

Friday Sermon: Self Reformation: Breaking bad habits

December 20th, 2013

Carrying on from the subject of last Friday sermon, today Huzoor gave a discourse on further six causes of impediment in reformation of practice with reference to a sermon of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (may Allah be pleased with him).

The third impediment to reformation of practice is to only keep immediate or short-term matters in view. Matters of faith and creed are long-term and relate to the Hereafter. Man considers that immediate matters have no correlation with faith. For example a jeweller thinks adulterating his gold merchandise will have no bearing on his faith. It will give him quick and larger gain. Keeping immediate matter in view he thus commits something immoral, which is an act of theft and a deception. Many a great Hajji people commit deception in trade dealings not giving significance to life after death. Such thinking affects worldly acts. People usually look upon practising teachings of a Prophet of God and salvation etc. as a remote matter. In the third world it is common for shopkeepers to adulterate their merchandise, for industrialists to take orders pitching for a model that is different from the finished product. Worldly needs come in way of their practises and immediate gain makes them forget long-term benefit.

By way of example Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) illustrated a case of back-biting, which is a big sin. A man's boss is unkind and unjust to him but the man cannot do anything about it. By chance he meets the boss of his boss and the boss's boss says something negative about the boss. The man is delighted to find an opportunity to tell the big boss shortcomings of his boss and this ultimately puts his boss in trouble. The man does not stop and think before back-biting to take his revenge and keeps the short-term advantage in view.

The fourth impediment to reformation of practice is the correlation between habit and practice. Habit can weaken one's practices especially if governance is carried out without religious underpinning. Unfortunately the acts that Islam considers as immoral are being practised in the Muslim world in spite of Muslim governments and in the non-Muslim world certain matters which demand reformation are not considered immoral. The government of a country has a role to play in reformation of practice where religion and government define reformation of practices in the same way. In such situations habits can be broken because of rules and regulations but places where the law does not lend a hand in reformation of practices, weaknesses of practice can become a toxin for the society. As we see many weaknesses of practice in the developed world which are now spreading everywhere because of the electronic media. Those who are brought up in this environment, being a part of this milieu, habitually adopt some of its weaknesses. Young men and women are unconsciously inclined to these weaknesses and once habits are formed it becomes difficult to shake them off. By way of example those who habitually indulge in intoxication find it very hard to stop. A person can make the sacrifice of accepting One God instead of three and it will never be that having accepted One God, one fine day he will think about three gods. However, a person dependant on intoxication will certainly have withdrawal symptoms. He can give up a life-long creed but giving up a habit of few months or years makes him restless. There are people who come in the Jama'at having forsaken their families, even their wives and children but when they are asked to give up smoking, they look for hundreds of excuses. This is not the case with just the new Ahmadis but is applicable to everyone.

Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) related that he had an atheistic older uncle who smoked hookah all day. When people who had the habit of smoking hookah came to see the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) they would go the older uncle afterwards to enjoy smoking. They had to put up with his

nonsensical talk caused by the stimulant. Although people would visit him to smoke hookah they had to endure hostile words against Islam and Ahmadiyyat. One day an Ahmadi came out of his place deploring himself and said that due to his dependence on hookah he had to listen to things he would never tolerate otherwise. Sometimes habit can disgrace you. Then there are people who have a habit of telling lies. No matter how much they are advised and supervised they cannot desist from telling lies. Their reformation is difficult but not impossible. If it were impossible why would sermons be advisory in this regard! God commands to advice and even if there is an iota of faith in someone, advice works. A person had the habit of swearing. When a complaint was sent to Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) he sent for the person and asked him why did he swear? The person swore and said who says I swear, without realising what he was saying. If man tries, diminished sense of remorse can be regenerated. Habit has a big part in reformation of practice. These days people are drawn to watching unsuitable films on the internet etc. Their case is like taking an intoxicant, they do not eat, do not sleep, simply sit and watch films, not caring about their family, wife and children.

The fifth cause of impediment to reformation of practice is family: wife and children. Sometimes people are tried because of their family. For example in Islam usurping others' wealth is forbidden. If money is left as a trust with someone to which there is no witness and no proof, the intention of the person may falter due to the needs of his family. The wife may have demanded something or the son may have asked for money which the father could not provide, or money may be required for treatment of an ailing child. The person may think of usurping the money left as a trust with him to meet his needs and not care about the consequences. This of course is totally against the Islamic teaching of keeping trusts. Some people do usurp the wealth of young orphans or incur loss on them to make property for their own children. This is not confined to financial matters. Borne out of undue indulgence some parents in particular in this liberal society – although this also goes on the underdeveloped countries – do not make their children conform to Islamic teachings. Regrettably these matters also come out in Ahmadi society from time to time where someone or the other usurps another's trust, someone or the other deceives the other in financial dealing, someone or the other does not fulfil the right of orphans. These matters and complaints come before the Qadha Board. Someone living in the developed world marries his daughter off in Pakistan and on the very first day tells the son-in-law that his daughter's upbringing has been very pampered and she is free to do what she wants so no restrictions should be put on her. The daughter is very haughty because of the father's encouragement and does not think anything of her husband. Although Islam teaches that a wife should pay the dues of her husband and look after her home. Sometimes young men marry from Pakistan and are very cruel to their wives. There are many examples of impediment to reformation of practice caused by family: wife and children. Bribery is common in the third world. Officials take bribes for themselves and to make property for their family or to send their children to expensive schools. Here emotions become a hindrance in reformation of practice and can only be corrected when love of God supersedes all other loves and man is totally free from the influence of worldly loves.

The sixth cause of impediment in reformation of practice is that man does not constantly watch himself. We should weigh out the consequences of everything we do, we should consider whether what we are doing is permissible or not. We should be mindful that the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) told us there are 700 commandments in the Holy Qur'an to be abided by. For example there is the important commandment of truth and honesty which a shopkeeper, a labourer and everyone else should abide by within their sphere of life. It is common in underdeveloped countries for shopkeepers to sell substandard merchandise to unaware customers or sell merchandise weighing less than it is made out, to think of ways to take advantage of the lack of awareness of every single customer. Sometimes seeing the urgent need of a customer, exorbitant profit is made by shopkeepers and this is even against the etiquette of trading whereas Islam strictly forbids it. When Rabwah was first populated Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) advised Rabwah's shopkeepers that if they kept their profit margins low they would have more customers. However, Huzoor receives complaints that the profit margins of shops in Rabwah are so high that people have started going to Chiniot for their grocery/shopping. Ahmadi shopkeepers are responsible for this. This matter is not just for Ahmadi shopkeepers of Rabwah, in fact everywhere Ahmadi shopkeepers should do the right thing and keep their profit margins reasonable. Similarly, Ahmadi in all fields of life should be honest and for this it is important to constantly

remind oneself of whatever is required to reform one's practice. Speaking truth should always be followed. There is also the example of one shopkeeper going to Salat and the other keeping his shop open to attract all the customers while the first shopkeeper is away offering Salat! Complaint was received about Rabwah shopkeepers in this vein but now a report has been sent that they have all agreed to shut their shops during Salat times. Similarly, shopkeepers of Qadian should be mindful of this matter. They will have extra customers these days due to Jalsa but they should not disregard their obligation and all shops and stalls should be shut during Salat times. Ahmadis all over the world need to be mindful of this matter.

Paying attention to one's practices is like a person on a galloping horse. If he does not settle himself properly on the horse, he will fall over. A true believer has to keep his practices in view each moment. Keeping an eye on everything in every matter alone can be the step in the right direction. Once a person is inclined to evil, he is doomed. By avoiding evil one comes in a hijab (covering) and once this hijab is removed one after the other badness takes over. An example for women is the state of purdah and modesty. Once it is removed things can go very far. When recently in Australia, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih came to know that elderly ladies who had freshly arrived from Pakistan to live with their families in Australia advised their younger family members to at least wear modest clothes and take headscarf. Girls who do not cover up told these elderly ladies that observing purdah was a crime in Australia and they too should give it up. Frightened of committing crime these ladies who had observed purdah all their lives gave it up when in fact there is no such law in Australia about purdah. It is only to follow fashion and trends that some younger women have given up purdah. A young woman from Pakistan who has come to Australia after getting married wrote to Huzoor that she was asked to give up purdah or was influenced by the surroundings and had given it up. However, she wrote that when she listened to Huzoor's speech during his recent visit, she had her burqa on and she has kept it on and is praying to continue to do so and requested prayers. Purdah is being abandoned because the Quranic commandment is not often reminded and it is not spoken about in families. Thus, it is very important for reformation of practice to continually mention what is wicked and what is virtuous.

The seventh impediment in reformation of practice is that human relations and customs/conducts gain upper hand and fear and love of God is diminished. Sometimes greed, friendship, relationship, conflict, rancour and malice do not let the good side of deeds be evident. For example, trust was cited as an example earlier and is given again. A man looks upon something he is entrusted with not with the perspective of a commandment of God but with the view of how it will influence his friends or detractors. Similarly, God has ordained to speak the truth but some view it with the perspective of whether or not speaking the truth will cause any harm to him or his friends and family. This weakness in practice is because fear and love of God is absent from hearts.

The eighth impediment in reformation of practice is that it becomes extremely difficult to bring such reformation about unless the whole family is reformed. For example, honesty cannot be complete unless the entire family is honest, especially in cases of extended family living together. Unless there is betterment in the entire family, one of them is bound to influence the others. If the father offers Salat but does not draw children's attention to it or the mother draws attention to it and the father does not offer Salat, it would affect the children. God states: **'...save yourselves and your family from a Fire...'** [\(66:7\)](#) If one does not save one's family, one day the family would cause ruin. Everyone in the family should make an effort but the head of the family has an important role to play.

There can be other causes of impediment in reformation of practices apart from these eight causes. However, if pondered upon these eight causes cover everything. In summary, there exist impediments which cause man to falter on the way of God and for this attention is needed. Reformation does not come about by merely professing something.

Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) gave an example in this regard. There was a European lecturer who delivered excellent lectures but had the habit of moving his shoulders as he spoke and this caused the audience to laugh in derision. He tried to remove this weak point and ultimately availed the following

method: He had two swords suspended from above and stood underneath them to exercise oratory. Each time he moved his shoulders about the suspended swords would hit him. Trying this method he got over his habit of moving his shoulders when speaking. In order to adopt good practices such methods should be utilised by each member of the family and this effort cannot be made without sacrifices.

Each member of the Jama'at needs to self-reflect, make sacrifice and make a firm pledge. It has been stated earlier that we have triumphed as regards faith and creed, for example the concept of Hazrat Isa (on whom be peace) alive in heaven, creed about Jihad etc. Many great scholars are now giving the same viewpoint as us. No matter what arguments they give in this regard it is influenced by the teaching of Ahmadiyyat. However, our practices and deeds are lacking. They do not have the spirit that would show a model to the world whose superiority no one could reject. We are not fully abiding by the ways and means of reformation that Islam has presented. Rather than have others acknowledge us we emulate them. We need to be successful in our deeds and not let the spiritual water with which we have sought beneficence spill over. For this we will have to set limits for ourselves, then alone we will be successful in our objective. We have given sacrifices to strengthen the structure of our faith and creed and we continue to do so, however, not enough attention is given to the structure of practices and deeds.

Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) has encapsulated this rather splendidly in these few words: 'Up till now there are only two walls of faith/creed. We have not yet made the two walls of practice/deeds. This is why thief can come in and steals our property. When, as a result of sacrifice we will complete our four walls, all ways for the thief's entry will be closed.'

Today we need to pledge that we will give sacrifice of our personal wishes, wishes of our family and will fully try to give each such sacrifice which brings about reformation of practice. May God enable us to do so!