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The Quran does not specify rituals unless it is necessary. It leaves them to the prophet to demonstrate them in practical terms.

The prayer times mark an “important revolution” to the observer. Do we see it as such? Consciousness is definitely required. For example, the changes we see from night to day and vice versa, the sunrise, sunset are major events we observe on a daily basis. What is the human response to these events that I see happening around me? I am usually so much indulged in my personal events that I forget that I am a part of this universe. I isolate myself as an independent being and see the universe as a separate entity, forgetting that I am part of this universe. Things around me in this universe are conveying a meaning and I have to relate my being within the context of the universe. So when something good or some event perceived as bad happens, I tend to isolate my being and do not see the bigger picture that the events are happening within the context of the universe.

Prayers are mostly taken as a religious obligation or duty. They tend to become burdensome when thought of this way. Prayer is the result of the recognition of a conscious connection that links the phenomena observed in the universe to my being. I respond back and acknowledge the phenomena. For example, the morning felt cool, I need to respond to that in a human way, i.e. get the meaning out of the coolness, the morning light, the breeze, and the sense of feeling. All rituals that we perform must establish this connection to the universe.

*What is the wisdom in the specific times of prayer?*

* Every moment is a new creation, a new opportunity to reflect on our existence. It helps us conclude what we make out of our existence.
* It is a reminder that we are part of this universe and therefore we should not isolate ourselves from the rest of the universe.
* Prayer means to respond back to your Lord.

**As time changes, the manifestation of the Creator’s qualities also changes. *What is my stand behind this reality?***

* Coffee is manifesting the Creator’s qualities to me by displaying its taste and smell. In its manifestation lies its worship. The worship of the coffee is according to its capacity. When it comes to human beings, the worship should be according to the human capacity. My praising and glorification should be done according to the qualities manifested in me. I have to use my disposition to respond back to what is created in this universe, i.e. praise and glorify the Creator.
* You alone we worship. We= “**I understand that everything manifests Your glory and so I declare Your glory together will all of creation that I observe**”.
* Prayers need to be performed with the consciousness that everything else in the universe is a mirror to His qualities. Example: when praying the sunset prayer, if I never reflect on the sunset activity (i.e. the sun going down) or any activity that I witnessed, it is not a full prayer. Prayer is the act of responding back to the meaning in the sunset I observe.

We do not usually question what we are; we do not know what our position is with the rest of the universe. We have a selfish understanding of our existence. By defining our lives within the context of material things and family circles, we reduce our human value. Although it is a starting point, we need to train to see ourselves as part of the whole universe.

Prayer, fasting, Hajj and other rituals are tied to time. It reminds us that there are other people and other creatures as well. The reminder helps us integrate our existence with the rest of the universe. Quran always refers to creation and historical events as a reminder which means that we cannot isolate our existence from the rest of the universe.

***What does it mean to have faith?*** It must be something concrete and convincing based on real life experiences. I have to make sense of things within my own being, using my given qualities. Anything that does not go through investigation and experience is baseless. For example if I have to go to a particular place and take a bus in the opposite direction. Despite claiming to have faith, I will never arrive at the intended destination.

We need to follow the Sunnah i.e. the Prophetic way of life which teaches us to personalize the meaning of our interaction with the universe. I should not pray the sunset prayer because the Prophet taught us but on the contrary, I pray the sunset prayer as a response to my witnessing the manifestation of the act of creation. The Prophet applied the Speech of God in the best human form and exemplified how to live with the message.

* **ASK:** *What is the meaning in the action the Prophet performed?*

Every action should make sense within its own context. This means that we need to understand the actions of the Prophet within the purpose of the Quran. That is the only way to contextualize (personalize) the actions for ourselves. His teaching opens up acknowledging the absolute source which is an unending journey. Muhammad (pbuh) teaches me the message in a certain context and he is employed to teach me how to make my existence meaningful eternally.

* **ASK:** *Why do I follow the Prophet Muhammad?*

Following the prophet means to follow his way which is to personalize the message of the Quran in one’s personal life. Otherwise, following him falls into imitating the outward form.

 If Muhammad’s teaching teaches me about making sense of my existence that should be the “main” reason for me to follow him as my teacher. That is called belief in Prophethood. Only then I can make the message universal for myself. Generally speaking, the Quranic message is universal, i.e. anyone can benefit from it according to their capacity.

* Prophet does not dictate us to perform rituals but on the contrary reminds us to make the message practical in our lives.

We are learning here in order to expand our capacity. We need to increase and develop our awareness of what we are doing. If we associate ourselves with a specific religion or if we follow a teacher without trying to understand the wisdom behind his actions, then we are hindering our ability to develop or grow.

* Conscious awareness must be based on our personal experience.

See the world as a mirror where we encounter the manifestation of Divine power i.e. Creator’s qualities. *Ihdina al-sirat al mustaqeem (guide us to the straight path)*: I need to know what the truth is, please guide me to the straight path.

* This does not mean that I will get the straight path. Just as to get the right answer is not the point but searching for the right answer is the point.

I need to realize the universal divine bounties within the manifestation of the Creator’s qualities. The glass of water that I drink is representing universal mercy. Human beings should expand their understanding, i.e. get out of their individual shells and see the universality in the qualities.

The meaning of the prescribed prayers is to realize the manifestation of the divine qualities in the innumerable bounties presented to me. It prompts me to respond whereby I praise, glorify and thank the One who is manifesting them.