

February 19, 2010

Khutbah



Title: [Re-Forming Our Selves Every Day](#)

DVD title: Re-Forming Our Selves Every Day

Opening duas. Allah says:

And if your Lord had willed, He would have made the people one single community, but they do not cease to differ, save the ones upon whom your Lord has mercy, and for that He has created them. Surely, the word of your Lord will be fulfilled: “Surely, I will fill hell with jinn and human beings all together.” And all that We relate to you about the messengers from the past is to make you firmly rooted in your heart. And there has come to you in this Qur’an the truth in instruction and remembrance for the believers.

(11:118-120)

There are a lot of things we can discuss in these ‘*āyāt*. One, perhaps not too obvious, thing we can talk about briefly is the concept of *isla*/reform, change. Whether we realize it or not, clearly or even slightly, every day, programmed by Allah (swt) in and for the life of human beings is a force for change, reform, and reformation in our lives. It is as much a part of us as the air we breathe and the food we eat. If you just go over the circumstances of your life today, you could ask yourself questions about change and reform. “I would have done this differently. I could have changed that. This forced me to change my plan. I had one thought, but had a conversation and then reformed my thinking.” Change and reform, it is programmed into human life.

Some of these things are subtle, and hard to notice. Sometimes they are earth-shattering, and tell us about change and reform. Revisionism of history is also part of reforming people's opinion. Reform is needed for all of us on a personal level, as well as a social level. As individuals, we need to, in a true sense, re-form our lives from the form it was in to a new form. Human beings need reminders, which can remind us all about the truth, about justice, about ethics, about understanding and countless subjects. Without constant reminders and continual checks and balances, people tend to forget, and then go down that road into actions that are not leading us in the right path or right direction.

Sometimes we hear idiomatically in English, "Well, I'm only human." "Well, it's only human." "I'm only a human being." But we have to remember that the human being is the greatest of all creations, and we are one of them. We are of the greatest creation of Allah swt, greater than the angels. Only human beings have been given this opportunity to see what is good, true and right. We are the only ones given the opportunity to repent and be forgiven. Did you ever see a blue jay attack another bird's nest and then say, "Oh, I'm sorry. I repent!?" No. We've been given great tools, the greatest of which is the tool of choice and decision. We have to understand that every single choice and decision we make has its implication. It's possible – I've had the experience one or two times in my whole life – that sometimes I've made a decision and I see the implication right away and repent right away.

It's all part of a greater reality, a greater choosing and being chosen. We tend not to want to think that way because it seems restraining on us. Yet, if we knew that the choices we might make could lead us to open fields instead of closed doors, lead us to beautiful places instead of horrific places; to a deep understanding and peace of heart instead of confusion, we would have no problem. After we climb a mountain going up, you have to go down. [We need] these constant reminders and checks and balances that come in many forms, especially the revelation of the Qur'an, and from the Prophet (sal), and those near and dear to us. The reminders come in the form of our *shuyukh* and our *shaykh*,

from our parents and friends, and hopefully from our inner self, our hearts and minds where we realize we are never alone in this world. We are always accompanied, as I was saying last night, in *mayati hubbi*, even to the grave and beyond, one meter (approximately 3 feet).

We don't think that any small decision we make is going to lead us to destruction. Indeed, we feel we are entitled to make mistakes, as opposed to it being a natural consequence of life. We rarely think that any little decision can add to the impression of others; we think those are only big decisions. We rarely think that any small common, every-day choice we make can lead to misery, grief, horror, injustice or loss. We never think that even if we do something right, it might give the impression that it's wrong and someone might act on that. Reach into your pocket and someone shoots you because they think you are going for a gun; but you are going for a handkerchief because you are going to sneeze. We don't think that way.

There is a tendency not to like to think in terms of cause and effect. It's a little too obvious on one hand, and a little too New Agey on the other. We don't think in this way; we think in linear or self-centered terms, or narrow terms.

After them succeeded a generation. They inherited the Book, but they chose the vanities of this world saying, "Everything will be forgiven of us." Even so, if similar vanities came their way, they would again seize them. Was not the covenant of the Book taken from them that they would not ascribe to Allah anything but the truth, and they study what is in the Book? But best for the righteous is the home in the Hereafter. Will you not understand? As for those who hold fast by the Book and have established regular prayer, never shall We allow the reward of the reformist to perish. (7:169-170)

What does reformist mean? The one who is trying to re-form their self, their life, in a way that is good and comprehensive. It's not about failure; it's about constant effort. It's not that there is no hope for someone who fails at this; there is. There is repentance and forgiveness. Allah has provided (Shaykh snaps his finger) like that. It's possible Allah didn't think about cable television and the news cycle. With all the people in the world, you would think there were enough stories. But this story, the story of reforming our self, is inside of ourselves. It is the duty of those who believe and understand, who have grown up and been guided to work on levels both personal and social, both inner and outer, to take this process of reformation very seriously. In fact, it goes along with what I have been speaking about recently. Believers have to reform their own selves, and prove their own character, and remove their own shortcomings. But at the same time, there is assistance for that. There are models and guidance.

Again, personal piety, without social reform, doesn't go very far, as you can see from the minions of politicians who parade their piety and repentance publicly, but continue to go on and cheat the public and be corrupt. Without community or family reform, nothing can be effective or continue for very long. That's why we worry about the underpinnings of society rotting away. If you don't worry about it, you should. It's also pretty hypocritical if we call for the whole world to change, and we don't make an effort to change our own self. It may not be balanced. It may work like we work here, hundreds of hours a week, a month, trying to rectify the problems of the world. Maybe we work an hour or two on our self. It may not be a one-to-one ratio, but there has to be that effort. We remember the prayer attributed to the prophet Isa (as), who said, "*Change me O Lord not my circumstances.*" All efforts of social reform are useless, if the reformer him or herself doesn't benefit from them.

In the same way, all our efforts to change our external circumstances will come to naught at the least, and to pain, suffering, loss, confusion and ignorance at its worst if we

really believe we can change our external state without changing our internal state. Allah (swt) said in Suratu-l-Anfal:

O you who believe! Respond to Allah and his Messenger when He calls you to that which will give you life, and know that Allah (swt) comes in between a man and his heart. It is He to Whom you shall be gathered. Be conscious of a trial that will affect not only those of you who do wrong, and know that Allah is strict in His Punishment. (8:24-25)

The first thing we have to respond to is Allah (swt). We have to respond to the messengers, the guidelines, to carrying that message forward. Because Allah is inviting us through the Prophet (sal) to that which will give us life and revive and reform us. It's a promise that life will improve, that life is a gift, and life-giving is a great honor. Those of us who respond to this call, who see that we don't look to the past but to the future, those of us who use the past as a stepping stone to the future, who turn a positive heart and eye to what can come, those who don't dwell on difficulties or pain and suffering realize that only we have been called by Allah through these circumstances to a better life, and that we can live and move in the Light/Nūr of Allah and His Prophet (sal).

Can he who is dead, to whom We gave life and a light whereby he can walk amongst men, be like him who is in the depths of darkness from which he can never come out? Thus, to those without faith do their own deeds seem pleasing. (6:122)

Faith, and also our commitment to righteousness and to live a good life, as hard as it may be at times, and as much as we want to pull against the flow of life at times, it's very, very critical for us to remember that we must not fall off this path just because it would be fun to run through the woods where there is no path. Every person individually, every single one of us has to respond to Allah (swt). Every Muslim, every individual man or

woman, has to be sure that their life has faith and sincerity, honesty and cleanliness and justice in it. We have to continue to purify and cleanse ourselves outwardly and inwardly. I don't know about you, but I have many opportunities every day to try to do that. We have to make *wudu* in the *rūh*. Some people are very good at making their *wudu* in the bathroom with water. Others are very good at making their *wudu* in their heart and soul. Some people are good at both; and some people are not good at either.

Whether it's through the study of Qur'an and Hadith, through *ibāda*, through *khidma*, *dhikr* and *muraqabah*, through *fikr* and *tafakkur*, we have to make this reformation and cleansing. We should observe what is *halal*, of course, but we should be understanding about it. I've said it so many times: of course we should eat *halal* food. However, a person who eats *halal* meat is gaining something by that, but is losing a lot if that meat is poisoned. What do we mean by *halal*? The point of *halal* is that it is good for your heart and soul, and it is blessed by Allah. Can we imagine that Allah is blessing the poisoning of food? We can't. We have to have that kind of pragmatic point of view also. Same thing about our attitude. We need to be proud of who we are. The children need to be proud of who they are. That means they need to be armed with knowledge, not just information. They have to be able to answer the questions of the questioner. They need to be able to shine the best light on the hearts and minds of people. Our school is not about information; it should be a school for life and living.

That means they need to dive deep within themselves and ask themselves profound questions, and be able to find the answers around them in their teachers, the texts, the Qur'an, and in the *muraqabah* and meditation. The reality of being the most we can be and being the best we can be in any circumstances, and being proud of it is probably the greatest opportunity of life, not to hide from who we can be. It's natural for a human being who has not been distracted or misled to move toward what is good.

O Lord! We have heard the call of one calling us to faith, “Believe in your Lord,” and we have believed. Our Lord, forgive us our sins, blot out from us our inequities, take to Yourself our souls in the company of the righteous. Our Lord, grant us that which You did promise us through Your Messengers and save us from shame on the Day of Judgment, for You never break Your Promise. (3:193-194)

How many times have we recited *du'ās* like that? This is about Islam, about reform. If you wake up in the middle of the night and you think, “I can't sleep. I have insomnia” you should make some out-somnia and make some *du'ā*. Don't complain about the night, about the sleep, just make a *du'ā*. When you realize it is the middle of the night where we are, even in the daylight... this world is in darkness like the middle of the night. There are terrible, terrifying, horrific dreams. If we take a moment and remember who we are, and make *du'ā*. In the quiet of the night, speak to Allah about justice, mercy, and health and well-being. Remember the people you love and the people who love you, the people you know and who would like to know you.

Think of the people in the community. Go through the names of each one and the children. It will take you enough time just to fall asleep. Shareefa..... Khaled.... Yehya.... Snore. Just start. Start at ICA and work your way up the hill. Start up the hill and work your way down. Then remember the relatives of everyone. By the time you get 8, 10 in, you'll be back asleep. If you happen to get through the whole group, start over. That's what we should do. That's how we will change, reform ourselves. That's how we remember who we are. That's how you can find the peace that usually slips through the fingers of humanity. That's how we can ask for those poor people around the world. That's how we can get more inspiration in our work, how to be more righteous, more piety, less hypocritical ourselves, how to eliminate what's wrong in us and what's wrong in our community. That is how [we remember] to speak in a language people understand, and be inspired by your words instead of fearful of them. It requires a lot of

patience, a lot of perseverance, a lot of wisdom. Life gives us the opportunity. Allah says:

You are the best of people evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah. If only the People of the Book had faith, it would be best for them. Among them are some who have faith, but most of them are perverted transgressors. (3: 110)

We are not just talking about non-Muslims here. There are a lot of perverted transgressors who call themselves Muslims; and who the world is very happy to point the finger at and say, “They are the perverted transgressors. Not us! They are the bad people, not us!”

Here is a plain statement to men a guidance and instruction to those who fear Allah. So do not lose heart; do not fall into despair, for you must gain mastery if you are true in your faith. (3:138-139)

Inshā'a-LLāh, we are not afraid of or burdened by, or resentful of, or tired of, or distracted from faith. And we are anxious to reform ourselves every day in a good way, in a modern way, a progressive way, a pragmatic and truthful way, and an historically accurate way, and we are not ashamed of who we are, *inshā'a-LLāh. Asalaamu aleikum.*

SECOND KHUTBAH. Duas.