

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Friday Khutbah – 20/03/2015

Voluntary Work

Praise be to Allah who has made us from the best nation that has been raised for human kind; Who has made the best of this *Ummah* those who are most beneficial to His creation.

It has been reported in a sound *Hadith* that a man came to the Prophet Rasulullah (*Salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*) and said: O Messenger of Allah! Who are the most beloved people to Allah and what are the most beloved actions to Allah? Rasulullah (*Salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*) said: The most beloved people to Allah are those who are most beneficial to other people and the most beloved act to Allah is joy that you bring to a Muslim or that you remove some difficulty from him or that you pay his debt or drive away his hunger. For me to go with a brother and attend to some of his need is better than performing *I'tikaf* (seclusion) in this *Masjid* (Madinah *Masjid*) for a whole month.

Slaves of Allah! *Iman* which Islam invites its followers to adopt is not a theoretical or abstract idea. It is also not something passive or negative. It is a positive, active and creative energy. It is for this reason that the Qur'an always joins between *Iman* and *al-'amal as-Salih* (righteous deed) because good deed is the natural result and fruit of *Iman* – if there is *Iman*.

Good deeds are of two types; mandatory and voluntary. The mandatory includes the *Fard* acts of worship and other compulsory good deeds. It also includes prohibited things. This circle of mandatory deeds is the minimum that is required of every Muslim.

The circle of voluntary deeds is very wide. It is a broad field for people to hasten and compete in good deeds; something which is very desirable according to the Qur'an and *Sunnah*.

At the forefront of the voluntary acts come voluntary acts of worship, which although very important, are not what is intended by the term voluntary work and it is not the subject of our talk today.

Voluntary work can be defined in this sense as being: a financial, physical or intellectual offering which a Muslim, motivated by his religion, freely makes for a good cause without expecting a material return or benefit. Compulsory acts and acts which are done for material return are not included in voluntary work.

Islam encourages Muslims to do voluntary deeds and reward them greatly for them even if the work is as tiny as an atom. Allah (*Subhanahu wa ta'ala*) says: "Whosoever does good equal to the weight of an atom shall see it."

There are many *Hadith* of the Prophet Rasulullah (*Salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*) that urge Muslims to volunteer and help others. Imam Muslim reported the *Hadith* from Abu Hurayrah (*radhiya Allahu 'anhu*) that he said Rasulullah (*Salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*) said: "*Sadaqah* is incumbent upon every joint (in the body) of a person on every day on which the sun rises. Making peace between two people is *Sadaqah*, helping a person to ride on his mount or loading his luggage on it is *Sadaqah*, a good word is *Sadaqah*, every step you take to the Mosque is *Sadaqah* and removing something harmful from the pathway is *Sadaqah*."

Voluntary work is one of the attributes of those who are most close to Allah from among his creation; the Messengers of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon them. One such example is that of Musa, *alayhis-Salam*. Allah (*Subhanahu wa ta'ala*) says in *surah al-Qasas*: “And when he arrived at the water of Madyan, he found a large number of people watering (their animals) and found, apart from them, two women keeping (their animals) back. He said, “What is the matter with you?” They said, “We cannot water (our animals) until the shepherds take (their animals) and our father is an old man. So he watered (their animals) for them, then he turned to a shade and said, “My Lord, I am in need of whatever good you send down to me.”

Musa, *alayhis-Salam* fled Egypt for his own safety. After an exhausting journey of eight days of walking on foot he arrived at the water of Madyan. There he saw the scene described in the Qur’anic verse. Despite his difficult situation (exhausted, hungry and in a strange land) that did not stop him from doing what is noble and good – and he helped the two young honourable women who did not want to mix with men. That act which he did voluntarily for no reward, opened avenues of good for him. Later the father of the two women called him to his house, and he was offered food, shelter, work and a spouse,

Doing voluntary good deeds was one of the qualities of Rasulullah (*Salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*) even before he was sent as a Messenger according to the witness of *Sayyida Khadija (radhiya Allahu ‘anha)*, Mother of the Believers. When Rasulullah (*Salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam*) saw Jibril (*alayhis-Salam*) and received the revelation for the first time he was very fearful. He returned home and said to Khadija: wrap me! Wrap me! (Cover me up in clothes.) They did and when he calmed down he told her the story. She said: No, by Allah! He will not let you down! You maintain the ties of kinship, support the incapable, give the penniless, feed the guest and help those who are in difficulty....”

She mentioned five of his voluntary good deeds. She did not say to him for example that: You used to shepherd the animals because that was work for which he was paid.

Voluntary work is of two types. The first type is the individual one such as removing some harm from the pathway, helping a person to meet some of his need and so on. The second type is the collective voluntary work. Voluntary work in the real sense is the collective voluntary work which is carried out under a recognised institution or charitable organisation. In this case the efforts of the volunteers can be organised in a better way and better and greater results can be achieved.

Some of the examples of valuable voluntary work in our community in this country include: working without reward on Mosque and school committees to establish and run places of worship of Allah and cater for the education of Muslim children. Also *D’awa* activities like those carried out by the brothers in Discover Islam, washing and burying the dead Muslims by some brothers and sisters and so on. There is always need for volunteers to carry out the tasks which the Muslim and the larger community need.

Talking about voluntary work; the need for it and its significance can be a very long talk. Time does not allow for that. In the remaining time I would like to finish this subject by mentioning the characteristics and conditions of voluntary work in Islam, its benefits for the individual who does it out and the society, and will conclude by some advice in this regard.

The first characteristic of voluntary work in Islam is *Ikhlas* (sincerity) because since it is a work intended for the sake of Allah so it has to be pure for His sake – and one should be careful not to spoil his voluntary work by *Riya'* (showing off.)

Second condition: *Al-Ihsan* (perfection) – or doing it properly – Rasulullah (*Salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam.*) said: Allah loves that when one does something, he does it proper and perfectly.

Third condition: Commitment and fulfilling what one has promised to do. Whenever a believer promises he/she must keep his/her promise. Not keeping one's promise is a sign of *Nifaq*.

Not doing the work properly and not keeping one's promise are two things which are very damaging to voluntary work. People would lose trust in volunteers and voluntary work if volunteers are not careful of these two potential problems. Think about this! If you are not being financially rewarded for a voluntary work does not mean that you do in any way; proper or not, or that you do it when you please. If you are paid to do it then you will have the commitment for it. Remember that you will also be rewarded for the voluntary work but in the *Aakhirah* – “And the reward of the Hereafter is surely better” (*Surah Yusuf*, verse 57)

In addition to getting the reward for the good deeds, voluntary work has many other benefits for the individuals and for the society.

- It enhances the skills and experience of the volunteers.
- It teaches them punctuality and instils a sense of responsibility in them.
- It is a means for treating anxiety and restoring self-confidence – natural psychological feeling of good and happiness when does something good.
- It strengthens the relationships and the spirit of brotherhood between the individuals in the society.

Contemporary societies place great emphasis on voluntary work. The voluntary sector has become the third important sector in the building of modern societies in addition to the governmental sector and the private sector.

Finally: I would like to give the following advice:

- You should endeavour to make volunteering a habit and an attitude of you whether it is an individual or collective volunteering.
- You should not demean any good done regardless of its size or look down at voluntary work.
- You should always appreciate and encourage voluntary work and support the volunteers.

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