82497 - Ruling on giving tips to plumbers, carpenters and phone company employees

the question

What is the ruling on giving tips to plumbers, carpenters and phone company employees after they have finished their work, whether they ask for the tip or I give it myself without being asked for it? Please note that they receive a monthly salary from the company for which they work and which sends them to me?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

This is one of the serious problems that have become widespread nowadays, where many workers do not hesitate to ask for a tip, and some of them think that it is a right that is their due, and some of them will argue about the amount if it is given to them. They may also be negligent in performance of their job if they feel that they are not going to get a tip or they are going to be tipped poorly, and they will work harder for one who tips more generously.

Whoever thinks about that will see that there are many negative consequences that result from giving these tips. They may be summed up as follows:

1 – If the worker is being paid by the one who sent him, then there is no point in giving him a tip. Rather the apparent meaning of the Sunnah is that this is haraam. Al-Bukhaari (7174) and Muslim (1832) narrated that Abu Humayd al-Saa'idi (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) appointed a man from Bani Asad who was called Ibn al-Lutbiyyah in charge of the zakaah. When he came he said: "This is for you, and this was given to me." The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) stood up on the minbar and praised and glorified Allaah, then he said: "What is the matter with an agent whom we

send, then he comes and says: ‘This is for you and this was given to me’? Why doesn’t he sit in the house of his father and mother and see if he will be given anything or not? By the One in Whose hand is my soul, he does not take anything but he will come on the Day of Resurrection carrying it, even if it is a groaning camel, or a lowing cow, or a bleating sheep.” Then he raised his arms until we could see the whiteness of his armpits and said: “O Allaah, have I conveyed (the message)?” three times.

The difference between a haraam gift and a permissible gift is that if it is given because of a person’s work, then it is haraam. The guideline concerning this is to look at the person’s situation: if he was not in this job, would he have been given this gift? This is what the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) meant when he said: “Why doesn’t he sit in the house of his father and mother and see if he will be given anything or not?”

2 – These bribes tempt the worker to favour the giver, so that he may give him something that he is not entitled to, which will cause harm to the one who hired him.

3 – They may cause the worker to resent others who do not give him anything, so he does not do a good job for them, and falls short in his work.

4 – It may make the worker audacious in asking and demanding, and make him expect tips and hope for them, which is a bad habit which should be stopped and fought, because Islam calls on us to have pride and self-respect, and not to look for that which is in the hands of others. Rather Islam forbids us to ask except in the case of necessity. Islam does not want a large majority of the ummah to become beggars, even if it is in the form of tips.

These negative effects may be weighed against the idea of being kind to the worker and giving him something extra as a kind of charity if he is poor, or responding to his request for more so as to avoid being unkind to him.

But the basic principle according to the scholars is that warding off harm takes precedence over seeking benefits. Based on this, it is not permissible to give so-called tips, except within narrowly-defined terms that are free of these evils, such as if the worker has finished his work and is not

expected to do any more work for the giver of the tip, so there is no risk of bribery or favouritism. In that case it is permissible to give him something by way of honouring him or helping him, according to the fatwas issued by some scholars, as we shall see below, but it is better not to do that, because that may make him get used to asking for or expecting tips, and it may make him resent those who do not give him anything.

Examples of scholars' comments on this issue:

1 – The fatwa issued by the Standing Committee (23/548): What is the Islamic ruling on one who is given money when he is at work without him asking for it or using any tricks in order to take that money? For example, the mayor or the Shaykh of a village, to whom people come for certificates and documents because they live in his village, and they give him some money for that. Is it permissible to take it? Is this money regarded as permissible? Can we take as evidence for it being halaal the hadeeth of Saalim ibn 'Abd-Allaah ibn 'Umar, from his father 'Abd-Allaah ibn 'Umar, from 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) who said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to give me a stipend and I would say: "Give it to one who is in greater need of it than me." He said: "Take it, for if any of this wealth comes to you when you are not hoping for it and asking for it, then take it and keep it, then if you wish you may give it in charity, but whatever does not come to you, do not seek it." Saalim said: 'Abd-Allaah used not to ask anyone for anything, and he would not reject anything that he was given. Agreed upon.

Answer: If the situation is as described, whatever is given to this mayor is haraam, because it is a bribe. The hadeeth of Ibn 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) has nothing to do with this matter, because that has to do with one who is given something from the bayt al-maal of the Muslims by the Muslim ruler without asking for it or expecting anything. End quote.

2 – Shaykh Saalih al-Fawzaan (may Allaah preserve him) was asked: We have a banquet hall in which there are cooks, and some of the cooks ask for tips in addition to their salaries. Is it permissible to give a worker some money as a tip, as he is used to taking from people?

He replied: If there is a worker who has a salary and is paid a set amount by the boss, then it is not

permissible for anyone to give him anything, because this will make him resent others, as some people are poor and cannot afford to give them anything. So doing this is a bad habit. End quote from al-Muntaqa fi Fataawa al-Shaykh al-Fawzaan, vol. 3, question no. 233.

3 – Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahmaan al-Barraak (may Allaah preserve him) was asked: What is the ruling on giving a restaurant worker a tip, knowing that bills include a “service charge”?

He replied: It is not permissible to give the worker this tip, because it is regarded as a bribe from you to the worker, so that he will give you better service and more food than he will give to one who does not give him this tip. The worker has no right to single out anyone for better service, rather he should treat all people in the same manner. But if there is no risk of bribery or favouritism being involved in this tip, then there is nothing wrong with it in that case, such as if you intend thereby to be kind to this poor and needy worker, and you are not going to go back to that restaurant. End quote from question no. 21605.

And Allaah knows best.