34631 - Giving zakaah to a seeker of knowledge

the question

If a man devotes all his time to seeking Islamic knowledge, is it permissible to give him zakaah to cover his living expenses and to buy books?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

There are eight areas in which zakaah may be spent. These are mentioned in the verse in which Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“As-Sadaqaat (here it means Zakaah) are only for the Fuqaraa’ (poor), and Al Masaakeen (the poor) and those employed to collect (the funds); and to attract the hearts of those who have been inclined (towards Islam); and to free the captives; and for those in debt; and for Allaah’s Cause (i.e. for Mujaahidoon — those fighting in a holy battle), and for the wayfarer (a traveller who is cut off from everything); a duty imposed by Allaah. And Allaah is All-Knower, All-Wise”

[al-Tawbah 9:60]

What is meant by fi sabeel-Illaah (for Allaah’s Cause) is jihad fought so that the Word of Allaah will be supreme. So the mujaahid should be given what he needs to cover his expenses and to buy weapons.

The scholars said: fi sabeel-Illaah (for Allaah’s Cause) also includes a man who devotes all his time to seeking Islamic knowledge, so he should be given from the zakaah funds enough to cover his expenses for clothing, food and drink, accommodation and the books of knowledge that he needs, because Islamic knowledge is a kind of jihad for the sake of Allaah. Indeed, Imam Ahmad (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: There is nothing like knowledge for the one whose intention is

sound.

Knowledge is the foundation of the whole religion, and there is no religion without knowledge. Allaah revealed the Book so that mankind may keep up justice, and learn the rulings of their religion, and the beliefs, words and deeds that are enjoined upon them.

With regard to jihad for the sake of Allaah – yes, it is the noblest of deeds, and is indeed the pinnacle of Islam, and there is no doubt concerning its virtue. But knowledge has a high status in Islam, and the fact that it is included in jihad is obvious and there is no doubt concerning that.

Majmoo' Fataawa Ibn 'Uthaymeen, 337-338.

The Standing Committee was asked:

Is it permissible to give zakaah funds to seekers of knowledge who are in desperate need?

They replied:

Yes, it is permissible to give them zakaah to meet their needs.

Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa'imah, 10/17.

It says in al-Mawsoo'ah al-Fiqhiyyah:

The fuqaha' are agreed that it is permissible to give zakaah to seekers of knowledge. This was clearly stated by the Hanafis and Shaafa'is and Hanbalis, and this is what is understood from the Maaliki madhhab. Some of the Hanafis were of the view that it is permissible for a seeker of knowledge to accept zakaah even if he is rich, if he is devoting all his time to seeking knowledge and teach others, because he is unable to earn a living otherwise.

Al-Nawawi said: If he is able to earn a living that suits his situation, but he is too busy acquiring Islamic knowledge to such an extent that if he were to start earning a living he would have to stop seeking knowledge, then it is permissible for him to receive zakaah, because seeking knowledge is a communal obligation (fard kafaayah).

Ibn Taymiyah was asked about someone who did not have enough money to buy books to study. He said: It is permissible for him to take zakaah for what he needs to buy books of knowledge that he needs for his religious and worldly interests.

Al-Buhooti said: Perhaps that is included in the areas where zakaah may be given, because that comes under the heading of what the seeker of knowledge needs, so it is like his other expenses. The fuqaha' said that it is permissible to give zakaah to seekers of Islamic knowledge only.

The Hanafis clearly stated that it is permissible to transfer zakaah from one land to another to give it to a seeker of knowledge.

Al-Mawsoo'ah al-Fiqhiyyah, 28/337.

And Allaah knows best.