Halaqa – May 15, 2013

We hear a lot of narrations about ‘practical’ things in Islam and this is because a lot of people were asking about the practical components in Islam

* How to make ablution
* What makes ablution negated

Another fact that we should not forget is the ‘narrator factor’

* Everybody is unique and had different characteristics
* 2 people who listen to the same talk can take away very different things based on their personal experiences
* Person A might narrate only 1 sentence out of a 4-hour conversation. This sentence is selected by the narrator and is communicated to the audience
  + There is a selection being made, remember that.

When kingdoms took over the Muslim community, they were more concerned on how to control the people in a peaceful manner.

* They had a motive and their commands/actions were to achieve their aims
* Again, the focus on people was for ‘practical’ gain.

If someone asks, how was the Prophet sitting?

* You look in the hadiths.
* But if someone asks about God, you would refer them to the Quran.

Most of the teachings of the Prophet during the Meccan period were about the foundations of belief. He would speak to people religion alongside practicing the Quran.

There is one narration that says:

Nahna kunna natadarrasul Quran fi darrul akram : We used to study the Quran

We cannot perceive the ‘practical’ ways the way the Prophet studied the Quran.

When it comes to the practical matters, you can narrate the Prophetic hadiths. But where the concern has to do with matters of belief, refer to the Quran.

Humans will pay attention to what attracts them but every human will pay attention to different things.

Similar, the Prophet’s teachings are not only that which we find in the Prophet’s hadith books.

* We have to be aware of the shortcomings in hadiths
* Hadiths are narrated by other humans

How then can we understand what the Prophet taught?

* By studying the Quran we can use our understanding (of the foundation of the Quran) to

If through our studying of the Quran, we cannot understand the hadith, stop and go back to the Quran.

The better your understanding of the Quran, the brighter will your vision of the Prophet be.

* To understand why the Prophet behaves in a certain, you need to know what the Quran says because the Prophet is teaching and exemplifying the Quran.

If you are looking for the rules of certain actions, then you have to look at the practice of the Prophet.

* Most of his actions have been narrated.

But if you want to understand what Islam is, you have to look to the Quran

* The Quran gives you the foundation you need to understand the wisdom behind the teachings of the Prophet
* You cannot really understand the hadiths if you have not grasped the Quran.

If you are trying to find out about Islamic inheritance, you will not really turn to the Quran only.

* Of the 6000 odd verses in the Quran, only 300 or so deal with injunctions
* Out of these, the laws on inheritance are even more limited
* Hence, you have to go back to the hadiths

Prayer:

* Apart from the narration of the outward appearance of prayer, can the narrator convey what is going on in the Prophet’s heart?
  + No. Narrations are only outwardly.
* If we only concentrate on the narrations of the Prophet, knowt hat you are only getting a glimpse of his ‘outward’ action
  + You have to think about the inner feelings he is experiencing
  + To do that, you have to read and understand the Quran.

We have to guard ourselves from falling into ‘outward’ actions.

Hadith: When the Prophet was praying and heard a child crying, he would cut the recitation and finish the prayer.

* The Prophet was respectable of the community
* He was not trying to control the people
* Rather, he cared and respected the people.
* He was not a dominant characteristic.
  + He was the messenger of God

The Prophet was the person who represented the religion that is true to humanity

* Can you then expect him to be oppressive and dominant?
* He always respected the traditions of the community until there was a clear prohibition by the Quran
* He was following the tradition of the people

Do not alienate yourself from the community.

* It does not mean that when you are offered wine, you drink it.
* Don’t behave strangely with the community
  + Don’t use language that people do not understand
  + If we do not open ourselves to the society, we establish our own ghettos

In Mecca, the Prophet dressed as the Meccans. In Madina he dressed in what the people there wore

* The essential of religion is establishing tawhid, not commiting shirk, establishing a relationship with your creator while you are in this world, trying to understand the purpose of your life
* It is not about the physicalities

Study the Quran and you will see how we ought to establish our relationship with our creator and how we should understand the real essence of this world.

Without understanding the Quran, you cannot understand the hadith narrations because you do not know the ideological background.

-You will know about the Prophet’s worldview, only be reading the Quran

- When you make sajdah, you are imitating the Prophet BUT unless you are aware of his worldview (he lived his life in constant awareness of his position as a slave to his lord) you will not understand why you are prostrating.

The best way to express your reality in front of your creator is by prostrating

* Your reality is 100% dependent on the creator of the whole universe

How can you express this reality?

* By prostrating.
* We learn this from the Quran.
* If you don’t get educated in this ‘belief’ aspect (Makkan), you will not understand the commands of the Madina period

Everywhere is God’s property and everywhere is sacred. Regardless of where you turn, you are turning to God.

* If you do not have this worldview, you start creating spaces (secular and religious)

When you read the hadiths, bear all these elements in mind and then try to understand the sunnah.

* Sunnah and Hadith are two different things
* Sunnah, the way the prophet behaved
  + Not the ‘actions’

The Prophet is the person who is employed to represent the creator of the Universe.

* He has been given the mission to teach humans how to fulfil their existence on earth
* The prophet teaches me why I am here
  + Not necessarily to teach me certain actions
  + But to teach me the ‘feelings’ that I should have when performing certain actions
* We should never forget that the Prophet is the person who is employed to put the teachings of the Quran into practice

It was said that the Prophet ‘ was the living Quran’

* What does that mean?
* Therefore, when you read the hadith, we ought to look at how he embodied the Quran

Our minds are occupied with the forms of action.

* Actions are important BUT the Prophet being an embodiment of the Quran means that we should look for the teachings of the Quran in all his actions
* The main teaching of the Quran is about establishing the oneness of God (ubudiya)
  + Do not ascribe any partners to God
* In your actions, what ought to be included in the representation of tawhid (oneness of God)

We know that the core/heart/meaning of the action, cannot be expressed even if we perform our outward action (as narrated in the hadith)

The core of the Prophet’s actions were taken from the Quran.

If you do not look at the Prophet’s action in light of the Quran (tawhid, angels, books, rasul, etc), you are losing a fundamental part of the meaning in an action.

When you perform the sajdah, all the fundamental teachings (that the Prophet is the embodiment of the Quran) need to be at the core of your action.

* If these fundamental teachings do not form the core of your action, then you busy yourself with the physical attributed

If you do not see the Prophet as the embodiment of the Quran, then your actions are merely imitation and your sunnah is imitating in people’s lives.

We ought to know what forms the basis of the rules that we command people to perform.

The Prophet is not there to solely teach us the ‘outward’ form of actions.

* He is there to be the embodiment of the Quran.
* Interpret the Hadith within the context of the Quran and accept it as guidance for your life
* Always look for the core meaning narrated in Hadiths. Only then will you be following the sunnah.
* Otherwise you are following your own imaginations

People were unhappy with Jesus because he was undermining the authority of the Rabbinic clergy. They wanted to make him for into a situation that will result in punishment from the Roman authority.

Like all prophets, Jesus too would speak to people around him.

There was a question asked to him deliberately.

“Master, are we going to pay tax to the Roman authorities (secular).” He said: “ Do you have any money with you?”

He took the money and saw a picture of a ceasar printed on it. So he said: Give to Caesar what he deserves and give to God what he deserves.

The Prophet is speaking to teach the people that they should not live their lives only in connection to this worldly life.

In order to give charity to the temple, there were money exchangers around the temple.

* Temples were not allowed to take money that had caesar’s picture on it
* So people would change the money which had caesar’s face on it and give you money without his face
* That was the tradition of the time.

The Prophet is teaching that if you get the authority from the Caesar, you have to pay your tax to him. But, you should not accept any authority on earth (la ila illAllah)

* Everybody is equal
* In order to pay your charity (zakah; in the name of God), the authority of God needs to be acknowledged and established.

So what the Prophet did was teaching his followers about the Kingdom of God on earth.

* If you accept that anything in the world has a power over you, then you have to pay him his due

If you say that some causes have an effect on something, you have to worship these causes. You have to pay these causes its due.

But if you are aware that everything on earth is under the power of God, then you have to pay God’s due to God.

If you don’t take Jesus as the embodiment of the message of God, you will end up separating the authority between state and religion.

* You will fail to take notice of the teachings of the Prophets as messengers of God

Messengers: Convey the message of their Lord.

Everything is going on according to your understanding of the world

* If you see that everything is coming into existence as the result of the choice of the will of the creator, you have to return everything back to Him
* It is God’s right

When you read the narration, you have to read it bearing in mind that the action or saying is made by the Messenger of God, in order to teach you the aspect of your life that looks to God and which is related to God.

That is the main purpose of the teachings of a Messenger; it is to connect you to God.

“Don’t each much” – saying of the Prophet

Why? The Propher is not a nutrionist

He is the messenger of God.

* He is introducing the message of God to you
* Even though it may be difficult for you at first, you should keep practicing to see the aspect of the even that looks to God
* If you don’t train yourself, you will not see it
* We are used to narrating hadiths and imitating actions
  + Where is the aspect that looks to the message of the God?

How can you listen to God through His messenger?

* By listening to the messenger’s message which relates to God
* NOT, by simply imitating the action
* Fill in the blanks accurately.
* The mission of the messenger is introducing God to you
  + Keep searching for this perspective in hadiths.

When someone introduces a hadith to you, ask yourself, how can I become aware of my God through this narration?

* How can I relate myself to my God?
* It is not easy but we have to train ourselves

**“You cannot be a believer, unless you love for your brother what you love for yourself.”**

* I have to love for my brother what I love for myself, why?
* Think deeply about the hadith on don’t just act superficially on it
* Performing the action should make you a believer
  + But to become a believer you cannot just imitate
  + You need to understand the message of God in this action
* Which aspect in the hadith introduces God to you?
  + Brothers; all of creation
  + Would you like to be safe in your home? Yes. So do not destroy the nest of a bird.
  + What is the *rasul* teaching me through this?
  + We learn that we are all connected and that our perfect connection is not something that happens by chance
    - The messenger of God is telling us that we are all coming from the same source
    - That we should not take ownership over anything we have
    - Attach the existence of all that you love to the source who is Absolute
      * If you are connected to the Absolute source then you will not feel like you have ‘lost’ if you share
    - Everything is given to us so that we become aware of its giver
* Why do we have hands, legs, eyes, etc?
* Everything exists for a reason. Ask yourself why?
* If you don’t ask why, you are not using your human qualities.
* You are ignoring your consciousness and are behaving like an animal

The Prophet comes to teach us about our existence and how to relate ourselves to our Source.

* We are taught to see the value of everything that we have been given
* The prophetic mission is to teach me to be aware that everything I am given is coming from an absolute source
  + If so, should you have any worry about your being?

If the federal reserve bank is yours, will you ever worry about money?

If you really acknowledge that the source is endless, you have no worry.

* If it is limited, you have every right to worry
* So you will be cautious about sharing

Everything that the Prophet says and does is for the purpose of attaching me to my source because he is the messenger of God.

* This is what he is here to teach me
* He is not the best engineer, farmer, etc
* He is the best person to show and tell me about the owner of this universe

If I don’t feel comfortable about sharing what is given to me with my brother, it means that I am not attaching what I hold to the eternal source = I am not a believer.

If you don’t attach everything in this universe to the absolute source, you are not a believer in that respect.

You are not expected to become a believer just by saying I believe in God. You are expected to acknowledge belief in God through your experiences in the universe.

* You should experience that every single thing in the universe is created by God

We have to train ourselves and to concentrate on the aspect of the teaching of the Prophets and the narrations (hadiths)

-Always look for what has the hadith to do with the mission of the messenger of God

Some people take the Prophet’s advice as pertaining to solely the ‘physical’ of the world

* ‘Don’t cut the trees’
* He did not say that as a farmer
* His words were conveyed as the messenger of God
* It is a crime to take the hadiths literally
  + You are killing the message of the messenger of God
  + You are killing the rasul and leaving Muhammad alive
* The trees are glorifying God, so let them glorify God
  + The messenger of God looks at matters from the belief perspective
    - He wants us to acknowledge that all creatures are glorifying God
    - Your actions need to be done with the awareness of this
  + So therefore, you don’t stop cutting trees literally
    - Rather, you ought to continue pruning and cutting them because only be doing so can the trees continue to glorifying God

Establish a connection between my Lord and I: Mission of the Prophet

Study some exemplary hadiths and get some training from them. But don’t let it overtake your study of the Quran.