

Spending in the Way of Allah Secretly and Openly

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Islam, in its comprehensive teachings, makes provisions for the welfare of every individual, society and the world as a whole. Among these teachings is the injunction to spend in the way of Allah that is to say to help the poor and needy out of love of God.

Spending in the cause of Allah benefits not only those who receive alms, but those who give them: 'If you give alms openly, it is well *and good*; but if you conceal them and give them to the poor, it is better for you; and He will remove from you *many* of your sins...' (2:272)

Social welfare in fact leads to the prosperity of the nation which leads in turn to the prosperity of the individual, but this is not the first purpose of spending, rather the goal is purely seeking Allah's pleasure.

The Qur'an permits Muslims to spend in Allah's way either secretly or publicly as both have their benefits and drawbacks, and both merit reward: 'Those who spend their wealth by night and day, secretly and openly, have their reward with their Lord; on them *shall come* no fear, nor shall they grieve.' (2:275)

Therefore, a Muslim must assess the circumstance and situation to see which way of spending will attract Allah's pleasure, and achieve the maximum benefit. On the other hand, showing off and bragging is

categorically forbidden: '...render not vain your alms by taunt and injury, like him who spends his wealth to be seen of men, and he believes not in Allah and the Last Day. His case is like the case of a smooth rock covered with earth, on which heavy rain falls, leaving it bare, smooth and hard...' (2:265)

So when a Muslim spends in front of others, it must be purely to encourage them to spend in the cause of Allah and to do good, but if the intention is to show off one's wealth in front of others, it will be as if one's good works never were.

However, speaking of favours Allah has bestowed upon oneself monetary or otherwise, is acceptable if the aim is solely to encourage others to seek these bounties: 'And as for the bounty of your Lord do relate it to others.' (93:12). So, giving is the noblest of acts, so long as the giver has no atom of hypocrisy, nor is led by the desire to show off or demean others.

It is preferable to hide charity when it is given particularly to the poor and needy out of respect to their feelings and dignity, but it is better to do other good deeds openly in order to inspire others to follow suit, for example, when people are called upon to openly support a humanitarian cause, we see a very high turnout. 'Say to My servants who have believed, that they should observe Prayer and spend out of what We have given them, secretly and openly...' (14:32)

While all religions call for doing good, Islam stands alone in calling for vying with one another in this, the word vying in Arabic means to speed up to the maximum degree, as in a race where each person competes with others. In this context, the best and most charitable person will do more good

and others will try to catch up to him or her, so the race of millions vying with millions in doing good will continue with all speed and full strength and energy.

One should not understand by this that Islam creates envy and greed in the hearts of its followers, rather it only shows that the believers' duty is to help their brothers and sisters advance because the ultimate purpose is benefiting others "And let there be among you a body of men who should invite to goodness, and enjoin equity and forbid evil..."(3:105) Thus, when the believers attain good, they invite others to hurry and partake of the same blessings.

When the believers race in the act of good deeds, they take with them those who are

behind and help others to catch up with them. This is in fact the greatest race of goodness and embodies the true spirit of humanity.

We have to remember the guiding principle which the Holy Qur'an taught us regarding drawing the most benefit out of giving, that is: "Never shall you attain to righteousness unless you spend out of that which you love..." (3:93). So, everything, which you love most, whether it is money, sleep, children, time, etc., if you are ready to sacrifice it for the sake of Allah, that act would become righteousness. May Allah enable us to act upon these great teachings, Ameen.