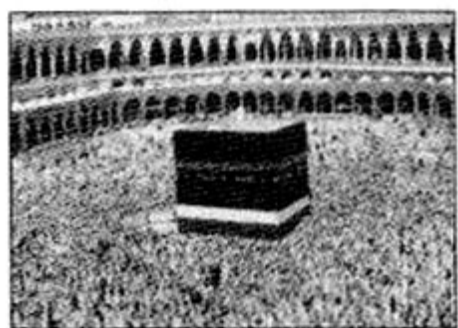


ISLAM

Charity is a Duty

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



According to the Quran, the have-nots have their rights. That is, the haves must give the have-nots their due; otherwise, the haves shall have to pay a heavy price for negligence in discharging their duties. Philanthropy is a duty rather than simply a charity.

An event narrated in the Quran in the chapter titled Al-Qalam (The Pen), is the best illustration of this concept:

We tried them as we tried the owners of a certain orchard, who vowed to harvest all its fruits the next morning, without saying, "If it be God's will." A calamity from your Lord befell the orchard as they slept. And by morning it lay as if it had already been harvested, a barren land... They set out early in the morning, thinking they had the power to prevent.

But when they saw it, they said, "We must have lost our way. Indeed, we are utterly ruined!" The more upright of the two said, "Did I not bid you to glorify God?" They said, "Glory be to God, our Lord. We have surely done wrong"...Such was their punishment (68:17-33).

When one gets a harvest, it is not the fruit exclusively of one's labour. There are other natural factors involved in the harvest, without which no harvest is possible. So, nature also has a share in every harvest. And this share should be returned to those people who for some reason have suffered deprivation.

These factors are numerous, such as, soil, water, bacteria, air, sunlight, etc. These factors are beyond the ability of the harvester to provide, but are externally made available by nature. Philanthropy means returning this share to the have-not group. Those who pay this share will be rewarded by God and those who fail in this duty will be punished.