

The concept of charity in islam religion essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The paper which I am going to write is about Islamic concept of charity. The concept is not new for so many people because every religion of the world preached that charity is a way of bringing justice to society. But here I would like to explain different forms of charity in Islam, their differences and its impact on society.

“ Charity is for those in need.” This is general principle which enjoins us to help people in need, be they good or bad, on the right path or not, Muslims or non-Muslims. No one should judge in these matters. The foremost ends in charity should be God’s pleasure and our own spiritual good. The concept of charity in Islam is thus linked with justice. It is not limited to the redressed of grievances. It implies apart from the removal of handicaps, the recognition of the right that every human being has to attain the fullness of life.

The definition of charity in Islamic tradition differs somewhat from its interpretation in other contexts.

The Qur’an states:

“ And be steadfast in your prayer and pay charity; whatever good you send forth for your future, you shall find it with Allah, for Allah is well aware of what you do” . Charity is central to a Muslim’s life.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said “ No wealth (of a servant of Allah) is decreased because of charity.”

There are misconceptions by some people regarding Islamic concept of Charity. They think that Islam is taking Charity by force in the name of Zakat.

But this is not reality. Islam does not force anyone to give charity. This is third pillar of Islam and its reward will be given in after world.

The following five words are the most frequently used words to describe charity in the Noble Qur'an:

1. Infaq fi Sabil Allah (spending in the path of Allah). Infaq Meaning spending benevolently
2. Ihsan Meaning the doing of good or (kindness and consideration)
3. Zakah Meaning growth or purification
4. Sadaqah Derived from the root sidq and meaning truth, and comes to signify charitable deed
5. Khayrat Meaning good deeds

Here two basic concepts will be explained that is Zakat and Sadaqah where Zakat is obligatory charity and Sadaqah is voluntarily Charity.

DEFINITION AND IMPLICATION OF ZAKAT (ALMS GIVING)

Zakat, is derived from the verb zaka, (which means “ to thrive,” “ to be wholesome,[“ to be pure”) and signifies purification. The Noble Qur'an referring to the purification of wealth states: “ Of their wealth take alms to purify and sanctify them”

Zakāt or “ alms giving”, one of the Five Pillars of Islam, is the giving of a small percentage of one's possessions (surplus wealth) to charity, generally

to the poor and needy. It is often compared to the system of tithing and alms, but it serves principally as the welfare contribution to poor and deprived Muslims, although others may have a rightful share. It is the duty of an Islamic community not just to collect zakat but to distribute it fairly as well.

Zakat is a multi facial concept. In one form it is an act of worship while in other form it is the carrying out of social service. It is thus not just the payment of a tax as it is generally understood but is rather an act of religious significance.

Muslims fulfil this religious obligation by giving a fixed percentage of their surplus wealth. Zakat has been paired with such a high sense of righteousness that it is often placed on the same level of importance as offering Salat. Muslims see this process also as a way of purifying themselves from their greed and selfishness and also safeguarding future business. In addition, Zakat purifies the person who receives it because it saves him from the humiliation of begging and prevents him from envying the rich. Its importance and centrality to Islam results in the “ punishment” for not paying when able are very severe.

Muslim jurists agree that zakat is obligatory on the Muslim who has reached puberty, who is sane, who is free, and who owns the minimum assigned nisab throughout Islamic history; denying Zakat equals denying the Islamic faith. However, Muslim jurists differ on the details of zakat, which may include rate, the exemptions, and the kinds of wealth that are zakatable. Zakatable refers to assets subject to zakat according to Islamic examples

and directives. Some scholars consider the wealth of children and insane individual's zakatable. Some scholars consider all agricultural products zakatable; others restrict zakat to specific kinds only. Some consider debts zakatable. Similar differences exist for business assets and women's jewellery. Some require certain minimum nisab for zakatability.

THE PAYMENT OF ZAKAT

Zakat is obligatory on every sane adult Muslim who is malik al-nisab, i. e., who possesses wealth equivalent to the monetary value of 20 Dinar of gold or 200 Dirham of silver. In the case of Muslims below the age of puberty and those Muslims who are insane, Zakat is obligatory on their wealth and their guardians are entrusted to pay it on their behalf. The law stipulates that once a year (after the completion of one lunar year) Zakat must be calculated and 2.5% is to be deducted from a malik al-nisab's wealth (cash, savings, investments, gold and silver) and donated as Zakat.

ZAKAT AS AN ACT OF WORSHIP

Zakat is in spirit an act of worship and in its external form the discharging of a social service. It is, therefore, not a levy or a tax, but is rather an act of worship.

That is why the Noble Qur'an often mentions the observance of Salah alongside the giving of Zakat:

وَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا ۚ فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا ۚ لَا تَبَدِيلَ لِطَعْنِ اللَّهِ ۚ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾
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“ And be steadfast in your prayer and pay charity; whatever good you send forth for your future, you shall find it with Allah, for Allah is well aware of what you do”

Moreover, the Noble Qur'an emphasizes the importance of Zakat as follows:

“ By no means shall you attain righteousness, unless you give of that which you love”

RECIPIENTS OF ZAKAT

Allah (S. W. T) has mentioned paying of Zakat on multiple occasions like.

“ Zakat is for the poor and the needy and those who are employed to administer and collect it, and for those whose hearts are to be won over, and for the freeing of human beings from bondage, and for those who are overburdened with debts and for every struggle in God's cause, and for the wayfarers: this is a duty ordained by God, and God is the All-Knowing, the Wise.”

According to the Noble Qur'an, the lawful recipients of Zakat must be Muslims who belong to either one or more of the eight categories:

- (1) The poor
- (2) The needy

- (3) Those whose hearts are to be reconciled
- (4) Securing the freedom of those who are captives
- (5) Those that are genuinely in debt
- (6) Muslim employees
- (7) Those who engage in the cause of Allah I
- (8) The wayfarers

DEFINITION OF SADAQAH

The word Sadaqah is derived from the Arabic root verb sadaqah which means “ to be truthful” and hence Sadaqah implies engaging in any righteous act in order to earn the mardat (pleasure) of Allah.

SOME RULES PERTAINING TO SADAQAH

There are three basic rules involved for Sadaqah to be divinely rewarded. Firstly, it must be donated in the name of Allah alone. Secondly, all monies donated must be from a legitimate source. Money that has been stolen or earned unethically is rendered void by Allah . Thirdly, all excess wealth is seen being owned by Allah and Muslims hold the wealth as trustees. Therefore, it is left up to individual Muslims to determine as to how much they are willing to give back to Him in the form of charity.

SOME MITIGATING CONSEQUENCES OF SADAQAH

According to the teachings of Islam, the giving of Sadaqah serves a number of functions. First and foremost is the expiation of sins. The believers are asked to give Sadaqah immediately following any divine transgression. It also serves to compensate for any shortcoming in any past payment of Zakah.

Moreover, it also gives protection against falling victim to calamities. Furthermore, it wards off affliction in this world, and punishment on Day of Judgment. It is therefore recommended to give Sadaqah, irrespective whether it is at night or during the day, in secret or in public in order to seek God Almighty's pleasure (Al-Baqarah, 2: 274). Finally, it is generally believed that the constant giving of a little charity pleases God Almighty more than the occasional giving of much charity.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ZAKAT AND SADAQAH

It is important to differentiate between Zakat and Sadaqah. Zakat is the obligatory annual almsgiving which is determined on the basis of the value of one's wealth. Sadaqah on the other hand is superogatory charity, given by Muslims over and above their Zakat contribution. Moreover, every Muslim irrespective of his/her financial status can in actual fact participate in Sadaqah in view of the fact that Sadaqah is not necessarily restricted to monetary contributions, but can also be given in kind as specified in the Noble Qur'an, for example, feeding the poor (69: 34; 90: 11-16; 107: 1-3), extending any form of support to the orphans (17: 34; 76: 8; 89: 17; 90: 15; 93: 9, 107: 2) and widows, advising or counselling, and volunteering one's services in the community.

CONCLUSION

Thus charity, on a generic level, plays a major role in Muslim society. One of the key purposes of the religion is grounded in a sense of community, which is fostered by charity. The Noble Qur'an reassures those who engage in voluntary charity would be amply rewarded:

“ Those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness, and establish regular prayers and regular charity, will have their reward with their Lord: On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.”

From the Islamic point of view, wealth belongs to God and is held by human beings in trust; so for those whom Allah has blessed with wealth, it is a test; and Muslims should strive to pass this test by not becoming worshipers of hoarded wealth. They should rather use the wealth only in ways God has permitted and realize that the amount to be given is not really their money but, rather, it belongs to those who have less than they do.

Islamic charity is one of those unique forms of worship that bring out both the individual and the social aspects of ibada – worship. Consider its sociopolitical effects: it frees society from the ill feelings arising out of class hatred. It opposes an individualism that is blind to the travails of one's neighbors and stands against a socialism that shackles individual freedom. It fosters neither selfishness nor renunciation. It also strengthens a sense of brotherhood and establishes social cohesion. Islamic charity represents the unbreakable bond between members of the community, whom Prophet Mohammed described as “ like the organs of the body, if one suffers then all others rally in response.”

We are fortunate to have sufficient means to live a quality life, but there are millions of people who are less fortunate than ourselves. Many millions of children, women and men live in abject poverty. Things that we take for granted-regular meals, housing, education and healthcare-are considered luxuries in some of the world's poorest countries. It is our duty to help them- because helping the poor and destitute is emphasized again and again in the Qur'an and in the other Holy Scripts and traditions. By working together we can help make a real difference and bring about positive change to many people's lives. The rewards for being charitable are also manifold: charity purifies our wealth and God has promised us a great reward for being charitable towards our fellow human beings.