

The commandment of Allah for payment of Zakat on all Muslims of means comes next to His Order for their observance of prayer and these two often go together in order of sequence in many verses of the Quran (as in Suras 73:20; 9:18 98:5; 31:2-4; 9:11). Again Divine Order for prayer comes next to Faith. This sequence order of these three principles or pillars of Islam out of five (the other two being Roza and Hajj) is very significant.

Faith in the Supreme Creator is sought to be consolidated through prayer in order to bring a man closer to Allah, and the spirit of dedication and sacrifice inculcated through faith and prayer is manifested through practical demonstration of payment of Zakat. It is considered to be an Ibadat like prayer because it means carrying out of an order of Allah by serving the cause of suffering humanity. It purifies the soul of the payer because by so doing he learns to raise himself above his greed for wealth and accumulation of wealth in order to meet the urgent demands of his legs fortunate Muslim brethren.

It is in other words, a compulsory training for one who pays Zakat to elevate his

mind and thought above all personal interest to spend out of what Allah has given him.

As the Zakat system was introduced through Divine Order, so it is not a question of gift of the rich to the poor. The poor have a right to have a share of the wealth of the rich. The rich on their own accord will have to look after the poor and dispose of a portion of their accumulated wealth for the purification of their souls as desired and directed by Allah. The Prophet (SM) was thus directed by Allah, "Take (alms) Zakat out of their wealth so that you (Muhammad SM) may purify them and sanctify them" (Sura Tauba: 103).

Zakat is an annual charge on property which remains in possession of a person for a full one year when its value

reaches a certain limit called Nisab. It is different for different kinds of property and the rate of payment is also different. When at the end of full one year one is in possession of 52½ tolas of silver or of 7½ tolas of gold, he is to pay at the rate to 2½%. On each i.e. one fortieth of each item. The Nisab and rate of payment of cash is the same as that of silver and gold. Articles of merchandise are to be taxed in the same way on determination of values.

In case of animals, if one maintains more than what he requires for domestic purposes i.e. for purpose of profit then the Nisab is Camels, 5 (1 to be paid as Zakat) Cows and Bulls, 30 (1 to be paid), Sheep and Goats, 40 (1 to be paid).

If rice, wheat, dates, grapes and other fruits are grown by rain water then one tenth (Ushr) of each kind is to be paid as Zakat, but if these are grown by irrigation system then one twentieth of each kind is to be paid as Zakat. All details connected with Zakat are worked out by the compilers of Hadith.

When the order of payment

The meaning of Zakat

of Zakat was first revealed to the Prophet (SM), no details of expenditure were given to him. As a result the companions of the Prophet (SM) used to dispose of their wealth (cash, gold, silver camels, etc) after meeting their necessary expenses of life. It was distributed among the poor of the area where

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from it was collected from the rich. The Holy Prophet (SM), for example, once directed the Governor of Yemen, Hazrat, Muajib-Jabal to collect Zakat from the rich tribal people and distribute it among the poor people of the same tribes.

The details of expenditure of Zakat were given subsequently through revelation in the second year of Hira in Medina, thus, "Verily the alms (Zakat) are only for the poor and the needy and for those who collect them and for those whose hearts have been reconciled to truth by conversion); for those in bondage and in debt and for the cause of Allah (i.e. or those who are engaged in teaching or fighting, or

in duties assigned to them by the righteous Imams) and for the wayfarer (who stands stranded) (Sura Tauba: 103).

It is clear from this verse of the Quran that the Prophet (SM) as the head of the Muslim state was directed to collect Zakat Fund. This establishes the responsibility of a Muslim state to collect Zakat and distribute it and to maintain an establishment and office for the purpose. In a non-Muslim state it will, however, be the duty of the Muslim community to realise and distribute it.

The Zakat system was of course introduced with a total discouragement to idleness and begging with a view to fostering the ideal of self-reliance in the poor section of the Muslim community. If Zakat could properly be collected and carefully utilised all over the Muslim world, there would remain no needy Muslim anywhere in any Muslim states. Late Moulana Abul Kalam Azad, an erudite Muslim scholar and thinker in his famous book 'Indi-a Winds Freedom', says "If the Muslim of today only set aright the Zakat system as per rules laid down in the

Holy Quran (and Sunna of the Prophet (SM) it can be said with all certainty that all social problems and ailments would automatically be rectified. Even if the Muslim deviate today totally from Islamic loyalty and only practise the Zakat system, the present condition could undergo a rapid change... if they can collectively realise and spend Zakat, the society would change within a very short time".

The imperative necessity of payment of Zakat for a Muslim of wealth is further established by the inevitable imposition of a deterrent punishment for non-payment of Zakat, in the next world, in the verses of the Quran such as, "And those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of Allah announce to them the tidings, O Muhammad SM, of a painful doom of the day when it will (all) be heated in the fire of hell and their foreheads and their backs will be branded therewith (and it will be said to them, here is that which you hoarded and now taste of what you used to hoard (Tauba: 34-35).