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Forgiveness

Forgiving others and overlooking their faults is a virtue that is held in high esteem by all schools of thought and all nations. People consider those who are willing to forgive others to be unparalleled in value.

The Noble Qur'an, the Disciplinarian of all mankind, advises all of us to adhere to this enlightened value, saying:

"And they should pardon and excuse their faults. Do they not love for God to forgive them? And God is very forgiving and merciful."1

The Noble Qur'an does not just consider forgiving the mistakes of others to be desirable; rather, it considers doing good to one who has harmed you to be of even more value and to be one of the attributes of true believers:

"And they ward off evil with good and they give in charity from that which We have given them in sustenance."2

Doing good when one has been wronged is a fine art that only those with strong (spiritual) foundations can accomplish. Regarding this, Khwajah 'Abdullah Ansari has said, "Doing bad in response to bad is dog-like behavior. Doing good in response to good is donkey-like behavior. Doing good in response to bad is the work of Khwajah 'Abdullah Ansari."

In other words, responding to evil and good in kind are natural and normal. But doing good in response to bad is superior to the behavior of animals and is a quality to which only humans can aspire.

The Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family), who derived his discipline from the Qur'an, was always forgiving and he would also do good (*ihsan*) when he was wronged. This was also true of the other infallibles (peace be upon them).

Concerning the Prophet's virtues, it has been related that: "The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) would never take revenge (on someone) for (having wronged) him. Rather,

The following story is an example of the Prophet's tendency to pardon others: "One day a Bedouin man came to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and requested something from him. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) gave it to him and asked, 'Have I done good to you?' The man replied, 'No, you've never done good to me.' His companions got upset as a result of the man's ungratefulness and intended to harm him. The Prophet, however, prevented them from showing aggression. At that point, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) went home and gave the man even more and asked, 'Now have I done good to you?' The man said, 'Yes, may God reward you with goodness.'

The Messenger of God said, 'As a result of what you said in front of my companions, it is possible that they may think negatively about you. If you like, go to them and announce your contentment.' The man went to the Prophet's companions and the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said: 'This man has become satisfied with me, hasn't you?'

The man responded, 'Yes, may God reward you and your family with goodness.'

Then the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, 'This man and I are like one whose she-camel has run away, others follow it but the camel only runs further away. But the owner of the camel says, 'Let her go. I know how to tame her.' The camel comes back and he pats her head and face and dusts her body and face and takes her bridle in his hand. Yesterday, if I were to have given you (speaking to his companions) permission, you would have killed this man due to his foul tongue and (if he had died) in such a state he would have entered Hell."

In addition to being the type of person who overlooked the faults of others, the Noble Prophet of Islam also made others conscious of this eminent, spiritual and humanistic principle and he said, "You must pardon others for verily pardoning others only increases the servant (of God) in might. So be forgiving so that God may make you mighty." 5

Similarly, on another occasion he stated eloquently: "Shall I inform you of the best (most beneficial) traits for this world and the Hereafter? They are pardoning one who has done injustice to you, bonding with one who has cut off ties with you, doing good to one who has wronged you and giving to one who has withheld from you."

- 1. Surah an-Nur 24: 22.
- 2. Surah al-Qisas 28: 54.
- 3. Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol. 2, p. 87.
- 4. Safinah al-Bihar, vol. 1, p. 416.
- 5. Mir'at al-'Uqul, vol. 8, p. 194.
- 6. Mir'at al-'Uqul, vol. 8, p. 192.

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