

Friday Sermon: Knowledge and Will Power for Practical Reformation

January 10, 2014

A couple of Fridays ago some sermons were given in light of Friday sermons of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (may Allah be pleased with him) regarding reformation of practices. The need to remove some impediments to reformation of practices was mentioned and it was explained that the impediments to the reformation of our practices were stronger than the impediments to our creed and beliefs. The subject was carried forward today.

It should be remembered that the purpose of the advent of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) was not just reformation of beliefs. He said that he had come to connect man to God and for man to pay the dues of mankind. These matters are dependent on practices. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said: 'Remember mere verbosity and phraseology cannot avail unless it is followed by practise.' He also said: 'Make your faith weighty. Practise is the ornament of faith. If man's lifestyle is not right then there is also no faith.'

Wishing to be useful to the mission of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) can only be made possible when each one of us tries our utmost to remove the impediments to the reformation of our practices. Reformation of our practises alone will draw others to us and we will be able to help in the completion of the mission of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace). The strength to reform others can only come about after our own reformation. Our triumph is not in subjugating anyone nor indeed is it to attain worldly objectives. It is to make the world submit to God and His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). If there is no difference between us and the others, why should the world listen to us? Rather than be impressed by others, we have to impress them. There is need to free ourselves from any worldly influence. There are many obstacles in this way for which we have to instil inner strength that would help remove these obstacles. We have to propose some principles to contend with the world which each one of us would follow and firmly adhere to. This will require sacrifice of nafs (the self) and will require generating a special environment. The world today is like a global village and as mentioned before, the evil of thousand miles away has reached every household through the electronic media just as all that is good has also reached each household. However, the rate of spread of evil is more than the spread of good. It has been mentioned before that in addition to this, the standards of what is good and what is bad has also changed. Something which Islam deems bad and sinful is considered trivial in an irreligious society. In fact, certain such things are now even considered good.

Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) said that dancing is part of Western culture. Perhaps it was not as common in the time of Hazrat Musleh Maud as it is today through the agency of television and the internet. Some homes have been turned into dance houses. In some families dancing takes place in the name of entertainment during family functions, especially during weddings. Ahmadi families should be completely free of these practices and attention should be given to this matter. Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) said that although dancing was part of Western culture, there was a time it was not considered good but was later accepted as part of tradition. In earlier times men and women danced by holding hands, this changed and they started dancing with their faces close by and gradually the distance between them decreased and now dance has changed into something very vulgar with semi-clad dancers appearing on television. This gradual spread [change in dancing style] happened because those who spread this stayed firm on it in spite of protestations against it and were ultimately successful. Now there is vulgarity and nakedness even on Pakistan television, a Muslim country, in the name of entertainment.

Thus, due to its constancy, evil has overcome the collective mind of the world. Tremendous planning and sacrifice is required to contend with it. There is need to ponder over it and work hard at it. There is need to adapt those things which will generate the strength to remove the impediments to reform ourselves. Hazrat

Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) beautifully explained that in order to reform our practices we need to instil three-fold aspects: strength of resolve, correct and proper knowledge and strength to implement. The main and fundamental strengths are only the first and the third while the middle aspect, correct and proper knowledge, influences them both. For the purpose of reformation of practice, strength of resolve needs to be fortified and the defects of strength to implement need to be removed. Evil can only be stemmed out if there is resolve to stem it out and this can only come about if strength is generated to implement this.

There is little wrong with our strength of resolve. Majority of the Jama'at wants to have Taqwa (righteousness) and purity, to disseminate the message of Islam and to attain the love and nearness of God. Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) said that although our strength of resolve was strong it did not bring results. Perhaps there is not enough resolve to implement what is desired. We had sufficient resolve as regards our beliefs, however, we lack in our resolve to reform our practices and have not been successful in this regard. We must also acknowledge that our devotion to God is also flawed and our strength to implement what we intend is disabled and is not influenced by our sense of resolve. Or there is deficiency in the supports which are needed for us to get where we intend to be. In this instance unless we rectify the situation nothing will be of avail.

An example of this would be when a student wishes to learn something but cannot. Unless his mental capacity is corrected no matter how hard he tries he cannot learn/remember his lesson. In order to correct his mental capacity the reason for his inability will have to be found out. In Pakistan some students learn by rote, without really understanding what they have memorised. With great skill they memorise entire books but when they come to the West, sometimes they cannot maintain their educational success as things are done differently here. Everything is learnt by understanding and comprehension here. When the educational board in Rabwah was separated from the governmental system due to certain reasons, and associated with a system with different examination precepts, many students wrote to say they could not attain the grades they previously could. Sometimes the hindrance in learning is not due to some mental incapacity and there are other reasons. Of course mental incapacity makes it difficult to overcome things. However, as here in the West there are special schools for children with special needs as regards learning where they are taught in specific ways and sometimes they overcome their special needs.

In order to attain success, the mind should be adapted in accordance to the method that is recommended for something. We have to see why our good intentions and determination not influence that part of our brain which controls practical reformation! We have to see what our level of devotion to God is; we have to see whether our practical efforts are well-intended and sincere. As mentioned earlier, reformation of practice has two impediments: weakness in strength of resolve and weakness in strength to implement matters. The third aspect is weakness of knowledge which influences the other two states. Resolve and its implementation works in accordance to knowledge.

If a person does not know that a throng of a thousand people is about to attack him, but thinks that perhaps one or two individuals are about to attack him, he would have prepared according to the knowledge he has, or else his preparation would have been different. Strength of knowledge increases strength of resolve. If a person wishes to lift something but cannot, he stops and thinks and analyses the situation, perhaps changes the way he lifts and is then able to lift the object. In this instance he would have combined knowledge with correct use of his strength and attained what he wished. God-given capacity is always there but it needs to be used properly. The very same principle needs to be adapted to implement practical capacity and to remove weakness in implementation of matters and for this knowledge should be enhanced so that it can overcome weaknesses.

Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) said that God has given every individual the capacity to assess/compare which determines how much strength is required to do such and such tasks because there is muscular strength and then there is mental strength, just as it was illustrated in the example of a person lifting an object, whereby capacity to assess/compare was utilised. The capacity to assess/compare also comes from

knowledge, whether it is internal knowledge or external knowledge. Internal knowledge comes from observation and experiment whereas external knowledge comes from outside sources, for example the noise, sound of an approaching crowd. However, in the instance of lifting a heavy object successfully, it is the capacity to assess that is utilised. In the first instance the person could not lift the object as he had assessed its weight incorrectly, but later, after assessing and appraising the correct weight he lifted it successfully. The same principle works when man prepares to reform himself; it is his capacity to assess/compare which decides how much strength is required for his personal endeavour. Sometimes, due to incorrect knowledge, man is not able to reform himself and due to lack of knowledge the capacity to assess/compare does not furnish correct information as regards the particular kind of reformation. The capacity to assess/compare alerts man and it is the same capacity which, due to lack of knowledge, makes man negligent. Sin is committed due to lack of knowledge alone. When a child is brought up in a sinful environment he grows up with a distorted sense of right and wrong, like considering one cannot get by without telling lies.

It is bewildering why many people who seek [political] asylum think that unless they concoct a story their case will not be successful. This is in spite of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih repeatedly mentioning that if the matter is explained briefly and correctly asylum cases are successful quickly. There are many examples of this when people have said that they made brief and correct statements and their cases were successful promptly. In this regard it is sufficient to say [in the asylum application] that people cannot go through with the mental torture of being ever frightened for their own life as well as the lives of their family and all the related problems. Children cannot go to school or are harassed in schools. Majority of asylum cases are successful on these points. We should adhere to truth and of course trust in God. When false stories are mentioned in front of children, like such and such false account was put before a judge, children end up thinking there is no sin in telling lies and without telling lies perhaps their asylum case would not have been successful and telling lies is key to all progress. They end up thinking nothing gets done without telling lies and as a result they do not think much of telling lies. When such children grow up and expect their capacity to assess/compare to determine something, it will determine for them that there is no harm in telling lies. Similarly when a child grows up in an environment where back-biting is common, his capacity to assess and compare will conclude that everyone does it and there is nothing to it. It was mentioned in previous sermons that a great impediment in reformation of practices is that people consider some sins to be big sins and others not such big sins and think that there was no harm in committing the smaller sins. Once embroiled in sins, it is difficult to leave them. In these instances while the capacity to assess/compare is present, but due to wrong information/knowledge it does not give man enough strength to overcome sin. Physical weakness does not allow a certain amount of weight to be lifted. However, when brain sends signals to lift greater weight, it can be done. Likewise is the strength to erase sin. While such strength is present but when confronted with sin the capacity to assess and compare decides there is no harm. As a result the brain does not furnish strength to erase it and there is also no strength of resolve. In order to reform practices strength of resolve, abundance of knowledge and strength to implement is required. Abundance of knowledge enhances strength of resolve.

In summary, reformation of practice requires three things: strength of resolve which is capable of big things, abundance of knowledge so that our strength of resolve realises its responsibility as regards what is wrong and what is right and supports what is right and endeavours to follow it and not lose out due to ignorance. Thirdly, we need strength to implement matters so that our limbs follow our good intentions and do not reject what the good intentions order them to do. These are the fundamental sources of coming out of sin and reformation of practices. We have to make our strength of resolve like a highly disciplined officer who gets his instructions followed in accordance to his strengths and principles and does not let anything come in his way. We should not make our own definitions of big and small sins. Correct knowledge will save us from matters which influence our capacity to assess/compare. Indeed, strength of resolve cannot determine without knowledge. And if strength to implement matters is strong it would understand the slightest of hints given by strength of resolve.

Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) said that weakness in strength to implement is of two kinds: tangible and intangible. Intangible weakness is when strength is present but due to lack of use is

somewhat rusty whereas tangible weakness is when due to no use for a long period it is in a lifeless state and is in need of external help and support. Example of intangible weakness is when a person who can lift 40 kilos of weight but due to lack of practice is perturbed at the thought of it. If such a person convinces himself he can eventually lift the required weight. Example of tangible weakness is when due to not working for a long period of time, the capacity is gone and the person cannot lift more than 20 or 10 kilos of weight. Such a person requires a helper and support in order to be able to lift more weight. In short, when personal strength is not there external resources have to be availed. The state of reformation of practices is the same. Some people have to instil strength of resolve, some are in need of strength to implement but for some the burden is too much and for them the society has to play its role, Jama'at has to play its role, the auxiliaries have to play their role. We need to instil these matters, need to pay attention to these matters for reformation of practices so that we can fulfil the objective of the advent of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) and so that our God-given capacities do not get rusty and eventually corrode away.

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said: 'The way of belief is to want to be given reformation from Allah the Exalted and to expend one's strengths [for it].'

He also said: 'You should simply show your example by practise and it should have brilliance in it so that others may accept it. No one will accept it unless it has brilliance. Similarly, if your internal state does not have cleanliness and brilliance no one will buy it. If you do not have high morals you cannot attain any station.'

Constant hard work is needed for reformation of practice so that all Ahmadis are able to fulfil the objectives of being Ahmadis and are able make themselves true Muslims in accordance with the wishes of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace).

Next Huzoor announced that he would lead funeral Prayer in absentia of Master Mashriq Ali Sahib who passed away on 3 January in Qadian after being ill for a year. He was nearly 80 years old. He had taken Bai'at in 1965 and had remained ardent about Tabligh till his last breath. He was a Moosi. He leaves behind three daughters and two sons one of whom is perhaps known by the entire Jama'at. He is IsmatUllah Sahib who recites poems on MTA.