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Islamic Banking and Finance Against Conventional

Edited by
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Chapter 7

Concept of Zakat in a Broader Sense

Introduction

"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 traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives zakah; [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."47

To the Quranic word Zakah and the meaning it conveys, there is no equivalent in any other language as far as we know. It is not just a form of charity or alms-giving or tax. It is not merely a deduction of a certain percentage from one's property, but an abundant enrichment and spiritual investment. It is not simply voluntary contribution to someone or some cause, or a government tax that a shrewd clever person can get away with. Rather, it is a duty enjoined by God and undertaken by Muslims in the interest of society as a whole. The Qur'anic word Zakah not only includes charity, alms, kindness, tax, voluntary contribution and so on, but it also combines with all these God-

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47 Qur'an 2:177