

ZAKAT

IMPORTANCE OF ZAKAT

Zakat is a monetary devotion and an Ibaadat, hence zakat is farz (compulsory). Zakat is also one of the five pillars of Islam. One of the most important principles of Islam is that all things belong to Almighty Allah and that wealth is therefore held by human beings in trust. Therefore Allah revealed in the Qur'aan: *"Take from their wealth a portion for charity, in order to clean them thereby and sanctify them"*. Our possessions are purified by setting aside a proportion for those in need. Zakat not only purifies the property of the contributor but also purifies his heart from selfishness and greed. It also purifies the heart of the recipient from envy and jealousy from hatred and uneasiness and it fosters instead good will and warm wishes for the contributors. Those who fulfil this duty have been promised abundant reward in this world and in the Hereafter. Whosoever evades Zakat has been sternly warned in the Qur'aan and Hadith of the consequences. Even the mere thought of the severe warnings should make mindful Muslims tremble with fear.

THE VIRTUES & BENEFITS OF ZAKAT

The Qur'aan states that wealth increases abundantly by giving Zakat and the reward increases according to the sincerity of the intention. Almighty Allah says in the Qur'aan: *"The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is that of a grain of corn. It grows seven ears and each ear has a hundred grains. Allah increases manifold to whom he pleases"*. It is stated in the Hadith that by giving zakat the following benefits are derived:

1. The gain of the pleasure of Allah.
2. Increase in wealth.
3. Protection from losses.
4. A cause thus established for Allah's forgiveness and blessings are obtained.
5. Safety from calamities.
6. Protection from the wrath of Allah and from a bad death.
7. The zakat will provide a shelter on the Day of Judgment.
8. Security from seventy misfortunes.
9. It will serve as a shield from the fire of Hell.
10. It contributes to long life.
11. It saves from fear and grief.

ZAKAT IS NOT A TAX – IT IS AN IBAADAT

Zakat technically means to purify one's possessions of wealth by distributing a prescribed amount which has to be given to the poor as a fundamental Ibaadat. Through Zakat the poorer class (those who are not capable of providing for themselves) are being cared for, such as widows, orphans, the disabled, the poor and the destitute. And it is in fact a vital part of the elaborate and equitable system of the distribution of wealth established by Allah for the benefit of mankind. This clearly shows that zakat is not solely for giving to the destitute and the poor but has been ordained as a monetary devotion. In the same manner that Salaat and Fast are a physical devotion, zakat is a monetary Ibaadat.

THE PUNISHMENT FOR NOT GIVING ZAKAT

People who disregard zakat Almighty Allah says in the Qur'aan: *“And there are those who bury gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah; announce unto them a most grievous penalty on the Day of Qiyamah when heat will be produced out of that wealth in the fire of hell, and with it will be branded their forehead, their flanks and their backs. This is the treasure which you buried for yourselves, taste then the treasure you buried. Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) has said: “The person on whom Allah has bestowed wealth and he does not give Zakat, on the Day of Qiyamah, his wealth will be turned into a venomous bald serpent which will wind around his neck and bite his jaws and say “I am your wealth, I am your treasure”.*

CONDITIONS FOR ZAKAT TO BECOME FARZ:

1. To be a Muslim.
2. To be a matured person.
3. To be of sound mind (i.e. self conscience).
4. To be a free man or woman (i.e. not a slave).
5. To own wealth equal to or greater to the value of nisaab and to be in one's possession for one lunar year (i.e. at the beginning and end of the year).

DEFINATION OF NISAAB

Zakat is farz i.e. obligatory on a person who has money equal to or greater than nisaab. The Nisaab of zakat is 612.36 grams of Silver or 87.48 grams of gold or money or property equivalent to its value. If such Nisaab remains in the possession of a person for a full year he is bound to pay zakat as farz. The rate of zakat is 2½% of total amount eligible for zakat (i.e. 2.5 pence for every pound). The person on whom zakat is farz must pay before the completion of the year.

ITEMS UPON WHICH ZAKAT IS FARZ:

1. Gold & Silver
2. Cash & Liquid investments
3. Business Assets (including Stocks, Shares, Property and Pensions)
4. Livestock
5. Agricultural Output

ITEMS UPON WHICH ZAKAT IS NOT FARZ:

1. Metals other than gold and silver or imitation jewellery.
2. Fixtures and fittings of a shop, motor car, truck etc. which is used for the running of a business.
3. Diamonds, pearls or other semi-precious stones which are for personal use.
4. Living quarters, household furniture, crockery, personal clothing.
5. Books of a scholar or tools of a tradesman etc.
6. Belongings of an immature child.

FUNDAMENTALS OF ZAKAT

1. It is farz to form an intention for the fulfilment of zakat.
2. At the time of giving zakat, intention should be made that, “*I am giving this as Zakat*” or at the time of giving it to an agent for distribution (If the agent does not make the niyyat but the owner has, then it will be sufficient). If the niyyat is not made then zakat will not be valid.
3. The deserving person, to whom the amount is paid must be made legal owner of the amount and have the right to use it as one likes as an owner.
4. It is not necessary to reveal to the deserving person to whom zakat is given, that the cash or kind which is being given to him is zakat.
5. When one has put aside an amount for zakat with the intention that he will give it to the needy and at the time of giving zakat he forgets to make niyyat, the zakat will still be valid.
6. If one gives a deserving person some money as a gift but makes the niyyat of zakat, the zakat will be valid. In the same manner if one gives a poor man or the poor mans children zakat in the form of a present or an Eid gift, the zakat will be valid even if the recipient believes that it is a present. It is advisable to adopt this method with needy friends.
7. If a person in need borrows money and the lender decides that the money lent has to be repaid then such a loan cannot be offset with the mere intention of zakat.

ZAKAT CANNOT BE GIVEN TO:

1. Non-muslims.
2. A wealthy person (i.e. one who possesses wealth equal to or more than nisaab).
3. The family of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) i.e. the Banu Hashim and the slaves freed by the Banu Hashim.
4. Ones parents, grandfathers, grandmothers, children, grandchildren, husband and wife. However one may give zakat to relatives, brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, uncles, aunts, parents in law, provided they themselves are not liable to give zakat.
5. Employees as salaries.
6. Such institutions or organisations that do not give the rightful recipients possession of zakat, but instead use zakat funds for construction, investment or salaries.
7. Mosques or for its repairing and constructions.
8. Debts of a deceased i.e. if a poor man dies as a debtor and someone uses zakat money to pay the debts of the deceased, then zakat will not be valid as the deceased did not become the owner of the money paid.
9. Funeral expenses.

PEOPLE ENTITLED TO RECEIVE ZAKAT:

The Qur'aan in Surah 9 Verse 60 details those categories of people entitled to receive Zakat.

- **FUQARAA** - People who are poor and do not possess wealth equal to nisaab.
- **MASAAKEEN** - People who are destitute and extremely needy to the extent that they are forced to beg for their daily food ration.
- **AL-AAMILEEN** - Those persons who are appointed by an Islamic Head of State or Government to collect Zakat. It is not necessary that this be a needy person.
- **MUALLAFATUL-QULOOB** - Those persons that have recently accepted Islam and are in need of basic necessities who would benefit from encouragement by the Muslims which would help to strengthen their faith of Islam.
- **AR RIQAAB** - Those persons who want to free themselves from slavery.
- **AL GHAAARIMEEN** - Those persons that have a debt and do not possess any other wealth or goods with which they could repay that which they owe. It is conditional that this debt was not created for any un-Islamic or sinful purpose.
- **FI-SABILILLAH** - Those persons that have to carry out a farz deed which has become obligatory on them and subsequently (due to loss of wealth) are unable to complete that farz. (A common misunderstanding about the term Fi-Sabilillah has misled many to believe that this includes all types of charitable deeds. The Qur'aan and Ahaadith of Prophet (S.A.W) do not support this view).
- **IBNUS-SABEEL** - Those persons who are travelling and during the course of their journey are stranded and do not possess the basic necessities. In order to fulfil their travel needs to return home, they can be given zakat (even though they may be rich at home).

IMPORTANT: All the above mentioned recipients excluding Al-Aamileen must be those who do not possess the minimum Nisaab amount.