

Inspiration for Community Reforms

Men have such a high opinion of themselves, of their mental superiority and intellectual depth; they believe themselves so skilled in discerning the true from the false, the path of safety from those of error, that they should be forbidden as much as possible the perusal of philosophic writings.

These are words of a well-known philosopher, scholar and jurist whose name I would not disclose for now, lest I be accused of promoting preachers of a particular pattern. But I would take this chance to add to his words that those presumptuous men should also be forbidden to reform themselves because as per their opinion, they are oh so perfect. I dare say, Islam and the followers of Muhammad (SAW) have suffered much by calumny and misrepresentation, which has taken the shape of a spiralling tornado in recent times. Today, Muslims in India are in a state of disillusionment and dismay and in the face of a ceaseless propaganda and political marginalisation have, to some extent, started believing that perhaps they were at fault. But that is half of the half-truth; the other greater half is that as long as Islam is a living force in the world, it seems hopeless to expect non-Muslims opinion, in general, to take a dispassionate view of the contributions and rights of Muslims in the world and particularly by an inimical establishment in India. This is not the first time that Mughals have been blamed for an economic fallout six hundred years later or a cartoon of the Prophet is drawn by a goddamn daring artist in Denmark simply because he saw mosques full of worshippers and Churches empty even on Sunday mornings. The main reason for such unsound reactions is that whereas Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism have ceased to reckon as binding religions and Hinduism is on a resurgence path to justify its existent, Islam is still a tremendous force, and accordingly inspires the hatred of the Jews, the animosity of the communists and the apprehensions of the Hindus.

There is no doubting that the Muslim community is in need of reform, more so in India, but to embark on any rectification they have to first get rid of the notion that they are at fault for their miserable state. I say this because that uncalled for feeling of remorse would not be the right note to start off on a reformation course where the lone way to reach the end is to master the beginning. There is no need to feel despondent and isolated, for like someone had said centuries back, 'As I look back on my life, I realise that every time I thought I was being rejected from something good; I was actually being redirected to something better. You must convince your heart that whatever God has decreed is most appropriate and most beneficial to you.' Things haven't changed much as far as interfaith relations are concerned.

There are barriers in all courses, even those for reformation, but the biggest barrier between you and God is you. 'We are creatures that love to blame the external, not realizing that the problem is usually internal.' And so it is not only with the society, but with all of the communities, as well as individuals within the communities. As far as the community linked with jihad is concerned, they have to now declare jihad on enemies that they cannot see because they lie within and these are – Egoism, Arrogance, Conceit, Selfishness, Greed, Anger, Lust, Intolerance, Lying, Gossiping and Slandering. If we can master these failings for a beginning, we will be ready to face the adversaries that can be seen. Ponder for a while and notice that these traits are not blanket faults but are individual infections and these have to be diagnosed and treated at individual levels. The community as a whole did not lose direction overnight and neither would it collectively see the light one fine morning. The billionaires dictate the new economic policy because they first learnt how to make money work for them automatically, while the rest are doing the hard work to make it possible for them. Similarly when individuals introspect, the Muslim community would automatically come on the reform course that would work wonders for them. From there on, adopt a gentle tone when speaking with others, for truly the tone at times has a greater impact than the speech. Soft words soften the hearts that are harder than rock, yet I have often been guilty of speaking harsh words that hardened hearts that were softer than silk.

That's as much soft as softness can be. Realities are harsh and times are hard, moreover, the charge of jihad has been thrust upon us. So let us go on jihad mode to eliminate bigotry and superstitions with tolerance and truth; replace ignorance with rationality; obliterate illiteracy with the beacon of knowledge and generally mind our own business of the greater jihad. Let us jihad to be that reform that a scorched world is looking for but doesn't know from where it's gonna come. Let the world wallow in pride and arrogance and machinations and make-believe, while we the jihadists be the torchbearers of enlightenment and caretakers of humanity.

'If you see God, Mighty and Magnificent, holding back this world from you, frequently trying you with adversity and tribulation, know that you hold a great status with Him. Know that He is dealing with you as He does with His Awliya' and chosen elite, and is watching over you.'

These are not my own words; I have just compiled some sayings together with the hope that they make more sense in combination. Like Hazrat Ali once said, 'Consultation is a source of guidance, and one who thinks his own view enough runs a risk.' He also said, 'Generosity is the protector of good reputations, while knowledge is the silencer of fools.' So be generous with whatever you have and can spare, and now that you know how to silence the fools, do it.

Friends, this cup is still half empty, so give it a thought and fill it up please.

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