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2. Mercy And Kindness To People

Mercy and kindness occupy an important place in the Islamic social code. The Holy Qur'an narrates the courtesy of the last Prophet (S) in the following words;

It is by some mercy of Allah that thou (O Prophet) art gentle to them; hadst thou been harsh and hard-hearted, they would have scattered from about thee. (3: 159)

This Qur'anic verse clarifies that benevolence and kindness of the Holy Prophet (S) to all was one of the reasons of people's attraction towards him.

People are fed up of discourteous and harsh persons and certainly such persons are the victims of their own bad nature. As omission and unwanted errors are part of human nature, the same should be overlooked and retaliation avoided.

The sixth Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a. s.) was asked: "What is the definition of good manners?" The Imam said: "Keeping your wings soft, (i.e., behaving benevolently and courteously), talking sweetly and virtuously and meeting your fellow brethren with a happy and smiling face.1

Imam `Ali (a. s.) in his will to his son, Imam al-Hasan (a.s.) said:

إحمل نفسك من أخيك عند صرمه على الصِلة وعند صدوده على اللطف والمُقاومة وعند جُموده على البذل وعند تباعُده على الدُنوّ وعند شدته على اللين ، وعند جُرمه على العُذر ، حتى كأنك له عبد ، وكأنه ذو نعمة عليك ، وإياك . أن تضع ذلك في غير موضعه أو أن تفعله بغير أهله

Bear yourself towards your brother in such a way that if he disregards kinship you keep to it; when he

turns away be kind to him and draw near to him; when he withholds, spend for him; when he goes away approach him; when he is harsh be lenient; when he commits wrong think of (his) excuse for it, so much so as though you are a slave of him and he is the benevolent master over you. But take care that this should not be done inappropriately, and that you should not behave so with an undeserving person.2

Short temperament and engulfing people in flames of anger lead to failure and loss of friends. It is true that evil-doers should be put in their places, but wisdom limits this theory due to the reason that precaution and reform with an iron fist is impossible. The Holy Qur'an says that when Allah sent Moses and his brother to warn Pharaoh, they were advised in these words:

And speak gently to him, that perhaps he may be mindful, or perchance fear. (20:44)

Dale Carnagie says: "If you burn into anger and use filthy language, it means you have exhausted yourself. Does your opponent anyhow participate in your task? Will your blunt tone and unwanted attitude facilitate his job and make him your partner?"

Woodrow Wilson says: "If you approach me with a fist, be sure to be replied in the same coin; but if you come to sit together and discuss on even controversial matters, I will sort out the cause of differences and will try to minimize the same immediately. In many cases, the differences were just nominal whereas we agreed on maximum points. Only through rational outlook, sincerity and accommodative attitude, we may patch up differences."

Once while the fourth Imam, `Ali ibn al-Husayn (Zaynu 'l-`Abidin - a.s.) was sitting at his place with people of various school of thoughts, a man entered and out of malice abused the Imam, and then went away. A little after, the Imam spoke with the audience. "Did you witness how this fellow misbehaved and abused me? Now, I want to go to him with you to answer him." Everyone was willing for this job. The associates followed the Imam with the idea that the Imam would certainly put him to task, but were surprised to hear the Imam reciting this Qur'anic verse:

. . . The men of piety are those who restrain anger and forgive people, for Allah loves those who do good. (3: 134)

They knew that the Imam did not want to take revenge. On reaching his house, they called him. Being sure that the Imam with his party had come for revenge, he came out duly prepared to face the situation. However, unexpectedly, he found the Imam with a smiling face. The Imam told him: "Shortly, you came to me and said this and that. Now I have come just to tell you that if you were right in those words and I

really possess the evils pointed out by you, I pray to Allah to forgive me, and to pardon my bad conduct; and if you had told lies and blamed me for things which are not in me, then I pray to Allah to pardon you and forgive your sin." This noble attitude disarmed that man and he apologised to the Imam in these words:

"O son of the Messenger of Allah! You do not have any of the evils which I had spoken; instead it is I who deserves all those words." Through this sensible approach, the Imam converted his bitter enemy into his friend and also taught practical lesson of forgiveness to his disciples.

This lesson is a golden addition in the book of society and teachings of Islam and is obligatory on the followers of the Qur'an to adopt this virtue in order to be benefited by its useful fruits.

- 1. Biharu 'I-Anwar, vol.74.
- 2. Nahju '1-Balaghah, Commandment no. 31.

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