

# Merits of Charity in Sanatana

As for charity in Hinduism, it is among the good features of Hinduism that it also invites and exhorts its followers to give charity. For example, we find the following texts that call for charity:

“Give charity to poor as today you are rich and tomorrow you may be poor.” (Rig Veda, Book 10, hymn 117, V 5)

And Bhagvad Gita says regarding charity: “Various types of sacrifice, charity, and austerity are performed by the seekers of nirvana (salvation) by uttering “TAT” (or He is all) without seeking a reward.” (17.25)

Furthermore, Geeta exhorts its followers for charity and says: “Acts of sacrifice, charity and austerity should not be abandoned, but should be performed, because sacrifice, charity and austerity are the purifiers of the wise.”

Every religious work that is done by a devotee has one of three positions, as was asserted by Arjuna who said: “What is the state of devotion of those who perform spiritual practices with faith but without following the scriptural injunctions, O Krishna? Is it Saattvika, Raajasika, or Taamasika?” (The Bhagavad Geeta 17.01)

## Charity in Sanatana is of three kinds

- 1) **Saattvika Charity:** It is a charity given as a matter of duty, to a deserving candidate who does nothing in return, at the right place and time, is called a Saattvika charity. (17.20)
- 2) **Raajasika Charity:** It is a charity given unwillingly, or to get something in return, or looking for some fruit, is called Raajasika charity. (17.21)
- 3) **Taamasika Charity:** It is a charity given at a wrong place and time, to unworthy persons, without paying respect or with contempt, is said to be Taamasika charity. (The Bhagavad Geeta: 17.22)

There are multiple ways of making classification of charity in Hinduism. One depends on the item, and another on the size of the donation. However, a third depends on the purpose of daan, and has been mentioned in several Puran:

- 1) **Jyeshth Daan:** it a charity which is given in order to achieve Moksh and it has been considered the most valuable form of charity.
- 2) **Madhyam Daan:** it a charity which is given out of pity or kindness for others or for one's own kith and kin is considered to be of medium value.
- 3) **Kanishth Daan:** it a charity which is given to achieve one's own selfish ends is known as the least valued of all.<sup>[1]</sup>

# Rewards of Charity in Sanatana

According to the teachings of holy men, charity has two types of rewards: reward in the Hereafter (□□□□□), this reward is given to a person who gives charity to good men (Brahmin). But when the charity is given to liars, the reward is given only in this world (□□□□□) and there is no fruit for him in the Hereafter.<sup>[2]</sup>

It is noteworthy that the abovementioned quote refers to the existence of an afterlife in Hinduism that is called (□□□□□ Parlok) which means the Hereafter similar to the concept of Islam about the Hereafter. But the concept of Parlok is incompatible with the most famous Hindu doctrine of Rebirth which regards this world as the abode of work and reward together and simultaneously, while the reference refers to two sorts of worlds;(□□□□□ Parlok) and (□□□□□ Ehlok) which resembles the categorization of Muslim faith; *Ad-Dunya* (this world) and *Al-Akhirah* (the Hereafter). So, the concept of rebirth in Hinduism might be a human addition or distorted concept of the original notion of hereafter.

About reward of charity in Hinduism, Manu says:

“Both he who respectfully bestows a present, and he who respectfully accepts it shall go to a seat of bliss; but, if they act otherwise, to a region of horror.” (Manu, IV. 235.)

It is worth mentioning that in Hindu scriptures, Brahmin caste has been preferred in charity; if charity was given to a Brahmin caste it deserves higher rewards than the charity given to a lower caste. Sanjay Agarwal says in this regard:

“It is generally recognized that most *daan* is directed towards Brahmins. This is broadly in line with the *pauranic* directives.”<sup>[3]</sup>

The Indian religious literature concerning alms and charity is rich. Vedas, Purans, Mahabharat, Bhagavad Geeta and other Hindu scriptures are full of texts that call for charity. In fact, extending the helping hand to poor and needy is an ethical and moral value that can be realized even through mere human mind. Because Almighty Allah has granted human being the mind which leads to the humanistic and moral values; all human beings may agree upon the goodness of this type of works.

However, it is noted that some Indian religious texts about charity, often allocate the charity to Brahman caste, these books to a very large extent, deal with the necessity of bestowing alms and gifts on Brahmins. In the constitutions of Manu, it is stated that an oblation in the mouth or hand of a Brahmin is far better than offerings to holy fire, it never drops, it never dries and it is never consumed. A gift to one not a Brahmin produces fruit of a middle standard; to one who calls himself a Brahmin, double; to a well-read Brahmin, a hundred thousand fold; to one who has read all the Vedas, infinite.

Manu also says: “Let every man, according to his ability, give wealth to Brahmins, detached from the world and learned in Scripture; such a giver shall attain heaven after this life.”<sup>[4]</sup>

Moreover, when Shri Ram was born, King Dashrath was overjoyed, and gave various types of things in *daan* to Brahmins. These included gold, cows, clothes, and jewels.<sup>[5]</sup>

It is clear that these quotes give Brahmin caste preference in charity, the reward of charity is multiplied many times if the receiver of the charity is a Brahmin.