

## ARTICLE

### **Reformation - Self or Society?**

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We look around us, and we see in this world today, great efforts, strenuous efforts being made everywhere in hope of bringing about some reform and positive changes, some improvements in the human society.

Islamic groups are being formed in our Masjids, Muslim Associations are emerging in every community, with the sole purpose of "reforming our society." Meetings, gatherings and assemblies are held throughout the world with the motive and intention of uplifting the standards of morality and discipline in Islam.

Yet, my respected Muslims, most of these efforts, if not all, are ineffective and are in vain.

And the question that remains, that plagues us, is this: WHY ARE ALL THESE EFFORTS WHICH ARE EXPENDED IN HOPE OF REFORMING OUR SOCIETY INEFFECTIVE? WHY ARE THEY ALL IN VAIN?

Allah ((ST) gives us the answer to that important question, in Sura Maaida, Verse 105, when he says: "O you who believe! Take care of your own soul. He who is strayed cannot harm you, if you are rightly guided. To Allah you will return, and then he will inform you of what you used to do."

This verse of Quraan points out and highlights a very basic disease and fault of ours. It tells us that our failure to reform society is because we concentrate all our attention on the sins and shortcomings of others, but we fail to look at our selves, our sins, our faults, our shortcomings. The verse tells us that we need to reform our own self first, before we can attempt to reform society.

Allah says: "Upon you is your own self" – "Take care of your own souls." In other words "Check yourself!"

The messenger of Allah (SAW) has mentioned in a hadith, narrated in Sahih Muslim: "The man who says that the people are ruined, then he himself, is ruined most of all."

So whenever we find ourselves commenting and judging others, by remarking that such and such persons is misguided and such and such person has gone astray.... Then in reality, we are the ones who have gone further astray than they have. When we find faults with others, without first looking at our own shortcomings, then we require more reform and more help than they do!

If everyone tries to reform others, and change the lives of others, and impart what is right and prevent what is wrong upon others, and at the same time, ignore his own need of reformation and change, then there will certainly be no improvement in society at all!

No one is saying that if we see an open sin being committed that we should not intervene and admonish and advise. Certainly upon us is to correct a wrong act when we see it, with wisdom and justice. But let us not be negligent of our own sins at the same time.

There is the famous saying of Umar (RA), that every believer should know: Hazrat Umar (RA) says: "Take reckoning of yourself before your reckoning is taken."

So we, as believers, need to take heed, and to evaluate our selves each and every day. Take reckoning of ourselves. What have I done today? Did I perform all my Salaat? And what was the quality of the Salaat? Did I commit any sins today, major or minor? Did I backbite? Slander? Lie? Hurt someone's feelings? Did I do any good deeds? In other words, " Take reckoning of yourself."

Allah has also said in Sura Baqara, Verse 44, (whilst addressing the Jews): "Do you enjoin/command righteousness upon others, and forget yourselves, while you recite the book? Do you not then understand?"

Our beloved Rasool (SAW) has said: "On the day of judgment, a man will be brought and thrown in the fire. Because of the heat, his intestines will come out of his stomach.... Seeing him in this condition, the inmates of Hell will gather around him and ask him about his plight saying: "Why are you being punished? Are you not the same person who used to enjoin right and forbid wrong? How are you today in such a pitiable condition?"

The man will say: "I did enjoin right upon the people, but I did not myself follow the right course. I used to prevent people from wrong, yet I myself followed those wrongs. This has driven me today into this condition." (Fazail Sadaqa)

May Allah save and protect you and I from such a terrible plight, Ameen.

So in our great attempts to reform society, let us not forget our own self-reformation. And let us never be judgmental of another, believer or not, since we do not know what his final destiny will be.

The Rasool (SAW) has said: "It is the end and final fate that matters."

So if a sinner or disobedient man dies as a believer and a righteous man, then he would have certainly become a favorite with Allah, and would have superceded us in goodness and piety.

In a most beautiful narration, lies a story of a herdsman who became one of the most unique from amongst the believers.

In the time of the battle of Khaibar, a herdsman who used to graze the goats of the Jews came upon the Holy Prophet (SAW). When he saw that the Muslim army was camping outside Khaibar, he desired to meet them and hear what they had to say and what they were doing there. Therefore he went to the camp of the Muslim army and enquired about their commander. The Muslims told him that their commander was Muhammad (SAW) who was in his tent.

At first, the herdsman did not believe in what he was told. He wondered how such a great commander could stay in such an ordinary tent. It was a low—tent erected with mats made of date palm leaves. He entered that tent, met the Prophet (SAW) and enquired about his mission and message. The Prophet (SAW) put before him the message of Islam, that is, Tawheed and the oneness of Allah.

The herdsman asked: "What will be my fate and status if I embrace Islam?"

The Prophet (SAW) replied: " After embracing Islam, you will become our brother and we shall embrace you."

On hearing this the herdsman responded: "You are joking. What has a poor fellow like me has to do with a great commander like you! I am a black man clad in tattered rags, giving out a bad smell. How can you embrace me in such a repulsive state of mine?"

The Prophet (SAW) told him: "I must embrace you. Almighty Allah shall change the black of your body into brilliant white. He shall also change the bad smell emanating from your body into fragrance."

On hearing these words, he made Tauba and accepted Islam. He thereafter asked the Prophet (SAW) what he to do next. The Prophet (SAW) told him: "You have embraced Islam at a time when it is not pray time that I should ask you to pray, nor is it the month of Ramadhan that I should ask you to fast, nor is Zakaat due on you. At this moment, there is only one worship and that is Jihad (Holy War) in the path of Allah which is being conducted with the sword."

The herdsman replied, "I will participate in this jihad, but there are only two alternatives for a fighter, either victory or martyrdom in this Jihad."

The Prophet (SAW) replied: "I guarantee that if you attain martyrdom in this Jihad, Allah shall admit you in paradise. Further, He shall change the bad smell of your body into fragrance. He will likewise change the black of your body into brilliant white."

The Prophet (SAW) advised the herdsman to return the goats under his charge to the Jewish owner, since this was a trust upon him. The herdsman, therefore returned the goats, joined the Muslims in Jihad, and became a martyr.

At the end of the battle, the Prophet (SAW) began a survey of the Muslim army. He saw the companions assembled together, so he went and enquired as to what was the matter. Among the martyrs was a person whom none recognized. When the Prophet (SAW) saw him, he said: "You do not recognize him, but I recognize him. He is a herdsman. He is that unique servant who has not made a single prostration in the path of Allah. In spite of this, I bear witness that Allah has admitted him directly into Jannatul Firdous. I am seeing with my eyes that the angels are giving him a bath. The black of his body has turned into white. Similarly, the bad smell emanating from his body has turned into fragrance."

Sunhaanallah! Allah brought such a revolution in the life of this herdsman. He did not perform one single Salaat, or did any other form of Ibaadah and worship, yet he died in such a state where he had embraced Islam, and become a servant of Allah.

That is why the great and renowned men of Allah always remain in fear for their end and pray to Allah that their end be a good one and their death be upon Iman.

A man once asked a pious man: "Tell me, are you better than my dog?" The pious man replied calmly: "I cannot say just now whether I am better, or whether your dog is better, because I do not know in what state I shall die. I shall be better than your dog if I die upon Iman with righteous deeds. On the other hand, if I meet a bad ending, may Allah forbid, your dog will surely be better than I, because the dog will not go to hell, nor will it face any punishment."

As our beloved Prophet (SAW) said: "It is the end and the final fate that matters."

So if every individual succeeds in reforming himself, one at a time, then the society at large will in turn,

become reformed, Inshaa Allah. Just as one candle that produces one little light can give light to a second candle and that second candle, in turn, gives light to a third and so on, so to, the light of Deen will also go on expanding more and more, until the society, as a whole, become fully reformed Inshaa Allah. Ameen.

May Allah cause your final fate and mine to be upon Iman and Taqwa. Ameen.