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Sadāqāh and Dānā: A Descriptive Study

Amt-ul-Rafi*

Abstract

Conducting charity is the most common way of helping those who are in need yet in terms of reward and impact it is the most significant deed. This article attempts to discuss the concept of charity as detailed in the scriptures of Islam and Hinduism. It discusses and analyzes the different aspects of charitable giving in the light of the Qur'ānic verses, Prophetic traditions and the sacred books of Hinduism. The primary purpose of selecting this topic is to highlight and appreciate the richness of the traditions of giving in both the religions. This article explores, describes and analyzes various aspects of charity in Islam and Hinduism. A significant part of Qur'ānic verses and Prophetic traditions talk about giving charity, its importance in the life of a believer and a Muslim society, the etiquettes, the components and the rewards of charitable giving. Similarly, there is a huge part of sacred Hindu texts which deals with the concept of spending one's wealth as charity, in great length. The twin concepts of Sadāqāh and Dānā have been described in this paper, followed by a discussion on their components, significance, etiquettes and principles. Conducting charity generously is a very appreciated deed according to the Qur'ānic verses and the one who performs it is promised endless rewards in this world and the next. Similarly, the texts of Hinduism signify the act of being charitable and encourage a devoted Hindu to perform this meritorious deed in return for various imperishable treats in this world and the next as well.

Keywords: Al-Sadāqāh, Islam, Dānā, Hinduism, well-being.

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Introduction

Generosity is the best way in which human beings practice compassion towards one another. Generosity and liberality are two important aspects of human lives which are driven by religious injunctions. Therefore, it is pertinent to understand the exact religious injunctions regarding liberality. The religious approach towards generosity is significant in the sense that religion makes up an important part of human lives. It shapes the human response towards various aspects of life and sets some moral guidelines to be followed. Islam and Hinduism are considered to be two of the major religions of the world as both boast a huge number of following in different parts of the world. Their sacred books are filled with divine injunctions encompassing every aspect of collective and individual human lives. Charitable giving is the most beneficial way to build communities, practice generosity, being compassionate, promoting social connections and improving relationships. Surprisingly enough, their scriptures seem to have a quite similar approach towards charitable giving. Both the religions describe every aspect of the process of giving charity in great detail for their followers. However, Islamic injunctions emerge as more insightful and logical as they focus on building a healthy society where wealth is not accumulated by a single class of society rather circulated regularly in the form of charity. Hinduism, tends to focus majorly upon the most privileged class of Hindu society i.e., Brāhmanā. Whereas, Islam strives to bring about socio-economic stability among the strata of society.

Research Methodology

The methodology which has been applied in this work is descriptive and analytical to describe the concepts of Charity as discussed in the verses of Qur‘ān, Traditions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the texts of various sacred Hindu books such as *Manū Smritī*, *Mahābharātā*, *Pūranās* and the Vedic Hymns. Firstly, the descriptive method has been applied to state the significance of traditions of giving in Qur‘ān, Hadīth and sacred Hindu texts. Subsequently the components, types, rewards, etiquettes and the principles are laid out as mentioned in the scriptures. The analytical approach has been applied to compare the approaches of Islam and Hinduism towards the concept of liberality and generosity.

Literature Review

Religious injunctions govern almost every aspect of human life setting forth moral principles and ethical guidelines which enable human beings to create societies based on

the fundamentals of mutual cooperation and active participation thus bringing about social stability. Giving charity may seem like an ordinary deed but in terms of significance and reward it is one of the most important one. Therefore, an abundance of religious literature is available on the concept of liberality. Divine scriptures address the topic of charity comprehensively through injunctions encouraging mankind to perform this meritorious act while listing its overall benefits for the well-being of a society and an individual. Guidelines, principles and rules pertaining to the concept of charity are also discussed in great detail. The most relevant literature discussing the concepts of charity in Islam and Hinduism has been analyzed in this study. For the purpose of gaining an in-depth understanding of the Islamic point of view relevant verses of the Holy Qur‘ān and the traditions of the Prophet have been discussed with explanations from reliable and authentic sources.

The translatory texts of Manū Smrītī, Vedic hymns, Puranas, the laws of Aryās and the Mahābhārata have been studied extensively prior to the writing of this paper in order to understand the concept of Dānā in its entirety. Manū Smrītī has proved to be a particularly valuable primary source in this regard as it comprehensively elaborates on the topic of charity.

A well-written book “Daān and other giving traditions in India” by Sanjay Agarwal has proved to be an extremely helpful resource in the compilation of this paper. It examines different indigenous traditions of charitable giving in India paying great attention to every detail. The remarkably detailed work of Abu Rayhān Al Birūnī (d. 1048 AD) “Al Birūnī’s India” is an asset for those who wish to gain an in-depth understanding of Hinduism. It contains an entire chapter on Dānā, thus explaining it in a profound manner. “A survey of Hinduism” by Klaus Klostermaier presents an elaborate account of Hindu worldview, beliefs, dogmas and practices. A section in it elaborates on the significance of Dānā and other forms of Hindu charity.

Authentic and reliable Islamic classical literature has been consulted in order to understand the Qur‘ānic verses about charity. Voluminous works of Muslim scholars like Ibn-taimīyyāh, Al Marāghī, al Zuhāyālī and Al Qurtūbī have been consulted in this regard.

Hinduism is a culturally vibrant religion and one of the major religions of the world. Like every other religion, the Hindu faith heavily depends upon the corpus of its sacred literature

and owes its diversity and vibrance to its voluminous religious manuscripts. Most of this literature prescribes to Hindus their *Dhārmā* or the set of obligations which are mandatory upon them to follow by the virtue of their religion while the rest of it is historical in nature. The text of *Manū Smṛitī*, *Bhagāvāt Gītā*, *Pūranās* and the *Upānīshāds* discuss a diverse range of topics which are of immense significance in a Hindu's life. Liberality and generosity occupy a huge part of these texts. People of the twice born upper three castes are instructed to give charity as zealously as they can in different ways. The terms used for charitable giving in Hindu literature include:

Dānā: *Dānā* is the most commonly used term for charitable giving in Hinduism. It refers to the transfer of wealth, property or any item from one person to another. The term is specifically used for giving away wealth in charity.¹

Ustārg: This term is used as a substitute for *Dānā* when the donor donates an item or property for the use of general public and vows to benefit from it as an ordinary citizen without enjoying any special privileges.²

Poort: Actions or deeds which involve charitable giving such as construction of public utilities are called *Poort*. These kinds of actions are acknowledged and rewarded in this life as well as the hereafter. They also aid a Hindu in attaining *Mokṣā*.³

Charity according to Hinduism is the wealth, property or belongings given away for the sake of seeking the pleasure of Gods and in order to fulfil the obligations prescribed in the Holy Scriptures. A Hindu is instructed to give charity for other purposes as well such as honouring the knowledgeable ones, helping others in distress, financially aiding the destitute, offering one's wealth as a penance for major and minor crimes and doing welfare works.

Significance of *Dānā*

Like all the religions of the world Hinduism also pays great importance to moral values, ethical codes and good deeds. There are deeds which are deemed to be better and more emphasized upon than the rest. One such deed is giving charity or *Dānā*. The

¹ Agarwal. Sanjay, *Daan and other Giving Traditions in India*, (New Delhi: Account Aid India, 2010), 23.

² Ibid., 23.

³ Ibid., 24.

importance of *Dānā* has been repeatedly emphasized in Hindu religious texts. Different Hindu scriptures devote entire chapters which praise the benevolent act of charity. It is believed that those who are capable of giving but do not spend on others or give charity end up being sick, stupid, poverty-stricken and dependent on others.

Manū Smṛitī, the most ancient and authoritative of Hindu scriptures, pays great importance to generosity. According to *Manū Smṛitī* the Hindu system of timekeeping is divided into four parts *Satya Yuga*, *Tretā Yugā*, *Dāwapār Yugā* and *Kālī Yugā*. The *Dhārmā* needs to be upheld through four pillars during *Satya Yugā*: Truth, Kindness, Austerity and *Dānā*. With every passing *Yuga* one of these is lost and today mankind is living in the *Kali Yuga* which is the age of darkness, misery and sorrow and only *Dānā* remains as the sole pillar upholding *Dhārmā*. Therefore, *Manū Smṛitī* lays great emphasis on giving charity or liberality which it deems is alone best for the people during the 432,200 years of *Kālī Yugā*.⁴

Furthermore, Hindu scriptures teach that this world and its materialistic life is basically an illusion meant to distract human beings from their true purpose in life. The wealth and the luxuries that a man collects throughout his life act as an anchor to bind him to this illusion. Giving away his wealth with a contended heart aids in corroding this anchor, hence a devoted Hindu is instructed to spend his wealth in conducting charity as often as he can.

Components of Charitable Giving

Liberality in Hinduism is a vast and a comprehensive concept emphasized upon in various religious scriptures. Detailed religious text and injunctions can be found about rules, principles and elements of giving charity. This section discusses the most important components of *Dānā* as detailed in various Hindu scriptures.

The Donor: The donor or the giver of *Dānā* is given secondary importance in Hinduism. He is directed to give to the worthiest of receivers keeping in mind his financial capacity and economic conditions. Usually, the text incurs the responsibility of giving over *Vaīśyās*⁵

⁴ Klostermaier K. Klaus, *A Survey of Hinduism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 494-495.

⁵ Muller. Max, *The Laws of Manū* (New Delhi: Aryan Book International, 1993), 420.

and *Kshatrīyās*.⁶ Different qualities of a good donor are explained in the scriptures such as healthy, virtuous, holy and honest.

The receiver: Among all the scriptures *Manū Smṛitī* gives a detailed description of a receiver as it clearly states that the acceptance of *Dānā* and its consequent rewards depend on the receiver chosen by the donor. A clear preference for the Brāhmānas can be observed throughout the text related to liberality and its elements. They are considered to be the worthiest receivers of *Dānā*. But the donor must keep in mind that not every Brāhmāna is to be considered worthy or eligible rather only those who are learned in the Vedas and are virtuous. Many a times a common Hindu householder is directed to present the oblations meant for the God and Man to a Stotrīyā (a Brāhmāna well-versed in the *Vedas*).⁷ The text clearly indicates that charity or *Dānā* given to an unlearned and uncultured person who is only a Brāhmāna by birth will not be accepted and the donor along with the receiver will face extreme punishment such as swallowing red hot spikes, spears and iron balls after the death.⁸

The donated item: The item that is being given away as charity is of significant value in Hinduism. One is directed to give, no matter how little it maybe with a cheerful heart and a respectful attitude towards the receiver. Different items suitable for giving are mentioned in *Manū Smṛitī* along with the rewards the donor will receive in return for his donation. For example, a giver of water obtains the satisfaction of his hunger and thirst, a giver of food imperishable happiness, and a giver of lamp most excellent eyesight.⁹

Types of *Dānā*

Giving charity has been a social norm among Hindus for centuries. This ancient tradition has become an integral part of a common Hindu's life. Different religious texts such as *Puranas* and *Smritis* have classified *Dānā* in different ways. It is obviously impossible to discuss every one of these complex classifications here in great detail. However, the most famous forms of *Dānā* in Hinduism can be found in *Puranic* texts and the *Manū Smṛitī*. The *Puranic* forms of charity are divided into broad categories based on the item that is being given away as *Dānā*. On the other hand, *Manū Smṛitī* classifies *Dānā* into different types according to the intention of the donor.

⁶ Ibid., 24.

⁷ Ibid., 99.

⁸ Ibid., 100.

⁹ Ibid., 165.

Puranic Forms of Dānā

There are more than 30 types of Dānā elaborated in the Pūranās. All these types are further subdivided into different categories based upon the item that is being donated as charity. The most superior of the Puranic types of Dānā in terms of sacredness include the Mahā Dānā as they yield great rewards for the donor such as enhancing the donor's age, increasing his virtue, adding to his merit or Pūnyā, absolving him of all guilt and removing his sins. Other significant forms of Puranic Dānā include *Dhenū Dānā*, *Parvāt adnā* and *Merū Dānā*.

Types of Dānā in Manū Smṛitī

1. Dānā to honor the knowledgeable ones

Giving to those who are well-versed in the *Vedas* is a recurring theme in *Manū Smṛitī*. A *Stotrīyā* is given special preference as a worthy recipient. The donor is often encouraged to honor the students and teachers of religious knowledge through *Dānā*. Heavenly bliss is mentioned as a reward for such a donor.

2. Dānā as a penance for minor offences

Another type of *Dānā* mentioned in *Manū Smṛitī* is the charity given in order to atone for one's minor sins. Minor sins or offences mentioned in *Manū Smṛitī* include killing animals, birds, insects or people from lowest caste i.e., *Sudras* and adulterous women of the four castes. Various items are mentioned which are to be given as penances for killing animals for example a pot of clarified butter should be given for killing a boar, a cow should be given to a *Brāhmāna* for killing a peacock and killing an elephant can be atoned for by giving a garment.

3. Dānā as a Gift

According to the text of *Manū Smṛitī* giving away presents and gifts is also considered as a *Dānā*. Like every other type of *Dānā* *Manū Smṛitī* instructs the giver to find a worthy recipient for the gift so that he reaps tremendous awards for his effort because no matter how little his present is it will not be considered insignificant if it is given to a worthy recipient according to the sacred rules. A worthy recipient of a gift is considered to be a *Stotrīyā* as well, but at the same time a *Brāhmāna* is instructed to not to make himself habitual of these presents or indulge excessively in the materialistic aspects of the worldly-life otherwise his divine light may diminish with the passage of time extinguishing completely if his greed takes a complete hold of him. If a donor presents gifts to a *Brāhmāna* who neither performs austerities nor studies the *Vedas* yet delights in accepting gifts, both shall sink in hell together for their negligence towards the sacred rules. Various

items are mentioned in the text which are to be given as gifts including a house, kusa grass, perfumes, a couch, water, flowers and jewels.

4. *Dānā* as a philanthropic activity

Another type of *Dānā* mentioned in the *Manū Smṛitī* is the one given in order to help others in their times of distress and need. This type of *Dānā* can be given to everyone and can be taken from anyone.

5. *Dānā* as penance for murder

Murdering a *Sudra* is considered to be a minor offence according to *Manū Smṛitī* whereas killing a *Brāhmāna* is considered to be a murder which has to be atoned for so that the murderer can remove the guilt of killing someone from the highest and the purest of the castes. To seek forgiveness for committing such a heinous crime one is instructed to give *Dānā* which includes presenting his entire property to a *Brāhmāna* or he should at least give wealth sufficient for the maintenance of a learned *Brahmana*'s house.

***Ustārg* and its Types**

The term *Ustārg* is used as a substitute for *Dānā* when an item or property is donated with the intention of benefitting the general public. *Ustārg*, its types, rituals and ceremonies are discussed extensively in Hindu religious scriptures. The most recommended types of items or property which can be donated as *Ustārg* include water reservoirs, hospitals, gardens, rest houses for the traveller's, temples for the devoted and shelters for the destitute and the poor. All these deeds are considered to be spiritually elevating as they add a great deal of splendid rewards to a devoted *Hindu*'s merit or *Punya*.¹⁰ Plantation of trees and gardens with the intention of benefitting the general public is a highly commendable act. *Mahābhārat*, *Pūranā* and *Smṛitī* emphasize upon this form of charity. Planting trees is praised and appreciated because it is believed that they prove to be beneficial for the society at large and are a source of multiple rewards for the donor, as they please deities by providing flowers for worship, departed ancestors and people by their fruits, tired guests, worn-out travellers and homeless strangers by their shadow. Furthermore, trees are described as the sons of the donor because they not only benefit him in this world but also ensure prestige and honor for him in the next world¹¹. Similarly, a

¹⁰ Dutt. Manmātha., *Mahābhārat; Anūhāsan Pārv* (Calcutta: Elysium press, 1905), 155.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 137.

donor of a spacious, well equipped hospital shall enjoy a long stay in blessed world of *Lok*¹² and a builder of a vast, magnificent temple adorned with sacred deities, statues of gods, garlands, incense sticks etc. is promised great rewards in religious scriptures.

Due to its development spanning over centuries the Hindu literature on liberality is vast and varied with diversity in the shades of opinion and various classifications according to time of giving charity, method of giving charity, ways of giving charity, purpose of giving charity etc. The above-mentioned classifications or types of charity are discussed in the text of *Manū Smṛitī*, *Puranas*, *Bhagavat Gita* and other Hindu texts of religious nature.

Basic Principles of Giving *Dānā*

Very strict and clear rules and regulations are laid down in Hindu scriptures regarding any sort of charitable giving. There are two types of rules regarding liberality, those which differ from caste to caste and those which should be taken into account by everyone regardless of their caste or financial capability and economical condition. These non-specific rules are few but very important and include the following:

Charity with faith: Charity is a deed beloved to the Gods; therefore, it must be performed with faith a pure intention. It is a deed of immense significance in these times and if performed with utmost sincerity it shall lead the donor towards glorious rewards.

Taking into account one's financial capability: Perhaps the most important rule which should be taken care of while performing charitable acts is taking into account one's financial conditions. *Manū Smṛitī* directs Hindus to give out charity once they've fulfilled the needs of their family. For example, a householder is enjoined to give food that which he can spare, similarly if *Dānā* is given to someone while the family of the donor is living in poverty, he shall reap no rewards for his liberality.¹³ Therefore the donor must provide for his family before giving away *Dānā*.

A suitable recipient: Finding a worthy and a suitable recipient and making inquiries about him is an over-emphasized rule. As mentioned in one of the previous sections there is a visible preference for a learned, well-versed and a virtuous *Brāhmāna* as a recipient. A donee other than him shall bring ordinary rewards.

¹² Agarwal Sanjay, *Daan and other Giving Traditions in India*, 60.

¹³ *Ibid.*, -26

Lawfully-earned money: The donor is instructed over and over again to perform charitable acts with law-fully earned money. He cannot give *Dānā* if the wealth he earns isn't coming from pure sources.

Etiquettes of Giving *Dānā*

Apart from the rules described in the previous section Hindu religious texts seek to impart upon the donor various religious etiquettes of the meritorious act of liberality. These manners and etiquettes enhance the subsequent rewards of giving charity no matter how small it may be.

- A donor is instructed to perform these deeds with a very cheerful and a happy heart. He should not once regret giving *Dānā* because being regretful may nullify the acceptance of his deed.
- Mutual respect plays a vital role in the acceptability of *Dānā*. One should never turn down a person who comes to him in times of distress or need; he should be welcomed with an open heart, looked after and provided for. When the recipient is scolded or harshly dealt the donor loses all his merit. The text states that the one who gives respectfully goes to the heaven and in the contrary case hell will be his final and everlasting abode.
- Displaying an overinflated sense of pride over one's good deeds also nullifies their merit. One should never be proud of his austerities and adopt a humble attitude because he may hurt the sentiments of the recipient because of his pride.
- The most important manner of giving is zealous offering. One should always be ready and enthusiastic about spending on others who are in need. He should always spend and give away his wealth enthusiastically.

***Daan Veer*: The over-Zealous *Dānā* Giver**

The concept of *Daan Veer* in Hinduism is an intriguing one. The term refers to those whose zealous generosity and magnanimity have become a legend. They are famous for their extremism in giving *Dānā*. The stories of their generosity have been passed from one generation to another over the centuries and have become a significant part of Hindu religious texts. The most famous *Daan Veers* include King Karn, King Raghu, King Bali and King Virochan. All of them are narrated as selfless enough to sacrifice their wealth, possessions, belongings and even their lives for seeking the pleasure of Gods. All these personalities are known as *Daan Veers* because they were courageous enough to sacrifice

whatever they possessed. The entire concept revolves around the exemplary attitude displayed by these individuals in matters related to liberality. Their stories are used as role model to encourage charitable giving among Hindus and to inculcate the highest ideals of morality and ethics among them.

Charity in Islam

By the virtue of our faith, we Muslims believe that Islam is the last of the divine messages to reach mankind through Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Its foundations are firmly built upon its religious texts i.e., the Holy Qur‘ān and the Ḥadīth (Traditions of the last Prophet). These texts are self-contained statements, parables, stories, injunctions, and prohibitions. Their teachings and ideas are specially designed to encompass every aspect of an individual as well as collective lives of Muslims. Therefore, they have been shaping up the lives, speech, actions, behaviours and attitudes of Muslims for centuries and will continue to do so regardless of the differences of language, race, colour, caste and culture. Islam continuously encourages a devout believer to perform good deeds and abstain from sins. Its injunctions strive to inculcate the highest of ideals, in its followers, in terms of ethics and moral values. The goal and the purpose of encouraging these ideals is to create a society where every individual plays a vital role in collectively benefitting the society and safeguarding the spiritual, physical and financial well-being of all its members.

Significance of charity

The Charitable giving is one of the most fundamental obligations prescribed in the Holy Qur‘ān and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The act of conducting charity is held in high esteem by Allah Almighty and the donor is commended for his efforts in the following words:

For those who believe in the existence of that which is beyond the reach of perception, who establish Prayer and spend out of what We have provided them, who believe in what has been revealed to you and what was revealed before you, and have firm faith in the Hereafter. Such are on true guidance from their Lord; such are the truly successful.¹⁴

The above-mentioned Qur‘anic verse enlists the characteristic of the rightly guided people and one of these traits is spending for the sake of seeking Allah’s pleasure.

¹⁴ Al-Qur‘ān, 2:3,4,5

A Muslim is therefore encouraged to make charitable giving a priority in his daily life along with the performance of other good deeds so that he can become one of those whom the Qur‘ān terms as the rightly guided and promises them *Falah* (success in this life and the next).

Components of Giving Charity

In Islam the process of giving charity comprises of four components. Each one of them plays a vital role in making this deed a meritorious act. These components include the following:

Al-mūtasāddiq: The donor or the one who conducts charity is known as *al-Mūtasāddiq*. He is given prime importance in the process of giving charity. He is urged to give away his wealth as often as he can.

Al-mūtasāddiq‘alāyh: The second component in the process of giving *Sadāqāh* is the recipient or the receiver of the donation who is known as *al-Mūtasāddiq‘alāyh*. Qur‘anic verses discuss different categories of the people eligible to receive *Sadāqāh* or charity. The Holy Qur‘ān categorizes them as follows:

Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah , 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 traveller, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives zakat; [those who] fulfil 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.¹⁵

The above-mentioned verse not only explains the significance of giving charity but also enlists the eligible recipients to whom the alms or donations should be given. They include one’s poor relatives, orphaned children, those living in abject poverty, wayfarers who are in need of financial help to return to their homeland, those who are in need of financial help and beg and those in bondage i.e., slaves by spending money to set them free.

¹⁵ Al-Qur‘ān, 2:177

Al-MūtaṣāddāqBīh: The donation is termed as *al-MūtaṣāddāqBīh* and it is the third component of the process of giving charity. The most recurring rule regarding the donation is that it should be chosen from what the donor loves so that the aim of detachment from the worldly life can be fulfilled.

An-Niāh: The intention is perhaps the most important element in the process of giving charity. The acceptance of one's good deeds and whether they will be considered as *Ibādāh* (a sacred act) is entirely dependent upon the intentions of the donor. Therefore, the act must be performed for the sake of Allah alone.

Types of Charity

In Islam the charitable giving is divided into two broad divisions i.e., Mandatory Charitable giving and the Voluntary charitable giving. Generally, the mandatory charitable giving is known as *Al-Zakāh* whereas the voluntary charitable giving is termed as *Al-Sadāqāh*. Sometimes the word *Al-Sadāqāh* is also used to describe the mandatory charitable. Both are highly emphasized upon and are considered to be fundamental responsibilities prescribed upon a devoted Muslim by his Lord.

Mandatory charitable giving: Mandatory charitable giving is further divided into two sub-divisions *Zakāt-ul-maāl* and *Zakāt-ul-fītr*. The difference between the two is of eligibility mainly. The former is mandatory only for those who own a wealth over a certain amount whereas every Muslim is instructed to pay the latter regardless of their age or financial status. The second difference lies in the amount due. The amount attributed to *Zakāt-ul-Fītr* is very small regardless of one's financial situation. *Zakāt-ul-maāl*, however, depends on your personal wealth, because it is comprised of 2.5% of all net savings, so it varies greatly from person to person. The third difference lies in their due dates, *Zakāt-ul-maāl* can be paid at any time, with the only condition being that the earnings reflect one year's worth of net savings (one lunar year). *Zakāt ul Fītr*, however, is paid during Ramadan before the month ends. It needs to be paid before the Eid prayers at the very latest. This is a very specific time frame that all Muslims must abide by.

Voluntary charitable giving: *Al-Sadāqāh* is a very vast and a comprehensive concept. It not only includes material charitable giving but non-material charitable giving as well. A Muslim is instructed to spend his wealth for the sake of Allah *سبحانه و تعالی* every now and then. The Prophetic traditions discuss a variety of voluntary charitable giving which includes giving gifts, planting trees, providing water, feeding the poor and helping the

destitute. Interestingly enough, the concept of charitable giving in Ḥadīth is much more comprehensive in meaning as according to the Prophet, every good deed is considered as charity. Narrated Jābir bin ‘Abd Allah: The Prophet said “Enjoining, all that is good is a *Sadāqāh*”¹⁶

So basically, conducting charity is not only reserved for the privileged and financially stable classes of the society rather every Muslim is encouraged to conduct charity through his contributions to the Muslim society in general. Spending one’s wealth is not the sole manner of performing this deed of high merit rather one can help the needy with their might, encourage people to perform good deed or refrain themselves from committing bad deeds. As a companion of the Prophet (PBUH) states:

Sa ‘ūd bin Abū Burda reported on the authority of his grandfather that the Messenger of Allah said: “Giving of *Sadāqāh* is essential for every Muslim. It was said (to him): What do you say of him who does not find (the means) to do so? He said: Let him work with both his hands, thus doing benefit to himself and give *Sadāqāh*. It was said to him: What about him who does not have (the means) to do so? He said: Then let him assist the needy, the aggrieved. It was said: What do you say of one who cannot even do this? He said: Then he should enjoin what is reputable or what is good. He said: What about him if he cannot do that? He (the Holy Prophet) said: He should then abstain from evil, for verify that is *Sadāqāh* on his behalf”. It can be concluded that *Al-Sadāqāh* can be conducted in non-material ways such as using manpower and performing good deeds.¹⁷

Principles of Charitable Giving

Whenever Islam orders a Muslim to perform a good deed it also lays out a number of instructions and guidelines regarding the performance of that deed. A Muslim is told that his charity is only acceptable if he takes care of the following principles:

Ikhlāās: (sincerity) is the foundation on which every righteous act depends for its acceptance.

¹⁶ Al-Bukhari, Imam Abū -Abdullah Muhammad Bin Ismā‘īl al-Ja’afi, *Sahīh-al Bukhārī* (Cairo: Dār al Tasīl, 2012), 8:32.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Halal earnings: The wealth or the items which are to be given in charity must come from halal sources or lawfully earned money.

Keeping in views one's financial capability: Islam is a very practical religion and never intends to physically, mentally and financially burden a believer. The Holy Qur'ān clearly instructs that one should conduct charity after he has fulfilled the basic needs of his family. The Holy Qur'ān states that: "They ask: "What should we spend in the Way of Allah?" Say: "Whatever you can spare."¹⁸ Ibn Kathīr¹⁹ opines that *al-afw* means that which one can spare after fulfilling the basic needs and requirements of one's family.

Prohibition of giving away of unwanted things in charity: Islam directs a believer to donate things which are in a good condition, are useful according to the social standards and are loved by the donor for himself. Allah سبحانه و تعالى says in third chapter of the holy Qur'ān: "You shall not attain righteousness until you spend out of what you love (in the way of Allah."²⁰

Imam Ahmed Mustafa Al Marāghi elaborates²¹ in his Tafsīr that if a person spends his wealth in charity or donates an item which he loves he shall attain everything that a believer is promised in return for his good deeds. He further explains that the term *Al-birr* refers to the love of Allah for his obedient slaves, countless rewards, peaceful abode in heavens and withdrawal of His punishment in return for their good deeds.

Start with those of your kin: The most basic and fundamental principle of giving charity in Islam is that it starts at home. Those who are family or relatives and are poor, needy or destitute should be prioritized while giving charity.

Etiquettes of Charitable Giving

Charity is supposed to be a private matter so that the donor doesn't perform the act to satisfy his sense of pride and the donee is not humiliated due to his financial status. An important etiquette of giving away charity is showing respect towards the recipient so as to preserve his dignity. The Holy Qur'ān clearly warns the believers in these words: "O

¹⁸ Al-Qur'ān, 2:219

¹⁹ 'Imād Al-Dīn Ab ū al-Fidā Ismā'īl bin 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutūb A-Ilmīyyāh, 1998.)2:142-143.

²⁰ Al-Qur'ān, 3:92

²¹ Ahmad Al-Marāghi, Mustafa. *Tafsīr Al Marāghi* (Cairo, Sharikah Maktabag wā Matbā'a Mustafa al-Bābi wā al Hālbī, 1946), 3:206.

you who have believed, do not invalidate your charities with reminders or injury”²² According to Imam Zuhayli the term *Al-mānn* means to remind the recipient of one’s kindness and bragging about it constantly to the extent of harassing the recipient and the term *Al-Azaā* refers to hurting the sentiments of the recipient through harsh and words and disrespectful attitude. He further explains that both *Al-mānn* and *Al-Azaā* act as nullifying factors when it comes to charity and should be avoided at all costs.²³ Furthermore, Charity is given for the sake of Pleasing Allah سبحانه و تعالى and it is strictly prohibited to seek anything in return from the recipient. Imam Ibn Taimiyyah²⁴ is of the view that one should not even ask for a *Duā* in return for the charity he makes.

Conclusion

Every religion in the world strives to inculcate in its followers the highest of ideals in terms of ethics and moral values. The goal and the purpose of encouraging high ideals is to create a society where every individual plays a vital role in collectively benefiting the society and safeguarding the spiritual, physical and financial well-being of all its members. Generosity and liberality are ideals that are common to every religion. Islam & Hinduism have a vast concept of liberality prescribed in great detail in their scriptures. However, a keen observation is not required to point out the similarities and differences between the approaches of Islam & Hinduism towards the process of charitable giving. While, Islam’s approach often emerges as more pragmatic and logical than that of Hinduism. Yet, it is indeed fascinating to see that one can observe many similarities in their injunctions as well. Differences and similarities between their approaches have been discussed as following:

Differences in the approach of Islam and Hinduism towards charity

- The first difference lies between the recipients of charity. The Holy Qur’ān provides a complete list of recipients; most of whom are actually needy or belong to the poor factions of the Muslim society. On the other hand, injunctions in *Manū Smṛitī*; one of the most ancient and authoritative Hindu scripture, revolve around a single individual i.e. *The Brāhmāna*. They focus upon taking wealth from the

²² Al-Qur’ān, 2:264

²³ Al-Zuhayli, Wahba al Zuhayli, *Al Tafsīr al Munīr fil Aqeedāh wa Sharī’ah wā al mānhāj* (Damascus : Dār al fikr, 2003), 2:44-45.

²⁴ Ibn Taimiyyah, Taqī ad-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Abd al-Halim ibn Abd al-Salam al-Numayri al-Ḥarrānī, *Mājmū Fatāwā ibn Taimīyyāh* (Al-Madīnāh al Mūnawwāra: al Mātba’a al Rasmīyyah li Khādīmain al Harāmaīn al Sharīfayīn, 2004), 11:111.

poor classes and providing it to the already privileged class of the society. Whereas, Islam logically promotes socio-economic stability of every faction through the circulation of wealth among them. This approach has a very positive impact on the social welfare of an entire society through optimal distribution of wealth and goods among different strata of an Islamic society.

- Another difference that proves Islam's approach to be more comprehensive is that the process of giving *Sadāqāh* is not solely dependent upon material means rather every good deed which intends at benefitting another soul, no matter how little or insignificant it may seem to the doer is considered as *Sadāqāh* and rewarded by Allah سبحانه و تعالى.
- Apart from inculcation of high moral values and practicing detachment from materialistic worldly luxuries, Islam focuses upon bringing about socio-economic stability in a society. That is why, the injunctions on liberality do not intend to financially burden a believer. On the other hand, the process of giving charity in Hinduism is preceded by extravagant ceremonies and elaborate rituals which are financially so overwhelming that a common Hindu may altogether avoid giving charity thus inhibiting the process of social stability.
- Islam is a religion which encompasses every aspect of human psychology which is why every Muslim can connect with its teachings on a personal level. This quality is depicted in the detailed guidelines which precede every Islamic injunction and prohibition for instance Islam vigorously promotes the idea of giving charity in private and terms it a superior act than giving charity publicly. As the former aims at maintaining the dignity of the recipient and cultivating the quality of humility in a donor by prohibition of boastfulness. On the other hand, process of *Dānā* or *Ustārg* in Hinduism is supposed to be an ostentatious affair which includes a number of extravagant rituals and ceremonies.

Similarities in the approach of Islam and Hinduism towards charity:

- It is fascinating to observe that both the religions come across quite similar in some of their injunctions. The principles and the etiquettes laid down in their scriptures regarding the process of giving *Sadāqāh* and *Dānā* aim at guiding a donor step by step in order to improve the quality of his deed. Striking similarities can be easily observed in the rules as both heavily emphasize upon a cheerful attitude, contended

heart, lawfully earned money, mutual respect, prohibition of boastfulness and sincerity while giving away one's wealth.

- Another resemblance which draws one's interest is the notion of giving away wealth to fulfil the aim of detachment from this world and its luxuries. Islam and Hinduism encourage their followers to spend wealth for the benefit of others so that they don't get overly involved in this world and its affairs.

Keeping in view the above-mentioned similarities and differences it can be concluded that although both the religions strive their best to create a society of responsible and religiously devoted individuals, who are keen on playing a vital role in collectively benefiting the society and safeguarding the spiritual, physical and financial well-being of all its members, Islam emerges as more comprehensive, logical and pragmatic in its injunctions, goals, aims, principles and approach regarding liberality and generosity.

Recommendations

Here are some recommendations for future work on this topic.

- Hinduism is an ancient religion which has undergone several changes through the ages. Its books have been interpreted time and time again with injunctions being expounded upon several times leading to the birth of different religious sects within this religion. A further research can be conducted in which one can explore the concept of *Dānā* in detail in Hindu sectarian literature such as *Sathaptha Brāhmānaa* and Institutes of *Vishnu* etc.
- The research conducted in this article suggests that Hinduism pays great importance to knowledge so a further research study can be done on the topic of "Importance of gaining religious knowledge in Hinduism".
- In addition to that, study can be extended on the topic of "Famous philanthropic figures in Hinduism" or *Daan Veers*.

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