

# Comprehensive Demonstration of Greater Significance of *Infaq fi Sabilillah*

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## Abstract

*Infaq fi Sabilillah*: spending in the way of Allah (SWT)," other than Zakat, is usually considered a voluntary act of good deed in Islam. Also, there is a common understanding among Muslims that this spending is just an optional act of worship and is less important in terms of significance and status than mandatory acts of worship. However, the statements of Allah (SWT), the sayings of the Prophet (PBUH), and the opinions of scholars highlight the high importance of "spending in the way of Allah (SWT)." This research aims to demonstrate the greater significance of *Infaq fi Sabilillah* as an act of good deed in Islam. Many Qur'anic verses and Hadiths of the Prophet (PBUH) assert the great importance and status of spending in the way of Allah (SWT), even above those of some mandatory acts of worship. Also, according to the opinions of some scholars, there are occasions when spending, in addition to Zakat, becomes obligatory and necessary. The rewards of this spending and the consequence of not spending in the way of Allah (SWT) are also stated in some Qur'anic verses. Allah (SWT) has referred a believer in Al-Qur'an by various distinct qualities & names having some specific attributes. The activities of *Infaq fi Sabilillah* are the most mentioned attribute of a believer mentioned in those distinct qualities & names. Some relevant Qur'anic verses, the Hadiths of the Prophet (PBUH), and the opinions of scholars have been identified and presented in this paper using thematic analysis. This paper demonstrates that *Infaq fi Sabilillah* is an act of greater significance in Islam.

## 1. Introduction

The teaching of Islam is to earn wealth, property, and money, through righteous means and to spend a part of them as charity in the way of Allah (SWT). This spending in the way of Allah (SWT) is an obligation to the Muslims and they will be rewarded for doing this act. Although, it is the special duty of the rich Muslims to take care of the poor, general spending, in the way of Allah (SWT), is the responsibility of every Muslim. This spending is enjoined on Muslims to remove greediness from their hearts, purify their hearts and properties, and keep good social relationships and kindness in the community.

Spending in the way of Allah (SWT) is referred to in the Holy Qur'an with various distinct words: infaq (spending), i'tal maal (giving of property), it'am (feeding), sadaqah (charity), and qard hasan to Allah (SWT). These Qur'anic words, in general, are the activities of *Infaq fi Sabilillah* and refer to any spending in the way of Allah (SWT). *Infaq fi Sabilillah* is a significant social and economic act of good deed in Islam and incorporates all sorts of charitable spending aiming to seek the rewards and pleasure of Allah (SWT).

Another distinct word "Zakat" has been used in the Holy Qur'an, many times, for mandatory spending which indicates that there are special requirements in receiving and giving of this particular charity. Zakat is based on

the income of believers and the value of their possessions. Zakat is a certain proportion of wealth made to purify all wealth possessed if the wealth is above a threshold value (Nisab), which Muslims are obliged to donate every year. Zakat is paid out once in a lunar year, usually during Ramadan, when the calculations are made on any leftover wealth.

However, the obligation of spending as Infaq is to spend money or wealth, as required by the poor and needy people. Also, the areas or the recipients of Infaq are much wider than those of Zakat. This spending may be commanded, obligatory, optional, or desirable, depending on the situation and needs of the recipients. Similarly, building infrastructures for prayers, religious education, hospitals, orphanage centers, etc. are the financial obligations for Muslims that can't be fulfilled by Zakat spending. Moreover, spending for the treatment of a dying person or to feed a person in severe hunger would become obligatory for a true Muslim.

The objective of this research is to elucidate the profound significance of *Infaq fi Sabilillah*—that is, spending in the way of Allah (SWT)—within the framework of Islamic teachings. This study adopts a comprehensive and analytical methodology, beginning with the identification and interpretation of pertinent Qur'anic verses, authentic Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and scholarly commentaries from some renowned Islamic scholars. Central to the research is an in-depth exploration of the various categories of recipients and areas designated by Shariah for such charitable expenditures, as well as the divine injunctions and prophetic exhortations that emphasize the spiritual and social importance of this act. The research further delves into the reward structure associated with *Infaq fi Sabilillah*, as described in Islamic texts. It also examines the moral and legal obligations of Muslims concerning charitable giving and critically analyzes the consequences of neglecting this essential duty. A comparative analysis is conducted to position *Infaq* among other virtuous deeds in Islam, showcasing its distinctive status and its pivotal role in fostering personal piety and communal solidarity. Moreover, the study emphasizes *Infaq fi Sabilillah* as a defining trait of true believers, as described in the Qur'an and Hadith, and outlines the essential conditions for the acceptance of such acts of charity by Allah (SWT). Through this multidimensional approach, the research aims to reaffirm the indispensable role of *Infaq* in the spiritual, ethical, and socio-economic structure of the Muslim ummah.

Many Qur'anic verses and sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) emphasize the command to spend in the way of Allah (SWT), promising His reward and pleasure, while also warning of the consequences of neglecting this duty. Some verses highlight the elevated status of *Infaq fi Sabilillah*—spending in the way of Allah—even above fundamental pillars like Iman, Salah, and Zakat. The Qur'an describes true believers using titles such as *Muttaqin*, *Muflihun*, *al-Birr*, *Ebadur Rahman*, and *Ashabul Maimanah*, all of which include Infaq as a common trait. However, to earn divine reward, certain conditions of acceptance must be met. The Qur'anic evidence, Hadiths, and scholarly insights presented in this paper affirm *Infaq fi Sabilillah* as one of the most superior and defining acts of righteousness in Islam.

## 2. Areas of Spending in the Way of Allah (SWT)

### 2.1 Mandatory Spending: Zakat

Allah (SWT) has stated in verse 9:60 of al-Qur'an:

“Zakāh expenditures are only for the poor and for the needy and for those employed for it and for bringing hearts together [for Islām] and for freeing captives [or slaves] and for those in debt and for the cause of Allāh and for the [stranded] traveler - an obligation [imposed] by Allāh. And Allāh is Knowing and Wise” (Qur'an 9:60, Saheeh International).

The areas, or the recipients, of spending as Zakat are defined by Allah (SWT) in the mentioned verse. However, according to the opinions of the scholars, the area “*Fi Sabilillah*: spending in the cause of Allah,” mentioned in this verse, doesn't include spending for building religious infrastructures such as Masjid, Madrasa, etc. Ibn Kathir stated, “In the cause of Allah is exclusive for the benefit of the fighters in Jihad, who do not receive compensation from the Muslim Treasury (Ibn Kathir).” It is to be noted that the Zakat is paid once a year, usually, in the month of Ramadan. So, the Zakat spending can't fulfill the requirements of the poor and needy as and when necessary. These limitations of Zakat spending would be overcome by “Infaq: voluntary spending.”

### 2.2. Voluntary Spending: Infaq

While the obligation of Zakat spending is only for rich people, any Muslim can spend to fulfill the obligation of voluntary spending, if he finds a poor or needy person. The areas, or the recipients, of spending, other than Zakat, are diverse. The word used more often is Infaq while other words, such as *i'tal maal*, *i't'am*, *sadaqah*, and *qard hasan* to Allah (SWT) are also used for mentioning the activities of this voluntary spending. So, Infaq covers general charities and deeds of generosity and incorporates all sorts of charities and spending in the way of Allah (SWT).

Spending for the poor and needy people, orphans, wayfarers, freeing of slaves, etc. are the common areas of Infaq as Zakat. However, some other areas of Infaq, such as spending for jihad, building Masjids, planting trees, giving water to anyone who needs it, etc. are also mentioned in some Qur'anic verses and some Hadiths of the Prophet (PBUH).

“And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allāh and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allāh knows. And whatever you spend in the cause of Allāh will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged” (Qur'an 8:60, Saheeh International).

“you believe in Allāh and His Messenger and strive in the cause of Allāh with your wealth and your lives. That is best for you, if you only knew” (Qur'an 61:11, Saheeh International).

Ubaidullah Al-Khawlani narrated: I heard Uthman bin Affan saying, when people argued too much about his intention to reconstruct the mosque of Allah's Messenger (PBUH), “You have talked too much. I heard the Prophet (PBUH) saying, “Whoever built a mosque, (Bukair thought that Asim, another sub-narrator, added, "Intending Allah's Pleasure"), Allah would build for him a similar place in Paradise” (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith 450).

“Anas reported Allah's Messenger (PBUH) as saying Never does a Muslim plant tree or cultivate land and birds or a man or a beast eat out of them but that is a charity on his behalf” (Sahih Muslim, Hadith 1553a).

“There is none amongst the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, but is regarded as a charitable gift for him” (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith 2320).

“If any Muslim plants any plant and a human being or an animal eats of it, he will be rewarded as if he had given that much in charity” (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith 6012).

“O Messenger of Allah, my mother has died; shall I give in charity on her behalf?’ He said: ‘Yes.’ I said: ‘What kind of charity is best?’ He said: ‘Providing drinking water” (Sahih Nasai, Hadith 3664).

According to the Qur'anic verses, the sayings of the Prophet (PBUH), and the interpretations of scholars, spending in the way of Allah (SWT) should cover at least the following areas:

- i. The poor and needy people;
- ii. Orphans;
- iii. Freeing of slaves;
- iv. Wayfarers;
- v. Distressed and deprived Muslims in various corners of the world;
- vi. Logistic support for Jihad;
- vii. Building and maintenance of Masjids;
- viii. Building and maintenance of Educational Institutions;
- ix. Building and maintenance of Social Service Institutions: Hospitals for free treatments, Orphanage Centers, Old-age homes, Wakf institutions, etc.; and
- x. Public facilities: facilitating drinking water, building roads and bridges, planting trees, etc.

### 3. Guidance on Infaq

#### 3.1. Commands and Rewards from Allah (SWT)

Many verses in the Qur'an command Muslims to spend in the way of Allah (SWT) and ensure the rewards of such spending.

“Spend in the cause of Allah and do not let your own hands throw you into destruction (by withholding). And do good, for Allah certainly loves the good-doers” (Qur'an 2:195, Saheeh International).

“Whatever you spend of good is [to be] for parents and relatives and orphans and the needy and the traveler. And whatever you do of good - indeed, Allāh is Knowing of it” (Qur’an 2:215, Saheeh International).

“The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allāh is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allāh multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allāh is all-Encompassing and Know” (Qur’an 2:261, Saheeh International).

“Never will you attain the good [reward] until you spend [in the way of Allāh] from that which you love. And whatever you spend - indeed, Allāh is Knowing of it” (Qur’an 3:92, Saheeh International).

“And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allāh and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allāh knows. And whatever you spend in the cause of Allāh will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged” (Qur’an 8:60, Saheeh International).

“[It is that] you believe in Allāh and His Messenger and strive in the cause of Allāh with your wealth and your lives. That is best for you, if you only knew” (Qur’an 61:11, Saheeh International).

“And spend [in the way of Allāh] from what We have provided you before death approaches one of you and he says, “My Lord, if only You would delay me for a brief term so I would give charity and be of the righteous” (Qur’an 63:10, Saheeh International).

### 3.2. Hadiths of the Prophet (PBUH)

“Whoever gives charity equal to a date from good (halal) earnings – for Allah does not accept anything but that which is good – Allah will take it in His right hand and tend it for the one who gave it as any one of you tends his foal until it becomes like a mountain” (Sahih Muslim, Hadith 1014).

“There is no day on which the people get up but two angels come down and one of them says, ‘O Allah, give in compensation to the one who spends (in charity),’ and the other says, ‘O Allah, destroy the one who withholds” (Sahih Muslim, Hadith 1010).

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) went out on Eid al-Fitr or Eid al-Adha to the prayer place, and when he had finished (the prayer) he preached to the people and enjoined them to give charity. He said, “O people, give in charity!” Then he went over to the women and said, “O women, give in charity for I have seen that you are the majority of the people of Hell” (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith 1462).

“Allah said: ‘Spend, O son of Adam, and I shall spend on you” (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith 5352).

### 3.3. Infaq as an Obligation to Muslims

“Financial obligations do not end at the simple payment of Zakat. There are occasions, other than those of paying Zakat, where spending out of one’s wealth becomes obligatory and necessary. For instance, spending on one’s kin, when they have a valid excuse of not being able to earn their own living, is necessary; or there may be some needy person dying in poverty while you have already paid your Zakat, then, it becomes obligatory for you to save his life by spending your wealth on the spot. Similarly, building mosques and schools for religious education are all included in financial obligations. The difference is that Zakat has a special law of its own and it is obligatory to take full care in paying the Zakat in accordance with that law, under all conditions. While these other obligations depend on necessity and need; where needed, spending would become obligatory” (Mariful Qur’an, n.d.-a).

### 3.4. Limitation of Spending as Infaq

While the amount of mandatory spending as Zakat is limited to 2.5% of the possessed property of the rich believers, the amount of general spending in the way of Allah is not limited. This spending depends on the needs of the poor and needy. However, Allah (SWT) has given some guidance regarding this spending.

“Do not be so tight-fisted, for you will be blameworthy; nor so open-handed, for you will end up in poverty” (Qur’an 17:29, Saheeh International).

“And those who spend neither wastefully nor stingily, but moderately in between” (Qur’an 25:67, Saheeh International).

### 3.5. Consequence of Not Spending

Usually, the optional or voluntary acts of worship such as the optional prayer, the optional fasting, etc. are ensured rewards for performing and don't have any consequence for not performing these acts of worship. Allah (SWT).

“And spend in the way of Allāh and do not throw [yourselves] with your [own] hands into destruction [by refraining]. And do good; indeed, Allāh loves the doers of good” (Qur’an 2:195, Saheeh International).

One may become the inhabitant of Saqar (Hell) for not spending in the way of Allah (SWT).

(The inhabitants of Saqar will be asked) "What put you into Saqar?" They will say, "We were not of those who prayed, Nor did we used to feed the poor" (Qur’an 74:42-44, Saheeh International).

## 4. Methodology of study

This study has used the thematic approach [Uslub Tafsir Al-Maudhu’i] and synoptic approach [Uslub Tafsir Ijmali] (Kitota, A. 2023) in reviewing and analysing the Quranic verses related to the *Infaq fi Sabilillah*; in relation to zakah. English translation, The Qur’an Introduction and Appendices by Qur’an Project was used for the primary tafsir of all verses used in this study. Tafsir Al-Qur’an Al-‘Adhwim of Al-Imam Ibn Kathir; which is regarded as the second after Tafsir Al-Tabari of Al-Imam Ibn Jarir At-Tabari (Adam, I. I. . (2023) was used to get the primary commentary of the verses of the glorious Qur’an related to *Infaq fi Sabilillah*. The leading ahadith books such as Sahihayn [Sahih al-Bukhari & Sahih al-Muslim], Sunan At-Tirmidhi and Musnad Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal were used to get the interpretation of topic discussed. These data were then analysed by thematic to show how they have exposed that *Infaq fi Sabilillah* is an act of greater significance in Islam.

## 5. Discussion on Findings: Status of Infaq

*Infaq fi Sabilillah* is usually classified as voluntary or general spending. However, sometimes, the status of this general charity is given precedence over the Salat (prayer) and Zakat (mandatory spending) even over Iman (faith). The activities of Infaq have been given a higher status in many Qur’anic verses.

### 5.1 Status of Infaq Alongside Salat

“Who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them” (Qur’an 2:03, Saheeh International).

“Those who are constant in their prayer. And those within whose wealth is a known right. For the petitioner and the deprived” (Qur’an 70:23-25, Saheeh International).

### 5.2 Status of Infaq over Salat and Zakat

Allah (SWT) stated in the Qur’an:

“Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allāh, 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 zakāh; [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” (Qur’an 2:177, Saheeh International).

We can see in this verse that, just after Iman (faith), the activities of Infaq, such as giving wealth to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves are stated before the statement “establishing prayer and giving zakat.”

### 5.3 Status of Infaq Over Iman (Faith)

“But he has not broken through the difficult pass. And what can make you know what is [breaking through] the difficult pass? It is the freeing of a slave. Or feeding on a day of severe hunger. An orphan of near relationship. Or a needy person in misery. And then being among those who believed and advised one another to patience and advised one another to compassion” (Qur’an 90:11-17, Saheeh International).

We see here that the activities of Infaq, such as the freeing of a slave, feeding on a day of severe hunger to an orphan of near relationship, or to a needy person in misery are stated before the statement “and then being among those who believed.”

## 6. Infaq as the Unique Attribute of a Believer

Various distinct qualities & names, for a true believer, are mentioned in the Qur’an. Each quality or name incorporates some specific attributes. An activity of Infaq is the most common attribute of a believer included in those distinct qualities & names.

### 6.1 An attribute of Muttaqin and Muflihun

“Who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them. And who believe in what has been revealed to you, [O Muḥammad], and what was revealed before you, and of the Hereafter they are certain [in faith]” (Qur’an 2:3-4, Saheeh International).

### 6.2 An attribute of Al-Birr (Righteous People)

“Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allāh, 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;” (Qur’an 2:177, Saheeh International).

### 6.3 An attribute of Ebadur-Rahman (The servants of the Most Compassionate)

“And [they are] those who, when they spend, do so not excessively or sparingly but are ever, between that, [justly] moderate” (Qur’an 25:67, Saheeh International).

### 6.4 An attribute of Muhsinin (good-doers)

“Indeed, the righteous will be among gardens and springs. Accepting what their Lord has given them. Indeed, they were before that, doers of good. They used to sleep but little of the night, And in the hours before dawn they would ask forgiveness, And from their properties was [given] the right of the [needy] petitioner and the deprived” (Qur’an 51:15-19, Saheeh International).

### 6.5 An attribute of Honored Inhabitant in Jannah

“And those within whose wealth is a known right, For the petitioner and the deprived... They will be in gardens, honored” (Qur’an 70:24-25, 35, Saheeh International).

### 6.6 An attribute of Ashaabul Maimanah (Companions of the Right)

“It is the freeing of a slave. Or feeding on a day of severe hunger. An orphan of near relationship. Or a needy person in misery. And then being among those who believed and advised one another to patience and advised one another to compassion. Those are the companions of the right” (Qur’an 90:13-18, Saheeh International).

## 7. Acceptance Criteria for Infaq

It has been understood that “Infaq fi Sabilillah: spending in the way of Allah (SWT)” is an act of good deed in Islam having great significance, higher status, and attributes. However, spending would be accepted and the rewards of spending would be ensured only if the donors are free from feelings and actions of mannan (favor) and adhan (hurt/injury), after spending their wealth in the way of Allah (SWT).

## 7.1 Relevant Qur'anic Verses

The conditions for acceptance of Infaq are mentioned in verses 2:262 and 2:264 of the Qur'an. Allah (SWT) has stated:

“Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allāh and then do not follow up what they have spent with reminders [of it] or [other] injury will have their reward with their Lord, and there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve” (Qur'an 2:262, Saheeh International).

“O you who have believed, do not invalidate your charities with reminders [of it] or injury as does one who spends his wealth [only] to be seen by the people and does not believe in Allāh and the Last Day. His example is like that of a [large] smooth stone upon which is dust and is hit by a downpour that leaves it bare. They are unable [to keep] anything of what they have earned. And Allāh does not guide the disbelieving people” (Qur'an 2:264, Saheeh International).

## 7.2 Relevant Hadith

Several Hadiths of the Prophet (PBUH) prohibit reminding people of the acts of charity. For instance, Abu Dharr said that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said:

“Three persons whom Allah shall neither speak to on the Day of Resurrection nor look at nor purify and they shall receive a painful torment: he who reminds (the people) of what he gives away, he who lengthens his clothes below the ankles and he who swears an oath while lying, to sell his merchandise” (Riyad as-Salihin, Hadith 793).

## 7.3 Comments from Interpreters

“It is said that people who spend in the way of Allah and do not publicize their favor after having spent, nor cause any pain to those on whom they have spent, their reward is secure with their Lord. For them, there is no danger in the future and no sorrow of the past. Two negative conditions governing the acceptance of sadaqah have been stated in this verse:

1. Do not publicize your favor after spending.
2. Do not consider the receiver practically disgraced, and do nothing to cause him insult or pain” (Mariful Qur'an, n.d.-b).

“Those who spend for the cause of God, on the other hand, adopt a different approach. They do not, for one, taunt their beneficiaries with reminders of the favors they have bestowed. Indeed, having spent their wealth for the cause of God, they do not consider themselves to have bestowed any favor at all upon anyone. And they do not show any displeasure if a gracious response is not forthcoming from those to whom they have been generous. This is because their hopes are pinned on being rewarded in full by God, so what do they care if human beings show appreciation or not?” (Tazkirul Qur'an, n.d.).

## 7.4 Attributes of Donors for Acceptance of Infaq

According to the Qur'anic verses, the Prophet's saying, and the interpretations, mentioned in this section, and a recent interpretation (Md. Mamunur Rashid, 2024), the spending in the way of Allah (SWT) would only be accepted and the rewards would be ensured if the donors have the following attributes:

- i. They do not remind their spending (as a favor) to those on whom they have spent.
- ii. They do not publicize what they have spent in the way of Allah (SWT) or do not tell others that they (donors) have favored the recipient by giving this charity.
- iii. They do not fill their spending as a favor to those on whom they have spent.
- iv. They do not cause any injury or distress by hurtful words to those on whom they have spent.
- v. They do not feel their spending as any injury or distress to themselves.

## 8. Conclusion

“*Infaq fi Sabilillah*: spending in the way of Allah (SWT),” is a highly rewarded act of worship in Islam that has great religious as well as social significance. Infaq helps to maintain economic harmony in society by helping the poor and needy meet their basic needs. The Muslims are commanded to spend their wealth so that they can attain the

pleasure of Allah (SWT). “Infaq fi Sabilillah” is also a fundamental guidance from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He greatly emphasized the virtuousness and benefit of spending one's wealth to meet the needs of the poor, orphans, and other needy people in the community seeking the pleasure of Allah. This spending is necessary for keeping the social relationships between all sections of the Muslim community and even with non-Muslim neighbors.

This paper has highlighted several Qur'anic verses, Hadiths, and scholarly opinions that emphasize the importance of *Infaq fi Sabilillah*—spending in the way of Allah (SWT). Some verses command Muslims to spend, while others promise divine rewards. In certain cases, Infaq is given a status higher than even obligatory acts of worship. The consequences of neglecting this duty are also mentioned, and Infaq is repeatedly identified as a defining trait of true believers. Based on the evidence presented, it can be concluded that Infaq fi Sabilillah holds a superior place among Islamic acts of worship and carries profound significance in a Muslim's life.

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## Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of the paper.

## Author Contribution

*The authors are responsible for the study conception, research design, data collection, data analysis, result interpretation and manuscript drafting.*

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