

Self – Criticism

In Islamic terminology, one aspect of human soul is called “Lawwamah’ (self-reproaching spirit). It is one of the surest means of perfecting one’s character and behavior. As Hadhrat Ali (A.S.) said: “Check your account (of deeds) before you are called to render it (after death, in presence of God)”. We must check our account and make up the shortcoming before it is too late.

Realistic self-evaluation and self-criticism are essential for the development of the soul. Only in this way can we save our self from being a prey of conceit and pride. Before we go to sleep we must relive the whole day, seeing whether our behavior was up to the required standard of spiritual perfection. If we detect any slip, any wrong or any impurity, we must firmly resolve to amend it at once and repent sincerely.

If we cultivate this habit of continuous self-criticism, we will progress, in no time at all, towards that stage of spiritual perfection which is called in Islam ‘Mutma’innah’ when a soul rest and satisfaction by grace of Allah. But this self-criticism must begin before our vision has blurred, before evil makes a slave of our soul. Otherwise, we will fail to recognize the evil when we see it.

When a murderer justifies (nay, really feels justified in) his crime; when a robber thinks that, by his action, he is rectifying the imbalanced of the society, then only a special grace of God can save him from plunging into the lowest Hell of disgrace.

Unfortunately, modern society is heading blindly towards that same degradation. Social thinkers spend their whole energy in inventing new excuses for law-breakers. Stealing is white-washed by the impressive name of ‘kleptomania’; sex-perversion and dirty habits are explained away as “just a protest against society”. Criminals are afforded more protection in law than their helpless victims, under the disguise of ‘liberty of the individual’. And the real tragedy is that all of it is done in the name of ‘progress’.

Is the ‘conscience’ of modern nations merely stunned?

Or, really dead?

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