

Reciprocal Responsibility Among Muslims

It is narrated that Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a), quoting the Messenger of Allah (s) as saying:

“He who passes his night satiated while his neighbour is in a state of hunger, has no faith in me.”¹

Allah, the Most High, created this earth and provided food, water, air, sun, moon and the stars, to fulfill all the needs of man in this life. He made provision for all mankind. Each man has the right to take his needs from these provisions.

Allah ordered Muslims to work and earn a living to gain their provisions. A man has the right to work in all fields including agriculture, industry, trade, medicine, or teaching, to obtain his provisions and gain lawful property. No one has the right to prevent him from doing so.

Thus everyone obtains wealth to satisfy his needs from employment, and spends it on himself and his family, saving any extra. However, human society contains poor and needy people with no property, food, housing or clothes. Therefore, it is obligatory for the rich to provide such people with what they need so that no one remains in poverty.

The Messenger of Allah (s) advises Muslims that whoever passes his night satiated and restful in his home with his family, while he has poor neighbours who pass their night hungry, has no true belief in the Messenger of Allah (s) and is denying him too. Had such a man been a true believer, he would have given food to his neighbours and not let them pass the night in hunger.

Surely, Allah is displeased with those who accumulate wealth, food, and property while others suffer from poverty, hunger and deprivation. Islam is the religion of justice, equality, charity and mercy. Giving to the poor is one of the important actions of the faith. Giving to the poor and needy is mentioned many times in the Holy Qur'an.

“Have you considered him who belies religion? Such is the one who treats the orphans with harshness, and does not urge (others) to feed the needy.” Holy Qur'an (107: 1-3)

Muslims should help the poor and needy before they are forced to ask for it. Muslims should establish

charitable and co-operative associations in schools, mosques, districts and villages to help the needy. Allah has promised to recompense them with rewards in the Hereafter. Who is truer to a promise than Allah?

A true believer suffers greatly if he sees his believing brother hungry or in need, and is not satisfied while the rest of the believers and their families remain in need.

1. Al-Bihbodi, al-Kafi p. 170, First Edition.

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