

FRIDAY MESSAGE

ISSUE 268

FRIDAY 2nd MAY 2025/ 4th Dhul Qadah 1446

The Timeless Virtue of Generosity in Islam

Generosity (*sakhā'*) is a hallmark of Islamic character and a reflection of one's faith in Allah's limitless provision. It is a divine act rooted deeply in the principles of Islam, shaping not only individual lives but entire communities. As emphasized by revered Islamic scholars, generosity is more than a gesture; it is a transformative act with spiritual, social, and moral dimensions.

Generosity Defined

Generosity involves giving without expectation, fulfilling needs before requests arise, and ensuring that what is offered reaches its rightful recipient. Al-Mawardi, the Islamic jurist, eloquently described generosity as *"giving what is needed at the time of need and ensuring it reaches the one deserving it to the best of one's ability."* This definition underscores the importance of intentionality and precision in acts of generosity.

Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) emphasized the purity of generosity in its truest form, saying: *"True generosity is that which is initiated without being asked; giving after a request is out of modesty and a sense of obligation."* His words remind us that the highest form of generosity stems from a selfless heart.

Prophetic Generosity

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) set an unparalleled example of

generosity. Ibn Battal, a respected Islamic scholar, highlighted this, stating:

"Generosity is among the noblest traits, for Allah Himself is named 'The Generous' and 'The Giver'. Stinginess, however, is not a trait of the Prophets or the virtuous."

One striking example of the Prophet's generosity occurred when he gave a man an entire flock of livestock grazing between two mountains. Overwhelmed by this act, the man returned to his people saying, *"Follow Muhammad, for he gives like one who does not fear poverty."* Such extraordinary generosity touched hearts and led to the spreading of Islam, proving that giving is not merely about material exchange but about inspiring transformative change.

The Many Faces of Generosity

Generosity in Islam transcends the act of giving wealth. Ibn Qudamah categorizes generosity into various forms, highlighting its depth and breadth. Among them:

Altruism: The highest level of generosity, giving what one needs oneself to benefit others, even in times of hardship. As Allah praises in the Qur'an: *"They give preference over themselves, even though they are in need."* (Surah Al-Hashr: 9).

Knowledge: Sharing insights and wisdom to guide others is deemed more valuable than material wealth. Ibn al-Qayyim explained this beautifully: *"Generosity is of two kinds: the higher being generosity with what others possess, refraining from coveting it, and the*

second being generosity with what you own, offering it freely."

Forgiveness and Patience: Offering emotional and spiritual generosity by forgiving those who wrong us and showing patience and tolerance in the face of adversity.

Good Manners: Cheerfulness, kindness, and a welcoming demeanour are acts of generosity that transcend material giving and foster unity and goodwill.

Impact of Generosity

Generosity captures hearts, heals wounds, and creates bonds of trust and love. It is not merely an obligation but a privilege, as Ibn Hibban observed: *"Generosity earns love and praise, while stinginess leads to blame and hatred. Wealth holds no true value unless paired with generosity."*

The influence of generosity is profound, as evidenced by its ability to mend relationships, uplift communities, and preserve dignity. Al-Shafi'i poetically captured its essence:

*"If your flaws are many among the people,
And you'd like them hidden under a veil,
Then cover them with generosity;
For every flaw is concealed by generosity."*

The Ripple Effect of Generosity

Generosity has a ripple effect that transcends the giver and the recipient. It builds cohesive communities, fosters mutual support, and spreads positivity. In its highest form, it safeguards the pillars of faith, as seen in the construction of mosques and schools and the funding of charitable projects. Such acts save individuals from poverty, protect their dignity, and instil hope.

As Hassan ibn Thabit aptly said:

"I protect my honour with my wealth, I would never degrade it,

May Allah not bless wealth if honour does not accompany it."

Modern Relevance

In a world marked by materialism and individualism, generosity is a beacon of light. It reminds us that true wealth lies in contentment, gratitude, and the ability to share. Generosity purifies the soul, strengthens faith, and brings the blessings of Allah in both this life and the Hereafter.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encapsulated this truth, saying: *"The upper hand [giving] is better than the lower hand [receiving]."* This timeless principle urges us to give freely, trusting that Allah's promise of reward is far greater than anything we relinquish.

Through the example of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and wisdom of scholars and we see that generosity is not merely a trait but a spiritual journey. It is a way of life that elevates individuals, unites communities, and fulfils the divine purpose of spreading goodness and compassion.

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Verily, Allah Almighty is magnanimous and He loves magnanimity. He loves the highest morals and He detests pettiness." (Ibn Abbas, Hilyatul Awliya)

The Prophet peace and blessings be upon him, also said: "Allah, the Exalted, Says, 'Spend, O son of Adam, you will also be spent upon.'" (Abu Huraira, Al-Bukhari & Muslim)