

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND WEALTH DISTRIBUTION: THE ROLE OF ZAKAT

**FATIMAH SHARINI BINTI MANSOR, NUR IZZATUL SYAHIRA BINTI AZMAN,
NUR ANIS ALYA BINTI CHE AZMAN & NOR SYAHIDA ANISA BINTI AZLI**

What is Zakat?

Zakat is a pillar of Islam. It is a required act of devotion and obligatory form of charity among Muslims. Every year, rich Muslims are obliged to give a certain percentage (usually 2.5%) of their excess wealth to needy individuals. It is not merely a religious ceremony; it is a way of distributing wealth within society. By transferring money to the poor, zakat attempts to create social effect by fair distribution of resources. In short, zakat makes sure the poor are helped by the wealthy, a step towards social justice on the most fundamental level.

Zakat's Role in Social Justice

Social justice in Islam means equality in society – in which the basic needs of everyone are met and money does not end up in the hands of a couple of people. Zakat is a powerful tool to achieve this justice. It takes away from the riches of the rich and gives to the poor, thereby establishing an equitable distribution. Therefore, zakat is not just personal charity, but a tool for building a just society.

Zakat is not a mere ritual; rather, he considered it to be an actual measure for the formation of a fair and balanced society. Zakat consolidates the solidarity of society, i.e., it unites people and stimulates them to care for each other. By providing assistance from the rich to the poor, the perception of injustice and disparity in society decreases among its members.

Most Significant Means Through Which Zakat Facilitates Social Justice

- **Eliminating Poverty:** Zakat directly benefits the poor and allows them to meet their primary needs like food, clothing, and shelter. It was created as a social obligation to eliminate poverty by providing that the affluent give to the poor ones. Rich individuals help pull people out of poverty through the payment of zakat.

- **Reduction of Wealth Disparity:** Zakat diminishes inequality between the poor and the wealthy. Scholars contend that zakat not only guarantees social justice but also directs resources towards the poor. This means that money saved is spent in improving the well-being of needy individuals. Thus, inequality among rich and poor persons is reduced.
- **Promoting Fairness and Equality:** Because everyone who is eligible must pay zakat, it creates a sense of fairness. The practice ensures that wealth circulates and is not hoarded by a small group. Research has shown that fair distribution through zakat can reduce income inequality and improve overall social well-being. In a just society, fewer people feel left behind.
- **Strengthening Community Bonds:** Zakat strengthens the bonds within the community. When the rich give to the poor, it builds compassion and brotherhood. This caring connection between different economic groups fosters social solidarity. People feel responsible for one another, which unites them.
- **Enhancing Social Stability:** By helping the less fortunate, zakat reduces social tensions. It can prevent feelings of resentment among the poor toward the rich. If the poor know that the rich will help them through zakat, they are less likely to feel anger or envy. This cooperation leads to a more stable and peaceful society. In fact, experts say that zakat promotes the fabric of society and even contributes to political stability, because a fairer distribution of wealth means fewer social conflicts.

Zakat as a Moral and Social Foundation

Zakat is a practical expression of the Islamic values of empathy and responsibility. It is rooted in the belief that helping others is a duty, not just an act of kindness. By commanding those with wealth to give to those without, Islam builds a moral foundation for social justice. Iqbal and other thinkers view zakat as a moral cornerstone that shapes a caring society. It teaches generosity and humility to the giver, and it uplifts the receiver. This mutual benefit means zakat is a tangible tool for creating a more humane and just society. In essence, zakat links personal faith with social responsibility: fulfilling one's religious duty also improves the community.

Conclusion

In summary, zakat is a fundamental Islamic practice that embodies the principle of social justice. It requires those who are financially able to support those who are less fortunate, thereby ensuring a fairer distribution of wealth in society. Through reducing poverty and inequality, zakat creates a sense of balance and fairness. It not only provides economic help but also strengthens social bonds and trust within the community. In an academic view, zakat is not only a religious obligation but also a powerful instrument for social welfare and justice. By obeying the command to give zakat, Muslims contribute to a more equitable and compassionate society. This shows how a religious duty can translate into practical steps towards achieving social justice for all.

