

The Basis of Social Co-operation

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The delicate feelings and emotions that illuminate the panorama of life in the form of various forms of kindness, help and assistance to one's fellow beings belong to the sublimest of human motives. It is this feeling that intensely affects the human heart on witnessing the sufferings, hardships and afflictions of others and prepares it for all kinds of self-sacrifice and self-denial.

It is an undeniable fact that pleasure and pain, suffering and joy, poverty and prosperity are an inalienable part of man's life. But fortunately many of these sufferings, misfortunes, and afflictions, with all the bitterness and burden they entail, are remediable, and their causes, which blacken the horizon of the lives of the afflicted, like dark and inauspicious clouds, can be cleared with mutual assistance.

Man is not merely a living organism but the bearer of the universal message of goodness, wisdom, beauty, and human worthiness. The mutual relations of human beings with one another should be based on sincere reciprocal sympathy, love and co-operativeness, not on the basis of ostentation, expedience and a businesslike attitude.

The solution of life's problems is impossible without forgiveness, sacrifice, and kindness to fellowmen in critical moments, for sympathy, self-sacrifice and mutual forgiveness are among the pillars of the edifice of social life, which is based on co-operation.

Those, individuals or groups, who have such a spirit in social conduct attain to their full maturity. Those who have concern for life should, in the first place, render it service and play a dear and definite role in the creation of a strong and healthy society. The higher the degree of emotional maturity of persons and the more developed their social outlook, the more will they be attentive to one another's interests.

A positive and sympathetic thinking about others, as a mark of developed humanity, will help create a wholesome environment for a better life for the individual. The social sciences prove that true self-interest involves concern for others, co-operativeness, and sympathy.

There is a saying which says, "You receive with the same hand that you give." How can one who does not sow the seeds of benevolence reap the fruit of kindness? Accordingly, one's social outlook and ethos constitute the basis of one's human merit and the criterion of the individual's personality.

On the contrary, the absence of such a spirit in individuals and groups is a sign of

backwardness and lack of social maturity. Their indifference, unconcern, and lack of the sense of moral responsibility are symptoms of a psychological disorder and sickness, as much as they are marks of social immaturity. They do not perceive the relatedness of their own lives to the happiness and welfare of others. Such a society resembles a ship sinking in a storm at sea, where everyone tries to save his own life.

To be sure, the habits of sacrifice, forgiveness, and altruism are not easily acquired. One thinker says Altruism is difficult at first, but the further we advance on this path the greater becomes our capacity for it, as if benevolent acts were mothers which in the course of time give birth to numerous offsprings!

This is a fact. Serving the people and sacrificing for their sake is hard for someone who is selfish and self-centred, who greedily wants everything for himself and is willing to sacrifice everything in order to attain his own ends. Every effort and endeavour involves discomfort, even thought and understanding. There are different forms of effort.

One kind of effort gives vision, broadens the horizons of thought, leads man to truth and the knowledge of the world's realities, helping him obtain the highest rewards in the Hereafter. The other kind of effort leads man into deviance and alienates him from reality. An effort that constantly enlarges the circle of self-interest with no reasonable limits will lead to the dissolution of the inner faculties that govern man's moral conduct.

There are many persons who consider themselves as being endowed with feeling and emotion; they are dismayed at witnessing the misfortunes and afflictions of others. But they are not willing to make any commitment involving responsibility.

They shun any responsibility that may fall upon them and which involves helping the needy in a monetary or some other manner, or requires some effort on their part, or involves foregoing a part of their pleasures. The reason behind such an attitude is that they have not wanted to get used to even small and simple duties that could prepare them for more significant tasks.

To feel the grief and suffering of others is a good and admirable thing. But what is the use of it if that does not lead to action and cannot lighten the burden of those who suffer? What benefit can humanity derive from dormant feelings that hide in the heart and have no effect whatsoever on real life? Mere goodwill for human life is not sufficient. Genuine goodness .inevitably involves action

The Sublimity of Spiritual Pleasures

Striving to solve the problem of others and relieving them of their afflictions is not only the duty

of every person, it is one of the best and sublimest pleasures of life. The scope of one's love should be so wide and inclusive that there should be room in it for everyone. Such a love can illuminate the soul and purge the heart of all suffering and bring true happiness to man, making him feel that everything that there is in the world is beautiful and lovely. A Western scholar writes

There is a reward for every virtue and a punishment for every vice, but this punishment and that reward do not lie beyond virtue and vice themselves. What can the reward of virtue be except virtue itself? And what can be a worse punishment for vice than vice itself?

In fact, reward and punishment are the natural consequence of our acts. One who puts his hands in fire gets burnt and one who acts in an evil manner and violates his duties receives the direct result of his deeds. You should not ask yourself, 'What is to be gained by goodness?' Be good, for goodness' sake. In the same way as day follows night and light follows darkness, true happiness, which consists of inner peace, will greet us as a result of our virtuous conduct.

One who does some good to others within the limits of his duties feels an unbounded joy within his soul. At such times it is as if he has risen over his ordinary surroundings to find himself on a brighter horizon beyond the confines of this life, and, as a result of this sublime feeling, he attains happiness.

Good intentions are fine, but one must make good deeds one's goal. We have a pleasant feeling when good thoughts cross our mind, but good acts, like shining stars, brighten the horizons of others' souls. We can build the foundations of personal merit by the means of our actions, or can destroy these foundations to build the house of vice and corruption on their ruins. Yes, we are able to accomplish either of these two alternatives, and, hence, our responsibility is truly great.

There are two kinds of people. Those who undertake painstaking efforts for the comfort of others and those who cause hardship to others for the sake of their own comfort. The second kind of people, while they cause distress to others, are not themselves free from wretchedness. Yet the first kind obtains happiness in the course of working for others' welfare. The acts that are performed with the purpose of helping others have great and remarkable results, no matter how small they might be.^[1]

There is no limit to benevolence and altruism, for the emotional resources of man are vast and inexhaustible. In fact, the more they are tapped the more abundantly do they flow. It is said that "the human intellect is finite but human passions are boundless: they can take everything under their angelic wings." Ultimately, benevolent and altruistic assistance is a virtue that is not .attained by everyone

Indifference to Others' Problems

Those who view every act of benevolence towards others as a cumbersome matter and regard people with ill will and resentment, are, in fact, those who have severed their spiritual links with the world in which they live, so much so that they are immersed within themselves and are unconcerned with others and their problems. They imagine that no one else has an equal right to live, and they themselves are incapable of perceiving their own stakes in the general good and welfare.

Of course, this group of people is not devoid of human feeling and they do sense the suffering of others. But they are so imprisoned within the walls of egocentrism that there is no room in their scheme of things for altruistic sentiments. In other words, they are incapable of transcending their individual egos to reach the collective self.

Dr. Alexis Carrel, the well-known scholar, says

Everyone who directs himself wisely through life gradually undergoes profound changes. When the body and the soul act in accordance with their nature they become more resourceful. Conformity to the laws of survival, regeneration, and spiritual edification automatically reinforces all physical and psychic activities. This progress becomes especially noteworthy with the development of ethical merits and the growth of the moral, the aesthetic, and the religious sense, as well as personal altruism and forbearance. At the same time, the intellect is also illuminated.

When one understands that the goal of life is not mundane profit but life itself, one no longer devotes his attention exclusively to the external world, but views more closely his own life and that of those around him. He comes to know that he is dependent on others and that others are dependent upon him. This brings to light the artificial character of the views of Jean Jacques Rousseau, the illogicality of the social contract, the danger of individualism, and the necessity of paying attention to others like oneself at all stages of life.

There is an open contradiction between individual self-seeking and the love of one's fellowmen, which is essential to social existence. The development and growth of the body takes place through the means of environmental agents and with the help of other individual. Throughout its foetal existence, the human being is a kind of parasite dependent on the mother, and until the age of maturity is a parasite dependent on the family and society. Accordingly, he becomes accustomed to regarding the boons of his environment as a right. The ubiquity of individualism in all living creatures owes its existence to this instinctive urge to egoism.

On the other hand, extreme self-love makes the formation of a real society impossible. Hence,

the love of one's fellowmen is as necessary as self-love, and there should be an equilibrium between 'I' and 'we' as two opposite tendencies. This equilibrium is a necessary condition of our success in life, in the same way as the precise movements of the hand depend on the functional opposition of the contracting and stretching muscles of the fingers. There are [various ways in which individual 'I' become transformed into a collective 'We'.^[2]

Islam and Social Ties

The Islamic programme of education has been framed with a view to expanding general social consciousness and broadening the people's intellectual horizons. That is because the wider their intellectual perspective and the higher their level of thinking, the easier it is for them to emerge from the darkness of selfishness and monopolistic motives.

This programme has been prepared in such a manner as to develop a collective ethos while simultaneously strengthening the individual spirit, so that individualism is reconciled with co-operativeness, and the individuals constituting society neither become hollow and devoid of personality nor self-centred and indifferent towards one another.

Social cohesion in an Islamic society is related to the bond between the individual and God. The people encourage one another to benevolence, piety, and worthy deeds and co-operate with one another in generating and sustaining an environment in which the young generation cultivates the love of virtue, benevolence, and goodness in the light of a pure faith.

This helps mobilise all the constructive energies of the people toward general welfare and good, not toward corruption and vice. In this way, the goals and activities of the members of society are harmonised, their sense of co-operation awakened, and their individual and collective energies set to work for the service of mankind.

Since Islam essentially requires a co-operative and sympathetic society for the establishment of its prescribed social duties, and as benevolence and benefaction form the basis of its ethical code and programme, it warns that anyone who is not concerned with the service of society is not a Muslim. The Holy Prophet (s) declared

One who wakes up without the feeling of concern for the affairs of Muslims is not a Muslim.^[3] When Islam rose over pagan Arabia, it offered a teaching that encompassed all the affairs relating to society and the individual. It undertook the task of moral education and spiritual purification of a people among whom vindictiveness, mundane ambition, exploitation, and licentiousness were prevalent.

It called them to brotherhood, benevolence, love, and friendship. It established such a basis for the positive personality of every individual that no divisive agent, such as hate and hostility,

could separate them from one another. In this way, it brought into existence a society characterised with strength and merit.

In that society, in which faith, benevolence, and service were the criteria of personal worth, every individual felt so much involved in the destiny of others as if he were solely responsible for it. Intense attachment, forgiveness, self-denial, and self-sacrifice characterised their mutual relations. The Holy Qur'an describes this sublime and luminous relationship in these words: And those (Helpers) who offered their dwellings and their hearts for the hospitality of the Emigrants, they love whomsoever has emigrated to them not finding in their breasts any need or miserliness for what they have been given, and preferring others above themselves even (though poverty be their portion. (59:9

The Qur'an describes the benevolent in these words
It is no piety that you turn your faces to the east and to the west. True piety is this: to believe in God, and the Last Day, the angels, the Scripture, and the prophets, to give of one's substance however cherished, to kinsmen and orphans, the needy, the traveller, beggars, and to ransom the slave ... (2:177)

On the other hand, at the sensitive moments when the well-to-do person offers generous help to the needy, a proper and subtle approach should be adopted in order to preserve the dignity of the needy person and to avoid undesirable psychological consequences. Islam asks the wealthy to hold their hand low while giving so that the needy person's hand is above while he takes, in order that he does not feel humiliated and crushed. They should also refrain from being proud and overbearing.

'Ali-may peace be upon him-said
How nice it is for the rich to behave with humility with the poor for the sake of that which is with God! Yet nicer is the proud dignity of the poor in front of the rich due to their trust in and [reliance on God].[4

The Visage of the Benevolent in Islam
Of the prominent signs of a Muslim are kindness and benevolence, a sincere kindness and generosity that are inspired by a special motive. It is a kindness that is done for the sake of God, even though the persons to whom it is done be strangers one does not know and with whom one has no acquaintance or kinship. His heart is full of love and affection for them and he does not expect any reward or gratitude.

This conduct of his is motivated by a profound love that thrives in the depths of his heart and is replenished by a boundless, inexhaustible source: the bountiful and all-eenerous mainsDrine of Divine love.

Is it possible for any motive except faith and trust in the fair reward that God has prepared for the virtuous to induce man to perform acts of unalloyed and absolute benevolence free of every kind of personal interest?

Hence true benevolence and kindness is something whose mainspring is an inner Divine motive and ideal, whose sole end is the attainment of God's good pleasure. Islam strives to create this sublime ideal and Divine motivation in the depths of the people's souls, and by this means it creates a profound and expansive consciousness that is commensurate with the expanse and depth of the universe and which cannot be contained in any dry and limited teaching.

With this expansive and all-inclusive consciousness and vision and the genuine bond of feeling between one's soul and the spirit of creation, the work of a wise Maker, as well as with the awareness of God's infinite power, the artificial and self-made blinkers are removed from the eyes of man's soul.

This sublime human consciousness is born as a result of sincere servitude to God and the eternal bond and relation with Him. The perpetual worship of the Creator, the effort to seek His favour, and the wish to live in the shadow of His grace and beneficence bring man to such a point that he can attain to the station of God's vicegerency. He can come to possess a love that can remove every suffering and obstacle from the path of humanity and wage a struggle against every form of evil and corruption.

With all its guiding precepts Islam nourishes this genuine feeling in such a fashion that it becomes amalgamated with the individual's nature. And when love becomes the mainspring of feeling and spreads its roots deep into the core of man's being, it gives rise to a yearning which, with voluntary zeal, is prepared to do benevolence and service to society.

When that happens, enmity, malice, hostility and insolence cannot take roots in individuals but remain unstable, removable with a little of attention, for nothing else is better capable of eradicating these vices from the soul than this invaluable cure-all.

The profound concern of the Qur'an in regard to all the human beings in the world and the close attention paid to them has an extraordinary purifying effect on the soul. The consciousness of the firm and inalienable bond between oneself and the world, brings the order of one's being into harmony with the order of creation and makes man view all beings, except a group of harmful creatures, with benevolence and love.

Getting habituated to the feelings of benevolence, which reflect the greatness and sublime station of man's humanity, and a uniform feeling of tenderness for all living things, for the entire universe and its creatures, creates a healthy and balanced motivation in man that is indispensable for a fruitful life and removes darkness and violence from his soul and purges it of impurities.

It was the heavenly and refined consciousness of the Noble Prophet of Islam that made him say concerning his vicious kinsmen who had adopted a hostile and inhuman conduct towards him: "O God, be merciful and forgiving to my people, for they are ignorant."

The inexhaustible love and benevolence of the Prophet of Islam (s) not only extended to all human beings, in practice it taught Muslims the principles of kindness and benevolence on a very extensive level. One day the Prophet (s) told this story to a group of his companions. A man passing through a scorching desert was overwhelmed with thirst.

Finding a well, he descended into it and quenched his thirst with water. On coming out he saw a dog that had lost all its strength due to thirst and in agony was rubbing its nose on the ground. The man saw that the poor animal was suffering as it could not find water. He felt pity and compassion for it and decided to give it some water. Thereupon, he again descended into the well and filling his shoes with water placed them in front of the dog which was about to perish out of thirst. God Almighty forgave that man as a reward for this act of kindness.

The Companions asked the Prophet (S): "Can we too seek God's reward by being kind to animals?" The Prophet (S) replied: "Yes. You will be rewarded for service to every living thing."

Every act must be judged by its motives and the source of any action should not be divorced from its consequences, exactly like a disease which is treated by taking into consideration its .cause

The Visage of Benevolence in the West

If today's developed nations allocate an amount of their yearly budget and a fraction of their economic resources for the development of backward and underdeveloped nations, their action, in the first place, is not inspired by pure humanitarian motives or by sheer benevolence. Rather, it is because if the purchasing power of underdeveloped nations collapses and they are unable to consume the industrial products of the industrialised countries, their economies will suffer due to a decline in foreign trade. Hence maintenance of a relative economic equilibrium between the two sides is the basic motive behind this kind of aid.

Many individual acts of benevolence, too, serve as a means of satisfying selfish needs and there is no trace of sincerity in them; rather, mostly they serve as a bridge for attaining personal

objectives. However, human merit as a source of benevolence has its sole place in man's character and, therefore, while making a judgement concerning the value of an act, it is not proper to consider solely the consequences. We should not look for an arithmetical equation for determining the value of a good act by equating it with its results. Arithmetics alone cannot resolve ethical issues.

Alexis Carrel paints the visage of benevolence in the West in the following description: The motive behind our actions is either personal gain—more than anything else, financial advantage—or the satisfaction of our exhibitionist tendencies, the desire for title, recognition, and social status. This quest for personal gain often conceals itself under the garb of hypocrisy and hides behind the mask of philanthropy. One can observe such instances of treachery in military circles, universities, offices and courts

The very meaning of honour has been distorted. Those who dedicate themselves to a great purpose or strive in an unassuming manner appear to be crazy and contemptible. The signs of self-seeking effort can be seen everywhere—in the lady who engages in charitable undertakings without being concerned with helping the destitute in the depth of her heart, but who wishes either to become the leader of some institution or earn the Legion of Honour, or to make a profit by opening a lucrative venture; in the famous physician who recommends a medicine to his pupils and patients because he has been secretly bribed by its manufacturer; in the scholar whose efforts are not for the sake of advancement of knowledge, but for the hope of occupying an academic chair and the financial advantages associated with it; in the medical scientists who do not observe any code of morality either in conducting tests on their patients or in their medical care; in the students who tempt the college office clerk in order to obtain question papers before the examinations; in the pupil who sells the vitaminized sweets gifted by some charitable institution in the black market.

Often the ugly and brutal face of avarice hides under the mask of altruism, scholarship, and philanthropy. We are fond of money, for money procures everything and gives us power before everything else. Almost everyone can be bought, either with money or with things that wealth can provide and the wealthy can offer as a temptation. Ultimately money helps us satisfy our base lusts.[5]

The following story represents an example of the conduct and the way of thinking of those who were brought up under the influence of Islam's teachings. The story helps us understand the real character of the Islamic view of benevolence and charity.

One day a man came to the Noble Messenger (s) and declared that he was hungry and tired.

The Prophet immediately sent someone to his house to fetch food for the man. He was told with regret by the Prophet's wife that there was nothing except water in the house. Disappointed that he could not feed the man, the Prophet turned to his Companions and asked them: "Can anyone of you accept him as a guest?"

Thereupon, one of the men belonging to the Ansar extended his hospitality to the man. When he reached home he found that there was enough food only for the children. He told his wife to make arrangements to provide food for the guest. At the time of dinner, he put the lamp out so that the guest should think that he too was eating the dinner with him!

The great Prophet of Islam said: "It is obligatory on every Muslim to do an act of charity every day" Someone said to him, "But who can afford to give charity every day?" The Prophet (S) replied: "If you remove troublesome stones and obstacles from the public way that is also considered an act of charity."^[6]

It should be noted that the Prophet (s) mentioned lifting of stones from the road used by Muslims as a charitable and godly action because that is the least that a man without any means can accomplish. That is, someone whose status does not allow him to lift stones from highways should accomplish bigger tasks. Those who have plentiful means of all kinds must perform acts of benevolence and charity in proportion to their capacity, because there must be a proportionate relationship between an individual's means and his works.

Once, one of my friends who was an influential social worker said to me: "My daily programme every morning after leaving home and before taking up my routine work is to consider it my duty to perform some act of altruism though it may involve guiding someone who has sought my counsel regarding his work. This is part of my fixed programme in life."^[7??]

Truly, if all Muslims and concerned human beings should decide to put into action the programme suggested by the Holy Prophet of Islam and should everyone perform an act of charity in proportion to his means and in accordance with his profession, the wheels of social life would rotate more smoothly and many of the people's problems and difficulties would be .solved in this way

The Criterion of Human Worth Before God

When the Prophet of Islam (s) was asked as to who was the dearest of human beings to God, he replied:

It is someone who is of greatest benefit to the people.'

The Messenger of God (s) also said
If someone hears a person calling Muslims for help and does not respond positively to his call

and request for help and does not assist him, he is not a Muslim.[8]

Once Safwan was present at a gathering with al-'Imam al-Sadiq ('a). Suddenly a person who was visibly worried entered the room. When he spoke and described his difficulty, it became evident that it was a financial problem that he had failed to solve. The Imam ordered Safwan to go immediately and to do something to solve the difficulty of his brother in faith. Safwan got up and left and returned into the Imam's presence after solving that man's problem. The Imam

asked him about the matter and Safwan replied, "God has set right the matter."

The Imam said to him, "You should know that the solution of this apparently small difficulty for which you spent a little time of yours is of greater value than your performing circumambulation of the Ka'bah non- stop for a full week." Then he narrated the following incident. Once a man came to al-Imam al-Hasan ('a) with some difficulty and asked him to help him out.

Al-Imam al-Hasan ('a) immediately got ready and went out with him. On the way, they came across al-Husayn ibn 'Ali ('a) who was engaged in prayer. Al-Imam al-Hasan ('a) asked the man why he had not approached al-Husayn ibn 'Ali ('a) and asked his assistance. The man answered that at first he had wanted to approach him but had given up the idea on hearing that al-Husayn was in the state of i'tikaf.

Al-Imam al-Hasan ('a) said to him: "Had he received the opportunity to assist you it would [have been dearer to him than a month's i'tikaf." [9]

Boundless Charity and Love

The more expansive and wider the scope of human feeling, the greater the number of people that it embraces. Such an expansive love and benevolence cannot find room in the breasts of people who have narrow and straitened hearts. Their benevolence is not universal so as to embrace people belonging to every group and class. Such a benevolence and compassion is not close to Divine mercy.

(A man said in the presence of al-Husayn ibn 'Ali:) "Goodness is wasted when done to those who are not worthy of it." The Imam said to him: "That is not true; for benevolence is like a torrential rain which comes down everywhere and equally waters orchards as well as wastelands." [10]

Al-Imam al-Sajjad ('a) exhorted al-Imam al-Baqir ('a), his son, not to hold back his kindness and benevolence from anyone and to carry out this moral and human duty to the extent of his capacity in respect of all human beings:

My son, don't hold back your kindness from anyone who seeks your charity and benevolence;

for even if he were not worthy of that kindness you would prove to be worthy of it by
responding positively to his request.[11]

Al-Husayn ibn 'Ali, the master of world's freemen—may peace be upon him—in a profound and eloquent sermon, calls men to benevolence. The following is a free paraphrase of his speech.

O people, adopt the virtues of benevolence and chivalry and hearken to solve the difficulties of the destitute, for benevolence is a greatly profitable quality. O people, seek salvation and felicity by the means of service to God's creatures. You, who have the capacity to alleviate the pains of those who suffer, should not let others speak ill of you on account of your negligence
in rendering benign service.

If you give a helping hand to the weak and the disabled and they do not thank you for your kindness, do not be disappointed and dispirited in your altruism, because God will give you a great reward and grant you His inexhaustible favours and bounties. In fact, it is one of His
great favours that God has given you the capacity to satisfy the wants of the needy.

It does not behove you to be greedy and avaricious. For, should you acquire all the bounties of God and yet be unwilling to help the deprived and bring relief to the suffering, God shall change the favours that He has granted you into suffering and pain. He will make you face humiliation
and let you taste the afflictions of the deprived and the suffering.

How delightful it is to bring solace and consolation to a broken heart or offer relief to some destitute! Should you be worthy and honourable, you will achieve a good name amongst the people, and they will look upon you with gratitude and affection instead of resentment and rancour when you pass by them. Perhaps many of those who are needy today will be able to
reward you for your kindness in their better days.

Were benevolence to take the form of a human being and were you to behold his beautiful and luminous visage, you would see him as a most handsome and charming youth whose sight gladdens your heart. And were it possible for vice and misconduct to appear before you in a human form, you would undoubtedly be so repelled by the sight of his ugly and hateful
countenance that you would close your eyes in horror and revulsion.

O people, be generous and munificent in order to enjoy honour and dignity, for one who is
parsimonious and stingy shall be petty and contemptible.

The most generous of men is he who gives to someone in need who cannot return his kindness and the most forgiving of them is one who forgives despite possessing the power to retaliate. The noblest of kinsmen is he who does not neglect to be benevolent and caring in
regard to his relatives, though they should not observe the demands of familial ties with him.

If you were so noble and forbearing, you would be like a tree that bears plenteous fruits, a tree

whose roots are nourished by goodness and blessing. The branches of felicity and good fortune would spread over you and others will benefit from their shadow. Its sweet and pleasant fruits will free you of all bitterness.

Every good man should make haste in performing good works and service to God's creatures. He will receive such a reward and blessing for it in the future as he had never expected. Should he, for the sake of God's good pleasure, offer a helping hand to someone in need the generous and magnanimous Lord will assist him on the day of his need and save him from facing hardships.

O people, God shall take away the sorrow and darkness of the world and the hereafter from the heart of everyone of you who brings relief to a suffering soul.

He will reward the good-doers for their good-doing, for God loves the good-doers.^[12] Good doing and charity are not confined to monetary help, or to providing relief from physical suffering and hardship. Rather, spiritual assistance, moral guidance and correction of moral conduct and qualities have a higher and greater value than material charity. Hence if one were to assist those who are lost and help them extricate themselves from the clutches of corruption and misguidance and enter the luminous environs of the truth, he would be doing the greatest favour to them. From the viewpoint of Islam, the sublimest and the most valuable act of charity and benevolence is to help the deviant and deliver those bogged down in the mire of corruption and wretchedness.

The sublime leader of Islam (s) said to 'Ali ('a):
If God were to guide a single person through you, that is better for you than every thing under [the sun].^[13]

Notes:

- [1]. Aveberry, John Lubbock Baron, *Dar justojiz-e khushbakhti*, pp. 201-203.
- [2]. Carrel, Alexis, *Reflexions sur la conduite de la vie*, Persian trans. *Rah wa rasm-e zindagi*, pp. 145-146.
- [3]. Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, p. 390.
- [4]. *Nahj al-balaghah*, Hikam, No. 406.
- [5]. Carrel, op. cit pp. 15-16.
- [6]. Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar*, vol. xv, p. 131.
- [7]. Al-Kulayni, op. cit p. 391.
- [8]. *Ibid*, vol ii p. 164.
- [9]. *Ibid*, vol. ii P- 194

[10]. Al-Harrani, Tuhaf al uqul, p. 245.

[11]. Al-Kulayni, op. cit, p. 153.

[12]. Al-Irbili, Kashf al-ghummah, vol. ii, p. 204.

[13]. Shaykh 'Abbas al-Qummi, Safinat al-Bihar vol. ii, p. 700