

ARE WE MINDFUL OF OTHERS DIGNITY ??

The purpose of commissioning prophethood in Islam was to elevate man to higher level of character. As such Islam has not left any dimension of human character untouched and unprovided with divine guidance. An average man is normally very concerned of his personality in the society. He is easily puffed up when praised or given some honour and hurt when insulted or neglected. Numerous instances in the Islamic history as well as from the teachings of the Prophet and his holy progeny can be quoted in respect of upholding and preserving dignity of fellow Muslim brothers.

A man asks Imam Mohamed Baqer (A.S). if he could pay zakat money to his neighbour who maintains a servant at home, but his life was somewhat financially tight. The Imam told him to do so as his continuing to have a servant was necessary to preserve his personal dignity in the society.

Another person approached the Imam saying that he has a neighbour who was not able to proceed to Mecca that year for Haj whereas all his friends did. Was it permissible to uphold his dignity by assisting him with zakat (charity money) to enable him to proceed to Mecca, he inquired. The reply from the Imam was in the affirmative.

Islam has emphasized on the duty of every Muslim to maintain and respect the personality of fellow Muslim brothers. Excepting those involved in open and perpetuated vices, we are strongly advised to cover up sins and shortcomings of people and not to expose them lest we damage someone's name. This is because Islam affords opportunity and time to sinners to repent and mend their bad habits. The following traditions would throw more light on the subject. The Prophet has quoted to have said:

“Oh Muslims! Cover up (the shortcomings) of your brothers”.

It does not mean that no effort be made wherever possible to guide those astray to the right path. The aim of the tradition is to dissuade people from searching for defects of others and not to be the cause of degrading them.

At times, when one comes across a strange habit of one busy in condemning others for a particular sin in which he himself is involved. Hazrat Ali (A.S) is reported to have said:

“The worst of defects is for you to criticize others for a sin in which you yourself are involved.”

For one fond of criticizing others, it is desirable for him to search into his own habits and shortcomings. Instead of concerning himself in what others do, let him try to mend his ways first so that his advice when passed to others could have effect. One truly thoughtful of his own sins, feels obliged to abstain from finding and exposing those of others. On this Hazrat Ali (A.S) had this to say:

“One who concentrates on defects of his own, keeps aloof from those of others”

“Cover up the defects of your brother as you know of the same thing existing in your ownself.”

Hazrat Ali (A.S) in one of his valuable sayings expresses astonishment at those people concerned about shortcomings of others while neglecting their own. So much so, he describes such people as the worst”

“The worst are those who do not forgive errors and cover up shortcomings of others.”

Were it not for the emphasis by Islam on covering up the shortcomings and defects of others and to refrain from exposing them, society would be wrecked with insecurity and disunity. To this, Hazrat Ali (A.S) refers in Nahjul Balagha in these words:

“Keep silent and cover up (defects and sins of people) so that peace and security can be maintained (in society).”

Allah (SWT) has declared magnificent reward for those observing this advice in the words of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A) who said:

“One who covers up (defects) of a Muslim, Allah (SWT) would reward him by covering him up (from his own defects) in this world and the hereafter.”

And one of the attributes of Allah is He is the One who covers up and does not expose the sins and defects of people.