

Research Paper



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‘REFORM’ OR ‘REVOLUTION’ THE PROCESS OF SOCIETAL CHANGE IN QUR’AN

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WRITE UP

There is a strong need to find out the process of societal change in Qur’an. Some of the verses that give a clue to the process of change are the following.

“He said: O my people! Bethink you: if I am (acting) on a clear proof from my Lord and He sustains me with fair sustenance from Him (how can I concede aught to you)? I desire not to do behind your backs that which I ask you not to do. I desire naught save reform so far as I am able. My welfare is only in Allah. In Him I trust and unto Him I turn (repentant).” (Soorah Hood, 11: 88)

Another verse (Soorah al-A’raaf, 7: 56) is: “Do no mischief on the earth, after it hath been set in order (ba’da islaahiha), but call on Him with fear and longing (in your hearts): for the Mercy of Allah is (always) near to those who do good.”

Many other derivatives of ‘islaah’ including the verb and the active participle are found in numerous verses in many different chapters of Qur’an. It clearly indicates that the process of change or bringing about betterment in all sorts of situations is ‘islaah’.

The best translation for ‘islaah’ is ‘reform’. However, the word most often heard currently for societal change is ‘revolution’. It is worthwhile to find out the Arabic word for revolution. The best Arabic equivalent of revolution is ‘thawrah’. Interestingly, ‘thawrah’ does not occur in Qur’an. Not even once.

The above could clearly signify the inclination of Qur’an with regards to these two terminologies or the processes of societal change thereby.

‘Reform’ / ‘islaah’ could be described as a peaceful, slow, gradual, healthy, positive, and permanent change. Whereas ‘revolution’ / ‘thawrah’ is a sudden, big, temporary, and painful change.

Muslims in general haven’t clearly figured out and aren’t quite sure if the process of change in the light of Qur’an is ‘reform’ or ‘revolution’. There is a widespread confusion with regards to these two processes, or words.

If there could come about a measure of clarity on this subject, the world will witness some betterment in the situations and some bloodshed, chaos, extremism, and destruction of life and property could be avoided.

KEY WORDS: reform, revolution, Qur’an, process, change.

