

**PROPHET (P.B.U.H.)'S TEACHINGS FOR ERADICATING
BEGGARY**

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ABSTRACT:

Among the many blessings of the teachings of the Holy Prophet, is one that enlightened mankind of his superiority over other beings. Having been declared as the Creator's favorite, all the miracles of this universe have been designed for man's benefit. He is the one endowed with intelligence, and the one granted the honor of worshipping Allah. Thus, due to this position of high esteem, it does not appear fit for him to beg in front of his fellow beings. The time that it all began is difficult to decide, but beggary is a known shame for mankind, which the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) sought to eradicate. His teachings in this regard are summarized as follows.

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Introduction:

Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) declared beggary as such a wrongful act that his companions would never ask someone for something even if it did not fall into the category of begging. Hazrat Auf Bin Maalik Ashja’yi narrated:

“About seven or nine of us were with the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) when he said, ‘You don’t pledge to the Messenger of Allah’. Given that we had pledged a few days ago, we responded ‘O Messenger! We have already pledged’. The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) repeated, ‘You don’t pledge to the Messenger of Allah’, and we responded as before. The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) repeated his words again, and we all extended our hands saying ‘O Messenger! We have already pledged to you; what do we pledge for now?’. The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) replied ‘Pledge that you would only pray to Allah, and will not associate anyone with Him, and will offer prayers five times a day, and will obey Allah’, and in a slow voice he added, ‘and will not beg in front of anyone (ask anything from them)’.”

Hazrat Auf revealed:

“From those of us who pledged that day, I noticed a few who wouldn't ask someone to pick their skelp if it fell.”¹

Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) explained the negative impacts of beggary as that beauty and the holy light (read: “noor”) vanishes from their faces. It has also been stated:

“When a person who used to beg in this world will be brought in front of the Lord, there will not be a single piece of meat on his face.”²

Another narration goes as that the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) stated:

“A man who asks from people (begs) to increase his treasures, be it less or more, is asking for flames.”³

It has also been clarified that the beggary provides no satisfaction. And thus, after all these warnings, a true follower of Islam is likely to go hungry than beg.

Imaan Ghazali (R.A.) declared beggary as “*Haraam*” given the following reasons:

- Begging is complaining to Allah. That is, if a servant asks some other master to fulfill his needs than his own, his action can be considered disrespect and complain of his master.
- A beggar lowers his esteem in front of others rather than just Allah, which is not acceptable for a true follower of Islam.
- The attitude of a beggar is often harmful to others.⁴

¹ Sahih Muslim, Kitaab Zakat, Baab un-nahi an-al-masa'lah

² Sahih Muslim, Kitaab Zakat, Baab al-asta'af an-al-masa'lah

³ Sahih Muslim, Kitaab Zakat, Baab un-nahi an-al-masa'lah

Enforcing the Concept of Earning through Hard Work:

The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) has expressed his dislike for idleness, and so a true believer spends his days working to better his worldly and after-life. The Holy Quran has related the activities of a believer to good deeds; which have been defined by Hameed Uddin as *“any deed that results in the personal growth of an individual, leading to his ultimate success in life”*.⁵

Though the importance of good deeds has been established in the Quran, it has also been clarified that they are unacceptable without true belief. Thus, the two have been discussed in association with one another, as if good deeds are a confirmation of belief.⁶

Holy Quran has given high regard to earning lawfully through hard work, including those doing so with the soldiers of Islam.⁷

Intellectuals narrated the Prophet in this regard:

*“A trader who transports food from one city to another and sells it as per the day’s rate, in the eyes of Allah, is equal to martyrs of Islam.”*⁸

There are almost 360 verses in the Quran, that emphasize the importance of good deeds, hard work, and rewards⁹(. The life of Holy Prophet

⁴ Muhammad Ghazali Imam Ahya-al-uloom (tarjuma: Muhammad Ahsan), Maktaba Rehmaniya Lahore, Jild 4 (355-6)

⁵ Islahi Ameen Ahsan, Tadabbur Quran, Foreign Foundation Lahore, Jild 8 (536)

⁶ Surah Jummah, verse 9-10

⁷ Surah Muzammil, verse 20

⁸ Muhammad Karam Shah Peer, Zeyaa-ul-Quran Lahore, Jild 5 (410)

(P.B.U.H.) is a practical implementation of these verses, as he worked by his own hands and liked it. The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) was a part of the construction of Masjid-e-Nabwi¹⁰, did shepherd in Makkah¹¹, and himself took part in digging up trenches in the battle of Ahzab¹². He cleaned his house on his own, fed his animals, carried his grocery and helped his servants¹³(14). Apart from the great example his life is, his sayings and teachings emphasize the same. As the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said:

“It is better for you to transport rope than to ask from others.”

Similarly,

“It is better if one of you carries wood on his back (to earn) than to beg.”¹⁴

Learning from the teachings of the Messenger of Allah, his companions disliked spending their days in leisure and idleness. As per Hazrat Abu Huraira:

“The Muhajirs (immigrants) kept themselves busy in the market, while the Ansaar worked in the fields.”¹⁵

Hazrat Ayesha explained the condition of the companions of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) as:

⁹ Al-Amal-fil-Islam

¹⁰ Bukhari Kitab Al-Jarah

¹¹ Ali Nadvi, Abul Hasan, Nabi Rehmat, Idara Nashrehaat Islam Karachi (257)

¹² Nabi Rehmat (328)

¹³ Musaddir Sabiq (599)

¹⁴ Sahih Bukhari, Kitaab Al-Biyoo, Sahih Muslim, Kitab Zakat

¹⁵ Sahih Bukhair, Kitab Al-Biyoo

*“Their bodies smelled (of sweat) and it was wished that they would (make time to) shower.”*¹⁶

Such was the effect of the teachings of the Messenger of Allah which, unlike the preachers of today, led his companions to work hard to fulfill their needs rather than asking from others. The business of Hazrat Abdur Rehman Bin Auf, the trade of Hazrat Abu Bakr, and the market of Hazrat Umar have also been mentioned in the Sahih Bukhari.

Mufti Muhammad Shafi explained verse 37 of Surah Noor through the example of Prophet’s companions and their livelihood as:

*“This verse indicates that most of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.)’s companions were either traders or manufacturers.”*¹⁷(18)

Similarly, Imam Bukhaari has referred to many events that present carpentering, tailoring, and others as potential means of earning livelihood. Imam Sha’rani has rightfully said:

*“How good it shall be, if the needle of the tailor and the cutter of the carpenter, become their prayer (tasbeeh).”*¹⁸
(19)

The Prophetic teachings have also identified such perspectives which create obstacles in earning lawfully through hard work:

¹⁶ Musaddir Sabiq, Baab Kasb-ar-Rijal-o-Amalah

¹⁷ Muhammad Shafi Mufti, Mu’aref Al-Quran, Idaara-tul-Mu’aref Karachi, Jild 6 (430)

¹⁸ Al-QAR-Zaavi, Yusuf, Islam aur Mu’aashi Tahaffuz (tarjuma: Abdul Hameed Siddiqi), Al-Badar Publications Lahore (44)

- The wrong concept of trust in Allah i.e. one must trust Allah with the results of his hard work (earning) and not with work entirely – he shouldn't stop working.
- Uncaring of the world's happenings in the name of differentiating between this life and the afterlife i.e. one must pray for the betterment of both these lives, given that earning lawfully has been declared a form of prayer.
- Laziness i.e. people mustn't refrain from traveling. As per teachings of Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.), traveling to earn must be thought of as a means to success; as the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) discussed the sea voyage of a man belonging to Bani Israel for trade purposes, which can also be applied to air and land travel.

Thus, Islam has eliminated all these obstacles, that result in beggary at the cost of one's honor. As per the requirements of today's world, it is necessary to highlight the two types of deeds and hard work (read: "amal") as taught by our Prophet (P.B.U.H.):

- **Amal Baleed**

It refers to physical work i.e. trade, manufacturing, selling, etc. Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) said:

*"There is no better food than the one earned
by one's physical work."*

This is reflected in the life of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.), providing a practical example for all of mankind to follow.

- **Amal Zehni**

It refers to mental work or thinks tanks. Islam has always invited its followers to deep, rational thinking and critical analysis, where the Quran holds almost 49 references in this regard.

22 times “*ya 'qiloon*”, 24 times “*ta 'qiloon*”, 4 times “*tadabbur*”, 6 times “*tafakkur*”, 20 times “*tafqah*”, and 269 times “*tazzakur*” has been used in verses. The term “Men of Intellect” has been given to those performing such deeds.

The importance of these types of labor can be highlighted, as per Obaid Ullah Fahad:

“The rational thinking in Islam is treated as one of the religious obligations of Muslim Ummah, while the intellectual activities are considered as their unavoidable duties.”¹⁹

Another point that must be clarified is that the thinking ideology of today gives rise to worldly traditions, whereas the Islamic ideology promotes spiritual traditions and provides a flourishing environment to the holy light within.

Psychological Measures to Counter Beggary:

The Messenger of Allah was aware of the psychological shortcomings of mankind. Men desire to respect and high regard in society, and this aspect of their nature was effectively utilized in countering beggary. Hazrat Abdullah Bin Umar narrated:

“Once while the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) was preaching charity and negating beggary, he said, ‘The upper hand is better than the lower hand, where the upper hand is the spending (giving) one and the lower hand is the begging one’.”²⁰

¹⁹ Sahih Muslim, Kitab Uz-Zikr, Ad-Da'waat-o-Ta'aoz

²⁰ Sahih Bukhari, Kitaab Zakat, Baab Bayan An-Aleed-al-Aleyah kher

In a single sentence, he prohibited beggary as well as provided a way of protecting one’s honor. Such was the thinking of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) that he endowed us with. Other of the Messenger’s saying in regards to charity and its importance are also inclusive of these psychological measures to eradicate beggary.

Maintaining Social Connections:

As per the teachings of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.), it has been deemed necessary for financially stable individuals to consider their close relations (family, neighbors, etc.) first when it comes to giving out charity. Consequently, this lessens the number of needy individuals in society. In Sahih Muslim, there is a chapter dealing with the rewards of spending (giving) on family, spouse, children, and parents, even if they are Mushrik. The mentioned chapter clarifies the fact that spending in this manner has twice the rewards – one for maintaining social connections (read: “selaah rehmi”) and others for charity. The example of Hazrat Talha is worth mentioning here, who was advised by the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) to allot his field to his brethren. He complied, and the fields were thus distributed among his family and grief-stricken brothers.

This concludes the summary of the teachings of the Messenger of Allah on the topic of eradicating beggary.

Causes & Types of Beggary

Imam Ghazali has presented a rather interesting discussion on this topic:

“Few professions require learning and practice of certain skills, as well as hard work before they can be adopted. However, a few amateurs disregard this or are unable to do so properly. Resultantly, they are incapable of earning for

themselves due to the lack of such skills. And so, they rely on the lawful earnings of others to fulfill their needs. This gives rise to two shameful professions – stealth and beggary. Common people are cautious of such professionals, working to protect their earnings from thieves and beggars. Therefore, these professionals require effective techniques to counter this situation. Thieves do this, either by forming groups of like-minded people and looting the population through fear or by going solo and behind masks. Beggars, on the other hand, provide excuses when asked to earn through hard work themselves. They pose themselves as disabled (pose as blind and go out on the streets with their children) or sick to develop a sense of sympathy for them in the population. Sometimes, they utilize unorthodox methods to impress the people (mimicry, comedy, etc.) or even fool the rather illiterate of them with fake religious cures (read: “ta`veez”) for different diseases. People who claim to read stars, or are fake preachers, are also included in this category. The sole purpose of these people, who exist in large numbers, is to fool the society for their personal and financial benefit.”²¹

This discussion is as applicable today, as it would have been in the era of Iman Ghazali (R.A.).

²¹ Islam aur Mu'aashi Tahaffuz (49-50)

Professional Beggars & Government Responsibilities

While discussing the various techniques employed by professional beggars, Allama Ghulam Rasool Syedi mentions the responsibilities of the government in this regard as follows:

“From the teachings of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.), it is established that asking from others (begging) is only allowable for an indebted individual who was in dire need of the loan at that time. Similarly, an individual begging for food is also allowed to do so, only if his condition is confirmed by at least three learned men. Thus, it is made clear here, that professional beggary is prohibited in Islam, making it the responsibility of the government of an Islamic state to take lawful actions against such individuals. There is a prevailing trend in society, where these professional beggars pose themselves as disabled, either through disguise or by actually making themselves disabled, in hope of earning pity-money. The second major blessing after Iman (belief) is the physical ability of an individual, and by throwing that away, these beggars call the wrath of Allah upon them. Others use makeup to appear sick or act as blind to fool the people around them. Such individuals must be arrested and punished, to eradicate this shameful and prohibited profession.”²²(23)

²² Saeedi, Ghulam Rasul, *Sharah Sahih Muslim*, Fareed Book Stall Lahore, Jild 2 (569-966)

An example of the actions taken by governments against professional beggary can be found in the rule of Hazrat Umar, as discussed by Imam Ghazali:

“Hazrat Umar heard someone begging for food after Maghrib, and ordered him to be fed. His command was carried out at once. When he heard the beggar call out again, he said, ‘I asked him to be fed’, and was met with the response, ‘He has been fed’. Hazrat Umar observed the shopper of that beggar, only to find it full of baked bread (read: “roti”). He said to the beggar, ‘You are no beggar, but a trader’, and used his collected goods to feed the camels bound for charity (read: “zakat”) and punished him.”²³(24)

Hazrat Umar’s approach has been called as just and wise by Imam Ghazali.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, the Prophet (P.B.U.H.), as per the Islamic ideology, has declared beggary as a sin. His sayings and their practical implementation as can be found in his own lifestyle are a clear indication of this fact. He sought to eliminate this disturbing trend from the Islamic society, and his example was rightfully followed by his companions and others after them. However, in the present era, this trend continues, and it is up to us and the people ruling us, to make sure it doesn’t prevail. With such resources at

²³ Ahyah-al-Uloom-ud-Deen, Jild 4 (347)

hand, in the form of the Holy teachings, and a resultant clear motive in our mind, it isn't long before we succeed in this venture.



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