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The Psychological and Social Impacts of Repentance

Repentance with all its external consequences like giving up sin, performing what he had missed in the past, and not returning to it again, all these indicate an eternal psychological behaviour which starts to grow in man's self and which extends out in the form of behavioural correctness and upright human manners.

The repentant also finds, in Islamic Shari'ah, the encouragement towards repentance such as is found in the saying of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.):

"Indeed a man who commits sins enters Paradise, when he repents."

People asked him: O Messenger of Allah, how that could be?

He (s.a.w.) replied:

"The sin will be before his eyes, and repenting from it, he will run away till he enters Paradise."

As the Almighty, Allah says:

"Surely Allah loves those who turn to Him, and loves those who keep themselves pure." **(Holy Qur'an, 2:222)**

The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (s.a.w.), says:

"Whoever repents is Allah's beloved friend and the repentant from sin, has no sin."[1]

And, also, says:

"The expiation of a sin is regret." [2]

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) also says:

"If a man sincerely repents, Allah will love him and then protect him."[3]

These collections of Islamic texts; which are great in their content, open the doors of hope and return, before the deviated, criminal man, who inclines towards vices and deviations then commits crimes and sins, and who becomes accustomed to such kind of life, the life of deviation and crimes in order not to lose hope in himself or become despaired.

A criminal or a deviated one should realize, even for a while through conscience, that man who dissents against the tradition of this existence; a disobedient and mischievous, harmful being, understands that the society around him dislikes him and looks at him as rubbish of the society and a secretion of a dangerous sickness which poisons the life of mankind and which forms a danger against their security and peace. This concept leaves the sense of deficiency to grow.

Therefore, to open the door of repentance is more helpful for such a man and more beneficial, which returns confidence to him and which saves him against feeling that a society has pressure on him and dislikes him.

Certainty, the society has an enormous psychological impact on the nerves of a criminal and a deviated one. It, also, looks down upon the one who commits sin or who falls to the abyss of vices; so its regulations remain as a basis for evaluating and dealing with this criminal.

Whoever is known as a liar or has an aggressive behaviour: such as committing adultery, stealing, kidnapping or is famous for treachery and bribery and blood shedding or is known as a habitual drunkard, the society looks at such man with this viewpoint and deals with him on the basis of this evaluation.

If a deviate looks at himself and sees that the law runs after him and the society around him disrespects and refuses to deal with him, surely he will be full of vindictive feelings against such a society, and, thus, continue to exceed the bounds of deviation if he finds no hope to reform or correct the concept of such a society concerning him.

But, Islam deals with this deviate and disobedient through mercy and kindness and gives great importance to him and devotes a number of its laws, regulations and instructions to guide and reform this man.

Allah, the Most High says:

"And whoever does evil or wrongs himself and then seeks forgiveness from Allah, he shall find Allah, All-Forgiving, All-Merciful." **(Holy Qur'an, 4:110)**

So, the door of repentance is open and the horizons of mercy are wide for this man if he is watchful,

wakes up, and wishes to return to the life of purity and righteousness.

As a result of this, Islam has built its position, regarding the repentant, on an essential foundation and a practical evaluation for the truth of behaviour and the consequences resulting from it; this attitude is a deviated one, it is a fact which happened; and man's connection with it and his responsibility for it still exists, but, Allah, through His forgiveness, gave man an opportunity to put an end to this vicious connection and delivered him from its consequences.

Thus, he will not be considered responsible for it as long as his psychological and mental connection is cut off from it:

"The expiation of a sin is regret."[4]

Thus the repentant is innocent before himself; and his society which surrounds him, from each and every action he commits and then repents therefrom; because Islamic society recognizes the meaning of repentance and believes in the consequences resulting from it. If the repentance of a criminal or a disobedient one is known, he will be forgiven from that which he is known by because Allah, the Owner, is the One Who can forgive in this creation. Indeed, for him, the door of returning and entering, for a righteous and pure life, shall be opened:

"Whoever repents (from his sins) has no sin and is Allah 's beloved friend."[5]

On the basis of this new feeling, new human feelings will be born in him. He will be changed from a man who felt he was disliked and refused by society, to a man who feels dignified by Allah and the society in which he lives; thus, his movement will sincerely be directed towards doing good and reforming himself after suffering much under the experience of deviation and the bitterness of being far from Allah and expelled from His mercy and feeling the pricking of the conscience, and the criticism of the society to which he belongs.

The Almighty says:

"Say: O My servants who have been prodigal regarding their souls, despair not of the mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives sins altogether. He is indeed the Forgiving, the Merciful." **(Holy Qur'an, 39:53) (Holy Qur'an, 39:53)**

1. Muhammad Mehdi Al-Naraqi, Jami' al-Sa'adat (The Collector of Felicities), vol. 3, p. 65
2. Ibid, p.67
3. Ibid, p. 17
4. Al-Naraqi, Jami' Al-Sa'adat, vol. 3, p. 67
5. Muhammad Mehdi Al-Naraqi, Jami' al-Sa'adat (The Collector of Felicities), vol. 3, p. 65

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