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| **Date** | Saturday, September 26, 2015 |
| **Topic** | The Ninth Word |
| **Part** | 4 |

When the Prophet (PBUH) performed an action, he must have some reasoning behind his practice. Although, we may not understand the wisdom behind everything practiced by the Prophet, we should at least try to universalize the message and thus apply it to our practical life. In order to effectively understand the wisdom behind the Prophet’s actions, we need to consider the following two principles:

1. The specific action (hadith narrations) has taken place within his historical context (time).
2. He is a messenger of God practicing the Eternal message (mission).

This awareness gives me the opportunity to universalize the message and thus understand the Prophetic way of life, Sunnah.

* He is employed to convey the universal message of the Qur’an to me but his practice is limited within his space and time condition because he is a created being. His message however, is universal and lives on.
* Interpreting the wisdom in the practice of the Prophet by following the guideline that I take from the Qur’an as much as I understand through various means, leads me to practice the message in my practical life.
* Example: Prophet prayed in the morning and I will learn from this practice the wisdom behind praying in the morning. I cannot read what was in the mind of the prophet but I can make sense that a brand new day is being given and thus respond to it.

Whatever wisdom I extract is based on my capacity to understand and so I apply that practice accordingly. Therefore, no one can claim to hold the Absolute meaning behind the Prophetic practices.

To sum up, **we have to interpret the wisdom of the Prophetic practice according to the definition of the Quran.** Look for the difference between your current understanding of a practice and the Prophet’s supposed understanding. Take the wisdom and apply it to your practical lives. **Your interpretation is only valid for you because it is based on your worldview, which is hopefully derived from your understanding of the Qur’anic message.**

***What does it mean to universalize the message?***

Example X: A quarrel between two children, a normal act, took place. They called each other’s parents. The parents also got into the quarrel leading to tension between two communities. They called each other names; let’s say “Muhajir” and “Ansar”. (People who migrated to Mecca were called “Muhajir” and the locals were referred to as “Ansar”). Here is how to universalize the message based on the teachings of the Quran:

* Any kind of division in a society, institution or nation must be rejected. Propagating divisions (Hindus, Muslim, Jews…) contradicts the fundamental teachings of the Quran.
* Although, “believers” and “unbelievers” are differentiated in the Quran, by no means does it justify segregating people or expelling them. This division made in the Qur’an in order to teach the reader to get the guideline as they are described in the Qur’an, to follow the characteristic traits of “believers” and to avoid the characteristic traits of “unbelievers,” or the Christians and Jews. It is not for segregation purpose. Neither the Qur’an nor any of the practice of the Prophet shows that there should be segregation in the society. On the contrary, the Qur’an assures the life of nonbeliever who took refuge with a believer should be protected and secured by the believer.
* “*And if anyone of the idolaters seeks your protection, then protect him so that he may hear the word of God; and afterward convey him to his place of safety. That is because they are a folk who know not.”* Tauwba (9): 6
* Belief in God is supposed to unite creation.

Example Y: The Prophet spoke to children according to their level. From this, I can deduce that I have to speak to people according to their level i.e. no one speaks to an elderly the same way as they would speak to a five years old child.

While universalizing the message, we have to bear in mind that the Prophet was dealing with people based on their varied conditions. A few of the companions even modified some of his practices based on their specific circumstances. For example, there is one instance where the Prophet was managing the finances of Mecca (*Bait ul maal*) and he gave out some almsgiving to some people just to soften their hearts for a smooth integration into the society. Later, Umar put a stop to this practice because it served no purpose i.e. those people integrated well into the society and the mission of the Prophet has been accomplished.

* Lesson: We have to adopt a practice according to the universality of the message in it i.e. what was the purpose of the Prophet doing what he was doing.
* We are trying to understand the wisdom behind the Prophetic actions: wisdom must be interpreted according to the universal principles we receive from the Quranic message (the practice of the Prophet in human form.) **The wisdom of the Prophet’s practice is according to the definition of the Quran; not according to his historical context, but take it as an example.**
* Analogy: The professor demonstrates the solution of a problem by giving an example. Then, he gives the students a sheet which has many exercises for the students to practice on similar problems by using the professor’s exemplary demonstration.
* God’s message is applicable to anyone, anywhere, in any condition.

**The Ninth Word, SECOND POINT:**

Meaning of worship:

* Realizing my neediness, impotence, poverty and faults in terms of my existential reality.
* I cannot change the order of the universe, I am helpless by myself.
* **The first condition to perform worship is to become aware of this reality.**

Meaning of ablution:

* Cleansing myself of any false assumptions, contrary to my reality.
* While making ablution, a symbolic representation for renewing myself, I try to cleanse myself from any previous claims (biased, egocentric…) because my reality cannot confirm them.
* Prerequisite of being in a position to pray: **I cannot do anything in this universe on my own, my whole being is dependent on my Creator.**

Getting ready in order to perform worship:

We have to think about our existential value (which is essential) not the societal value (which is transient). Example: I may be in a low or high position in a firm. If I am aware of my reality, I would not let the values that society places on status affect me. Any values that society attaches to us are irrelevant to my being. Sadly, we don’t keep up with our required human conditions. These are our shortcomings and we need to focus on them.

“Fault” (realizing that I am not perfect) should not be misunderstood for “sinful” (not acknowledging my reality). Even if I am doing the best religious activity, I am still faulty, impotent and poor. The main problem of this society is the inability or inconsistency to realize who we are. **Realizing our reality is the start of “freedom”.** We are misled thinking that societal values, as accepted by society, to be human values.

* In order to focus on the meaning of worship, we have to focus on our existential reality.
* My existential reality is the same as any created thing (be it a table or bird), there is no difference. **I exist and my existential reality is such that I cannot decide about the existence of anything. I just beg to be given existence.**

Worship is to establish the vertical relationship between me and the Creator; it has nothing to do with the society, a horizontal relationship. Most of the time our relationship with the universe is only horizontal which in turn impacts our vertical connection with the Creator. Realizing such faulty commitment leads to asking for forgiveness. Asking for forgiveness includes in it the acknowledgment that we are impotent. We have to stop reducing religion to “sinning” or doing “good actions”. **What makes me a worshipper is my awareness/consciousness of my position in the universe** **i.e.**

* ***Who am I?***
* I am the One who is always in need to be sustained in his/her existence.
* ***Who my Creator is?***
* The One who gives me existence.

We are always impotent and needy regardless of our state of being at a given moment. Prophets were sinless “*ummi*” (a one who belongs to “mother” i.e. remains innocent as s/he was borne of her/his mother) means that they were always in a state of acknowledgment i.e. realizing their neediness/impotence. They were consistent with their worship of their Creator. What makes me sinful is when I am not in a state of realizing my neediness and thus rejecting my reality. Therefore, we should always seek to return to our initial state as we were born, by developing our potentialities in a way that we acknowledge our total dependence on the Creator. Babies represent this state by their physical appearance, the adults are expected to realize the state by consciously declaring that although we seem to be doing some things but we are not the Creators of our actions.

When asking for forgiveness, the acknowledgment must be based on “conscious worship”, the relationship between you and the Creator. Here, the human being realizes that he is always impotent before or after seeking forgiveness. When asking for an apology, my attitude should be that I am following the order in the universe. Whether the person accepts or does not accept my apology should not be my concern. As long as I am aware of my reality is what matters.

We need to establish our relationship with the society according to our connection with our reality. When I ask you to forgive me, I am doing that because of the awareness of my reality before the Creator not how am I going to be treated in the society.

* WRONG WAY: societal values->relationship with Creator.
* RIGHT WAY: Relationship with Creator-> accordingly relationship with society

Divine Court: Everything declares His authority/perfection. Through my limitedness, I realize His infinity. Through my imperfections, I see His perfection.

We do not imagine God. Analogy: There is an artist, his art and its qualities. Everyone appreciates the qualities in the art. On the canvas reside the qualities of the artist.

* Wherever the qualities are manifested, that is the throne of God (“*arshullah*”).
* Anything on which God’s Omnipotence, Absolute Knowledge, Dominion manifests is the “*arsh*.” Water, land, mountains, human beings, every created thing in the universe is the throne of God.
* With this awareness, I realize that I am an “arsh”. The One who demonstrates these qualities on my “*arsh*” of existence, like every beingin this universe, is everything.
* In the Divine Court, I applaud/acknowledge his Dominion.

Eternally Besought One: The One who does not need anything. Everything in creation is in need of that One.

* Acknowledgment is the foundation of worship.

*How do we see Sovereignty of Divine Lordship?* I see nothing in this universe that interferes with the order. Everything created follows the order established by the Owner of the universe. Therefore, if we **discover** something (new ideas, becoming aware of the existence of certain principles in the cosmos…), that is a part of the order of the universe (nothing in the universe **invents** any thing). We just obey by following the order.

* *Do we really see this Sovereignty of Divine Lordship?*
* I am created with the capacity to acknowledge the Creator. If Divine Lordship manifests itself, as far as I am concerned, I have to confirm by responding back. If I like something, it is part of my existence to respond back. I am made with the quality to acknowledge and respond back.

*How do I understand when scriptures say: “I am your lord, Worship me alone”?*

* This is not a command. It’s a guide to check myself that I cannot rely on anything else but the Creator. We need to find out within ourselves that we can only solve our problems/questions by worshipping/referring to the Creator.

Guidance is for me to discover what is within me. For example, helping someone is my reality. When I help out a needy one, I am just following the order within my existence, therefore, in the universe. God is demonstrating or introducing Himself to me that the helping quality is from Him given to me so I get to know Him. This act helps me utilize my given abilities and help me discover the endless capacity endowed within me.

Getting guidance from God fits our reality; our duty is to be consistent with it. Quranic prescriptions should be understood within human reasoning. Human reasoning cannot find out about the reality without reminders nor by remaining silent. We need to question our existential reality, the pre-requisite for reading scriptures which may bring us to discover the Lord. We need to worship the One to whom belongs the existence of everything.