

EDHI

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Abridged Version of
Tehmina Durani's Book
Edhi: A Mirror to the Blind
by

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Preface

I got an opportunity to visit Karachi as member of a delegation in 2005. Dr. Inderjit Kaur, President of Pingalwara Trust, Amritsar, asked me to find time to see Mr. Abdul Sattar Edhi while I was in Pakistan. I still remember the words of Edhi Sahib: "If all religions could be based on humanity, and politics on social service, there would be no problem in the world." The most important single word in this statement is "Service", and it was this word that guided Edhi throughout his life.

Edhi is a name which is known by everyone in Pakistan, including even the children. His contribution in the field of social security is even greater than that of the government of Pakistan. There are 250 hospitals of the Edhi Foundation, of which he is the founder, spread out throughout Pakistan at every 25kms interval. There are multi-speciality hospitals and hospitals for special treatment of cancer, T.B., and Orthopedic problems. More than 700 ambulances and 7 aeroplanes are available 24 hours for the service of the people. Thousands of abandoned children, orphans, widows and destitute people are being looked after by his foundation. Unclaimed dead bodies have been buried with dignity by Edhi. He has been honoured with a number of national and international awards including The Magsaysay. He was inducted as a member of Majlis-e- Shoora in the Government of Gen. Zia-ul-Haq, but later resigned when he saw that politics was not really about helping people. Edhi only wanted to tread the path of selfless service. I have made a humble effort to present his life in brief, a life which was devoted to the service to humanity.

Dr. S.S. Chhina

From Publisher's Pen

*ਜਨਮ ਮਰਨ ਦੁਹਰੁ ਮਹਿ ਨਾਹੀ ਜਨ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੀ ਆਏ ॥
ਜੀਅ ਦਾਨੇ ਦੇ ਭਗਤੀ ਲਾਇਨਿ ਹਰ ਸਿਉ ਲੈਨਿ ਮਿਲਾਏ ॥*

Efforts to know God and to be one with Him, have been made by man since the beginning of human civilisation. Various ways and means have been adopted for the achievement of this objective. Yoga, Perseverance, Bhagti (devotion) and Service are few examples of these ways and means., On deep reflection, one comes to the conclusion that only that person can be considered nearest to GOD who dedicates his life to the service of mankind. Only the prophets of those religions can be counted among the persons nearest to GOD who had dedicated themselves for the service of mankind. The girl named Rabia can be included among these saints (Bhagats). In the present age, Albert Switzer and Bhagat Puran Singh have been prominent among these Saints (Bhagats), and many others will doubtlessly arise with the passage of time. It is difficult to know all such godly beings as their number is without end.

Having seen the Divine Light, Bhagat Puran Singh did not think of anything else except an absolute dedication to the benevolent service of the needy and suffering humanity. The only objective before him was to provide solace and relief to suffering human beings. He never thought of his own comforts and well being. Many a time, he would even forget taking his meals when thus absorbed in the service of the needy and the suffering. As per Guru Granth Sahib:

ਸੇਵ ਕੀਤੀ ਸੰਤੋਖੀਈ ਜਿਨੀ ਸਚੇ ਸਚੁ ਧਿਆਇਆ ॥
ਓਨ੍ਹੀ ਮੰਦੇ ਪੈਰੁ ਨਾ ਰਖਿਓ ਕਰਿ ਸਕ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਧਰਮ ਕਮਾਇਆ ॥
ਓਨ੍ਹੀ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਤੋੜੇ ਬਧਿਕਾ ਅੰਨ ਪਾਣੀ ਥੋੜਾ ਖਾਇਆ ॥

Just three years back, we came to know of one such person, Abdul Sattar Edhi of Karachi, who has completely devoted himself to the service of suffering mankind. His thinking and practical benevolent service are very similar to that of Bhagat Puran Singh.

Just like Bhagat Puran Singh, Abdul Sattar Edhi inherited the qualities of service to mankind with full devotion from his mother. His wife Bilquis, a brave woman, co-operated and supported him in every possible way. She faced all difficulties and problems with a smiling face. I once had an occasion to meet Bilquis in a meeting at Delhi. She had a smiling face, divine looks, and was completely dedicated and devoted to her mission. Abdul Sattar Edhi did many kinds of work in his life. Whatever he learnt from his work, he put it into practical use in his benevolent service for the suffering people. He kept himself away from materialism. He slept on hard bed and ate only simple bread (Rotis). He is one of those brave sons of the soil who have great patience while suffering hardships of life. Money could never lure him. He got a kind of spiritual satisfaction while putting unclaimed rotting dead bodies in graves, having first given them a ritual bath. Mentally disturbed patients became a regular part of his family. Once, out of ignorance, a mentally sick woman happened to pour boiling water on his grandson's body while giving him a bath. Edhi loved the child dearly and was deeply attached to him. The child suffered severe burns on his body, which caused his death. Despite this grave tragedy, he kept marching ahead towards his goal.

Edhi has been providing free ambulance service to the poor and needy people throughout Pakistan. Beside the care and the

provision of requisite medical treatment of abandoned and destitute patients, Edhi has also been undertaking the performance of last rites of unclaimed dead bodies as per their respective religions. His biography was written by Tehmina Durrani in English and the same was translated into Punjabi by Dr. Sarbjit Singh Chhina. All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar, had got it published and distributed free of cost among 'the masses'. This work was greatly appreciated by people of all religions. The translated book being voluminous, and as these days, people are overbusy and cannot spare much time for reading, an abridged version of the book is now being published in the English language. This will facilitate people who do not know Panjabi to avail of an opportunity of reading this book. In the present materialistic world, the life and work of Abdul Sattar Edhi serves as a beacon of dedicated and benevolent service to the suffering and the needy.

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