

True Charity

“And whatever you give, verify God knows it well”. (Qur’an: 3:92).

Charity is not just doling out some cash or material to a needy person. It involves far deeper feeling and far more subtle psychological attitude. Sincerity of purpose is the soul of charity. Unfortunately charity has become one of the most misunderstood virtues in our time. Industrial progress and commercial environment of modern society has degraded charity into a medium of business propaganda. How many times do we see an advertisement for a charitable cause which ends with line “space kindly donated by M/s. xyz”?

According to Islam, a charity must be only for the sake of God, without any shade of worldly motive. Islam condemns

“those who spend their wealth to show to the people” (Qur’an, 2:264)!

Such baseless charity has been described to be

“like a hard barren rock on which is a little soil; on it falls heavy rain and leaves it just a bare stone” (Qur’an, 2:264)!

The second condition to remember is that a charity must be of such a thing which we have earned lawfully. Qur’an says: “Give of the good things which you have honorably earned”. Mass psychology may have an awe for the tactics of Robin Hood: but religion cannot glorify or endorse such methods. It follows that only such charity is real charity in Islamic language. A handful of rice given with our own free will for God is more valuable in Islam than a shipload given under compulsion or for worldly motives.

And what can be given in charity. Qur’an says:

“Never shall you attain righteousness unless you give freely of that which you love”. (Qur’an, 3:92).

So this is the test of the real charity: Do you give something that you value greatly? If you give you life

for a cause, that is the greatest gift you can offer. Next in degree are your personal efforts, your talents, your skill, and your learning. Then come the charities involving your earnings, your property and your possessions. There are other aspects of charity in which you sacrifice the well-being of your near and dear ones, or your near and dear ones, or your position, or reputation.

Whatever the form of your charity, it is the unselfishness which God demands; and whatever you give verily God knows it well.

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