

**22/10/ 2018**

## **The Only Person We Can Change**

**By Roshan Shah**

As a college student, Romi was fired by a passion to change the world. The entire world, he thought, was full of problems. He couldn't see (or, rather, he didn't want to see) anything good in it at all. If people would come out into the streets everywhere to demonstrate—against this and that—a whole new world could soon dawn, he was convinced. He attended almost every protest march that was held in town, raising slogans and urging passersby to participate. 'Join us to change the world!', he would enthusiastically appeal to them.

But no matter how hard Romi tried, the world didn't seem to get any better. In fact, going by news reports, it seemed to be sliding further into chaos, and very rapidly at that!

Some years later, Romi got married, and in the years that followed, he became the father of three children. He was now a very different person: his college-mates wouldn't have recognised him! He had completely stopped talking about changing the whole world. His only concern now was changing his wife and his children! He thought they had many faults, and he had set himself up to get them to rectify them.

'You should behave like this!', 'Don't do that!', 'You ought to know better!', Romi would scold his wife and children, on and on and on, in the hope that they might listen to him. But no matter how hard he tried to reform them, they didn't seem to change. In fact, the more he went on at them about their faults, the more adamant they seemed to get. 'Don't tell us what to do!' they would snap at him, and this would make him more angry. Soon, things became so bad that they barely talked to him.

Some years passed and Romi was an old man now. He would now spend long hours sunk in his chair, reflecting on his life. His mind would travel to his years as a college student. He'd relive the protest marches he had participated in, the slogan-shouting and the other things he had done in chasing his dream of changing the world in the name of 'Revolution'. Then, when he would bring his mind back to the present and think of how the world was further hurtling along into chaos, he would laugh to himself. 'How foolish of me to think I could change the whole world, by protesting and raising slogans!' he would say.

Romi would also think of the many years he had futilely spent in trying to change his wife and children. Tears would well up in his eyes as he recalled how they had rudely rebuffed him. His well-meant enthusiasm to help them mend their ways had come to nothing. In fact, it had only turned his home into a veritable battlefield. He had never thought his family would react like that to him.

Then, after ruing how he had wasted so much of his life, Romi would reflect on the words he had heard from a saintly man recently. "The only person you can change is you! You must be the change that you want to see in the world!", the man had said to him.

When these wise words would come to his mind, Romi would wish he had heard them many years earlier, when he was a college student. That way, he might have saved himself many wasted years—of trying, in vain, to reform everyone but himself.

"Please forgive me for my foolishness," Romi would pray to God. "I used to ask you to transform the whole world, and then to transform my family. But never once did I ask you to transform the one person I should have—me. But that's what I request you to please do now, God, before it's too late."