Halaqa, April 27 2013, Saturday

Through using our qualities in the correct way, for the same purpose that they are created, that we become true human beings.

* When we say things like converting into a different religion or experiencing something in a spiritual sense, we expect that we are going to change but in reality we do not change. Rather we just become true human beings by experiencing the true element of belief
* When some people have some sort of religious experience, they think that they are going to change but in reality, they are becoming true human beings
* We are not expected to change but we are expected to realize our own reality as we are

When we do not associate ourselves to God and we do not submit to God,

* Then we are not using our human qualities as they should be and distort them
* We end up losing our human qualities and become more animalistic than human
* Therefore, we ought to be careful as to whether we are living our lives more like animals or if we are behaving as humans should.

The equation between re-submitting ourselves to God AND becoming what exactly a human being is this: God’s religion, which is historically known as Islam, is equal to humanity (as we ought to be)

* What is the significance of this statement?
  + The religion, or Islam, is for anyone
  + We are no expecting to have anything ‘extra’ to be a practitioner of Islam
    - Just being a human being is enough
  + In order to address myself to the teachings of God and to follow the guidance of my Go (to understand the Quran and the exemplary teachings of the Prophet), all that is expected of me is to use my human qualities in the right way
    - We do not need to dream of something or to have any extraordinary experiences
    - All we need to do is to use our human qualities

By doing so, we will be able to see how the Prophet is representing Allah’s religion in his life.

Animalistic side of you existence gives us the opportunity to experience our human side

* Take human beings as a whole
* Do not dissect them into different categories and say one aspects (animalistic) versus human intellect is worse or better
* God speaks to us in terms of these different qualities

When I read the revelation (Quran and Hadiths) I have to look for the guidance in how to use my human qualities

* The Prophet says that you should not eat too much or that you should maintain oral hygiene (they may seem to be in conjunction with our animalistic side but think again!)
  + Animals never eat too much
  + When they are satisfied, they stop eating
  + Animals do not need guidance

These verses are guiding us in our animalistic lives because we do not use our animalistic tendencies in conjunction with our true purpose.

Example: If I learn that the Hadith teaches me that I have to brush my teeth, I should not be performing my teeth for health reasons ( the hadiths are not meant to simply teach you about the physical aspect of your lives but to teach you how to live WRT your purpose and your connection to God) but rather read the Hadith by thinking about how it matters to my human purpose

Why is it sunna to brush your teeth?

* Prophet is not t hygiene expert
* Rather, take the Prophet as the one who connects you to your Lord
* When you are brushing your teeth (as a result of reading the hadith) you should perform the action by experiencing a connection with your Lord
  + Animals do not need guidance on how to clean themselves
  + It is ingrained in them to clean themselves
  + Similarly, it is ingrained in us that we ought to clean ourselves because when we do not clean ourselves we feel uneasy
    - People who have not heard the revelation, they still clean themselves SO revelation is not to teach you about your ‘animalistic’ aspect
    - Instead, look for the ‘human’ dimension in the Prophet’s teachings

( Remember: The Prophet was sent as a messenger – his actions are a message from Allah SWT and we need to be able to draw this connection from his actions otherwise what is so special about the Messenger?)

Human beings do not need to receive training in how to be an animal from the revelation and from God

* This is a very important
* So do not read the words in the Quran and in the Hadith literally as providing you guidance on how to live your life in animalistic terms
* If you are doing that, you are not reading the Quran as the speech of God

Whenever you are in contact with revelation, ask yourself: Why does the Quran tell me this? What am I being taught here?

* + If I take the teachings in the Quran in simplistic, animalistic and literal terms, you will realize that the Quran does not truly guide you
  + Everybody wants peace, Nobody wants anarchy; it is encoded in your being
    - The revelation is for your human qualities in order that you may attach yourself to God
  + By taking revelation literally, you do not realize that the revelation is for your human side and restrict it to your animalistic sides.

When you read a verse or a hadith, ask yourself what it does for you to your human side?

* You may not have to answer because we haven’t been trained to derive information in this manner
* We need to engage ourselves in deep thinking and take religion seriously.
  + Most people follow their instinct (animalistic)
  + Do not take them as your example
  + Think, reflect and learn what the reality of religion is
  + And you have to engage yourself in the process constantly

Even in the Quran, certain points are continuously repeated.

* The Quran keeps telling ust hat we should not associate anything with God (Shirk)
* We are told that it is not something that can be forgiven
* Shirk: Describing God in the wrong way and mixing up your understanding of existence

Example: Alcoholic Anonymous

* Most of them are not Muslims but they are muslims in their actions if they relate the prohibition of alcohol as an act of obedience to their Lord
  + This means that they are acknowledging the creator of alcohol and the creator of their bodies and realizing that
  + If someone, has not exposed himself in any way to the teachings of the revelation (God’s speech), for this person (as a human being), it is not possible for him to connect himself with the creator of the universe
    - Purpose of revelation!
  + I am endowed with the qualities to connect with the world itself
    - When I am hungry I eat
    - When something hurts me I avoid it
    - But, if there was no revelation, how can we understand that this universe has an owner and has a purpose
    - We will ask questions, because we have been instilled with that quality but we will not be able to transcend this world and connect with the universe

If someone heard that there is a creator

* It opens up a whole new perspective that there exists something beyond this universe
* Without being religious, people still believe in a creator because otherwise this universe cannot be explained
  + Although not of a certain religious tradition, this person has just benefitted from revelation
  + Because, revelation was sent down to connect Man with God

If someone does not become a student of the revelation, his knowledge will stay at the level of acknowledge that there is a being that created the universe

* But as far as training himself in his relationship with the universe (for example, when it comes to deciding what to consume and who to interact with) He does not see that the creator of the alcohol has prohibited it
* He will use his own human qualities and conclude that alcohol is really harmful for human beings
* So, without referring to revelation, he does not drink alcohol and tries to convey the message to the public that they should avoid alcohol
* Animalistically, we will not drink because we want to care for our bodies. BUT if we engage our human side, then we can decide whether to drink or not, based on our connection with the creator.
  + We are created with the need to gain knowledge
  + We want to get married because we want to create a small community for ourselves
    - It is not for some animalistic urge
    - But, as a human being, we are establishing our social life and constructing a society for ourselves
    - In this independent society, we have to experience our relationship with God, through your relationship with your family.

If it it was only for animalistic urges, then all animals get married because everybody experiences that. We, however, have to make use of our human qualities when we decide to get married.

We want social life

* If I do not get education from the revelation, I will only follow my animalistic impulses and will not be able to connect myself to my Lord
* He created me, but my relationship is left to me
* When we see people who are doing good, it is because of their unspoilt human qualities BUT they have not fulfilled their purpose of having these qualities.

Author is emphasizing that these human qualities are given to you so that you can connect yourself to the owner of the qualities

* This is what revelation is meant to teach us

They believe in God, and they are good people but they cannot adjust themselves to the teachings of the revelation because they do not know how to connect themselves to the creator

* This is why the Prophets come as teachers

We shouldn’t judge other people and their actions but rather look at them and remind ourselves that our actions and emotions are a way to acknowledge the owner of this universe.

* The Quran teaches us how to behave in this world
* Foundation: Your awareness of your lord
* Occasionally it provides details on how to behave in this world.

Why does the Quran say that there are benefits to alcohol but there more harms than benefits?

* You may enjoy drinking a little bit of red wine
* But the purpose of your existence in this world is to acknowledge the creator of wine AND in doing so…

**Look through the meaning of the following comparisons and see that the human faculties were not given in order to gain worldly life like an animal.**

**For example, someone gave one of his servants twenty gold pieces, telling him to have a suit of clothes made out of a particular cloth. The servant went and got himself a fine suit out of the highest grade of the cloth, and put it on. Then he saw that his employer had given another of his servants a thousand gold pieces, and putting in the servant’s pocket a piece of paper with some things written on it, had sent him to conclude some business. Now, anyone with any sense would know that the capital was not for getting a suit of clothes, for, since the first servant had bought a suit of the finest cloth with twenty gold pieces, the thousand gold pieces were certainly not to be spent on that. Since the second servant had not read the paper in his pocket, and looking at the first servant, had given all the money to a shopkeeper for a suit of clothes, and then received the very lowest grade of cloth and a suit fifty times worse that his friend’s, his employer was bound to reprimand him severely for his utter stupidity, and punish him angrily.**

If someone is enjoying something, do not just say ‘enjoy it’ BUT speak to the human side of that person

* Even animals enjoy good food
* Rather, acknowledge that you are being treated well by your creator.

There is a huge difference when we read to gain information AND when we read to teach our human qualities.

For the former, you can speed read but for the latter, you need to read and contemplate at length.

* Don’t take the information you read for granted
* Ask yourself why are you reading the Quran and the Hadith?
  + To learn something and to educate yourself
  + But are you really connecting yourself to the text?

Parable in the paragraph:

* What is the pocket and piece of paper referring to?
  + The paper is not referring to the Quran and the Bible
  + Paper is the human qualities that we have been endowed with
    - If we ignore our human qualities and then expose ourselves to the revelation, we are just following secular practices
    - When the revelation comes, you can only understand and confirm it by connecting them to the creator who has endowed you with them

If you ignore human qualities then you are left with nothing to interact with the world. It is like going to the groceries without money.

If someone says that we are going to leave our human faculties and we will expose ourselves to the laws of religion, we become imitators

* We do not become conscious beings who are aware of our creator
* We cannot become worshippers
* Therefore, when we sit in the class of revelation, we have to analyze what we learn within the scope of our faculties.

You cannot really learn the rules of religion in and of itself.

* What is the difference between someone who says that they will not drink alcohol because according to their religion, alcohol is prohibited AND someone who does not drink alcohol because it is against the law to drink alcohol unless you are above 18?
* We have to use the action (not drinking alcohol) in recognition of your Lord
* While you are not drinking alcohol you have to bring consciousness of your Lord into your life
  + The point is not about abstaining from alcohol
  + Rather, we have to connect ourselves to our Lord in the practice (be it abstaining from something or engaging in another)

Why do you think that a person who has been given 20 gold pieces, buys the finest suit and the one who has been given 1,000 gold piece, buys the worst suit?

* The person who bought the worst suit, did not know the value of the money that he had
* In the story, the servant who has been given 20 gold coins and the servant who has been given 1000 coins, are us, humans.
  + Animals, maximize all that they have and so the pleasure they get from what they eat is 100%
  + But as humans, if we do exactly what animals do,

Animals are hungry, they search for food, the eat and leave fully satisfied.

Humans are hungry, the search for food BUT their satisfaction cannot be the same as humans. Humans have human qualities (paper) in our heart (pocket) that need to be satisfied.

* Although we have animalistic qualities, we also have human qualities (consciousness)
* When we do something good we are aware of it and when we do something bad we know it, too
* Our human qualities are ingrained in us and our consciousness is ever existent
* If you notice, animals never drink alcohol and never find a need to do so because they are not burdened by their consciousness.
  + Human beings drink because they cannot bear the responsibility of existence.
  + The qualities that we have, urge us to ask:
    - Why are we here?
    - What is our purpose?
    - How are we going to live?

Every animal has different type of 20 gold coins (qualities) but the point is that their qualities are fully satisfied by things in this universe.

Unlike them, humans will never find satisfaction in this world itself

* There is so much competition in this world BECAUSE human needs are endless
  + Birds have a nest and they don’t care about the other bird’s nest
  + They are instinctively satisfied.
* We, however, are built to question and there is a lot of emotional involvement
  + These emotions force us to think about why we are here on this earth

The one who wastes 1000 gold coins for something worth only 20 gold coins, is punished (not in hell) but HERE.

* Don’t try and think about hell and the future. We will figure it out when we are there
* But we will experience the torture and confusion of existence here
* We have to understand the potentialities of our lives!

**O my soul and my friend! Come to your senses! Do not spend the capital and potentialities of your life on pleasures of the flesh and this fleeting life like an animal, or even lower. Otherwise, although you are fifty times superior with regard to capital than the highest animal, you will fall fifty times lower than the lowest.**

**O my heedless soul! If you want to understand to a degree both the aim of your life and its nature, and the form of your life, and the true meaning of your life, and its perfect happiness, then look! The summary of the aims of your life consists of nine matters:**

Religion: Establishing consistency within yourself

* Even if we benefit from this world in terms of materialistic things, we know that eventually we have to die
* As such, we know that there is no real satisfaction in imposing your ego because your ego is transient
* Rather, equate yourself with your true position (as a slave) before you die
* Your consciousness knows that you are a slave and your consciousness reminds you
  + It is written in your pocket and it is firmly embedded in your pocket
* If we contradict ourselves then we are losers
* We cannot live in this world like animals

We have to concentrate on the aim and forms our lives.

How do we do that? TBA at the next halaqa, inshAllah ☺