Saturday, January 31, 2015

Topic: The Principles of the Qur'an concerning human social life? (*What is wisdom? part 6*)

* The wisdom of the Quran teaches us how to attribute the universe, including our human feelings to an Absolute Source of existence.
* Human intellect requires further questioning*: where do the objects come from, what do they mean to me? What is the meaning of my curiosity about the objects? Why are the objects placed in this universe as they are?*
* We cannot reduce our intellect to evaluating this universe at face value only. We need to extract the meaning from the universe, not for worldly gains but to attach our existence to its Absolute Eternal Source.
* Extracting meaning from the universe just for worldly gains keep us limited. Eventually, we shall realize that we do not sustain our existence.
* Our wisdom, as mentioned in the Quran, prompts us to see meaning in our existence, our feelings and the universe; then we build a relationship with the universe accordingly.
* *How can I explain the existence of creation and this universe?*
* Revelation comes in and introduces to us religion. (Attention: To us, religion mostly means performing rituals, but it is not.)
* When religion is reduced to cultural norms, it becomes a sociological idea or a community identity. In fact, religion is your own personal conclusion of your own existence.
* Religion is how we perceive the world and use our human qualities.
* Through the scriptures, The Creator’s intention is to instruct us how we need to understand our existence, the existence of the universe and how we need to relate them.
* Scriptures are a bridge for establishing a universal meaning between my being and the meaning I extract from the universe.
* Unfortunately, we inherit the cultures of a community and try to adapt its values into our personal lives and make it religion.
* However, the wisdom in the Quran teaches us the opposite i.e. I have to establish my own worldview first and then come to terms with others based on their personal values and start a community life.
* Religion needs to be taken personally. It means that I have to come up with my own conclusions and be satisfied with it as a human being.
* Without being satisfied, following a certain pattern of life is not religion.
* Society prompts us to see religion as the culture of a certain group of people doing certain rituals/actions.
* Action is the result of one’s belief/conviction.
* We need to study scripture from belief’s perspective.
* We cannot evaluate the quality of our actions without understanding our very own existence, the existence of the universe and relate both. The quality of our actions lies in our awareness of the meanings extracted from this relationship between our existence and that of the universe.
* First step in establishing religion: *Where do I belong or whom do I belong to?* I belong to someone; I should comfortably conclude that by using my human qualities: *Is it really a true conclusion?*
* In order to conclude that, we need to open up as individuals and not confine ourselves to a close universe only.
* *Am I benefitting from my existence as an intelligent human being?*
* Before we start making sense of our existence, religion does not exist for us. At this stage, it is external and superficial for us.
* Religion starts from the center of our existence and the outcome of it reflects in our action.
* There are layers and layers of meaning waiting for us to be discovered.
* Quran shakes its audience because human realities are dealt with in the Quran: *Don’t you see that this universe is transient?*
* You start questioning yourself: *How can I preserve my existence?*
* *What is worship?*
* We have to establish our understanding of religion by first knowing our own existence and the meaning of the existence of this universe.
* This is a life long journey.
* I need to use my human qualities in a progressive and dynamic way without reducing it for worldly gains only.
* I need to go deeper and deeper in the meaning of what I extract from my existence and the universe. As I grow, I develop and I need to be consistent with my human qualities.
* There is always something waiting to be discovered.
* We should not get distracted by cultural religion. Example: quarrels because of moon sighting.
* The revelation encourages us to keep questioning and to always be open.
* Per the author, the student of philosophy feels that he does not need revelation or he denies religion.
* On the other hand, the student of the Quran questions everything and extracts the meaning out of his relationship with the universe. Example: Tables are arranged in the class room.
* I question: *What does it mean for me?* *Which “conscious agent” has put it here?*
* For a human being, everything has a meaning and this meaning is not limited because human capacity to understand this meaning is not limited.
* Human capacity and “extracted meaning” are open ended, that is religion.
* Every individual has conclusions that are subjective to him alone.
* When I extract the meaning from the universe, it carries a message for “me”.
* Every individual has his/her own universe.
* If someone does not look for the meaning in his every interaction with the universe, in that moment, he is not being a human being.
* We always have to go beyond the apparent meanings of the objects in the universe.
* Example: When we read a book, we attribute the meaning to the author. We always acknowledge the author. If the book has meaningful sentences, we say: “the author is very intelligent and the author is pleasing me”. As our capacity of understanding increases, the meaning of the book for us increases and we get more involved and engaged with it and start communicating with the author. At the end, we find ourselves as having nothing to do with the book and everything to do with the author.
* This is a metaphor for worship of God. This is exactly what we have to do in our existence right now.
* My responsibility is to read the book from the author (the Creator) and always acknowledge Him. Every meaning opens up the door to understanding the author (Creator). I need to connect myself to the meaning coming from the Creator through what is beyond existence (**s*amaa***).
* *What is the meaning in the existence of the objects?*
* Let us take the example of a cow: You know that a cow giving milk has a meaning. It is deliberately in existence. We need to communicate with the Maker of the cow through the cow. This Maker of the cow is also your Maker.
* You communicate with your Maker through the cow otherwise the existence of the cow does not make sense. Similarly, your existence does not make sense without the existence of the objects in the universe.
* Revelation is a teacher but we cannot imitate the teacher; we listen to the teacher and try to understand the teacher by investigation.
* The Prophet (pbuh) practiced the message he received and taught it to the Companions. Companions followed the message that the Prophet received by way of investigation as students learning from their teacher.
* We have to interpret everything that we hear and observe. Our purpose is to internalize the message presented by the Prophet (pbuh) or his narrations (hadith) within ourselves.
* This does not mean that we should imitate his action. *His actions were in collaboration with his belief.* Thus our actions should be in collaboration with our belief.
* The meaning of the message that I extract from the Prophet (pbuh) is important.
* The companions interpreted the behavior of the Prophet and accordingly reached a conclusion; this conclusion was their belief.
* As far as the interpretation of the message of the Prophet is concerned, we think that the companions were privileged to be around him. This is not the point because we still have to interpret the message we receive, regardless of the message coming in through reading a narration or directly in the form of a speech.
* Ultimately, we are all responsible for coming up with our own subjective conclusions.
* We have to make sure that we do not become like the hypocrites in Medina who took their belief for granted because they belonged to a community of believers in God.
* We ought to investigate everything that we observe to come up with a personal conviction/commitment.
* ***Salaah*** means backing up your personal conviction. ***Salli ‘ala Muhammad*** means supporting the message which you receive from the Prophet (pbuh) through your personal conviction.
* Religious text cannot be read in a historical context.
* The line of thinking to understand the meaning of the text is important.
* “Faith” is a problematic word, often misused.
* It prompts most of us to not use our human qualities because we may claim to have “faith.”
* We cannot extract the meaning from a text by using a dictionary or simply translating the language. Real scholarship occurs when a person uses his intelligence and analyzes the meaning transferred in the text.
* The authenticity of the narration is not important. You still have to interpret the words in the narration.
* Ask yourself: *Is it really true, can I confirm this meaning?*