

Activism and Change Leading to Personal, Societal and Organisation Transformation

Dr. Dhanashree Potey*

Book Review on *'Freedom is an Inside Job: Owning Our Darkness and Our Light to Heal Ourselves and the World'* by Zainab Salbi, *Sounds True, 2018, 9781683641773, 184 Pages, Hardcover*

Freedom comes from telling our own story and empathy comes from listening to the stories of people very different from us – says the author Zainab Salbi, born on 24th September, 1969 in Baghdad, Iraq. She has a B.A., in Sociology and Women's Studies with a Master's in Development Studies from London School of Economics. She is an author, Media host and founder of Women for Women International.

Having seen the war, psychological abuse to her family, she was married off to an older Iraqi American in the U.S. at an early age. Ending the abusive marriage, she moves forward with her experience to sensitise the plight of women in war, areas of conflict, use of rape and other forms of violence. She is a jury of The Hilton Humanitarian Prize – the biggest award for humanitarian work throughout the world. And Board of Directors of Synergos and the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP).

In this book she narrates her personal experiences and anecdotes, the truth accordingly to Zainab Salbi - "Living in the truth is not easy, but it is always worth it". We have to own the truth that we are good bad and ugly that in her

opinion allows the other person to inspire and encourage them may be here is my ugly, good and bad once this is accepted by the person they can move forward in life and have a dialogue with anybody.

She adds further, we have to own our darkness and our light we have to do this exercise, we need to investigate that we may have betrayed ourselves or others, which has to be discovered by oneself. Being an activist, feminist and humanitarian, one does all good things and bad things, ignores it and puts it under the rug and move forward.

Narrating an anecdote - Nelson Mandela being her role model, as an activist she gives speeches, meets groups in south Africa on genocide and other matters. She believes in forgiveness, reconciliation in what has happened-transpired and moving on. A long time after ending the abusive marriage, studying further she meets her boyfriend/ finance with whom she was in the relationship and loved him very dearly while he betrayed her and all along he never shared with her that he was in another relationship and she loved him totally. This broke her down and he made her feel bad and pointed out the blame on her. This all made her feel bad about herself, here she stopped this self-destructive behaviour by putting her foot down and stopped blaming herself for it. Says Zainab - When one stands out give big speeches on forgiveness to the Tutis (Page 107) then what is the point in having the value of forgiveness when you cannot forgive this man. One needs to see within themselves this value "Forgiveness". One has to see through the process of self-analysis where has one betrayed oneself, then forgive oneself for the same and then you will be able to forgive the other person. If you have a sense of self those people don't betray those persons who are insecure betray.

From Political application of forgiveness, she went to the personal level applied it and investigated her discovery - Only when we clear our old clutter can new dreams arrive. The inner process if you burnt the farm you have to grow one again, if you have killed somebody's son, be their son that is righteousness here is journey where one lives that value.

Stating from her own experiences she stated further - Many a times we do not understand how and why people behave as they do. We are shocked "How could people, kill, beat other people, in name of religion or caste or god or if what for them is wrong, oppress in the name of freedom and democracy, separate mother and children in immigration crisis. Immigration, sees in many countries' division in opinion within politics and people of the country. And here we do not understand that other, states Salbi.

Here Zainab wants us to understand – Are we willing to go into our own darkness to understand other people's darkness. Until that moment none of us think we have that darkness. It's like the batman journey, you need to go inside yourself (your cave), see and know your darkness, then go to other people's darkness. This will lead you she says to understand their darkness. Which needs to be communicated and brought out into the light - hopefully.

Further the author elaborates that maybe to know and come to realise ones darkness one may meditate or put on some music sit in silence and think of one's life pass by while doing so don't judge yourself or your life, if you are uncomfortable with certain part of your life do not judge that too. **Lo and behold** and you know your darkness. You may find in this exercise that you were arrogant/impatient/angry (your darkness) but if some one were to tell

you that “You are arrogant”, you will not believe them and you say to them but I am a humble person – now having understood your darkness.

You begin your journey of realization. So, in this journey once you realise this now you want to change this how will you ever stop doing this. Salbi says first understand and acknowledge this (the darkness) and bring it out of the cave. Second Accept it and third now that you have accepted it others cannot manipulate you. Let them say to you that - You are arrogant. Well you say oh! Yes, I am arrogant. I am dealing with it.

So rather than being ashamed of it, bring it up and talk about it and respect it. In this way you take away the ability of others to manipulate you, your darkness or the darkness of others. If we all do this, we do not let the others who manipulate, give them the power or give in to their power. We own our power and say this is my goodness and this is my darkness. And still she is against deportation and separation of mothers and their children with this opines the author one can still advocate their values and beliefs as they now know their darkness is here and they know they are dealing with it.

The management lessons one learns in this is understand and know oneself, personal strengths and weaknesses, work on them. Do not sacrifice your values and beliefs. Alignment will come. This is how young managers of today need to align their own goals so that they can align and create successful life for themselves and their organisations.