

5 Pillars Of Islam - Zakaat

What does Islam teach about Zakaat and who are the people entitled to be recipients of zakat?

Among the various pillars of Islam, Zakaat also known as the poor due is obligatory on Muslims. It has been instituted for the community of our prophet (s.a.w) since the second year of Hijri. Zakaat is the amount of money taken from the better off or the rich and to be given to those in need. Allah says in the Qur'an to spend in His way as it is mentioned to spend on others out of what Allah has provided you.¹ Zakaat is taken from different sources like money, gold, silver, mines and land tax.

Normally it is 2 ½ % of our money or wealth that is given as Zakaat. If the Nisab; the minimum amount on which zakaat is taken, equals or exceeds 598.40 gm on silver and 85.5 gm on gold, then zakaat must be paid. Nisaab should be based on whichever of the two (gold or silver) works out better and more beneficial to the poor. Zakaat must be taken from mines as 1/5 of the produce and on land tax as 1/10 if the land is watered by a lack or a river or 1/20 if not watered naturally.

There are many people entitled to be recipients of zakat as it is said in the Quran.²

At the outset we have the Fuqara that is the poor. They have more need than the other categories since their need is pressing and precarious. They are the graceful persons who don not anyone for anything. According to Ibn Abbas³, the Fuqaha are the folk of the Platform. According to Qatada, they are the ill person.⁴

Another category which are in need of Zakaat is the Masaakin that is the needy. Abu Huraira said that the messenger (s) said that the needy is not the one who goes round people and asks them for a mouthful or two or a date or two, but he is the one who does not have enough to satisfy his needs and whose condition is not known to others, that others may give him something in charity and who does not beg people. According to Ibn Abbas, he is among the pilgrims.⁵

The third category concerns those who collect the zakat money. According to Ibn Abbas, they are the collectors of alms. These collectors of alms deserve a part of the alms, unless they are relatives of the prophet (s). The prophet (s) said that verily, the alms are not allowed for Muhammad and the relatives of Muhammad, for it is only the dirt that the people discard.

A forth category deals with those whose hearts are to be reconciled and attracted to the religion of Islam by giving them gifts such as Abu Sufyan and his 15 companions. Some people are given because some of his peers might embrace Islam, while others are given to collect alms from surrounding areas, or to defend Muslim outposts.

A fifth category is to free the captives. They are the captives who want to ransom themselves to be free. It is allowed to use Zakah funds to buy the freedom of slaves, indicating that 'Riqab' has more general meanings than merely giving money to slaves to buy their freedom or one's buying a slave and freeing him on an individual basis. It's about emancipating a person by freeing him on your own.

Another type deals with the debtors who incur debts to fulfil works which are for the obedience of Allah. They include those who incur expenses in solving disputes between people, those who guarantee a loan that became due (unpaid), causing financial strain to them, and those whose funds do not sufficiently cover their debts. It also includes those who indulged in a sin and repented from it.

A seventh category is for the cause of Allah. This deals with those fighters for the cause of Allah on the battle field. In the cause of Allah is exclusive for the benefit of the fighters in Jihad, who do not receive compensation from the Muslim Treasury. They are those who will risk their lives to defend both the Muslims and the non-Muslims as well as for any military expedition.

¹ Qur'an 36: 47

² Qur'an 9: 60

³ Tafsir Al Miqbas 9: 60

⁴ Ibn Katheer 9: 60

⁵ Tafsir Al Miqbas 9: 60

There are also the wayfarers who are the guests, the passer-by and the needy traveller in a land, where he does not have what helps him continue his trip. He has a share in the Zakat for what suffices him to reach his destination, even if he had money there. The same is true for whoever intends to travel from his area but does not have enough money. He has a share in Zakat to suffice for his trip and back.

Last but not least, zakaat can be distributed to madrasah, dar-ul-uloom or any Islamic centre to help the students in their studies and to spread Islam. Allah advised to spend on others out of that of which He has made you trustees for those of you who have attained faith and who spend freely in Allah's cause Will have a great reward.⁶

Why is zakat important in Muslim life? What is the significance / importance of Zakaat?

Zakaat is significant as Allah says in the Qur'an that "Those who do not give zakah, and in the Hereafter they are disbelievers."⁷ As such it is mandatory over Muslims to give zakat and they will be accountable on the Day of Judgement. It is the 3rd Fard pillar of Islam. If a Muslim is financially eligible but does not pay Zakah then he will no longer be a Muslim.

Zakaat is important in such a way that, it is mentioned in the Qur'an "You cannot attain righteousness until you give to charity from the possessions you love. Whatever you give to charity, the Almighty is fully aware thereof."⁸ In giving charity, we have to be humble, respectful and never act as if we were doing a favor because pride diminishes good deeds in Islam. We will thus attain righteousness.

Zakaat is important as the Quran says: "Take from their wealth so that you might purify and sanctify (bless) them"⁹ It keeps one away from sin and saves the giver from the moral ill arising from the love and greed of wealth. It is a way to obtain blessing from Allah. The more we give or spend in the path of Allah, the more Allah will help us in this world and the Next.

Zakaat is important in the lives of Muslims as it is a way to increase their wealth in this world and the Next. It is said in the Qur'an that "the likeness of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah, is as the likeness of a grain (of corn); it grows seven ears, and each ear has a hundred grains. Allah gives manifold increase to whom He wills. And Allah is All-Sufficient for His creatures' needs, All-Knower."¹⁰

Zakaat is important as it helps the economy. It develops a circulation of money for the economy and teaches the message of sacrifice to the followers of Islam. It also encourages the people to develop a better society that lives in peace and harmony. Money leaves the hands of the wealthy and is redirected to those in need. The money leaves the circle of a few and is circulated to the whole economy.

Zakaat is important as a source of reward for the Muslims. It is said that those who give to charity night and day, secretly and publicly, receive their recompense from their Lord; they will have nothing to fear, nor will they grieve.¹¹ The Muslims will be rewarded for their belief and for their effort in helping others. There won't be any fear and sadness upon them on the Day of Judgement.

Zakaat is significant as when we give it, this will minimise the suffering of the needy and the poor members of society. At the same time we will know the worthiness and value of money. Through Zakat, the poor are cared for; these include widows, orphans, the disabled, the needy and the destitute. It is the responsibility of each one of us to take care of the weak.

Zakaat is significant as when we give it, the moral degradation of society lowers and ultimately finishes because the frustration of people and their depression lowers down. There will be fewer thieves for instance. There will be a manifestation of spiritual and humanitarian interactions between individual Muslims and the society he lives in. This will bridge the link between materialism and spirituality.

⁶ Qur'an 57: 7

⁷ Qur'an 41: 7

⁸ Qur'an 3: 92

⁹ Qur'an 9: 103

¹⁰ Qur'an 2: 261

¹¹ Qur'an 2: 274