

# **The Importance and Effects of Voluntary Work**

## **Part one**

Praise be to Allah, the Almighty, the Most High, to Whom belongs Might, Perfection and Majesty! In His Hand, He holds the keys to the Heavens and Earth. He does all that He wishes and commands all that He desires! To Him we shall all return! I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah alone, with no associate, and that Muhammad is the servant and Messenger of Allah, a Prophet with great traits and magnanimous attributes! May Allah send His *Salat* (Graces, Honors, Mercy), Peace and Blessings upon him, his family, wives, Companions and upon those who follow them in righteousness until the Day of Judgment!

Having said that,

The best recommendation to you, O people, as well as to myself is to observe *taqwa* (fear of disobeying Almighty Allah). He who holds fast to *taqwa* and fears his Lord for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in anger and contentment shall find it illuminating his path in darkness, and guiding him in loneliness and misfortunes. ***﴿It is such as obey Allah and His Messenger, and fear Allah and do right, that will win (in the end).﴾*** [Al-Nur: 52]

O people!

For a society to attain success and integration, it must have a solid structure built from firmly laid blocks representing people's inner reality where all the blocks are equal and the same, with no distinction between those at the bottom and those at the top. Without this integration, the whole structure may not be to stand and hold together. Any rifting in the structure or disregard to any of its building blocks would inevitably lead to further cracks and eventually to the disintegration and collapse of the whole building. This state of affairs applies to every society without exception.

Therefore, it is imperative for society to act as a single family in all integration and concordance where the noble would lend their ears to the humble, the rich to the poor and the old to the young, and where no one would feel alienated, as camels in the desert while living amidst a huge nation and on one territory. Short of this, society would be bound to slide into dissipation and disintegration, paving the way for the

destructive spirit of selfishness, egotism and indifference to others. For what is the value of a society where destruction outweighs construction?

No matter how great, affluent and economically developed countries may be, this would not be enough for them to meet their peoples' requirements or fulfill their aspirations in time of need, let alone sustaining them.

At this point comes the role of the consistent and coherent society within which is kindled the spirit of voluntary work, which is the corner-stone that bridges the material, social, nutritional, security, and intellectual divide, besides fulfilling other primary necessities, needs and luxuries.

When voluntary work prevails in society and shapes itself as a noble feeling for those doing it and for fellow social members, it will indeed sweep away selfishness, miserliness, monopoly and humility provided that it stays free of any personal interest, favoritism or regionalism. Voluntary work has infinite beneficiaries. The Prophet (ﷺ) says, "**Regarding every wet liver (i.e. animate being) there is a reward.**" [Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim]

Voluntary work, O servants of Allah, is bound by neither space nor time; it stretches as far as its nature permits. Any work, if done without seeking pay or reward, is voluntary once motivated by good intention. It is as broad and extensive as the meaning of the word *good* itself. Here we need to make a little distinction between voluntary work and charitable work. Voluntary work refers to work done at one's own initiative, i.e. not requested by anyone. Charitable work, by contrast, is often carried out in response to a prior request. However, both types of work represent the two sides of the same coin; they lead to doing good for people in return for nothing, only seeking Allah's reward: **﴿(Saying), "We feed you for the sake of Allah alone: no reward do we desire from you, nor thanks.﴾** [Al-Insan: 9]

The wise know that progress and resistance to disintegration and collapse are what assigns value to society. They realize that volunteering is a necessity decreed by heavenly and man-made legislations before and after Islam. It is a salient sign of the purity of the volunteer's nature, altruism, passion and kindness as these are the attributes of the *hunafa*<sup>1</sup> who have not been vilified by diabolical selfishness and egotism.

This is corroborated by Khadija's –may Allah be pleased with her– description of the Prophet's (ﷺ) state, before he received divine revelation, when he returned from the cave of Hira after having met with Archangel Gabriel (ﷺ): "**I feared for myself**", he told her. "**Never!**" Khadija said, "**But have the glad tidings, for by Allah, Allah will never disgrace you as you keep good relations with your Kith and kin,**

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<sup>1</sup> Arabic plural of *hanif* (حنيف), i.e. true believers who profess the true religion.

*Speak the truth, help the poor and the destitute, serve your guest generously and assist the deserving, calamity-afflicted ones.*" [Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim]

What Hakim Ibn Hizam told the Prophet (ﷺ) proves that voluntary work is a righteous human disposition before and after Islam. "You know that in the days before Islam I used to maintain family ties, free slaves, and give charity." Hakim told the Prophet (ﷺ). "Will I be rewarded for any of those deeds?" he asked. The Prophet replied, "**You embraced Islam with all the good you did in the past.**"

This is the extent, the tolerance and the benevolence of Islam; it is urging Muslims to do good and to cooperate with each other in order to promote it and help attend to people's needs.

Voluntary work represents one of the guided, eternal, comprehensive and multifaceted images of Islam. It encompasses a variety of fields, such as economic development where volunteering stimulates people and spurs them into taking a true interest in endowment activities on account of the great impact they have on economic development. Endowments expand the scope of financial operations while keeping assets untouched.

Voluntary work applies to intellectual and social activities as well as *da'wah* (calling for Islam), and the like, provided that it departs from routine and stiffness into keeping pace with events and time, attracting qualified personnel, and establishing study and research centers that would seek to address the community needs and propose therapeutic and protective measures by engaging social awareness on the importance of volunteering and its effect on the socio-economic rapprochement as well as on affinity with religious.

A rapid glance at a single field of voluntary work –such as combatting penury and providing the destitute with vital necessities– reveals that what the haves spend on entertainment is enough to cover the needs of the have-nots in a whole city.

If half of the cost of a wedding party given by the rich were channeled to feed orphans near of kin or poor people cleaving to dust out of misery, it would be a blessing for the marrying couple, a source of happiness for the needy, a guard against the evil eye of the envious, and protection against the punishment for committing extravagance and thriftiness: **﴿And render to the kindred their due rights, as (also) to those in want, and to the wayfarer: But squander not (your wealth) in the manner of a spendthrift. Verily spendthrifts are brothers of the Evil Ones; and the Evil One is to his Lord (himself) ungrateful.﴾** [Al-Isra: 26-27]

This is our religion, and this is how we are taught by our Prophet (ﷺ). He wanted us to be constructive hands working towards people's welfare and success. He wanted us to work and not to sit idle; he wanted us to share people's feelings and not

to turn a deaf ear or a blind eye to their suffering. The Prophet (ﷺ) says, *"Every Muslim has to give in charity."*: *"(But what) if someone has nothing to give, what should he do?"* He was asked. The Prophet replied, *"He should work with his hands and benefit himself and also give in charity (from what he earns)."* *"If he cannot find even that?"* He was further asked. *"He should help the needy who appeal for help,"* he replied. Then he was asked again, *"If he cannot do (even) that?"* The Prophet said finally: *"Then he should perform good deeds and keep away from evil deeds, and that will be regarded as charity."* [Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim]

What is then the value of a society that spends very little in doing good?! What do you make of a society where evil outweighs good?! What path could be worse than this?! And what kind of pious and pure man could pass on such a steep path?! ﴿ *But he has not attempted to pass on the path that is steep (i.e. the path which will lead to goodness and success). 12. And what will make you know the path that is steep? 13. (It is) freeing a neck (slave). 14. Or giving food in a day of hunger (famine), 15. To an orphan near of kin. 16. Or to a Miskîn (poor) cleaving to dust (out of misery). 17. Then he became one of those who believed (in the Islamic Monotheism) and recommended one another to perseverance and patience, and (also) recommended one another to pity and compassion. 18. They are those on the Right Hand (i.e. the dwellers of Paradise),﴾ [Al-Balad: 11-18]*

May Allah bless you and me by the Glorious *Qur'ān* and make its verses and wise sayings beneficial to you and me! This is what I have said. If it is correct, it is so thanks to Allah, but if it is wrong, it is my own fault and Satan's. I seek forgiveness from Almighty Allah. Verily, He is Oft-Forgiving!

## **Part Two**

Praise be to Allah for His blessings, and thanks are due to Him for His guidance and bounty.

Every believer who keeps a jealous watch over his nation would certainly give serious consideration to the phenomenon of voluntary work nowadays. This phenomenon has gained international prominence, notably in non-Muslim countries, with such a degree of accuracy, perfection, devotion and one-man spirit. In the meantime, a Muslim observer cannot but pause and reflect on the status of voluntary

work in the West and what it has achieved compared with its counterpart in Muslim countries where the conceptualization of the term (voluntary work) is still vague and backward.

It is quite regrettable that a number of samples of voluntary work in Muslim communities are presented in the form of obligatory labor, or unavoidable duty without any prior psychological, religious, or social initiation in order to understand and appreciate this noble work.

Undoubtedly, school and university students will not be able to appreciate the meaning of voluntary work when they are, for instance, thrown into a valley, a neighborhood, or a street and are told to clean it, presumably as voluntary work, but as a duty, because it is an order from school, university, institute or the like without first relating to them the premises of such noble undertaking, in order to enhance its value, and clear any favor-related blemishes against every achieved work that members of the community have been used throughout their lives.

This contradicts voluntary work from the very outset, for the latter requires a supreme ability to give without reminding (anybody) of a favor, or expecting anything in return. Indeed, the essence of voluntary work is love, sympathy, and benevolence which is indifferent to the nature of response, but cares for satisfying one's conscience and making sure it is free of neglect and betrayal of society.

The volunteer's comfort and happiness lie in effecting a smile on a poor person's face, or hearing the murmurs of a supplication (to Allah to bless him) by a grieved anguished person.

It is impossible for us to imagine love without giving, or giving without love. In addition, voluntary work will not be perfect and successful without prior planning and organization, and without being aware of the motives, skills, personal credentials, and principles that introduce and define voluntary work, its nobility, and effect on the society that is made up of you and me, my relatives and yours, and my neighbors and yours.

A successful, generous, and righteous society is one that does not wait for anybody to say to it: give me, for its hands rush to take action (by giving) before its ears can hear, and its actions speak louder than its words.

How much we are all in dire need for all kinds of voluntary work at this time, which is infested with wars, calamities, and gloomy events whose fire reached brothers of ours in religion. Their houses' ceilings are leaking, their walls seeping, and can hardly protect them against cold or wetness. They are in Syria, Burma, and other Muslim countries. This situation requires hard work, and activation of voluntary service in all its aspects, the most vital of which is money.

So fear Allah! Fear Allah! And act to help our brothers, and the people of our faith; let us roll up our sleeves of hard work, of giving, and of sacrifice; blessings do

not last, and there is a tomorrow for today, death after life, and accountability after death: *﴿And know that your possessions and your children are but a trial and that surely with Allâh is a mighty reward.﴾* [Al-Anfal: 28]

This is said, send (O you Muslims) –may Allah have mercy on you– your *Salat* (Graces, Honours and Mercy) upon Muhammad Ibn Abdullah (ﷺ), the best of Allah's creatures, the most honest human being, and the sole possessor of the blessed basin and the only interceder in the Hereafter. For Allah ordered you –O believers– after beginning by Himself and then His angels, who are praising His sanctity, saying: *﴿O you who believe! Send your Salât<sup>[1]</sup> on (ask Allâh to bless) him (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم), and (you should) greet (salute) him with the Islâmic way of greeting (salutation i.e. As-Salâmu 'Alaikum.﴾* [Al Ahzab: 56]. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "*He who offers me a Salat, Allah will offer him ten such Salats as a reward*".

O Allah! Send Your *Salat* (Graces, Honours and Mercy), Peace and Blessing upon Your Servant and Messenger, Muhammad! O Allah! Be pleased with his four Caliphs, Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman and Ali, all of his Companions, on the *tabin* and those who righteously followed them till the Day of Judgment. O Allah! Be also pleased with us all, along with them, by Your Pardon and Generosity, O You, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate!

O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims! O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims! O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims! And fail polytheism and polytheists (who associate partners with You)! O Allah! Grant glory to Your religion, Your Book and the *Sunnah* of Your Prophet, and Your believing servants!

O Allah! Guide us along with those You have guided, pardon us along with those You have pardoned, be an ally to us along with those You are an ally to, and bless for us that which You have bestowed, protect us from the evil You have decreed, for verily You decree and none can decree over You!

O Allah! Grant our selves piety, and purify them, You are the best Who Purifies them, You are their Guardian and Master!

O Allah! Relieve the distressed among Muslims, alleviate their anguish, pay off the debts of those indebted, and cure our patients and theirs, with Your Mercy, O You, Most Merciful!

O Allah! Grant us safety in our homelands, and set right our *Imams* and Guardians. O Allah! Make our leadership from among those who fear You, guard *taqwa* and seek Your satisfaction, O Lord of the Worlds!

O Allah! Guide our leader to say and do whatever You love and please, O You, the Living, the Everlasting! O Allah! Set right his retinue, O You, the Lord of Majesty and Honour!

O Allah! Make better the conditions of Muslims everywhere, O Allah! Make better the conditions of Muslims everywhere, O Allah! Make better the conditions of Muslims everywhere, O Allah! Be on the side of our brothers who are oppressed and defenseless in their religion, wherever they may be! O Allah! Be with them, not against them; O Allah! Grant them victory over Your enemies and theirs! O Allah! Grant them victory in Syria and Burma, O You! The Lord of Majesty and Honour!

O Allah! Make their enemies the lowest and turn their affairs into scourge and disaster! O Allah! Speed up their (the Muslims) victory and relief, O You, the Lord of Majesty and Honour! The Lord of the Worlds!

O Allah, the Revealer of The Book (The Holy Qur'an), the Runner of the clouds, and the Defeater of the Confederates<sup>2</sup> defeat their enemy sooner, not later, O You, the Lord of Majesty and Honour, the Living One, the Eternal Guardian!

O Lord! You are Allah, and there is no deity worthy of worship but You! You are the Self-sufficient while we (humans) are destitute! Do send down rain on us and save us from despair! O Allah! Send down rain on us and save us from despair! O Allah! Send down rain on us and save us from despair! We implore You not to make our sins stand in the way between us and Your grace, O You, the Lord of Majesty and Honour!

*﴿... Our Lord! Give us in this world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and save us from the torment of the Fire!﴾* [Al-Baqarah: 201]

Glorified be our Lord, the Lord of Honour and Power! You are free from what they wrongly attribute unto You! May peace be upon all the Messengers! And the last of our supplications is “praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!”

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<sup>2</sup> These are disbelievers of Quraish and the Jews residing at *Madinah* and some other Arab tribes who rallied into a confederation and invaded the Muslims of *Madinah* but were defeated.