**The eternal legacy!**

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*“Constant kindness can accomplish much. As the sun makes ice melt, kindness causes misunderstanding, mistrust and hostility to evaporate”?Albert Schweitzer*

An overwhelming number of people in this world are so engrossed in their own lives that they find little time to attend to others’ needs. Not that humans are a selfish specie but it is just that either they lack sufficient resources or have too many responsibilities of their own that they fear taking further burden on their shoulders. Just the same, they do not abstain from helping out those who are within their close circle but this is on a very small scale and limited to a few persons. Besides, they are generally appreciative of those who selflessly work towards the betterment of the general public and make efforts to uplift the destitute and the needy. It is also necessary to understand the difference between charity and philanthropy. While the former helps to temporarily assist someone in trouble, the latter aims at something that would have prolonged and continuous benefits for everyone.

We have always had and continue to have scores of examples in our society of noble men and women who dedicate their time and money and who strive to reach out to the poor, the disabled, the sick, the unemployed, the abandoned, the innocent prisoner, the helpless, the hungry, the under-nourished and so forth. While their relatives maybe fighting over property disputes or cutting each other’s throats over petty matters like inheritance or marriage proposals, these magnanimous people spend their lives providing relief and alleviating sufferings.

There are of course different categories of philanthropists. Some limit their good work to a specific community, some within their close relations, some prefer extending their support only to certain religious sects, some like to help only say, widows or orphans, which is fine and perhaps in accordance with their way of thinking. Here the important thing is the determination to do good for others. They are all to be valued and cherished but those who rise above all prejudices, are the ones who top the list of good doers. They are God’s true workers. They require no worldly recognition, awards or expect any reciprocity from their beneficiaries. This is the pinnacle of selflessness, extremely few are adorned with and they are the ones who leave an eternal legacy long after they depart from this world.

The importance of philanthropy can never be undermined. Ask those beneficiaries who may have enjoyed the fruits of someone’s nobility when their own family and friends may have discarded them

As mentioned earlier, not all are capable of philanthropy, especially when it relates to parting with money, but the least they can do if not acknowledging an act of goodness, is to desist from hurling un-called-for accusations on someone whose work done while alive continues to benefit human beings, no matter who they maybe. As long as this type of institution remains in existence, retaining its salubrious character, the founder will be applauded and remembered by those who derive advantage from it. For example, if our incumbent prime minister would forever be spoken of with adoration, it would not be on account of his rise to power but for his benevolent deed of constructing cancer hospitals providing free services to the deprived section of society. This perpetuity will immortalize the name “Imran Khan.”

One such person, who left his name ineradicable on the minds of generations to come, was Sir Ganga Ram. An architect and engineer by profession, he was born on 13 April 1851 in present day Pakistan’s Punjab. He has to his credit, many landmarks in the Indian Sub-continent but his most splendid masterpieces can be seen in the city of Lahore. These include the Aitchison College, Lahore Museum, the General Post Office and Hailey College of Banking and Finance. Sir Ganga Ram is better known for the Trust that he established under which, first a dispensary within the walled city was made in 1921 which was later transformed into a hospital, where it stands in its new location to date.

All those who, out of sheer prejudice say today that the intention to make the hospital was only to benefit the Hindu community and a person belonging to any other religion was shoved away, must re-consider this allegation. To downplay the good work of follower of another faith is dishonesty at its worst. The only redeeming feature is that the accusers remain anonymous while the accused’s name comes on their lips. What other form of retribution can be more ironic?

To reach out to myriads of people one requires immense compassion as well as some good amount of money. Doling out mere cash to the needy is not philanthropy. It amounts to charity which does not have permanence. If one has substantial wealth it is better to invest in long term projects, having perennial beneficial effects for the community. This is better than leaving inheritance in the hands of legal heirs who may, after receiving easy money be more inclined to squander it, as in most cases. The name of such a testator who may have been powerful while alive, usually dies with his/her death.

There are some people who think that philanthropy has not done well for mankind but then what have governments done for the public? One such person is Seattle based Dan Price, CEO of Gravity who does not think that the world needs another billionaire philanthropist but he would rather see a system with more “justice and integrity”-easier said than done! Ground realities of the First World are much different from those of the under-developed states. With the exception of a few countries, majority, especially those of the Third World, care two hoots for its people and their welfare. Rampant corruption in the governing bodies, constant political turmoil, excessive evasion of taxes and lack of a sound judicial system with speedy delivery of justice, deprive the poor lot of social benefits resulting in the private sector stepping in to fill up the vacuum.

So, for example, with all his powers as head of the state, our incumbent prime minister would never have been able to build Shaukat Khanum Memorial Hospital had he postponed it till taking oath of the political office. His venture (which at that time many thought would be a failure) met with success because his determination on fulfilling his dream was intensely focused and his heart was greatly overcome with the plight of cancer patients who were unable to afford the expensive treatment, nor did they have access to a specialized hospital.

The importance of philanthropy can never be undermined. Ask those beneficiaries who may have enjoyed the fruits of someone’s nobility when their own family and friends may have discarded them. Ask all those successful entrepreneurs who managed to eke out an honourable living just because some benevolent trust financed their education. Ask all those poor patients who received timely treatment from say Ganga Ram Hospital, and managed to save a limb that would have otherwise left them handicapped for life. These and millions of other such examples are evident of the fact that these legacies are eternal by their very nature, their founders deserve whole-hearted respect and not subjected to malicious propaganda.

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