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Generosity and Miserliness

"And spend in the way of Allah and put not yourselves into destruction by your own hands". (Qur'an, 2: 192).

Not spending in the way of Allah, i.e., being miser is, according to the Qur'an, tantamount to self-destruction. There are four types of people so far as generosity is concerned:-

- 1. First come those who ignore their own needs and comforts and spend whatever they have to help others. This is the highest stage of human generosity, which reflects the divine virtue: God needs nothing and sustains every creature.
- 2. Then are those who spend to satisfy their own needs as well as to help others. They are 'beloved of Allah', and may be sure of His Grace in both worlds.

A Muslim is exhorted to reach at least this standard, if not the first one.

- 3. Now we leave the boundary of generosity and come to those whose only ambition is to satisfy their own desires without caring about the plight of others. They are 'enemies of God'; they feel no compassion for others, how can they expect any mercy on the Day of Judgment!
- 4. But the worst kind of niggards are those who do not spend even for their own necessities. Such people neither deserve nor get any love from anyone. As Imam Ja'far as–Sadiq explained, "such persons practice misery as a safeguard against some imagined future adversity. It is ironic to see them inflicting upon themselves by their own hands the same hardships which they are guarding against. What a fool he is? He collects the money by hook or crook, lives in a wretched condition, earns the displeasure of God, is despised by his fellows; and when he dies, the heirs spend that ill–gotten money extravagantly in pursuit of their sinful ambitions. The miser does not get any benefit from his wealth and earns the condemnation of God for his miserliness....and, as if that was not enough, gets his share in the punishment of the heirs also".

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