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Islamic Charity in India: Anxiety and the 'Gifts Not Given' in Making Moral Community

New Islamic charities are re-inventing Islamic almsgiving (*zakat*) in India, as reformers interpret *zakat* as a moral investment in both Muslim communities and in India's economy. The ritual of *zakat* has long represented a reinforcement of local solidarities and kinship networks. Today, however, the priorities of many Muslim almsgivers are shifting. This paper analyzes a new Islamic charity organization in the north Indian city of Lucknow that offers a more specialized and professionalized channel for distributing alms donations. This developmentalist, seemingly modernist approach to Islamic charity that is attractive to university-educated Indian Muslims is paradoxically linked to increasing religiosity and religious community. Looking beyond compassion as an emotion, this paper's conclusions emphasize the role of religious obligation and anxiety in the re-construction of social relations among India's Muslims. Anxiety over about "correct" and "incorrect" almsgiving, for example, is fueled by ordinary Muslims' increasing scriptural literacy in Islamic law and ethics (*shari'a*). Moreover, in this case study of a new Islamic charity, money changes hands in ways that trace both economic shifts and moral shifts in society, but it is the gifts *not* given that most clearly illustrate the changed boundaries of moral community among Indian Muslims today.

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