

AL-SADAQAH – ALMS

BY

Mujahidali A R Sheriff

Muhammad Ibn 'Ajlaan has reported that:

I was in the company of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as) when a man from a distant city arrived and greeted the gathering. "How were your brothers when you took leave of them?" The Imam (as) asked him. The man spoke well of them and praised them a great deal. The Imam (as) then asked, "Do the rich visit the indigent when they fall ill?" The man said that they seldom did. The Imam (as) then carried on and asked, "Do the rich seek to know the condition of those who are poor?" "Rarely", answered the man. "Do the affluent ones help out the poor and the needy?" asked the Imam (as) again. The man said, "You speak of attributes which are rare amongst our people". Thereupon the Imam (as) said, "How then do these people consider themselves to be (our) Shia'h (when there exists no bond of brotherhood between the affluent and the impoverished ones?)" (Al-Kaafi)

One of the things which is highly recommended in Islam, in addition to obligatory poor tax is **al-Sadaqah** which means 'to give alms to the poor and the needy'. Praising the people who are **Muttaqeen** (those who are God wary), Allah (SWT) says: **"And there was a share in their wealth for the beggar and the deprived". (51:19)** Elsewhere, He (SWT) has also included people who are considerate of the poor and help them with their wealth among the doers of good who shall be handsomely recompensed in the Hereafter. **".... And in whose wealth there is a known right for the beggar and the deprived..." (70:24)**

BENEFITS OF AL-SADAQAH

There are many advantages of giving **al-Sadaqah**. By giving it, one does not lose his wealth thereby causing miseries for one, on the contrary one stands to gain from it in this world and in the Hereafter.

Al-Sadaqah serves as atonement for our sins.

If we want our sins to be forgiven, and that of our beloved ones who have passed away from this world then in addition to **Taw bah** and **Istighfar** (repenting and seeking forgiveness), we must also give **al-Sadaqah** (alms to the poor).

S V Mir Ahmad 'Ali writes in his Tafseer:

There were some Muslims who did not accompany the Holy Prophet (saww) on the expedition of Tabuk. When the Holy Prophet (saww) returned to Madina, several verses were revealed to condemn these Muslims. Fearing the punishment of Allah (SWT), Abu Lubaba and two other companions (who were among the guilty) tied themselves to the pillars of the Masjid and said that they would continue to remain tied till death unless the Holy Prophet (saww) untied them as a gesture of forgiveness. They were forgiven by

Allah (SWT) and the following verse was revealed, **“And there are others who have confessed their sins. They have mixed up a good action with another that was evil. It may be that Allah will turn to them (with Mercy); Verily Allah is Oft-forgiving, Merciful”.** (9:102)

On being freed, all three of them presented the Holy Prophet (saww) with gifts, which he (saww) refused to accept, and said that he could not accept anything from them unless he received Allah (SWT)'s command. Thereupon, the following verse was revealed, **“Take alms out of their wealth; thereby you will cleanse them and purify them; and pray for them...”** (9:103)

The Holy Prophet (saww) has said, *“Verily the alms will cool down the heat in the graves for those who gave them; and on the Day of Judgement, a believer will remain in the shade of his alms”.* (Kanzul-'Ummaal)

He (saww) also said, *“Verily Allah (SWT) becomes extremely pleased with one who extends his hand out to give alms; and one on whom Allah is pleased with, He (SWT) forgives his sins”.* (Meezan al-Hikmah)

Al-Sadaqah is one of those good acts that is directly received by Allah (SWT).

Allah (SWT) says: **“Do they not know that Allah is He Who accepts repentance from His servants and takes the alms...”** (9:104)

The Holy Prophet (saww) has said, *“There are two things in which I do not like any one to associate with me; One is my Wudhoo (ablution) for it is part of my prayer and the other is my alms which goes from my hand into the hand of one who asked for it (beggar), thereby it goes into the hand of the beneficent”.* (Bihar al-Anwaar)

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as) has said, **“Verily Allah, the Exalted says: ‘For every good act, I have appointed someone other than Myself to receive it except for Sadaqah (alms) for I receive them with My own hands..’”** (Bihar al-Anwaar)

Al-Sadaqah increases the ‘Rizq’ (sustenance).

Many people think people that only those who can afford to give al-Sadaqah should give it. The teaching of Islam is contrary to this belief. It says: *‘Remove your poverty by way of giving alms’.* Giving Alms is considered as putting a capital investment in a transaction with Allah (SWT) whose returns are plenty. Imam 'Ali bin Abi Talib (as) has said, *“If you experience poverty then get into a transaction with Allah by giving alms”.* (Bihar al-Anwaar) Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as) has said, *“Sometimes I (too) experience poverty (financial difficulties) so I get into a transaction with Allah by giving alms”.* (Bihar al-Anwaar)

It is reported that once Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as) asked one of his sons Muhammad, *“O son! What is remaining of our spending money?”* He said, *“Forty Dinars”.* Imam (a.s.) said to him, *“Go out and give them away (to the poor) as alms”.* Muhammad was surprised and said, *“(O Father!) Besides this (amount) there is nothing remaining with*

me!" Imam (as) said, "Give them in alms for Allah will take charge of it. Don't you know that for everything there is a key to it and the key to sustenance is Sadaqah (alms)".
(Bihar al-Anwaar)

THE BEST ALMS

In traditions, there are certain **Alms**, which have been regarded as the best and superior in the sight of Allah (SWT). Some of them are as follows:

Unconditional Sadaqah:

The Holy Prophet (saww) was once asked, "Which type of Sadaqah is the best?" He (saww) replied, "That Sadaqah which you give whilst you are still healthy, (by nature) tight-fisted (possessive over wealth), hoping to remain alive (forever) and you fear poverty." **(Bihar al-Anwaar)**

In other words, the best **Sadaqah** is that which one gives at a time when one is still healthy and possessive over one's wealth due to the hope of living forever in this world and averting poverty. Many of us are concerned about our future in this worldly life. It is for this reason that we work hard and accumulate wealth, which becomes difficult to part with. In addition, some of us also think that **Sadaqah** should only be given when we feel necessary such as to safeguard from illnesses and calamities. Whilst it is true that **Sadaqah** protects us from all such things, the best **Sadaqah** is that, which is given purely to earn the pleasure of Allah (SWT), and its advantages will automatically follow.

Sadaqah Spent on Poor Relatives:

Many of us consider spending of **Sadaqah** on relatives as wrong and believe that such an act is disgraceful. Contrary to our belief and thinking, Islam encourages us to do the same.

It is reported from Imam 'Ali bin al-Husayn (as) that the Holy Prophet (saww) has said, "Begin your charity at home. By this I mean that you spend on your father, on your mother, on your sister and on your brother. Thereafter, follow the sequence of those who are nearer, and then nearer." **(Bihar al-Anwaar)**

He (saww) has also said, "If the near ones are needy then the Sadaqah cannot be given to anyone else." **(Bihar al-Anwaar)**

He (saww) has also said, "The best Sadaqah is the one which you spend on your sister, or on your daughter who has been returned to you (divorced), and she has no one save you who can support her." **(Bihar al-Anwaar)**

There are two advantages of giving **Sadaqah** to one's poor relatives:

Firstly, it will increase in the weight of good deeds when the deeds shall be put on the weighing scale in the Hereafter. Imam 'Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) has said, *"The first thing that shall be put in the weighing scale of a servant (on the day of Judgement) will be his charity on his relatives."* **(Bihar al-Anwaar)**

And secondly, the rewards of whatever one spends on his poor relatives shall be doubled. The Holy Prophet (saww) has said, *"Verily the reward of every Sadaqah that is spent on poor relatives shall be doubled."* **(Kanzul-'Ummaal)**

AL-EITHAAR (Giving Preference to Others)

The third kind of **Sadaqah** that is also considered as the best and superior in the sight of Allah (SWT) is the one, which, a believer gives despite his own financial troubles to those who are needier. This act is known as **Al-Eithaar** in the Holy Quran and it has been highly praised.

"And they give them (others) preference over themselves even though poverty be their own lot. And those who are saved from their own greed-it is they who are the felicitous." (59:9)

Giving preference to others over oneself is an act of greatness. The Prophets, the Imams and the sincere believers usually exhibit such attribute.

Once, having come to know that there is no food at home, Imam 'Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) borrowed a dinar and went to the market to buy some cereals. There, he (a.s.) saw Miqdad crossing the street. He was strolling to pass his time as, in his house too, there was no food. Miqdad could not bear the sorry plight of his children, so he had left home. Imam (as) found the real cause of his distressed appearance and gave him the dinar, and returned home empty handed. **(Tafseer of S V Mir Ahmad Ali)**

Once a group of men came to Imam 'Ali (a.s.) and said, "We always rely upon Allah. We eat when we have food; and if we do not have it then we bear (the hunger) with patience." Imam (as) said, *"Real dependence on Allah is to thank Him when there is nothing with you, and when you have something, to give it to others who are more in need of it than you."* **(Tafseer of S V Mir Ahmed Ali)**

Abu Baseer once asked Imam al-Baqir (as) or Imam al-Sadiq (as), "Which is the best Sadaqah?" Imam (as) replied, *"The struggle of one who has no possession. Have you not heard Allah (SWT) saying in the Quran: '**And they give them (others) preference over themselves even though poverty be their own lot.'**" Don't you see that greatness is in this?"* **(Meezan al-Hikmah)**

MODERATION IN AL-EITHAAR

Although giving preference to those who are more needy is considered to be a sign of greatness and a superior quality of **Sadaqah**, we will find that even in this act, Islam has prescribed moderation.

“Let not your hand be shackled to your neck, nor stretch it forth to the utmost stretching, lest you sit down blamed, destitute.” (17:29)

According to the above verse, one should neither be stingy nor should he be lavish to an extent that he renders himself destitute. A path of moderation should be applied.

“And they ask you (O Muhammad) as to what they should spend? Say: What you can spare.” (2:219)

Imam Musa al-Kadhim (as) has said, *“Do not spend on your brothers from yourself what will harm you more than what will benefit them.” (Wasail al-Shia’h)*

However, it is important to note that even in the prescribed moderation, one must strive to give to an extent that one himself feels that he has reached his limit and has been sufficiently lavish. In his will to Imam ‘Ali (as), the Holy Prophet (saww) said, *“With regard to giving Alms, you must strive in it until you can tell (yourself): ‘I have been lavish’, and you have not been lavish.” (Bihar al-Anwaar)*

Wallahu Waliyyut Tawfeeque

Mujahidali A R Sheriff

mujahidali.sheriff@gmail.com