

عَنِ النَّوَّاسِ بْنِ سَمْعَانَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: الْبِرُّ حُسْنُ الْخُلُقِ وَالْإِيْمُ مَا حَاكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ وَكَرِهْتَ أَنْ يَطَّلِعَ عَلَيْهِ النَّاسُ - رَوَاهُ مُسْلِمٌ .

وَعَنْ وَابِصَةَ بْنِ مَعْبُدٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: أَتَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ: جِئْتَ تَسْأَلُ عَنِ الْبِرِّ؟ قُلْتُ: نَعَمْ! قَالَ: اسْتَفْتِ قَلْبَكَ، الْبِرُّ مَا أَطْمَأْنَنْتَ إِلَيْهِ النَّفْسُ وَأَطْمَأَنَّ إِلَيْهِ الْقَلْبُ وَالْإِيْمُ مَا حَاكَ فِي النَّفْسِ وَتَرَدَّدَ فِي الصَّدْرِ، وَإِنْ أَفْتَاكَ النَّاسُ وَأَفْتَوَكَ. حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ؛ رَوَيْنَاهُ فِي مُسْنَدِي الْإِمَامَيْنِ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ حَنْبَلٍ وَالدَّارِمِيِّ بِإِسْنَادٍ حَسَنٍ .

Al-Nawwas bin Sam'an, (رضي الله عنه), reported that the Prophet, (ﷺ), said: "Righteousness is good character, and sin is that which wavers in your heart and which you do not want people to know about." [Muslim]. According to Wabisah bin Ma'bad, (رضي الله عنه), who said: I came to the Messenger of Allah, (ﷺ), and he said: "You have come to ask about righteousness ?" "Yes," I answered. He said: "Consult your heart. Righteousness is that about which the soul feels tranquil and the heart feels tranquil, and sin is what creates restlessness in the soul and moves to and fro in the breast, even though people give you their opinion (in your favour) and continue to do so." [A good hadith transmitted from the Musnads of the two Imams, Ahmad bin Hanbal and Al-Darimi]

Background

The first thing that should be pointed out is that even though the second hadith is weak by itself, due to supporting evidence it is raised to the level of hasan (authentic). These two hadiths state the meaning of righteousness and sinfulness.

Lessons

Ibn Rajab states that the term 'bir' which is used in this hadith is actually used in two senses: (a) treating others in a good manner, and (b) all acts of good deeds and worshipping Allah. Based on this, the first statement in the first hadith can be interpreted as meaning the most essential aspect of righteousness is good character. And Ibn Rajab extends this meaning by saying that good character can be interpreted as all good manners mentioned in the Qur'an. Consequently, according to Ibn Rajab, the two meanings of bir are there.

Allah has created us with a pure innate or natural disposition that is called fitra, as mentioned in other hadiths. This means to love the truth and the good and to hate falsehood and evil. Consequently, good believers with pure fitra should never confuse truth with falsehood.

The second hadith guides us to consult our heart regarding doubtful matters. If the heart is in tranquility that implies that it is bir or righteousness. If the heart is not tranquil, one should abstain from carrying out such an act or doubtful matter. However, it should be noted that fitra is subject to corruption and can be spoiled due to the influence of bad environment - a person may start to like and appreciate what is bad or evil and dislike truth and goodness. Here, the heart is diseased or even dead. Such a person cannot use his heart as a measure to judge what is good and bad because the fitra is already corrupted.

Sin is what wavers or trembles your soul. This portion of the hadith defines a sinful act as an act for which its performer deserves blame. Imam Qurtabi gives the previous interpretation. Ustaz Jamaludin Zarabozo states that in this hadith the Prophet, (ﷺ), gave very important signs of sin. The first one is an internal sign within the human being. It is the feelings of the soul with respect to any particular act. The second sign is also about the internal feelings but it deals with the outward reaction to the act itself. Sin causes a wholesome soul to be uneasy and troubled. The soul is unhappy and worried about sin and its consequences. Ustaz Jamaludin remarks that these signs occur because the person is naturally disposed to favour what leads to positive results and avoid what leads to negative results. The commentators of this hadith stress that the 'people' referred to here are the respected and righteous people.

The two hadiths reveal a significant aspect of Islam that is an internal controlling and guiding system that is established as a result of several factors:

1. The pure fitra (natural disposition). Allah created everybody with a pure fitra and not just Muslims. The Prophet, (ﷺ), mentions many factors in the environment that play an influential role in subjecting the fitra to corruption.
2. The realization of tawhid. This means practicing all the essentials of tawhid like loving Allah, seeking His Help as the only refuge, depending on Him (tawakul), asking for His Mercy, and many other essentials associated with the idea of tawhid.
3. Adhering to shari'ah instructions.
4. Seeking knowledge.
5. Tazkiyah and tarbiyah - that is the purification of the soul and the heart of the Muslim.

The above mentioned factors and many others are interrelated and altogether lead to the establishment of the internal controlling system. However, this system needs to be 'updated' and 'upgraded' regularly by educators and da'ies. It is very important that the educators and da'ies pay attention to the individual's and the community's built-in system. They have to create awareness about contemporary challenges. They should plan future strategies to deal with such challenges.

This internal system is very important for Muslims today. They should know about it in order to activate it. Only through such proper reconstruction of the consciousness can we be certain about the validity and effectiveness of the internal controlling system. Muslims need to be aware of this fact and have to activate their system in order to be sensitive towards doubtful acts and sinful matters. Unless this system is 'upgraded', the person may not act in the right way. It is like 'installing' an 'anti-virus software' within ourselves. With such a 'software' in place, our internal system will prevent 'viruses', i.e. bad/evil acts, from entering our thoughts or hearts.

There are many issues today where people are in total doubt about whether something is allowed or not. In many areas such as insurance, food, medicine, trade, and technology, there are no definite answers - or the people themselves are not aware of the Islamic approach. This may lead to moral conflicts. Unfortunately, even some people who teach akhlaq and moral values are sometimes not even aware of these conflicts.

In this era we have several clashing values. Muslims should be exposed to the Islamic point of view of the issue in order to go for the right value. Works about such issues should be published and translated for all Muslims. Books and magazines should be available to all Muslims. If the existing works are very long, we need to summarize the findings and translate them into major Muslim and international languages. Exposing Muslims to such findings will minimize disputes among them regarding certain issues. They will at least know what to do and what not to do. This will lead to unity and remove anything that can lead to disputes.

Another thing is that educators and da'ies should not simply use the traditional approach. If we want to talk about sidq, tazkiyah, and tarbiyah, we should not limit ourselves to one scholar or website. We should compare knowledge and information between different scholars. For example, if we compare the works of Al-Shaikh Zarrouq and Imam Ghazali on tazkiyah, we will notice differences; the work of Al-Shaikh Zarrouq is totally different from Imam Ghazali's. His books of Qawaed Altasaruf and Udat Alboroud Alsadeq use totally different approaches from Imam Ghazali. Al-Shaikh Zarrouq addressed the people of his time. We can read these books and benefit from them but we should use a more suitable approach that is more convenient to the challenges of our time. This means that we should have different ways of presenting these issues about tazkiyah and tarbiyah. It is only by this way can we 'upgrade' our internal controlling system.

We should interpret the Qur'anic texts and hadiths in the light of what we have today. This cannot happen unless the internal system is 'upgraded'. Otherwise we may get lost. The system has two sides: positive and negative. We must use the positive side. We have to know how to be honest in this era. It is the responsibility of the educators and da'ies of today to 'upgrade' the internal controlling system of the Muslims in general and the young generation in particular.

We should also be aware of the recent advancements in technology. For example, nowadays there are filtering software that are developed by non-Muslims. We can download these software and have control over some of the negative elements that can reach us through the Internet. We should develop this type of software to suit our needs as Muslims. We have to maximize the positive side of information technology. We need to do this to enable Muslims to access the Internet and use their time in the right way.

One more area that we need to be aware of is that of intellectual slavery - that is when people try to benefit from technology through globalization. There are some people who want to influence others in order to affect the akhlaq and ideology. They use cognitive psychology and other branches of knowledge where they can manipulate the mind. They practice brainwashing and Muslims are not aware of this. This is a very great challenge to Muslims since this may lead us to question our beliefs and moral values. Educators need to address this crucial issue. They should do something to 'upgrade' the above mentioned internal controlling system in order to prevent ourselves from being brainwashed.

Conclusion

Without a 'fully functioning' internal controlling system, people will have different attitudes which may lead to problems such as extremism. Extremists will increase in the Muslim community if issues like those mentioned above are not resolved. Muslims may end up with multiple personalities. They are Muslims but they commit haram (forbidden) and many other negative things. They are not aware that they are doing anything wrong and they start acting in strange ways. These people are victims of the new system of globalization. Our strategy to face such challenges is to 'activate' and 'upgrade' our internal system. Then Muslims can live their lives in tranquility and without confusion. Other solutions will merely be short term because there will be no tranquility.