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| **Date** | Wednesday, May 20, 2015 |
| **Topic** | The Principles of Reading the Quran |
| **Part** | 1 |

In order to get the proper guidance from the scriptures, we need to read them with proper principles.

*What is the Quran?*

* Speech of God

*Why does God speak?*

* I need to communicate with Him.

*What do we need from Him?*

* Sense of security in our existence.

*Why God? Do you think that God really speaks?*

* The One who creates must speak.

***How can we conclude that He must speak to me?***

* One of the ways I interact with creation is through speech; speech is a quality which is given to me; I attribute this quality to the Source. Therefore, the Source of “my ability to speak” is the Creator and so He must have the Quality of Speech.
* I am made by my Maker who must be the Source of my making.

*Why can’t we attribute a negative quality to the Creator?* Example: I get tired; the One who made me must have tiring qualities, why should I not say this?

* The sense of being tired is given to you.
* It would be a logical fallacy to conclude that my Maker must get tired because if we observe the universe, everything is continuously coming into existence. The One who has created the universe has made it in such a way that it is ever changing. From this, we can infer that **the Creator is Self-Subsistent**. Everything is subject to change in creation; it means that they are dependent on the One who gives them existence. The One who gives them existence cannot be subject to change Himself, otherwise He cannot be the Creator of this universe. The universe is a sign that the Self-Subsistent One is Absolute (not subject to change).
* Do not speculate anything from the Creator’s perspective.

Human beings have many questions:

* *Why am I here?*
* *What is going on around me?*
* *How are things so perfectly designed? etc.*

We are created with a need to get answers to our questions. We cannot get the answers in the form of a verbal speech per se but whatever we understand must be a kind of speech. Therefore, I can expect that the One who makes me must give me the answers to my questions. He must also speak to me in a way that I, a human being, understand from speech as well.

* The nature of the speech must be in the form of teaching.

Our Maker speaks to us in order to teach us so that we learn. He is our Educator, teaching us how to get answers to our inquiries, which we confirm after learning. In this regard, creation can be used as a Source of verification to confirm the answers that we get from the speech.

* My Maker has created me to learn.
* My Maker has created the universe to teach me something.
* I am given the potentiality to learn a lot and make progress; when I do not learn, the potentiality dies.
* I have the intelligence to make sense of creation but I cannot come to a sound conclusion by myself; there are some questions that I ask but there is no answer in this universe.
* We all have the potentiality to communicate with the Creator and get to know the purpose of our existence.

***How can I be sure that He will give me answers to my questions?***The fact that we have questions is a sign for us to wonder the Source of these questions. **The One who gave us the ability to have questions must give us the answers.** Look at creation around you; everything is in existence for a purpose. Therefore, there must be wisdom in the creation of my human inquires as well.

* Our existence is wise; I must look for the answers to all my wise (reasonable, intellectual) human questions.
* Religion must be for satisfying my human questions.
* Quran speaks to me in order to satisfy my human inquisition.
* The scriptures must be read to get answers to my human existential questions. Reading scripture to find out how to do certain actions only without getting the meaning behind those actions (i.e. what does the action symbolize), defeats the purpose of the scriptures.

Again, there is a purpose in the existence of the questions. We have to be curious about the purpose of our existence. Most of the times, we use curiosity in the wrong way. Human curiosity is completely exploited through media. Media mostly pulls our curiosity away from questioning our existence.

* We need to concentrate on our existential questions

***What is the primary requirement to understand the message from the scripture?***

* We got to have QUESTIONS, concerns, curiosity and look for answers otherwise we cannot confirm anything.

If we do not have questions and someone gives us the answers, we will never understand anything as the answers will be of no benefit to us. The speech of God needs to be read in order to satisfy our humanity otherwise we reduce the speech of God to a reference book which may satisfy our humanity within this life only.

* We need to educate our humanity to get to know:

1. the purpose of our existence
2. who our Lord is
3. what is He expecting from us

When I observe an apricot tree and I know that it bears fruit. If I only expect to entertain myself with the fruit then I am not being fully human.

* My curiosity should push me to wonder:

1. What does it mean to eat?
2. Where is the sense of hunger coming from?
3. Why do I enjoy eating?

The Creator says: “I created the apricots particularly for you”.

* We wonder:

1. There is a Creator.
2. Why does He prepare the apricots for me?
3. There must be a meaning to it.
4. Let me investigate.

Similarly, a mother is full of **compassion**. She takes care of us without us asking. We wonder why mothers burst with compassion to entertain us. Her actions would be meaningless if there was no purpose in it. Through mother’s actions, we get to know the Employer of her actions, the Creator. He reveals Himself to us through her declaring that He loves us. **He is the Most Compassionate and Caring One**. With this, we should be at peace realizing that we are under the protection of our Creator.

We need to extract meaning from the text that we read, by defining:

1. who is the Speaker (what is He providing)
2. who is the reader (who are you, what do you need)

At every level, we have to search and look for the answers to our questions. In order to have a structured understanding of the scripture, we need to start our education from scratch. We need to learn to read the Quran in a way that teaches us the nature of the Quran and our humanity which are the neglected aspects of religion. We need to benefit from the Quran both intellectually and emotionally.

Principles (***usool***) of reading the Revelation

**1/** **Thou shalt never historicize the Revelation!**

* *It is always here & now and NEVER then & there.*
* Who is speaking **now**? The Creator of your intelligence, curiosity, human questions and senses...

**2/ Thou shalt always read the Revelation as if you were the primary addressee!**

* *It is always about you and never about them & others.*
* Take it for yourself, make it personal. Your Creator is speaking to “you”; He must address “you” to educate “you”; He does not gossip about other people.

**3/ Thou shalt always start with observation and built everything else upon it.**

* *It is always evidence first and then comes the confirmation.*
* We need to experience the evidence and apply the confirmation to ourselves. Example: God says “I have prepared Paradise for you”. This means that we get Paradise from believing in Him. ***Do I experience that the belief includes in itself Paradise***? Paradise symbolizes the grace of God with no limit.
* I ask “*Do I really need Paradise?*” The One who made me, made me with the need of desiring Eternal Happiness. Whatever Causes the need must be able to give it.
* Belief must go through this process: observation🡪evidence🡪conviction🡪confirmation.

**4/ Thou shalt never extract worldly meanings from the heavenly Revelation!**

* *It is never about being good but always seeing the Creator as the Source of that goodness.*
* Example: If you help a neighbor, you feel good; this sense of helping is given to you by the One who creates you. You can either turn this goodness as a source of pride for yourself or use it as a sign of the qualities of the Creator. You have to acknowledge the Creator’s qualities: He is the One who gave you the sense of helping and feeling good.
* Reward is in within your realization i.e. you become aware that the Creator is the One who is the Loving One. My Creator is the One who loves to help; I am created by a Loving Creator.
* Pride is appropriation/stealing. We need to be among those who accept the truth, not reject it.

**5/ Thou shalt always see God in everything!**

* *There is always a sign to be read in creation.*
* Everything is created by Him in order to reveal Himself to us. We have to use our abilities to get to know the purpose of our creation i.e. who my Lord is. Using our abilities not for its real purpose is wasteful (***israaf***).
* *Are we wasteful?* We may be wasteful when we use our abilities not to get to know our Creator and thus it goes to waste, which is horrible.
* Everything is created for a purpose; conscious human beings must use it as a means to get to know their Owner. That is the only way we get meaning in our creation.
* He is not expecting anything from us i.e. to be His slave or serve Him. *Why should I serve Him?* He does not need service; I need to serve myself: I need to learn the purpose of my existence.
* My purpose is to get to know my Creator.
* Reward or punishment is for me, which I have to find in my choice.
* Find the reward in your action and choice and you will understand that you are building up your own Paradise or Hell.
* God creates feeling of Paradise in this world for the one who acknowledges Him.
* God creates feeling of Hell in this world for the one who does not have an Owner.

(**To be Continued..**.)