

Nature, Development Principle and Its Social Function of Religious Charitable and Public Service

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Abstract

Religious charitable and public service is the most important force in the area of human social charity. Religious charitable and public service owns the substantive characteristics taking practice of religion as cohesion, surpass belief as practice basis, taking religious organization as basis, volunteers participation as development foundation, at the same time, it follows the principle of developing according to law, service for the society, equal and voluntary, open and transparent, strict self-discipline and effective supervision. Also, it is the major part of social charitable public services and beneficial supplement of the social security system, it not only helps to spread religious culture, promote social civilization but also is good for releasing social contradictions and maintaining social stability of social functions.

Key word: Religious charitable and public service; Nature; Development principle; Social function

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INTRODUCTION

Religious charitable and public service, it refers to those non-profit charity activities carried out by social organization or person who have religion background

voluntarily to those vulnerable groups in the society, through funding in the area of education, scientific research, culture, art, sports, environmental protection and other social affairs. Now the civil society groups and individuals can be roughly divided into three types: charitable organization, foundation, private non-enterprise units which are set up based on monasteries, temples, churches and other religious rites and mission; carry out all kinds of charitable activities relying on the religious associations; charitable organization and foundation together organized by religious believers and enthusiasts; Besides, there're founders of some private foundations are religious beliefs, such as early American private foundation founder Mrs. Sach, Rockefeller as well as Carnegie are convinced Christian. Improve the understanding of religious charitable and public service, explicit its principle, manage their behavior and promote cooperation between religious charities with modern charity is something important in today's government and religion. Only government, religious and social public are clearly aware of social religious charitable and public service, it can give full play to its social function.

1. NATURE OF RELIGIOUS CHARITABLE AND PUBLIC SERVICE

As the important part of social charitable and public service, religious charitable and public service equips with features such as non-governmental, voluntary, autonomy and non-profit just like general social charitable public service, meanwhile, it plays positive role in releasing the contradictions of survival and life and promoting social harmonious development. However, it still owns unique characteristics and can be generally summarized as the following four aspects:

Firstly, religious charitable and public service takes the practice of religion as its cohesive force. For general

social charitable and public services, the mercy of social members is the moral foundation and the power source and keeps it in continuous development. However, when the whole society lacks of caring atmosphere for the weak as well as benevolent righteousness, charitable and public service seems hardly to survive. Despite that the world's major religions have different doctrine and dogmata but they are consistent in the area of "do good works" since all of them regard stop the bad and advocate the good, help poor and compassion fraternity as common value pursuit. Therefore, like general social charitable public service, religious charitable and public service also takes believers' mercy as moral or ethical foundation but it is belief that unites believers together, their philanthropy is the externalization of faith of "Equality and philanthropism, compassion and dedication", it is the undertaking for practice of religion as well as the must during religious cultivation.

Secondly, religious charitable and public service takes belief surpass as its practical basis. Despite the belief is the tie among religious groups, to some extent religious charitable public service is beyond belief. First of all, social donation is the strong support for charitable enterprise existence and development, but it not only comes from internal religious and its believers but also from generous people, enterprises and other social organizations and foreign social donation, therefore, it is beyond belief regarding sources of funds; For another, religious charitable and public service will not select service objects for their different faiths, actually the launch of religious charitable and public service has surpassed nationality, territory, country, races and faiths, it is the precious spiritual wealth of all human society oriented to the whole society, world and all mankind; At last, it often uses the secular organization method and management technology during the process, especially modern religious charity organization, charitable foundation of religion, nursing homes, orphanages, hospitals and schools organized by religious organization, they are running under modern organization management, activity management, capital management and personnel management system and methods and without big difference with secular organizations.

Thirdly, religious charitable and public service is carried out by taking religious organizations as organizational foundation. Without charitable organization, there's no charitable public welfare undertaking. Surely religious charitable and public service cannot live without religious organizations, it is the mechanism guarantee for existence and development. The development of Chinese and foreign religious charitable public welfare practice has proved that without rich religious organization, there is no developed religious charitable public welfare undertakings. Once upon the time, religious organization is the incurred

body for traditional religious charitable public welfare undertakings, but incurred bodies are various in the modern society, both have religious charity organizations, foundation, private non-enterprise units established relying on religious organizations and rite and also all kinds of private charity organized by religious associations, religious groups and individuals. These religious charity institutions, however, are more or less associated with a religious organization, that is to say, it is the existence of religious organizations that truly constitutes the organization foundation for existence and development of religious charitable and public service, it is the religious organization that makes it possible for organized, scale and institutional development. Without religious organization, it is impossible for developed and modern religious charitable public welfare undertakings.

Fourthly, religious charitable and public service is carried out based on universal participation, its development and continue must reply on participation and dedication of volunteers. Volunteers refer to those people who would like to provide public service and volunteer work for free and they are also called Yigong or Zhigong among Hong Kong and Taiwan area. Through voluntary work they realize personal value and meanwhile make contributions to improving social services and promoting social progress. Compared with secular charity organizations, religious charity organizations prefer to use more volunteers and tend to more rely on them, particularly the volunteers with religious belief. Modern religious charity organization not only recruits volunteers for a long time and will apply their knowledge and expertise to the corresponding field of charity, besides they also pay attention to the skills training and quality training for the volunteers. Volunteers may get level up by adding up working hours and sometimes obtain encouragement on the recognition event regularly carried out by religious groups. It is universal participation of volunteers that offers important guarantee and necessary conditions and makes religious charitable and public service develop and grow so smoothly.

In addition to this, some religious leader and principal of charitable religion institutions play cohesiveness role in the organization, their celebrity charm will help a lot for its extensive and smooth development. Although it is not the universal nature for all religious charitable and public service but indeed it is an outstanding feature. To sum up, religious charitable and public service owns the substantive characteristics of taking practice of religion as cohesion force, belief surpass as practice basis, taking religious organization as basis, volunteers' universal participation as development foundation, it will not grow well once deviates from those nature features. Therefore, only by respecting the true nature of religious charitable and public service

and always apply it through the development, religious charitable public welfare undertakings can win big development and prosperity.

2. PRINCIPLE OF RELIGIOUS CHARITABLE AND PUBLIC SERVICE

In addition to the nature law, we shall follow certain principles when carry out religious charitable and public service, only in this way, the service can be launched smoothly and guaranteed to achieve good results. The basic principles are the following major four aspects:

Firstly, promote the service according to law is the primary principle. It means all the services shall be implemented within the scope where national laws and regulations, system and policy allow. Due to religious charitable public service not only links with religion but also the related areas of the society, so supervise religious organizations and manage religious charity behavior is very important. Globally speaking, the more developed countries and regions in religious charitable and public service, the more reasonable and perfect system of laws, regulations and policies they have, so that religious organization activities can be implemented in accordance with law, their public welfare behavior are much more standard. For instance, the United Kingdom, as one of the countries with longest history of religious charitable tradition, it launched the first law called "law of charity" to manage the industry, it is often regarded as the watershed between medieval tradition charity and modern charity and known as "beginning of modern charity law". It shows that poverty problem has been considered into official way for the first time and the law standardizes and guides the British charity development and operation of the public welfare undertakings over one hundred years; As the most developed country in the area of religious charitable and public service, despite that America didn't make special and independent law about the charity like the U.K., but the regulations and clause on religious and charity occur completely in the constitution, the insurance law, tax law, company law, non-profit organic law, trust law, the social security act and other federal and state laws and regulations, therefore, religious charitable service grows well in accordance with the legal policy environment. In hence, adhere to primary principle of developing the service in accordance with the law can ensure religious charity carry out in the orbit of the rule of law and also it can give full play to the main body role of religious organization during the operation so as to bring more welfare for human society.

Secondly, service for the society is the fundamental principle. It is the aims and objectives of religious charitable and public service since services should be embodiment of spirit of "love", "compassion" and "dedication" also a kind of wish expression based

on public welfare. As all the social resources come from the people with the fear for god and dedication, therefore religious organization shall return these love and dedication to society in the form of charity. religious charitable and public service forms practical manner for religious organization to promote the religious spirit value and make society full of caring. The service will help religious organizations establish a good reputation in the society, in return public will be more willing to make contribute and dedication for religious groups, which objectively promote the prosperity of religious charitable and public service. As a result, service for the society is fundamental principle religious organization must insist in the running of service development.

Thirdly, equality and voluntary, open and transparent are the basic requirement. Equality and voluntary is the embodiment of the progress of social civilization as well as one of basic requirements shall follow when carry out religious charitable and public service. Under the principle of equality and voluntary, social public voluntarily implement donation behavior and decide donations of content, scale, style and purpose, at the same time, religious organizations shall fully respect the personal dignity and privacy of recipients. Open and transparent is another requirement, it means the operation of the religious charitable public service must be information open and transparent, informations such as donation program, management and use shall publish to the society and accept social supervision in time and by effective manner, while how to public and its degree of donation information is according to the will of the recipients. Follow the road of equality and voluntary, open and transparent way can keep religious charitable and public service running under sunshine and guarantee it grows better.

Fourthly, strict self-discipline and effective supervision are the vital principles. It is blasphemous or abuse and insult for selfless donors if religious organizations take charitable public service as a way to profit. So religious charitable public service needs strict self-discipline to guarantee the credibility of religious organizations, further ensure the vitality of the religious charitable public service. At the same time, the effective regulation and supervision from outside world also plays an important role in promoting the development of religious charitable public service, including law supervision from government departments, supervision of the third party, other charity organizations, as well as the social supervision of the public, media, etc.. Adhere to the principle of strict self-discipline and the effective supervision will be helpful for religious charitable public service establishing and perfecting the self-discipline, mutual-discipline and heteronomy mechanism, also helps to form the integrity and efficiency, standardized ecological environment for charity.

Besides, the positively innovative consciousness is also necessary for religious charitable and public service development. Furthermore, people shall keep adapting to the rapidly evolving society of high-speed development and strive to explore new mechanism and mode that can promote a sound development of religious charitable and public service. At the same time, before the proceeding of any specific charitable activities, religious organizations also should make an overall feasible scheme, and reinforce precaution and prepare emergency measures towards any possible accidents and safety problems, so as to ensure that those religious charitable and public activities can be carried out and held safely and smoothly.

3. SOCIAL FUNCTION OF RELIGIOUS CHARITABLE AND PUBLIC SERVICE

With the core business of attention and settlement towards human birth and death, religious charitable and public service extensively goes deep into various fields of social life, has profound effects and positive significance on development and progress of human society. Specifically, religious charitable and public service is mainly reflected in following three aspects:

Firstly, religious charitable and public service is the significant constituent part of social charity public welfare establishments, and is the beneficial supplement of social security system. At present, the organizational foundations and implementation subjects of charity public welfare establishments are abundant and diversified, including special charitable institutions and humanitarianism succor organizations, as well as all kinds of privately operated commonweal organizations, foundations, religious organization and so on. Among them, religious organizations have the long history of carrying out charity public welfare establishments, and simultaneously are slightly better than those mundane charity organizations in donation absorption, organization and mobilization, management cost, self supervision and social credibility. Religious organizations carry out charity public welfare establishments that rely on relief but beyond relief, and are the special power in social charity public welfare establishments. Then, religious charitable and public service also is the organic component of national social security system. Social security system mainly includes minimum standard of living, medical treatment, education and other various aspects. It is difficult to cover all levels of social security only by governmental forces, while charity public welfare establishments are the beneficial supplement.

Charitable causes belong to social security, and so they shall be contained by modern social security system. The relation between social security and charitable cause is not only the relationship of whole and part, but also the interaction and inter-coordination relation of basic security and supplementary security. (Zheng, 2010, p33)

As the significant constituent part of social public welfare establishments, religious charitable and public service also obviously is a relatively specific level in the social security system. Although they are somewhat different from the social security system in the economic base, operation mode and other relevant aspects, they also devote themselves to helping and solving those survival and hardship of the social public, and proving more and better public services for the society. Therefore, religious charitable and public service also is the organic composition and beneficial supplement of the social security system.

Secondly, it is beneficial to diffuse religious culture and promote social civilization to develop religious charitable and public service. First, to develop religious charitable and public service contributes to the correct cognition and understanding towards religious cultures for the social public. The one-sided or even incorrect understanding towards religion will keep some people away from religion. However, religious charitable and public service is the specific expression of coming upon the society and serving for the society by religion, and also is the important approach for the social public to know and understand religious culture. Those thoughts like mercy, caritas, poor relieving, badness stopping and goodness advocating in religious culture can be practiced, inherited and promoted through charity public welfare establishments. To develop religious charitable and public service is also to propose and diffuse charitable ideas in religious culture, cultivate philanthropic kindness and poor relieving to promote the formation of favorable social custom. Then, to develop religious charitable and public service also is the significant approach of constructing social civilization. The significant symbol of social civilization is nice social environment, stable social order, equal and kind interpersonal relationship and consecratory and friendly morality. To develop religious charitable and public service has positive acceleration effect on above four aspects, and the dedication spirit promoted in religion also is the intrinsic requirement and deserved significance of social civilization.

Thirdly, it is beneficial to relieve the social contradictions and maintain social stability to develop religious charitable and public service. First, religious charitable and public service can bridge the great gap between the rich and the poor in poverty reduction. Although religion itself cannot eliminate poverty, charity public welfare establishments can help to achieve reintegration of part of social wealth and social resources, and allocate them to those places where they are most needed, so as to help the poverty, bridge the gap between the rich and the poor and promote social equity. Therefore, those social problems caused from poverty and gap between the rich and the poor can be

effectively defused and thoroughly solved, so as to reduce social contradictions from the source. Then, religious charitable and public service has great significance in maintaining social stability. In the development process of religious charitable and public service, those excellent social cultural values like poverty alleviation, badness stopping and goodness advocating also can be maintained and advocated, which is conducive to motivate people's concern and responsibility to others and society, develop the charity awareness and open mind of the social public and construct social charity culture. Besides, it has great significance to maintain social stability and promote social harmony.

Indeed, above three aspects discuss the practical significance of religious charitable and public service towards recipients and the whole society from the macroscopic perspective. For those people who donate

and contribute to and participate in religious charitable and public service, charity public welfare behaviors bring them soul purification, spiritual growth and happiness and honors from practicing belief. Such kind of affectional satisfaction also is the unique significance of developing religious charitable and public service.

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