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Spending in the Way of Allah (SWT): A Superior Act of Good Deed in Islam

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Abstract:

Spending in the way of Allah (SWT), other than Zakat, is usually considered a voluntary act of good deed in Islam. Also, there is a common understanding among Muslims that this spending is just an optional act of worship and is less important in terms of significance and rank as compared to the mandatory acts of worship. However, the statements of Allah (SWT), sayings of the Prophet (PBUH), and the opinions of scholars highlight the importance of “spending in the way of Allah (SWT)” in Islam. This research aims to demonstrate the superiority of spending (other than Zakat) in the way of Allah (SWT). Many Qur’anic verses and Hadiths of the Prophet (PBUH) assert the great significance and ranks of spending in the way of Allah (SWT), even above those of some mandatory acts of worship. Also, according to the opinions of some scholars, there are occasions when spending in addition to Zakat becomes obligatory and necessary. The rewards of spending and the consequences of not spending in the way of Allah (SWT) are also stated in some Quranic verses. Allah (SWT) has referred a believer in Al-Qur’an by various distinct qualities & names having specific attributes. “Spending in the way of Allah (SWT)” is the most used attribute of a believer mentioned in those distinct qualities & names. Supporting Qur’anic verses, Hadiths of the Prophet (PBUH), and the opinions of scholars have been identified and presented in this paper. This paper reveals that spending in the way of Allah (SWT) is a superior act of good deed in Islam.

Keywords: *Spending, Infaq, Zakat, Significance, Ranks, Obligations, Attribute.*

1. Introduction

Spending in the way of Allah (SWT) is referred to in the Arabic terminology "Infaq fi Sabilillah" which is usually considered an optional act of worship in Islam. Regarding the earning of wealth, property, and money, Islam teaches us to seek them through righteous means and to spend a part of them as charity in the way of Allah (SWT). This spending in the way of Allah (SWT) is an obligation on the Muslims and they will be rewarded for doing it. Although, it is the special duty of the wealthy people to take care of the poor, spending in the way of Allah (SWT), in general, is the responsibility of every Muslim. This spending is enjoined

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on Muslims to remove greediness from their hearts, purify their hearts and properties, and keep good social relationships and kindness in the community.

Spending in the way of Allah (SWT) is referred to in the Holy Qur'an with various distinct words: infaq (spending), i'tal maal (giving of property), i'am (feeding), and sadaqah (charity). These Qur'anic words are synonyms of "Infaq fi Sabillillah" which refers to the general spending in the way of Allah (SWT), an important social and economic act of good deed in Islam. It incorporates all sorts of charitable spending aiming to seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT).

It may be noted that a distinct word "Zakat" has been used in the Holy Qur'an for mandatory spending which indicates that there are special requirements in receiving and giving of this particular charity. Zakat is a certain proportion of wealth made to purify all wealth possessed above a threshold value (Nisab), which Muslims are obliged to donate every year. Zakat is paid out at the end of the lunar year, where the calculations on any leftover wealth are made. Zakat is based on the income of the person and the value of their possessions.

However, the obligation of spending as Infaq is to spend money/property, as and when required by the poor and needy. Also, the areas of recipients of Infaq are much wider than the areas of Zakat. This spending may be fard (mandatory), wajib (obligatory), nafl (optional), and mustahabb (desirable, or preferred) depending on the situation and needs of the recipients. Similarly, building infrastructures for prayers, religious education, hospitals, orphanage centers, etc. are the financial obligations for Muslims that can't be fulfilled by Zakat spending. Moreover, spending for the treatment of a dying person or to feed a person in severe hunger would become obligatory.

This research aims to reveal the significance and ranks of "Infaq fi Sabillillah: spending in the way of Allah (SWT)" in Islam. Relevant Qur'anic verses, Hadiths of the Prophet (PBUH), and the opinions of some scholars have been identified & studied, and have been presented in this paper.

There are many verses of al-Qur'an, the sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) that command Muslims to spend in the way of Allah (SWT) and hence to attain the rewards and pleasure of Allah (SWT). The consequence of not spending is also mentioned in some verses. Moreover, some verses of al-Qur'an demonstrate the higher rank or status of "Infaq fi Sabillillah: spending in the way of Allah (SWT)" compared to some fundamental pillars of Islam such as Iman (Faith), Salah (prayer), and Zakat (mandatory spending). Allah (SWT) has referred a true believer in Al-Qur'an by various distinct qualities & names such as Muttaqin, Muflihun, al-Birr, Ebadur Rahman, Muhsisin, Ashabul Maimanah, etc. Each of these qualities & names has been defined with some specific attributes as mentioned in al-Qur'an. It is to be noted that "spending in the way of Allah (SWT)" is the most common attribute mentioned in those qualities & names of a believer. However, in the case of this spending, there are some acceptance criteria

to be fulfilled to get assured the rewards from Allah (SWT). Some relevant verses, the sayings of the Prophet (PBUH), and the opinions of scholars, regarding these acceptance criteria, are also presented in this paper. The Qur'anic verses, Hadiths of the Prophet (PBUH), and the opinions of scholars, presented in this paper, may justify "Infaq fi Sabillillah: spending in the way of Allah (SWT)" as a superior act of good deed in Islam.

2. Areas of Spending in the Way of Allah (SWT)

The areas, or the recipients, of spending in the way of Allah (SWT) are different for the Mandatory and the voluntary spending.

2.1. Mandatory Spending: Zakat

Allah (SWT) has stated in verse 9:60 of al-Qur'an:

"Zakāh expenditures are only for the poor and for the needy and for those employed for it and for bringing hearts together [for Islām] and for freeing captives [or slaves] and for those in debt and for the cause of Allāh and for the [stranded] traveler - an obligation [imposed] by Allāh. And Allāh is Knowing and Wise."¹

The areas, or the recipients, of spending as Zakat are defined by Allah (SWT) in the mentioned verse. However, according to the opinions of the scholars, the area "Fi Sabillah: in the cause of Allah," mentioned in this verse, doesn't include spending for building religious infrastructures such as Masjid, Madrasa, etc. Ibn Kathir stated, "In the cause of Allah is exclusive for the benefit of the fighters in Jihad, who do not receive compensation from the Muslim Treasury."² It is to be noted that the Zakat is paid once a year usually, in the month of Ramadan. So, the Zakat spending can't fulfill the requirements of the poor and needy as and when necessary. These limitations of Zakat spending would be overcome by "Infaq: voluntary spending."

2.2. Voluntary Spending: Infaq

While the obligation of Zakat spending is only for rich people, anybody can spend to fulfill the obligation of Infaq: voluntary spending if he finds a poor or needy. The areas, or the recipients, of spending, other than Zakat, are diverse. The word used more often is Infaq while the word Sadaqah is also used for mentioning this voluntary spending. Infaq or Sadaqah covers general charities and deeds of generosity and incorporates all sorts of charities and spending in the way of Allah (SWT). According to the Qur'anic verses, the sayings of the Prophet (PBUH), and the interpretations of scholars, this spending should cover at least the following areas:

¹ Al-Qur'an 9:60, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

² Ibn Kathir, Interpretation of Verse 9:60 of Al-Quran, Quran.com.

- The needy people (food, clothes, shelter, education, treatments)
- Orphans and widows (food, clothes, shelter, education, treatments)
- Freeing of slaves
- Wayfarers
- Distressed and deprived Muslims in various corners of the world
- Logistic support for Jihad
- Building and maintenance of Masjids
- Building and maintenance of Educational Institutions
- Building and maintenance of Social Service Institutions: Hospitals for free treatments, Orphanage Centers, Old-age homes, Wakf institutions, etc.
- Public facilities: facilitating drinking water, building roads and bridges, planting trees, etc.

3. Significance of Infaq

Regarding the significance of Infaq, commands and rewards from Allah (SWT), sayings of the Prophet (PBUH), the financial obligation of Infaq, and the consequence of not spending are described here.

3.1. Commands and Rewards from Allah (SWT)

Many verses in the Qur'an command Muslims to spend in the way of Allah (SWT) and ensure the rewards of such spending.

“Spend in the cause of Allah and do not let your own hands throw you into destruction (by withholding). And do good, for Allah certainly loves the good-doers.”³

“Have faith in Allah and His Messenger, and strive in the cause of Allah with your wealth and your lives. That is best for you if only you knew.”⁴

“And spend [in the way of Allāh] from what We have provided you before death approaches one of you and he says, "My Lord, if only You would delay me for a brief term so I would give charity and be of the righteous.”⁵

“The example of those who spend their wealth in the cause of Allah is that of a grain that sprouts into seven ears, each bearing one hundred grains. And Allah multiplies (the reward even more) to whoever He wills. For Allah is All-Bountiful, All-Knowing.”⁶

“Prepare against them what you (believers) can of (military) power and cavalry to deter Allah’s enemies and your enemies as well as other enemies unknown to you

³ Al-Qur’an 2:195, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

⁴ Al-Qur’an 61:11, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

⁵ Al-Qur’an 63:10, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

⁶ Al-Qur’an 2:261, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

but known to Allah. Whatever you spend in the cause of Allah will be paid to you in full and you will not be wronged.”⁷

“And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war¹ by which you may terrify the enemy of Allāh and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allāh knows. And whatever you spend in the cause of Allāh will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged.”⁸

“[It is that] you believe in Allāh and His Messenger and strive in the cause of Allāh with your wealth and your lives. That is best for you if you only knew.”⁹

3.2. Hadīths of the Prophet (PBUH)

"Whoever gives charity equal to a date from good (halal) earnings – for Allah does not accept anything but that which is good – Allah will take it in His right hand and tend it for the one who gave it as any one of you tends his foal until it becomes like a mountain."¹⁰

“There is no day on which the people get up but two angels come down and one of them says, ‘O Allah, give in compensation to the one who spends (in charity),’ and the other says, ‘O Allah, destroy the one who withholds.’”¹¹

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) went out on Eid al-Fitr or Eid al-Adha to the prayer place, and when he had finished (the prayer) he preached to the people and enjoined them to give charity. He said, “O people, give in charity!” Then he went over to the women and said, “O women, give in charity for I have seen that you are the majority of the people of Hell.”¹²

“Allah said: ‘Spend, O son of Adam, and I shall spend on you.’”¹³

3.3. Infaq as an Obligation

“Financial obligations do not end at the simple payment of Zakat. There are occasions, other than those of paying Zakat, where spending out of one's wealth becomes obligatory and necessary. For instance, spending on your kin, when they have a valid excuse of not being able to earn their own living, is necessary; or there may be some needy person dying in poverty while you have already paid your Zakat, then, it becomes obligatory for you to save his life by spending your wealth on the spot. Similarly, building mosques and schools for religious education are all

⁷ Al-Qur'an 8:60, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

⁸ Al-Qur'an 8:60, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

⁹ Al-Qur'an 61:11, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

¹⁰ Sahih Muslim, Hadith 1014, Sunnah.com.

¹¹ Sahih Muslim, Hadith 1010, Sunnah.com.

¹² Sahih Bukhari, Hadith 1462, Sunnah.com.

¹³ Sahih Bukhari, Hadith 5352, Sunnah.com.

included in financial obligations. The difference is that Zakat has a special law of its own and it is obligatory to take full care in paying the Zakat in accordance with that law, under all conditions. While these other obligations depend on necessity and need; where needed, spending would become obligatory.”¹⁴

3.4. How Much to Spend

While the amount of mandatory spending as Zakat is limited to 2.5% of the possessed property of the rich believers, the amount of general spending in the way of Allah is not limited. This spending depends on the needs of the poor and needy. However, Allah (SWT) has given some guidance regarding this spending.

“Do not be so tight-fisted, for you will be blameworthy; nor so open-handed, for you will end up in poverty.”¹⁵

“And those who spend neither wastefully nor stingily, but moderately in between.”¹⁶

3.5. Consequences of not Spending

Usually, optional or voluntary acts of worship such as optional prayer, optional fasting, etc. are ensured rewards for performing and don't have any consequences for not performing these acts of worship. However, regarding Infaq, Muslims have been warned about the consequence of not spending in the way of Allah (SWT).

“And spend in the way of Allāh and do not throw [yourselves] with your [own] hands into destruction [by refraining]. And do good; indeed, Allāh loves the doers of good.”¹⁷

One may become the inhabitant of Saqar (Hell) for not spending in the way of Allah (SWT). The inhabitants of Saqar will be asked, "What put you into Saqar?" They will say, "We were not of those who prayed, Nor did we used to feed the poor.”¹⁸

4. Rank or Status of Infaq

“Infaq fī Sabilillah” is usually classified as voluntary or general spending. However, sometimes, the status of this general charity is given the upper hand over the Salat (prayer) and Zakat (mandatory spending) even over Iman (Faith).

4.1. Status of Infaq just after Salat

“Who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them.”¹⁹

¹⁴ Mariful Qur'an, Interpretation of Verse 2:177 of Al-Quran, Quran.com.

¹⁵ Al-Qur'an 17:29, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

¹⁶ Al-Qur'an 25:67, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

¹⁷ Al-Qur'an 2:195, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

¹⁸ Al-Qur'an 74:42-44, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

¹⁹ Al-Qur'an 2:03, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

“Those who are constant in their prayer. And those within whose wealth is a known right. For the petitioner and the deprived.”²⁰

4.2. Status of Infaq over Salat and Zakat

Allah (SWT) stated in the Qur’an:

“Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allāh, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives zakāh; [those who] fulfill their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous.”²¹

We can see in this verse that, just after Iman (Faith), “giving wealth to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves” is stated before the statement “establishing prayer and giving zakat.”

4.3. Status of Infaq over Iman (Faith)

“But he has not broken through the difficult pass. And what can make you know what is [breaking through] the difficult pass? It is the freeing of a slave. Or feeding on a day of severe hunger. An orphan of near relationship. Or a needy person in misery. And then being among those who believed and advised one another to patience and advised one another to compassion.”²²

We see here that the acts of Infaq such as the freeing of a slave, feeding on a day of severe hunger to an orphan of near relationship, or to a needy person in misery are stated before the statement “and then being among those who believed.”

5. Infaq is a Unique Attribute of a Believer

Allah (SWT) has used, in al-Qur’an, various distinct qualities & names for a true believer. Each quality or name incorporates some specific attributes. “Spending in the way of Allah (SWT)” is the most common attribute of a believer stated in those distinct qualities & names.

5.1. An attribute of *Muttaqin* and *Muflihun*

“Who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them. And who believe in what has been revealed to you, [O

²⁰ Al-Qur’an 70:23-25, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

²¹ Al-Qur’an 2:177, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

²² Al-Quran 90:11-17, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

Muḥammad], and what was revealed before you, and of the Hereafter they are certain [in faith].”²³

5.2. An attribute of Al-Birr (Righteous People)

“Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allāh, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves;”²⁴

5.3. An attribute of Ebadur-Rahman (The servants of the Most Compassionate)

“And [they are] those who, when they spend, do so not excessively or sparingly but are ever, between that, [justly] moderate.”²⁵

5.4. An attribute of Muhsinin (good-doers)

“Indeed, the righteous will be among gardens and springs. Accepting what their Lord has given them. Indeed, they were before that doers of good. They used to sleep but little of the night, And in the hours before dawn they would ask forgiveness, And from their properties was [given] the right of the [needy] petitioner and the deprived.”²⁶

5.5. An attribute of Honored Inhabitant in Jannah

“And those within whose wealth is a known right, For the petitioner and the deprived... They will be in gardens, honored.”²⁷

5.6. An attribute of Ashaabul Maimanah (Companions of the Right)

“It is the freeing of a slave. Or feeding on a day of severe hunger. An orphan of near relationship. Or a needy person in misery. And then being among those who believed and advised one another to patience and advised one another to compassion. Those are the companions of the right.”²⁸

6. Acceptance Criteria for Infaq

It has been understood that “Infaq fi Sabillillah: spending in the way of Allah (SWT)” is an act of good deed in Islam having great significance, higher ranks, and attributes. However, spending would be accepted and the rewards of spending would be ensured only if the donors are free from feelings and actions of mannan (favor) and adhan (hurt/injury), after spending their wealth in the way of Allah (SWT).

²³ Al-Qur'an 2:3-4), Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

²⁴ Al-Qur'an 2:177), Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

²⁵ Al-Qur'an 25:67), Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

²⁶ Al-Qur'an 51:15-19, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

²⁷ Al-Qur'an 70:24-25, 35, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

²⁸ Al-Qur'an 90:13-18, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

6.1. Relevant Qur'anic Verses

These conditions for acceptance of Infaq are mentioned in verses 2:262 and 2:264 of Al-Quran. Allah (SWT) has stated:

“Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allāh and then do not follow up what they have spent with reminders [of it] or [other] injury will have their reward with their Lord, and there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.”²⁹

“O you who have believed, do not invalidate your charities with reminders [of it] or injury as does one who spends his wealth [only] to be seen by the people and does not believe in Allāh and the Last Day. His example is like that of a [large] smooth stone upon which is dust and is hit by a downpour that leaves it bare. They are unable [to keep] anything of what they have earned. And Allāh does not guide the disbelieving people.”³⁰

6.2. Relevant Hadith

There are several Hadiths that prohibit reminding people of the acts of charity. For instance, Sahih Bukhari recorded that Abu Dharr said that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said:

“Three persons whom Allah shall neither speak to on the Day of Resurrection nor look at nor purify and they shall receive a painful torment: he who reminds (the people) of what he gives away, he who lengthens his clothes below the ankles and he who swears an oath while lying, to sell his merchandise.”³¹

6.3. Comments from Interpreters

“It is said that people who spend in the way of Allah and do not publicize their favor after having spent, nor cause any pain to those on whom they have spent, their reward is secure with their Lord. For them, there is no danger in the future and no sorrow of the past. Two negative conditions governing the acceptance of sadaqah have been stated in this verse:

1. Do not publicize your favor after spending.
2. Do not consider the receiver practically disgraced, and do nothing to cause him insult or pain.”³²

“Those who spend for the cause of God, on the other hand, adopt a different approach. They do not, for one, taunt their beneficiaries with reminders of the favors they have bestowed. Indeed, having spent their wealth for the cause of God, they do not consider themselves to have bestowed any favor at all upon anyone.

²⁹ Al-Qur'an 2:262, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

³⁰ Al-Qur'an 2:264, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

³¹ Riyadh as-Salihin, Hadith 793, Sunnah.com.

³² Mariful Qur'an, Interpretation of Verse 2:262 of Al-Quran, Quran.com.

And they do not show any displeasure if a gracious response is not forthcoming from those to whom they have been generous. This is because their hopes are pinned on being rewarded in full by God, so what do they care if human beings show appreciation or not?”³³

According to the above interpretations and a recent publicatio³⁴ regarding the interpretation of verse 2:262 of Al-Quran, spending in the way of Allah (SWT) would only be accepted and the rewards would be ensured if the donors have the following attributes:

- They do not remind their spending (as a favor) to those on whom they have spent.
- They do not publicize what they have spent in the way of Allah (SWT) or do not tell others that they (donors) have favored the recipient by giving this charity.
- They do not fill their spending as a favor to those on whom they have spent.
- They do not cause any injury or distress by hurtful words to those on whom they have spent.
- They do not feel their spending as any injury or distress to themselves.

7. Conclusion

“Infaq fi Sabillillah: spending in the way of Allah (SWT),” is a highly rewarded act of worship in Islam that has great religious as well as social significance. Infaq helps to maintain economic harmony in society by helping the poor and needy meet their basic needs. The Muslims are commanded to spend their wealth so that they can attain the pleasure of Allah (SWT).

“You can never attain piety unless you spend in the way of Allah of what you love. Surely Allah will have full knowledge of what you spend.”³⁵

“Whatever you spend that is good is for parents and relatives and orphans, and those in want, and for wayfarers. And whatever you do that is good, Allah knows it well.”³⁶

Spending in the way of Allah (SWT) is also a fundamental guidance from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He greatly emphasized the goodness and benefit of spending one's wealth to meet the needs of the poor, orphans, and other needy people in the community seeking the pleasure of Allah. This spending is necessary

³³ Tazkirul Qur'an, Interpretation of Verse 2:262 of Al-Quran, Quran.com.

³⁴ Md. Mamunur Rashid “Comprehensive Understanding of ‘Thumma Lā Yutbi’ūna Mā Anfaqū Mannan Walā Adhan’ Mentioned in Verse 2:262 of Al-Qur’an,” Pakistan Journal of Qur'ānic Studies, Vol. 3, No.1, p.145, 2024

³⁵ Al-Qur'an 3:92, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

³⁶ Al-Qur'an 2:215, Translation, Saheeh International, Quran.com.

for keeping the social relationships between all sections of the Muslim community and even with non-Muslim neighbors.

This paper has presented some Qur'anic verses, some Hadiths of the Prophet (PBUH), and the opinions of scholars that highlight the great significance and the ranks of "Infaq fi Sabillillah: spending in the way of Allah (SWT)." Some verses are commands from Allah (SWT) about spending and some are the assurance of rewards of spending from Allah (SWT). There are some verses to show the ranks of spending in the way of Allah (SWT). According to these verses "Infaq fi Sabillah" is ranked even above some mandatory acts of worship. Moreover, Allah (SWT) has stated the consequences of not spending in the way of Allah (SWT). Infaq has been shown as a special attribute of a true believer in many Qur'anic verses. It may be comprehended, from the presentation of this paper, that "Infaq fi Sabillillah: spending in the way of Allah (SWT)" is a superior act of worship or good deed in Islam.