of unforeseen events and the oppression which takes place through the hands of oppressors are considered to be signs of the injustice of the Creator of the world and the disorder in the work of humanity is considered to be the fault of disorder in the structure of creation.

Just as they sometimes say, "Why is each stone made to block the way?" Why do some earthquakes strike cities and cause little damage but in the rural areas, many people are taken as sacrifices and many lose their lives in the fallen refuge of their homes. What kind of justice is this?

If calamity is to be divided, why is it not divided up equally?

Why the edge of sorrowful catastrophes always falls upon the deprived people?

Why in contagious diseases, these people most often suffer?

These are all beside the fact and do not relate to the system of creation and justice of God. These are the results of oppression, exploitation and colonialism of human beings in relation to one another.

If it were not for the fact that the rural people are abased and poverty-stricken because of the oppression of the cities and they were able to build better and stronger homes for themselves like those in the cities, earthquakes would not have such an effect upon them.

But when their houses are built of mud or stones or wood and very little stucco or cement is used in the

building of their homes, and in a simple way, it is piled on top of each other, even a strong wind or a very slight earthquake makes the earth open up, we should not expect the situation to be better than this. But what does this have to do with God?

This criticism should be made against the unbalanced situation and erroneous system of society. We must arise and end these injustices to society. We must fight with abasement and poverty and give the deprived their rights so that such phenomena do not appear.

If all groups of society have sufficient nourishment health and treatment, they will be able to face diseases and sicknesses with greater strength and perseverance.

But when an erroneous and false social system rules a society in the form of colonialism, one person is given so many possibilities that even their cats and dogs have a doctor, medicine and receive special medical care, but others do not have even the most basic necessities of life and health to care for their children, such unpleasant scenes are plentiful and are seen by all.

Instead of complaining about God in such situations, we should reproach ourselves.
We have to tell oppression not to be oppressive! And we have to tell the oppressed not to bear oppression!

We must make efforts so that all individuals of a society have at least the minimum amount of health facilities, food and housing, educational and cultural possibilities.

In summary, we should not place the blame for our sins on Creation. When did God ever impose a system like this upon us? Where has He ever recommended this?

Of course, He created us free because our being free is the key to our development and progress. But it is we who misuse our freedom and oppress each other and this oppression then shows itself as unevenness in society. But unfortunately, this error has come to include a great many people.

The Holy Qur'an says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ النَّاسَ شَيْئًا وَلَٰكِنَّ النَّاسَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

"Verily God will not deal unjustly with man in aught: it is man that wrongs his own soul." (***10:44***)

And now we end the discussion of signs and catastrophes here even though there is still a great deal which could be said, but this brief discussion is sufficient for us in this short study.

Think and Answer

1. Why did the discussion on signs and catastrophes continue for three lessons?

2. What ill effects does a uniform and monotonous life have? Have you ever seen a person who has a high life style, suffer?

3. What can we surmise from the light and darkness in the world of creation?

4. Do all of the difficulties which exist in society relate to Creation or are we also responsible?

5. To do away with social inequalities, does a correct way exist? What duty do we have towards the deprived?

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