

Benevolence of the Friends of God

Rendering service to people is one of the most important Islamic educational issues that is highly emphasized in Islamic traditions. The Holy Prophet (s) said:

"خير الناس من انتفع به الناس"

"The best of people are those who are (most) beneficial to (other) people. [1](#)

The Mystery of Creation

The reverend Shaykh highly stressed this educational principle. One of his disciples quotes him as saying:

"I had a proximity to God; I implored Him to tell me the mystery of Creation. I was told (by inspiration) that the mystery of Creation is benevolence to the people."

Imam Ali (a) said:

"بتقوى الله أمرتم، وللإحسان والطاعة خلقتم"

"You are commanded to God fearing and you are created for doing benevolence and obeying (God)."[2](#)

One of the Shaykh's disciples said: 'Once I told him, "O Shaykh! Tell me something to be of benefit to me!" He twisted my ear and said:

"Serving people! Serving people!"

The Shaykh would say:

"If you want to find your way to the truth of monotheism, do good to people. The burden of monotheism is heavy and hazardous, and everyone is not able to tolerate that burden. However, benevolence to the people makes its tolerance easy."

And sometimes, he would say humorously:

"Help the creatures of God during the day and beg at His doorstep at night!"

The late Fayz Kashani (ra) put it in the following poem:

All through the night lament humbly at the doorstep of the Sustainer,
When the day breaks, help out the wounded at heart and the heart-broken.'

Giving Alms while in Poverty

An important aspect that is stressed in Islamic traditions in relation to giving alms and doing good to people is giving alms in poverty.

The Holy Prophet (s) said:

"ثلاثة من حقائق الايمان: الانفاق من الاقتار، وانصافك الناس من نفسك، وبذل العلم للمتعلم"

"There are three signs to faithfulness: Giving alms in poverty; equity toward people; and imparting knowledge to the seekers of knowledge."³

Similarly, Hafiz touches upon the impact of giving alms in poverty on the spiritual self-building of man in the following poem:

'In poverty, strive for joyfulness and intoxication,
That this elixir of the whole being turns a mendicant into a Qarun.'

"Fast and Give Alms!"

One of the companions of Imam al-Kazim (a) related: 'I complained to his holiness of my poverty and said that I suffered poverty so severely that such and such took off his own clothing and gave it to me to wear! The holy Imam (a) said!'

"Fast and give alms!"

I said: 'Could I give alms from what I receive myself as alms, however meager it is?'

The Imam (a) replied:

"Give alms from what God grants you as sustenance, even if you should spend it for yourself!"⁴

Benevolence to a Jobless Person Encumbered by a Large Family

One of the Shaykh's friends said: 'I was jobless and very depressed for some time, so I went to his house to find a way to get rid of the plight. As soon as I entered the Shaykh's room and upon seeing me, he said:

"You are in such a veil that I have rarely seen one like that! Why have you given up your trust in God? The Satan has covered you with a veil that you are unable to perceive on high!"

His words moved me very deeply and prompted a profound contrition in my heart. He said then:

"Your veil is removed, but take heed it would not return." After that he said:

"Somebody is jobless and sick and he has to run two families. If you can afford, go and buy some cloth for his children and bring it here."

Although I was jobless and broke, I went to an old friend's draper's and bought some cloth on credit and took it to the Shaykh. Once I placed the pack of cloth before him, the Shaykh looked at me and highly admired my endeavor.

Dr. Thubati said: 'One of the things he highly stressed was doing good to people. He regarded this as extremely valuable and viewed it as one of very close and effective ways in faring the path to Allah. Thereupon, when one failed in his spiritual seeking, he would recommend:

"Do not be negligent of benevolence and do good (to people as much as you are able to)."

'Serve the needy as long as you can in you life,
Either through your words, money, pen, or (taking) steps.'

He was himself also a pioneer in doing good to people. Someone had gotten into trouble; he visited the reverend Shaykh who said:

"This person helps his relatives only through *khums* (one fifth levy) and do not do any other good to them."

That meant giving only *khums* is not sufficient.

Benevolence to the Sister

One of the Shaykh's disciples narrated: 'One day I requested the Shaykh to contact with my late father's spirit and ask him if there is anything I can do for him. The Shaykh said:

"Recite the Surah *Al-Hamd!*"

When I recited the sura, he immediately described the appearance and stature of my father who had died forty years before. Then, he quoted my father:

"I do not need anything, tell my son to help out his younger sister with her household needs."

The Shaykh and Rendering Service to People

A study of various aspects of the Shaykh's blessed life indicates that this Divine man was a real paradigm in serving the afflicted people and solving their problems. Some instances of his services are pointed out in different parts of this book, especially in chapter three of part one. Following, other instances of his concern with this issue are touched upon:

Recompense to the Prayer Leader as Ordered by Wali al-'Asr (aj)

One of the Shaykh's disciples said: The late Suhayli⁵ (ra) would say: 'My shop was located at Abbasi crossroads in Tehran. Once on a hot summer day the Shaykh came to my shop in a hurry and gave me some money and said:

"Waste no time, immediately take this money to Sayyid Bihishti."

He was prayer leader to the *Masjid* of Hajj Amjad on Aryana Ave. I got the money at once to his house and gave it to him.

Later on I asked him (the Sayyid) about the story. He said: 'That day I had a guest and nothing was to be found in my house. I went to the other room and appealed to Hazrat Wali 'Asr (aj), and then this (money) was sent to me!'

Also, the Shaykh himself said: "Hazrat Wali 'Asr (aj) commanded me to deliver this money to Sayyid Bihishti right away."

Recommendation for Serving Meals

In addition to various attempts he made to help out people solve their problems directly and indirectly, the Shaykh received guests in his small house on different occasions, particularly on religious celebrations and placed great importance on serving meals to feed the faithful at home. He always

recommended (his disciples) to try to give meals in their houses, contending that if they give the money to the poor to prepare food for themselves it would not be as worthwhile as giving meals at one's home.

Dr. Farzam said: 'Serving meals to the poor and the needy was among his frequent recommendations. Once I asked him what if we give the money instead.

He said:

"No! Giving food is something different and more effective."

Every body knew that the reverend Shaykh would hold a feast on the auspicious night of 15th Shaban, giving chicken and rice to all the guest from all walks of life who would sit attend his feast of benevolence. The Shaykh highly respected his guests and did his best to make his guests feel at home.

The Shaykh emphasized serving meals to the faithful and insisted on giving charity food in his house and observing ethics of hospitality, while he was always in financial difficulties himself.

"God Willing, it will be Sufficient!"

In one of the feasts in the Shaykh's house, a large crowd had gathered for lunch so that both floors were filled up with guests. Although around thirty kilograms of rice had been cooked, the family were worried maybe the food would not be sufficient for all those present. When the Shaykh came to know about their apprehension, he faced the cook—a religious scholar from Qum—and said:

"Sayyid Abul Husayn! What are they saying? Take the lid off the pot to take a look!"

He took some rice from the pot and said: "God willing, it will be sufficient!"

Accidentally, there happened to be not only no shortage of food but also lots of people who had gathered at the door with their bowls did not leave empty-handed.

The Blessings of Rendering Service to People

Doing good to people would entail many blessings in man's spiritual and material life. From the Shaykh's viewpoint, the most important effects of benevolence are radiance of the heart, emergence of a suitable state of mind for supplication and whispered prayer, and proximity to God, which was already pointed out.⁶

Following are some interesting and instructive reminiscences portraying the blessings ensued by rendering service to people.

The Status of Hazrat Abdul Azim Hasani

One of the Shaykh's friends said: 'The Shaykh and I went on a pilgrimage of Sayyid al-Karim (a). The

Shaykh asked him (i. e. Hazrat Abdul Azim Hasani (a)) :

"How did you achieve such a status?"

He (Hazrat Abdul Azim Hasani) answered: 'Through doing good to people; I used to write copies of the Qur'an, sell them with much difficulty, and giveaway the amount received to the poor!'

The Blessing of the Taxi Driver's Service

A disciple of the Shaykh said: In the year 1958 or 1959, I was working as a taxi driver. Once I was in Bazar Jumihri Gharbi Avenue.

There were no buses working that day, so many people were waiting in line for taxis. I saw two women, a tall and a short one, waved at me to stop. They said one of them was going to Lashkar Square, and the other one to Aryana Avenue, paying five Rials each. And I agreed to take them to their destinations.

The tall woman got off and paid for her fare, and I headed for Aryana Avenue to get the short one to her destination. She was a Turk and did not speak Persian.

I figured out she was murmuring to herself: 'O God! I am a Turk and do not know Persian and I do not know how to find my home either. Everyday I got on the bus and got off near my house with two *qirans* (Rials); I have done so much laundry since the morning for just two *tomans*, now I have to pay five Rials for the taxi fare.

I told her: 'Do not bother, I am a Turk too. I am going to Aryana Avenue and I will drop you at your house. She got very happy.

I finally found the address and stopped to let her get off. She took out a *two-toman* note and offered it to me. I said she did not need to pay, said goodbye and drove away.

A couple of days later I happened to have an audience with the Shaykh in the company of a friend of mine. He was sitting in his humble room along with some other people. After greeting, the Shaykh looked at me and—reading my mind—said:

"You are awaiting on Thursday evenings. You will be present."

I was keeping a regular (religious) program in relation to the Wali al-'Asr (aj), and what he meant by "you will be present" was that I would be present at the time of the *faraj* (advent) of Imam al-'Asr (aj). In view of the blessings I had been previously bestowed on by God Almighty, these words of the Shaykh touched me greatly and we all cried a lot. The Shaykh, then said:

"You know what happened that you came to me? That short lady that got in your car and you did not get any money from her, prayed to God for you, and the Almighty God answered her prayer and sent you to

me!"

Assisting the Blind Man and the Luminosity of the Heart

The same noble man (the taxi driver) related: One day I was driving the same taxi on Salsabil Avenue when I saw a blind man waiting along the street for someone to help him. I pulled up immediately and asked him where he wanted to go.

'I want to cross the street.' Said the blind man.

'Where do you want to go from there?' I asked.

'I will not bother you any longer.' Said the man.

On my insistence the blind man said that he was going to Hashemi Avenue and I took him to his destination.

The next day when I went to see the Shaykh, he said immediately: "What is the incidence of the blind man that you gave a ride yesterday?"

I told him the story. He said:

"Since yesterday that you did it, the Almighty God has created a light which is still radiating in *barzakh*."

Giving Meals to Forty People and the Healing of the Patient

One of the Shaykh's friends said: 'My son had an accident and was hospitalized. I went to the Shaykh and asked him what to do. He said: "Do not be upset. Buy a sheep, gather forty workers from around the neighborhood and make *Abgusht*⁷ and serve them the food; also ask a preacher to pray at the end of the feast. When those forty men say 'amen', your son will recover and return home."

I told this direction to several others too, and their requests were answered this way.

Rain in a Drought

The reverend Shaykh's son related: 'Several farmers from Sari⁸ came to my father and said there was a severe drought in Sari, all plants were dried, and people were under pressure. My father said:

"Go slaughter a cow and feed people!"

'The farmers sent a telegram to Sari to slaughter a cow and feed one thousand people. It was said that at the feast it rained so heavily that the guest had trouble getting to the place. This event led to a good relation between the people of that region and the Shaykh. He was invited to attend sessions in Sari for

several times.'

Giving Victuals by the Father to Beget a Child

The same person related: ' Someone failed to beget a child despite various treatments inside the country and abroad. One of the Shaykh's friends brought him to the Shaykh and told him his problem. He said:

"God will give them two sons and for each son they must slaughter a cow and distribute among the people."

He asked what for. The Shaykh answered:

"I requested from Imam al-Reza (a) and he consented."

When the first son was born the father had a cow slaughtered at the order of the Shaykh and gave it to the people. After the birth of the second son, however, some of that man's relatives prevented him from slaughtering a cow and feeding it to the people, protesting that if Shaykh Rajab Ali Khayyat was a son of an Imam or he has made a miracle! Who is he that orders to do this and that?! And this way they prevented him from keeping his vow. When the person who had introduced him to the Shaykh reminded him of keeping his vow, he said it was entirely superstitious. After a while his second son died.

The Blessing of Feeding a Hungry Animal

One of the Shaykh's friends related that one day the Shaykh had told him:

"Someone was passing through one of the old alleys of Tehran, when suddenly he saw a dog in the gutter whose puppies were pushing toward her breasts for milk, but the dog was too hungry to have any milk to give to its puppies and was in agony for this reason. Noticing this scene, that person went right away to a nearby kebab shop and got several kebabs and brought to the dog. ...The same night near dawn he was graced with an inexplicable blessing by God Almighty."

The narrator went on with this anecdote: ' Although the Shaykh never said who that person was, the evidence indicated that it was himself.'

Dr. Farzam said: 'Whenever I asked the Shaykh if he would give me a piece of advice when taking leave, he would state:

"Do not forget doing good to people, even to the animals."⁹

Benevolence Based on Love of God

The principal issue in serving people from the viewpoint of the Shaykh is the motive behind it and how it

is performed. The Shaykh believed that we should be at the service of people as the Imams and Friends of God were. In their serving people, they had no goal than serving them for the sake of God and for His love. In this regard he would say:

"Benevolence to people must be based on God-Orientedness; (انما نطعمكم لوجه الله) (We feed you for the sake of Allah alone.) (al-Insan: 9) How (lovingly) you spend money for your children and you adore them too! Can children do anything for their parents? The parents are in love with their little children and spend money for them out of love. Now why do not you treat God this way?! Why do not you love Him as much as you love your children?! And if by any chance you do a favor to someone you expect reward for that!"

Words of Imam Khomeini (ra) on rendering Service to People

At the end of this chapter it will be appropriate to point out the guideline of Imam Khomeini (ra) in respect to rendering service to people.

In his testament to his son Haj Ahmad Agha (ra), he wrote:

"My son! Do not evade the humanitarian responsibility that is, serving God in form of serving the people. The Satan does not gallop less in this field than among the officials and those in charge of people's affairs. And do not struggle to attain positions; neither spiritual nor worldly positions on the pretext of wishing to approach Divine knowledge or serving the worshippers of Allah, as paying attention to such positions is by itself satanic, let alone struggling to attain them. Listen to Gods admonition wholeheartedly and traverse on that direction: قل انما أعظكم بواحدة ان تقوموا لله مثنى وفردى (Say: I do admonish you on one point: that you do stand up before Allah-(it may be) in pairs, or (it may be) singly.) (Saba¹: 46) The measure at the outset of traversing is uprising for Allah, both in personal and individual tasks and in social activities; tries to succeed at this first step which is easier and much more attainable at youth. Do not let yourself to become old like your father, so that you will either mark time or move backward; this involves vigilance and self-examination. If a person possesses or rather attains the sovereignty of the jinn and mankind with a Divine motive, he is a possessor of Divine Knowledge and an ascetic in the world; but if he is carnally or satanically motivated, whatever he attains, even if it is a rosary, he will be equally distanced from God."

[1.](#) Mizan al-Hikmah, VIII, 3688: 12635

[2.](#) Ibid. I, 428: 1555.

[3.](#) Ibid. XIII, 6452: 20664.

[4.](#) Al-Kafi, IV, 18:2.

[5.](#) He was one of the Shaykh's close companions; in part four it is described that the Shaykh was held in his embrace when he died.

[6.](#) See "The way God loves", Chapter Three, Part 3.

[7.](#) A traditional Iranian dish.

[8.](#) The administrative capital of Mazanderan Province, northern Iran.

[9.](#) See Mizan al-Hikmah, VIII, 3686: 2674.

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