131561 - Ruling on asking authors to sign their books

the question

What is the ruling on what some people do of signing books and writing good wishes to those who ask them to do that?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

We put this question to Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Barrak (may Allah preserve him) and he said:

What some authors do of signing copies of the books they have written at the request of the publishers, is a new phenomenon and is undoubtedly a foreign tradition that does not make sense, because the copies that the author is meant to sign are not gifts from the author that he would sign to indicate that. Rather the copy of the book belongs to the one who is requesting the signature, so it does not seem that there is any meaning in that except blind imitation. It is as if the ones who do that are seeking blessing (barakah) from the author writing his name in their copy, and that is very unlikely, unless the author is someone whom the Sufis believe in as they believe in their saints. What appears to be the case is that this is not requested from every author; rather it is requested from those who are famous, so that the one who gets his signature can boast about it, or the author is someone he likes, so he gets that signature for the sake of memory. It is well known that competing in seeking signatures from the author may lead to him developing self-admiration.

Based on the above, the least we can say is that doing this is makruh, because it is imitating non-Muslims, and because it makes no sense and it may cause the author to develop self-admiration. It may also lead to the one who asks for the signature venerating the author and the copy that he signed. And Allah knows best. End quote.

Moreover, competition among fans, male and female, to rush to the author to get his or her signature, as happens in book fairs, may also open the door to fitnah and temptation between the sexes.

And Allah knows best.