

***FITRAH*: LEVY ON COMPLETION OF FASTING**

The Islamic system of finance is directed towards removal of poverty and degradation. There is another aspect of it. That is a sense of social interdependence. The individuals cannot feel happy unless all other fellows are equally happy. The objective of compulsory levy of *fitrah* upon everybody is that those who do not have means should also be able to celebrate Eid happily. That is why the disbursal of *fitrah* before Eid has been made compulsory. Some scholars recommend that *fitrah* can be disbursed after the middle of Ramadan. The Messenger of Allah ((*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*)) pronounced: *Fitrah* is a means of purification and cleansing of a person from all mistakes and omissions which he may have committed while fasting. It is also a means of feeding the poor and destitute. If a person paid it before the Eid salat he fulfilled his *fardh* but if distributed afterwards it will be regarded as charity or alms (Abu Dawood, Ibn Majah, Hakim). Payment of *fitrah* has been made obligatory for all self-supporting Muslims, men, women, young men and children. Every householder ought to pay *fitrah* on behalf of each member of his family. The quantity of *fitrah* is about 2.250 kilogram grains per head which may be given per head in kind or cash. *Fitrah* can be disbursed among all those who are eligible to receive zakat but it is preferable that it be distributed among the poor and destitute. The Messenger of Allah (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) advised that on this day make every needy man free of his need (Baihaqi).

Other Charitable Spending

In addition to the obligatory nature of *zakat* and *fitrah*, Islam inculcates in the minds of the believers the idea that whatever they enjoy is a bounty of Allah. All their possessions are but a trust of Allah in their hands. They should not forget the giver in their attachment with their property. Islam says that believers should not lag behind in fulfilment of their obligations for which they have been sent to this world. That is why believers are exhorted to spend in the way of Allah generously to secure His pleasure. Whatever you spend for the betterment of others does not diminish your property but rather maximizes it. Allah (*Ta'ala*) has ordained:

﴿مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلٍ فِي كُلِّ سَنَابِلَةٍ مِائَةٌ

حَبَّةٌ وَاللَّهُ يُضَعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٦١﴾ البقرة: ٢٦١

[“The likeness of those who spend their wealth in Allah’s way is as the likeness of a grains which groweth seven ears, in every ear a hundred gains. Allah giveth increase manifold to whom He will. Allah is Mighty, Wise” (Al-Baqarah: 261)]. In another place He says:

﴿لَنْ نَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ﴾ آل عمران: ٩٢

(Translation of meaning) [“Ye will not attain unto piety until ye spend of that which ye love. And whatsoever ye spend, Allah is aware thereof” (Al Imran: 92)].

When a bondman spends in the way of Allah, He says this bondman of mine has given me a loan and I shall repay him for it manifold. Therefore, Allah (Ta'ala) exhorts His bondmen to give more and more in his way:

﴿مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً﴾ البقرة: ٢٤٥

(Translation of meaning) [“Who is it that will lend unto Allah a goodly loan, so that He may give it increased manifold? Allah straiteneth and enlargeth. Unto Him ye will return” (A-Baqarah: 245)].

The importance of charitable spending is highlighted by this tradition of the Messenger of Allah ((sallAllahu ‘alayhi wa sallam)): Giving charity daily for each joint of yours is an obligation. To adjudicate between two persons is also a charity. To give somebody a lift is also a charity. To help somebody to load his burden is a charity. Saying good things is a charity. Taking each step for salat is charity. And removing an obstacle from the way is a charity (Al-Bukhari & Muslim). Thus the concept of charity is not limited to one’s wealth and property. One can very well perform a number of charitable deeds with his power, capacity, time and knowledge. It is also not necessary that one should perform big. The Messenger of Allah ((sallAllahu ‘alayhi wa sallam)) said: Save yourselves by giving a piece of date in charity. If you cannot afford even this much, then speak some good words (Muslim).

Maladies in the Way of Charitable Spending

Hypocrisy and ostentatiousness in respect of spending in the way of Allah represents the great killer. If a man spends his all but with the intention that

people say he is very benevolent and generous then all his good deeds are nullified. Likewise, to make others believe that he has done them some favour is also destructive. Thus Allah (Ta'ala) commands:

﴿إِنْ تُبْدُوا الصَّدَقَاتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِيَ وَإِنْ تُخْفُوهَا وَتُؤْتُوهَا الْفُقَرَاءَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَيُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ مِنْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ خَيْرٌ﴾ البقرة: ٢٧١

(Translation of meaning) ["If ye publish your almsgiving, it is well, but if ye hide it and give it to the poor, it will be better for you, and will atone for some of your ill-deeds. Allah is informed of what ye do" (Al-Baqarah: 271)]. In another place He says:

﴿وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ﴾ البقرة: ٢٧٢

(Translation of meaning) [". . . And whatsoever good thing ye spend, it is for yourselves, when ye spend not save in search of Allah's countenance" (Al-Baqarah: 272)].

Those who spend for fame and publicity have been depicted in the Quran in these terms:

﴿يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا يُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِثَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا﴾ البقرة: ٢٦٤

(Translation of meaning) ["O ye who believe! Render not vain your almsgiving by reproach and injury, like him who spendeth his wealth only to be seen of men and believeth not in Allah and the Last Day. His likeness is as the likeness of a rock whereon is dust of earth; a rainstorm smiteth it, leaving it smooth and bare. They have no control of aught of that which they have gained." (Al-Baqarah: 264)].

The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said: There will be seven categories of people whom Allah (Ta'ala) will shelter beneath the shade of His Throne on the day when there will be no shade; one from among them will be a man who gave charity but hid it so his left hand did not know what his right hand spent (Al-Bukhari & Muslim).

Allah (Ta'ala) has decried the hoarding of wealth for the love of it. He has warned thus:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يَنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ﴾ التوبة: ٣٤

(Translation of meaning) [“O ye who believe! Lo! Many of the [Jewish] rabbis and the [Christian] monks devour the wealth of mankind wantonly and dear [men] from the way of Allah. They who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not the way of Allah, unto them give tidings [O Muhammad] of a painful doom” (At-Taubah: 34)].

Likewise, Allah (Ta'ala) dislikes miserliness and stinginess. According to divine word only they are successful who avoid them:

﴿وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ ۚ﴾ الحشر: ٩

(Translation of meaning) [“. . . but prefer (the fugitives) above themselves though poverty become their lot.” (Hashr: 9)].

In another place Allah (Ta'ala) says:

﴿هَآأَنْتُمْ هَآؤَآءِ تُدْعَوْنَ لِتُنفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يَبْخُلُ ۚ وَمَن يَبْخُلْ فَإِنَّمَا يَبْخُلُ عَن نَّفْسِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ الْغَنِيُّ وَأَنتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ ۚ وَإِن تَتَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُونُوا أَمْثَلَكُمْ﴾ محمد: ٣٨

(Translation of meaning) [“Lo! Ye are those who are called to spend in the way of Allah, yet among you there are some who hoard. And as for him who hoardeth, he hoardeth only from his soul. And Allah is the Rich, and ye are poor. And if ye turn away He will exchange you for some other ok, and they will not be like of you” (Muhammad: 38)].

In the Islamic view worldly assets are not outlawed or depreciated but they are acknowledged as the bounty and grace of Allah. Allah has called them as the mainstay of the people and has encouraged economic enterprise and pursuits. He proclaims:

﴿فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِن فَضْلِ اللَّهِ ۚ﴾ الجمعة: ١٠

(Translation of meaning) [“And when the salat [Friday salat] has been over spread out in the earth seeking Allah’s bounty” (Al-Juma’: 10)].

There is no renunciation or monkery in Islam. Allah (Ta'ala) ordains:

﴿قُلْ مَن حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ ۖ وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ ۚ قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةٌ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ ۚ﴾ الأعراف: ٣٢

(Translation of meaning) [“Say: Who hath forbidden the adornment of Allah which He hath brought forth for His bondmen and the good things of His providing? Say: Such, on the Day of Resurrection, will be only for those who believed during the life of the world. (Al-A’raf: 32)].

But Allah also dislikes that worldly belongings deflect men from Allah and his Messenger. Thus He says:

﴿قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ﴾ (التوبة: ٢٤)

(Translation of meaning) [“Say: If your fathers, and your sons, and your brethren, and your wives, and your tribe, and the wealth ye have acquired and merchandise for which ye fear that there will be no sale, and dwellings ye desire are dearer to you than Allah and His messenger and striving in His way; then wait till Allah bringeth His command to pass. Allah guideth not wrong-doing folk”) (At-taubah: 24)].

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