

LETTER ELEVEN
CONCERNING SERVING OTHERS

With His Glorious Name ﷺ
Allah, Allah, Allah

My dear brother Muhammad ‘Iqbāl:

As-salāmu ‘alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuhu.

This *faqīr* is well and wishes the same for you in the court of Allah ﷻ. *Hadrat Maulānā ‘Ahmad ‘Alī Lahorī* ﷺ used to say, “Please Allah ﷻ with worship, the Messenger ﷺ of Allah with fellowship, and the creation of Allah ﷻ with service. Make service and attendance to Allah’s ﷻ creation your primary focus.” Additionally, our elders have said, “Whoever serves becomes a servant, and whoever stays lost in himself remains lost and deprived.”

Hadrat Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Adham ﷺ once saw a bright light in a dream alongside an angel writing down people’s names. He approached and asked the angel what he was doing, and the angel replied, “I am listing the names of people who love Allah ﷻ.” *Hadrat Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Adham* ﷺ asked if his name was on the list, but the angel said, “No.” *Hadrat* then said, “The rank of those who love Allah ﷻ is very high, so at least please add my name to the list of people who love the creation of Allah ﷻ.” The angel agreed and at that moment *Hadrat* awoke.

A few days later he again saw a bright light in a dream and saw the same angel compiling a list, and so *Hadrat* asked him what he was doing. The angel said that he was writing down the names of people whom Allah ﷻ loves. *Hadrat* Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Adham ؓ asked if his name was among them, and the angel replied that it was foremost in the list. The angel continued that this was because Allah ﷻ loves those who love His creation.

*Servants of Allah are many, roaming endlessly in the wilderness,
But I will become a servant of him who has love for the creation of Allah.*

Hadrat Mūsā ؑ once asked Allah ﷻ who He liked the most in creation. Allah ﷻ answered, “The person who is saddened by the slightest misfortune of another.”

Hadrat Abū Bakr Siddīq ؓ used to say, “Alms [*zakāh*] of the body is as necessary as alms of one’s wealth, and the body’s alms is to serve others and to make others’ misfortunes one’s own.”

Once *Hadrat* Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Adham ؓ was traveling with two of his attendants in bitter cold weather. At night they came to a mosque [*masjid*] with a broken door that would not close. When his attendants went to sleep, *Hadrat* Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Adham ؓ stood against the door all night so they would be comfortable.

Hadrat °Umar ibn °Aas ؓ was returning from the conquest of Egypt and found that a pigeon had built a nest in his tent. Although the army was leaving, he ordered that his tent not be touched, and so he completed the rest of the journey without a tent so that the pigeon’s house would not be destroyed.

Hadrat Khawājah Bāqībillāh ؓ was once going back to bed after having prayed the pre-dawn prayer [*tabajjud*]. It was intensely cold and he noticed that a cat had curled up in his bed and was sound asleep. *Hadrat* shivered all night but did not disturb the cat’s sleep.

Hadrat Maulānā Rūmī ؓ was traveling through an area with his followers and attendants. He noticed that a dog was sleeping in the middle of their path, and the path was so narrow that they could not have passed without the dog having to move. So, *Hadrat* and his party waited until the dog woke up and stepped aside.

On another occasion, *Hadrat Maulānā Rūmī* ؓ was traveling and came across a narrow path. The surrounding area had become muddy because of heavy rain, and there was no other passage. A dog was coming from the opposite direction on the narrow path. *Hadrat Rūmī* ؓ told him to step aside so that he could pass, and the dog said the same thing to him. *Hadrat Rūmī* ؓ said, “You are a dog so step aside because it will not matter if you get dirty.” The dog replied, “No, by stepping aside your clothes will become dirty, and clothes can be washed. However, if

you force me to step aside, you might feel in your heart that you are better than a dog. Your heart will hence be blackened [with pride] and will not be washable by water.” *Maulānā Rūmī* ﷺ thus stepped aside and let the dog pass.

That night *Maulānā Rūmī* ﷺ wept in the pre-dawn prayer [*tabajjud*] saying that a dog had helped him realize his true status. Allah ﷻ then told him that this had been the same dog that he had once refused to disturb from its sleep and so through this dog, Allah ﷻ gave *Hadrat Rūmī* ﷺ the wisdom to know his lower self [*nafs*].

These anecdotes contain jewels of guidance for us. Our elders used to take pains for the comfort of animals, and nowadays, we do not even take pains for the comfort of our fellow human beings.

Once *Hadrat ʿUmar ibn ʿAbdul ʿAziz* ﷺ was asleep and a slave girl was operating a fan because the weather was very hot. The slave girl fell asleep since she was tired. *Hadrat ʿUmar ʿAbdul ʿAziz* ﷺ woke up, and seeing her asleep, started fanning her instead so that she could enjoy her sleep. When the slave girl woke up and saw this, she became frightened as to what might happen to her. *Hadrat ʿUmar* ﷺ said, “Don’t be frightened, you are human like me and the heat is equal for both of us. There is nothing wrong if I fan for some time since you have been doing it for so long.”

Hadrat Maulānā Mahmūd al-Hasan was imprisoned on the island of Malta with his deputy [*kehalifah*], *Hadrat Maulānā* Husayn Ahmad Madnī رحمته. The weather was severely cold and it was the habit of the *shaykh* to wake up for the pre-dawn prayer [*tabajjud*]. After praying the night prayer [*ʿishā*], *Hadrat* Husayn used to fill a pail with water and sleep over it in a hunched position all night in order to keep it warm for his *shaykh*. In this way he would help his *shaykh* make ablution with warm water at *tabajjud*.

Hadrat Madnī رحمته taught *hadīth* for eighteen years at the Mosque of the Prophet ﷺ. Upon his return to India, he came to *Hadrat Maulānā* Rashid Ahmad Gangohī رحمته. He stayed with him a few days and would go himself to buy groceries for the spiritual lodge [*kebānqab*]. *Hadrat* Madnī رحمته used to say that he received the same amount of blessing in the presence of the *shaykh* that he received when teaching in Madinah.

This *faqīr* is pleased that you spend the majority of your time in the service of your *shaykh*, and this *faqīr* makes supplication for you for the time that you cannot be with him. Allah ﷻ is the owner of vast treasures, and He never falls short of giving: “*To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth.*” (39:63) This *faqīr* makes supplication that Allah ﷻ includes you among those

drawn near [*muqarrabīn*] to their Lord. May Allah ﷻ make you content in this world and the next as you please your *shaykh*, amen [*‘āmin*].

Was-salām ma‘al-ikrām,

Faqīr Zulfīqār Ahmad Naqshbandī Mujaddidī