

# How The Prophet Empowered The People with Special Needs

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## Abstract

The special needs community refers to those with physical and mental limitations, which generally impact their relatively limited potential. They have been an integral part of various societies since ancient times, necessitating interactions with other society members. While ancient western societies often devalued and perceived them as burdens, Islam emphasizes values like love, compassion, and justice towards them. However, contemporary society continues to harbour stigma and exhibit a lack of understanding of the potential of the special needs community. This underscores the imperative for an Islamic approach in fostering meaningful engagement with this community. This study explores prophetic approaches to empower the special needs community from *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhāri*, the most authoritative book of hadīth. A qualitative method employing document analysis is used. The data collection involves the deductive and descriptive method, starting with the identification of hadith related to the special needs community from *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhāri*. Books of hadīth commentaries and other sources are utilized to analyse the data, including reasons of revelation, the involvement of individuals or parties, as well as the time and location. The findings reveal six prophetic approaches towards the special needs community: consideration for their needs, recognition of their rights to contribute to Allah's ways, comforting them with Allah's rewards, encouraging assistance for them, ensuring their right to perform acts of worship, and providing government protection. These approaches by Prophet Muhammad serve as a moral compass in empowering the special needs community, elevating their status as valued members deserving of respect and capable of contributing to the development of society. In Islam, this condition does not negate their existence as caliphs on earth, along with a set of rights and obligations.

**Keywords:** special needs in Islam; special needs in sunnah; disability in Islam; disability in hadith

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## Introduction

Person with Disabilities Act (2008) in Malaysia defines special needs community as individuals with enduring physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory limitations that, when confronted with diverse obstacles, impede their comprehensive and efficacious engagement within the societal framework. This definition itself explains that the special needs community requires extensive support from the society particularly the government and the community members. They have been a part of the society members from the beginning of the ancient times and engaged with the community members. Throughout the history, the people with special needs are commonly

associated with stigma and prejudice resulting from the misinformation of their conditions. Some perceived them as God's punishment from sinning, witchcraft and magic, impact of negative maternal feeling during pregnancy, a form of hybrid between human and animals or evil spirits, and a product of astrological consequences (Groce et.al 2014). People who have disabilities often suffered prejudice, social stigma, exclusion, discrimination, and social isolation due to their limited capabilities to function as a normal individual. They have also missed valuable opportunity in terms of education, assistance for social inclusion, and the legitimate recourse to address injustices within their families, communities, or even at the national level.

The ancient western society held a set of beliefs towards the special needs community that were characterized by atrocity, superstition, and ignorance, leading to the ill treatment of this community. For instance, the Romans perceived disability as a sign of bad fortune and divine displeasure (Islam & Samsudin, 2020). Aristotle specifically mentioned that the deaf were senseless, devoid of reasoning capabilities, and equivalent to animals in the forest. These superstitions imposed and propagated during that era resulted in severe consequences, including ostracization by the community, infanticide through drowning or murder of children with special needs, and restrictions on marriage due to perceived mental illness (Andrew, 2013). Moreover, in 1939, Hitler initiated a euthanasia program targeting physically and mentally disabled children, urging parents to admit their children to paediatric clinics where they would ultimately be subjected to death through medication overdose and starvation. He furthered this genocide by implementing the secret program Aktion 47, employing gas chambers in designated institutions to execute adult members of the special needs community through the release of carbon monoxide. This event occurred due to the belief that the special needs community represented a genetic and financial burden to Germany (*Holocaust Encyclopedia* 2020). Such historical instances reveal the deeply entrenched discrimination and mistreatment endured by the special needs community in ancient western societies, driven by misguided beliefs and prejudices. These actions reflect the lack of understanding and empathy towards individuals with disabilities, emphasizing the significance of promoting inclusion, respect, and equal rights for this community in modern times.

In contrast to the Islamic tradition rooted in Quranic verses and prophetic hadith, the special needs community received a positive outlook, characterized by consistent support and assistance aimed at empowering their individual capabilities. Numerous Quranic verses not only acknowledge their existence but also emphasize their active participation within the community. Notably, the story of Abdullah Ibn Umm Maktum, a blind companion, holds great significance. This story is recounted in Surah Abasa, where the Prophet's interaction with him stands as a pivotal moment. In this Surah, the Prophet's expression changed subtly as Abdullah Ibn Umm Maktum, seeking knowledge, approached him while he was engaged with the powerful and influential leaders of the Quraysh, hoping to persuade them to embrace Islam. Although Abdullah Ibn Umm Maktum himself could not witness the Prophet's expression due to his visual impairment, Allah SWT, being All-Seeing, reprimanded the Prophet for his reaction. This incident underscores the Quranic emphasis on equitable treatment and inclusivity within the community.

Hence, this study aims to delve into and elucidate the methods through which Prophet Muhammad engaged with the special needs community. In this pursuit, Sahih Al-Bukhari,

acknowledged as the most authoritative compilation of hadith capturing Prophet Muhammad's utterances, deeds, and implicit endorsements, will serve as a pivotal source to unveil his interactions with this community. Employing a qualitative approach, this study employs document analysis for data collection and applies inductive and descriptive methodologies for data interpretation. The study's findings underscore that Prophet Muhammad, as the epitome of Islamic virtue, interacted with the special needs community in a manner marked by respect, affection, and compassion. His interactions serve as a model of behaviour, highlighting his embodiment of the values he preached.

## Special Needs in The Quran

Being the most trustworthy and frequently consulted source in Islam, the Quran encompasses a diverse array of verses that directly or indirectly pertain to the special needs community. Demonstrating a constructive approach, the Quran maintains a stance that refrains from considering them as a lesser tier of humanity. Rather, it presents a positive perspective by emphasizing the importance of understanding and connecting with people of various genders, tribes, and backgrounds. In the perspective of Allah SWT, one's status is determined by the sincerity of their heart, not by external appearances. This principle underscores the Quran's unprejudiced and inclusive view. The following verse explains this notion.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقْوَاهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

13. O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted. (Surah Al-Hujurat 49:13)

Ibn Kathir (1999) mentioned that Allah declares to humanity that He created them from a single soul and from it made its mate, Adam and Hawa. He diversified them into various nations, which encompass larger entities than tribes. Beyond tribes, there are further classifications, such as clans, lineages, sub-tribes, and other divisions. Syed Qutb's (1972) perspective extends the discussion by highlighting that variations in language, colour, disposition, behaviour, skills, and capabilities were intended to foster understanding among individuals, rather than sparking discord and animosity. Importantly, these differences encompass abilities as well, signifying that individual with special needs, a part of this divine diversity, serve as a mechanism for all members of society to collaborate and support each other. This divine arrangement allows for a deeper understanding of one another's disparities and aptitudes, promoting a functional and harmonious society. Furthermore, this verse emphasizes that one's esteem in the eyes of the Divine is not contingent on physical appearance but hinges on their devotion to fulfilling Allah's mandates and refraining from transgressions (Al-Tabari 2001).

Apart from that, the Quran elucidates that those who exhibit patience will receive their recompense from Allah SWT. The challenges posed by disabilities, as permitted by Allah, can occasionally trigger feelings of unease, discontentment, and ingratitude towards Him. However, Allah reminded the believers to have God-consciousness attitude (*taqwa*) when they face tribulations and tested by Allah as they will be rewarded abundantly in the hereafter.

قُلْ يٰعِبَادِ الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا اتَّقُوْا رَبَّكُمۡ لِلَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوْا فِيْ هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ وَّاَرْضُ اللّٰهِ وٰسِعَةٌ اِنَّمَا يُؤَفِّي  
الصّٰبِرِيْنَ اَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

Say, "O My servants who have believed, fear your Lord. For those who do good in this world is good, and the earth of Allah is spacious. Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account." (Surah Al-Zumar 39: 10)

Al-Shaukani (1993) in *Fath al-Qadīr* mentioned that this verse indicates that the reward and recompense for those who are patient is immeasurable while things that can be counted are limited. He further added that to be among the recipients of this extraordinary reward, the believers must control themselves and be disciplined. Since the despair cannot change the fate of someone in the position of hardship, patience is prioritised. Those who are wise will realise that being patient brings a great reward and those who exhibit impatience forfeit an inestimable reward, subsequently adding more suffering to themselves and incurring nothing but regret. The believers within the special needs community who demonstrate unwavering patience in the face of afflictions and tests bestowed by Allah shall receive bountiful rewards from Him. If they adhere to a God-conscious demeanour (*taqwa*) as their ethical compass, their standing in Allah's view may surpass even those endowed with flawless physical and mental attributes, who remain untried by the tests and trials decreed by Allah SWT.

The Quran serves as a poignant reminder, advising against the mockery of individuals with special needs, for in Allah's eyes, their stature might surpass that of those blessed with impeccable health. Any form of verbal mistreatment or derogatory language is unequivocally discouraged. The following verse from Surah Al-Hujurat verse 11 records this notion.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ اَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّنْ نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ اَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوْا اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَرُوْا بِاللّٰغِبِ بَيْنَ السِّمِّ الْفُسُوْقُ بَعْدَ الْاِيْمٰنِ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ

11. O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. Wretched is the name of disobedience after [one's] faith. And whoever does not repent then it is those who are the wrongdoers. (Surah Al-Hujurat 49:11)

Ibn Kathir (1999) in his book of Quranic commentary delves into the meaning of '*wa lā talmizū anfusakum*,' highlighting its admonition against engaging in backbiting and ridiculing others. Those who engage in mockery and those who belittle others are deemed among those

deserving blame and divine curse. Furthermore, he elucidates that '*wa lā tanābazū bi al-alqāb*' cautions against using derogatory terms or offensive nicknames when addressing one another. This guidance underscores the unworthiness of substituting derogatory labels for virtuous ones. Apart from that, Ibn Ashur (1984) in *Al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir* mentioned that when brotherhood was established, it necessitated good treatment between the brothers. He added that what was decreed regarding positive treatment among Muslim brothers extended to include good conduct among all individuals within the community. He further exclaimed that these verses serve as a reminder of various aspects of good treatment that may sometimes be overlooked due to their prevalence during the pre-Islamic era. It intends to emphasize the obligation of mutual politeness and courteousness among the members of the Muslim community. Therefore, it becomes evident that believers must refrain from mocking or using offensive language against their fellow humans, including the special needs community, to avoid falling into the category cursed by Allah SWT. Islam fundamentally advocates positive treatment among all individuals.

## Methodology

The study utilised qualitative method using document analysis where it combines the descriptive and analytical approaches in analysing the data. The data collection section begins from the identification of hadith on special needs community in Sahih al-Bukhari. Subsequently, the data analysis phase involved referencing hadith commentaries to extract details such as the context of revelation, the individuals implicated in the hadith, and the temporal and geographical context of the events.

## Findings

The findings demonstrate that there are around six hadith in Sahih al-Bukhari mentioning about Prophet Muhammad's approach in engaging with the special needs community. The hadith includes 1) hadith 704, chapter 'complaining against one's Imam if he prolongs the prayer', book of adhan 2) hadith 3925, chapter 'The arrival of the Prophet (saws) at Al-Madina', book of merits of the helpers in Madinah, 3) hadith 5653, chapter 'the superiority of a person who has lost his sight', book of patients, 4) hadith 2518, Chapter: What is the best kind of manumission (of slaves), Book of Manumission of Slaves, 5) hadith 840, , Chapter: Whoever did not say (a Taslim) in addition to the Taslim of the Imam but thought that Taslim of the Salat (prayer) was sufficient, books of azan and 6) hadith 6745, chapter: The heirs of a lady who dies, leaving two cousins – her maternal brother and her husband, Book of Laws of Inheritance.

Through an analysis of these hadiths, several prophetic approaches have been identified in relation to the special needs community. These include demonstrating consideration for their specific needs, safeguarding their rights to participate in the way of Allah according to their abilities, providing solace by emphasizing the rewards from Allah, encouraging others to support and assist the special needs community, addressing their requests to fulfil their rights in performing acts of worship, and ensuring governmental protection and support for the special needs community.

These prophetic approaches reflect the compassionate and inclusive nature of the Prophet Muhammad's interactions with individuals with special needs, highlighting the significance of their inclusion and welfare within the Islamic community.

## Consideration For the Special Needs Community

The Prophet exemplified engagement with the special needs community through consistent reminders to believers about practicing consideration towards them in all facets of life. This even extends to aspects as significant as Solat, a pillar of Islam ranking second in importance. While Solat serves as a vital connection between individuals and the Creator, with the *Imam* guiding this endeavour, the Prophet advised that the *Imam* should also be conscious of the congregation's diversity, including those with special needs.

عَنْ أَبِي مَسْعُودٍ، قَالَ قَالَ رَجُلٌ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنِّي لَأَتَأَخَّرُ عَنِ الصَّلَاةِ فِي الْفَجْرِ مِمَّا يُطِيلُ بِنَا فَلَانَ فِيهَا. فَغَضِبَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَا رَأَيْتُهُ غَضِبَ فِي مَوْضِعٍ كَانَ أَشَدَّ غَضَبًا مِنْهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ " يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ مِنْكُمْ مُتَفَرِّقِينَ، فَمَنْ أَمَّ النَّاسَ فَلْيَتَجَوَّزْ، فَإِنَّ خَلْفَهُ الضَّعِيفَ وَالْكَبِيرَ وَذَا الْحَاجَةِ " .

Narrated Abu Mas`ud: A man came and said, "O Allah's Messenger PBUH! I keep away from the morning prayer because so-and-so (Imam) prolongs it too much." Allah's Messenger PBUH became furious, and I had never seen him more furious than he was on that day. The Prophet PBUH said, "O people! Some of you make others dislike the prayer, so whoever becomes an Imam he should shorten the prayer, as behind him are the weak, the old and the needy. (Book of Call to Prayers, chapter: Complaining against one's Imam if he prolongs the prayer., hadith 704)

In this hadith, a man approached the Messenger of Allah and conveyed his reason for refraining from joining the congregational Fajr prayer. He cited the prolonged duration of the Imam's prayer. Upon hearing this, the Prophet, perturbed by the situation, issued a reminder to all *Imams* leading prayers to curtail the length of the prayer. This advisory underscored the consideration that the congregants might include those who are elderly, frail, or in need. Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalāni (2017) in the most authoritative book of hadith commentary, *Fatḥh al-Bāri Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* explained that shortening the Solat in this hadith does not imply condensing it to the extent of neglecting the obligatory elements of the prayer. It does not signify brevity to the point of compromising the essential requirements of the prayer. He further added that the *Imam* mentioned in this hadith is Ubayy bin Ka'ab as it happened during Solat Fajar in Masjid Quba. A similar event also once occurred where the Imam was Muaz bin Jabal and it happened during Solat Isya' in Banu Salimah. Ibn Battal (2003) in *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī li Ibn Battal* concluded that this hadith is a proof that the Imam should shorten the hadith without compromising the obligatory elements of Solat and consider the physical ability of the congregation if he would like to lengthen it at certain times. In another hadith, the Prophet suggested the *Imam* to recite *Al-Shams*, *Ad-Dhuha*, *Al-A'la*, and *Al-Lail* to prevent the Solat to become long.

Hence, a deduction can be made that the Prophet effectively showcased to the Muslim community that even within one of Islam's most crucial pillars, prioritizing consideration for others, particularly the special needs community, holds immense significance in upholding fairness within relational contexts. If the elongation of obligatory prayers risks deterring congregational participation, then the optimal course is to curtail the prayers' length, thereby averting such an outcome. The special needs community merits the opportunity to forge a connection with Allah and fellow society members through congregational prayers. Their presence within the mosque should be acknowledged and commemorated, recognizing the effort they invest despite physical or mental constraints they contend with.

## Rights to Contribute to The Ways of Allah

Furthermore, in the era of the Prophet, individuals from the special needs community were granted the liberty to engage in serving Allah in accordance with their abilities. Within the Islamic tradition, there is no trace of discrimination against those with special needs. The Prophet warmly welcomed anyone, irrespective of their abilities, who desired to partake in the propagation of Islam.

عن البراء بن عازب رضى الله عنهما قال أول من قدم علينا مصعب بن عمير وابن أم مكتوم، وكانا يُقرئان الناس،

Narrated Al-Bara bin Azib: The first people who came to us (in Medina) were Mus`ab bin `Umair and Ibn Um Maktum who were teaching Qur'an to the people. (Book of Merits of the Helpers in Madinah, Chapter: The arrival of the Prophet (saws) at Al-Madina, hadith 3925)

The hadith provides an account of Mus'ab bin Umair and Abdullah Ibn Um Maktum, two of the earliest individuals who arrived in Madinah to teach the Quran to its citizens. Abdullah Ibn Umm Maktum, a visually impaired companion of the Prophet, was previously mentioned in the Quran in Surah Abasa. His eagerness to seek knowledge from Prophet Muhammad was highly regarded by Allah SWT, as Allah reprimanded the Prophet for not giving equal attention to Abdullah Ibn Maktum, who possessed a sincere desire to learn about Islam. His blindness in no way obstructed his devotion to Allah's cause, serving as a poignant reminder that the capacities of sight and intellect are independent attributes. Remarkably, his visual impairment did not impede his extraordinary memory, aptitude in recitation, attentive listening, and profound understanding of the Quran. Abdullah's example displays his adept utilization of his other senses, granted by Allah, to study and impart Quranic knowledge to others.

Thus, this hadith serves as a counterpoint to the Western tradition's belief that individuals with physical disabilities impose burdens on society, showcasing how they can instead offer substantial contributions for the advancement of the *ummah*. People with special needs deserve the chance to engage and enrich the lives of their fellow community members. The privilege of the special needs community to participate in societal progress should not be

curtailed, if they fulfil the necessary qualifications for specific roles. While their challenges in certain areas of life are evident, these should not overshadow their potential to exert a positive influence on the community at large.

## Comforting Them with The Reward From Allah

Another way of engaging with the community with special needs involves offering them solace by highlighting the blessings Allah promises them rewards because of their patience and gratitude. Despite facing stigma, discrimination, and limitations in education and other spheres of life, the continual reinforcement of Allah's rewards can instil within them a sense of hope, gratitude, and a positive outlook regarding the trials presented by Allah.

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ " إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَالَ إِذَا ابْتَلَيْتُ عَبْدِي بِحَبِيبَتَيْهِ فَصَبَرَ عَوَّضْتُهُ مِنْهُمَا الْجَنَّةَ ". يُرِيدُ عَيْنَيْهِ. تَابَعَهُ أَشْعَثُ بْنُ جَابِرٍ وَأَبُو ظَلَّالٍ عَنْ أَنَسِ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

Narrated Anas bin Malik: I heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) saying, "Allah said, 'If I deprive my slave of his two beloved things (i.e., his eyes) and he remains patient, I will let him enter Paradise in compensation for them.'" (Book of patients, chapter the superiority of a person who has lost his sight, hadith 5653)

The mentioned hadith indicates that those who demonstrate patience when deprived of two cherished possessions by Allah SWT will be rewarded with paradise. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (2017) notes that Al-Bukhari titled this chapter as *'the superiority of a person who has lost their sight'* based on the hadith narrated from Zaid bin Arqam, through the chain of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal: "Allah does not test a servant with the loss of their faith, after which any loss is more severe than the loss of their sight. And whoever is tested with the loss of their sight, and remains patient until they meet Allah, they will certainly meet Allah without any reckoning upon them." Ibn Hajar (2017) further elucidates that the two beloved possessions mentioned in the hadith refer to a pair of eyes, the loss of which results in hardships, as one cannot witness moments of happiness and avoid dangerous situations. Al-Karmani (1981) adds that the virtue of patience in the face of affliction, and the choice to endure trials with patience, lead to the attainment of paradise.

This highlights the significance of remaining steadfast in times of adversity and aligns with the idea that those who endure such challenges with patience will ultimately be rewarded with paradise. Hence, it is imperative for members of society to mutually encourage one another, extending this reminder to individuals with special needs as well, to remain hopeful about the rewards Allah promises them for their steadfastness in confronting their physical and mental constraints. The teachings of the Quranic verse and prophetic hadith stand as a continual reminder that this world is transient, while the patients are destined to receive Allah's ultimate recompense.



## Encouragement to Help the Special Need Community

In addition to encouraging the special needs community to practice patience, society members are also counselled to provide various forms of assistance to individuals with special needs. Extending help to the special needs community is regarded as one of the noblest actions that believers can undertake.

عَنْ أَبِي ذَرٍّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ سَأَلْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَيُّ الْعَمَلِ أَفْضَلُ، قَالَ " إِيْمَانٌ بِاللَّهِ، وَجِهَادٌ فِي سَبِيلِهِ ". قُلْتُ فَأَيُّ الرِّقَابِ أَفْضَلُ قَالَ " أَعْلَاهَا ثَمَنًا، وَأَنْفُسُهَا عِنْدَ أَهْلِهَا ". قُلْتُ فَإِنْ لَمْ أَفْعَلْ. قَالَ " نُعِينَ صَانِعًا أَوْ تَصْنَعُ لِأَخْرَقَ ". قَالَ فَإِنْ لَمْ أَفْعَلْ. قَالَ " تَدْعُ النَّاسَ مِنَ الشَّرِّ، فَإِنَّهَا صَدَقَةٌ تَصَدَّقُ بِهَا عَلَى نَفْسِكَ "

Narrated Abu Dhar: I asked the Prophet, "What is the best deed?" He replied, "To believe in Allah and to fight for His Cause." I then asked, "What is the best kind of manumission (of slaves)?" He replied, "The manumission of the most expensive slave and the most beloved by his master." I said, "If I cannot afford to do that?" He said, "Help the weak or do good for a person who cannot work for himself." I said, "If I cannot do that?" He said, "Refrain from harming others for this will be regarded as a charitable deed for your own good." (Book of Manumission of Slaves, Chapter: What is the best kind of manumission (of slaves), hadith 2518)

The hadith expounds on the Prophet's response to Abu Dhar's inquiry regarding the best deed in Islam, to which the Prophet conveyed that it is to believe in Allah and to engage in jihad for Allah's cause. Subsequently, when questioned about the next best action, the Prophet advised the emancipation of the most valuable slave. However, for those unable to fulfil this, they should assist the vulnerable and engage in acts of goodness to those who cannot fend for themselves. If this is still beyond their means, they should at least abstain from harming others. Hamzah Muhammad Qasim (1990) in his book, *Manār al-Qāri Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* mentioned that 'ṣāni'an' refers to 'those who are working' whereas 'tasna'u laahraq' refers to 'those who are unable to work'. In *Fathul bāri Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani (2017) quoted the transmission of Ad-Daruqutni where he used the word 'ḍāyi'an' instead of 'ṣāni'an'. Ibn Hajar then agreed with this and clarifies that the term "ḍāyi'an" in the hadith refers to those devoid of possessions due to poverty or having numerous dependents.

The hadith implies that among the paramount deeds a believer can engage in, commences with faith in Allah, followed by *jihād* and liberating the enslaved. Subsequently, the pinnacle of virtue involves aiding those incapacitated due to physical or mental challenges, the indigent, and those with numerous dependents. It becomes vital to empower the special needs community by extending a helping hand in diverse ways, including facilitating education opportunities, ensuring their rightful participation in society, guaranteeing access to public facilities, and even offering financial support. Islam, as a faith founded upon compassion (*rahmah*), should manifest this attribute through active assistance for the special needs community.

## Fulfilling The Right to Perform Act of Worship

The act of worship (*ibadah*) encompasses every act of obedience performed with the intention of pleasing Allah and seeking His rewards in the Hereafter. This encompasses obligatory and voluntary prayers, fasting, giving zakat, and other significant practices. Ibadah serves as a conduit for individuals to establish a connection with Allah SWT in their pursuit of His contentment. This obligation applies to all Muslims, regardless of gender, health status, or capacity. Individuals with special needs, too, possess the right to cultivate a meaningful relationship with Allah through the practice of ibadah, a principle affirmed by the actions of the Prophet PBUH.

عن الزُّهْرِيِّ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الرَّبِيعِ،، وَزَعَمَ، أَنَّهُ عَقَلَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَعَقَلَ مَجَّةً مَجَّهَا مِنْ دَلْوٍ كَانَ فِي دَارِهِمْ. قَالَ سَمِعْتُ عِثْبَانَ بْنَ مَالِكِ الْأَنْصَارِيِّ، ثُمَّ أَحَدَ بَنِي سَالِمٍ قَالَ كُنْتُ أَصَلِّي لِقَوْمِي بَنِي سَالِمٍ، فَأَتَيْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقُلْتُ إِنِّي أَنْكَرْتُ بَصْرِي، وَإِنَّ السُّيُوفَ تَحُولُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ مَسْجِدِ قَوْمِي، فَلَوِ دِدْتُ أَنَّكَ جِئْتَ فَصَلَّيْتَ فِي بَيْتِي مَكَانًا، حَتَّى آتَخَذَهُ مَسْجِدًا فَقَالَ " أَفْعَلُ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ ". فَقَدَا عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَأَبُو بَكْرٍ مَعَهُ بَعْدَ مَا اشْتَدَّ النَّهَارُ، فَاسْتَأْذَنَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَأَذِنْتُ لَهُ، فَلَمْ يَجْلِسْ حَتَّى قَالَ " أَيْنَ تُحِبُّ أَنْ أَصَلِّيَ مِنْ بَيْتِكَ ". فَأَشَارَ إِلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَكَانِ الَّذِي أَحَبَّ أَنْ يُصَلِّيَ فِيهِ، فَقَامَ فَصَفَّفْنَا خَلْفَهُ ثُمَّ سَلَّمَ، وَسَلَّمْنَا حِينَ سَلَّمَ.

Narrated Mahmud bin Ar-Rabi` : I heard from `Itban bin Malik Al-Ansari, who was one from Bani Salim, saying, "I used to lead my tribe of Bani Salim in prayer. Once I went to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said to him, 'I have weak eyesight and at times the rainwater flood intervenes between me, and the mosque of my tribe and I wish that you would come to my house and pray at some place so that I could take that place as a place for praying (mosque). He said, "Allah willing, I shall do that." Next day Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) along with Abu Bakr, came to my house after the sun had risen high and he asked permission to enter. I gave him permission, but he didn't sit till he said to me, "Where do you want me to pray in your house?" I pointed to a place in the house where I wanted him to pray. So, he stood up for the prayer and we aligned behind him. He completed the prayer with Taslim, and we did the same simultaneously." (books of azan, Chapter: Whoever did not say (a Taslim) in addition to the Taslim of the Imam but thought that Taslim of the Salat (prayer) was sufficient, hadith 840)

In accordance with this hadith, a companion of the Prophet by the name of 'Itban bin Malik Al-Ansari encountered obstacles that hindered him from reaching the mosque of his tribe. The deluge, coupled with his weak eyesight, prevented him from attending congregational prayers. Al-Qastalani (1989) elaborates that 'Itban attributed his absence to the flood, which obstructed his path to the tribal mosque. Consequently, he approached the Prophet and requested him to offer prayers at his residence so he would use it as a place to perform Solat. The Prophet, in response, assured him of his intent to honour the request. The subsequent day, accompanied by Abu Bakr, the Prophet sought permission to enter 'Itban's home. Itban gave his permission, and he inquired about the specific location where 'Itban desired him to lead the

prayer. 'Itban indicated the chosen spot, prompting the Prophet to assume the role of the *Imam*. The prayer commenced, with 'Itban and Abu Bakr participating as followers (*ma'mum*), thus illustrating a harmonious act of worship.

Despite the manifold responsibilities borne by the Prophet, including his role as Allah's messenger, leader of the ummah, and judge, he did not disregard the plea of his companion who was afflicted with weak eyesight. He not only entertained the request, but also personally visited the companion's home, thereby providing solace and encouragement to *'Itban*. This gesture aimed at motivating him to engage in ibadah, especially given his challenges in reaching the masjid. This exemplifies the Prophet's compassion and his commitment to ensure that individuals with special needs could fulfil their religious obligations. Even in his capacity as a national leader and statesman, the Prophet did not dismiss what might have seemed a minor request from a person with special needs. His actions set a profound precedent, demonstrating the empowerment of the special needs community through the fulfilment of their right to engage in ibadah. This serves as a model for society to follow. Therefore, the requests of the special needs community should be treated with consideration, as they too deserve the right to connect with Allah SWT. Masjid should strive to be inclusive, providing facilities that offer comfort and accessibility to individuals with special needs, thereby upholding their entitlement to partake in the blessings of Allah.

## Government Protection to The Special Needs Community

The Prophet held diverse roles throughout his lifetime, encompassing his position as the leader of the nation and a statesman. This entailed his responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of the citizens of Madinah and the entire ummah. The community of individuals with special needs is no exception, as they necessitate additional assistance from both the Prophet and society to flourish and integrate as valued members of society.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " أَنَا أَوْلَى بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ، فَمَنْ مَاتَ وَتَرَكَ مَالًا فَمَالُهُ لِمَوَالِي الْعَصَبَةِ، وَمَنْ تَرَكَ كَلًّا أَوْ ضَيَاعًا، فَأَنَا وَلِيُّهُ فَلَادَعَى لَهُ

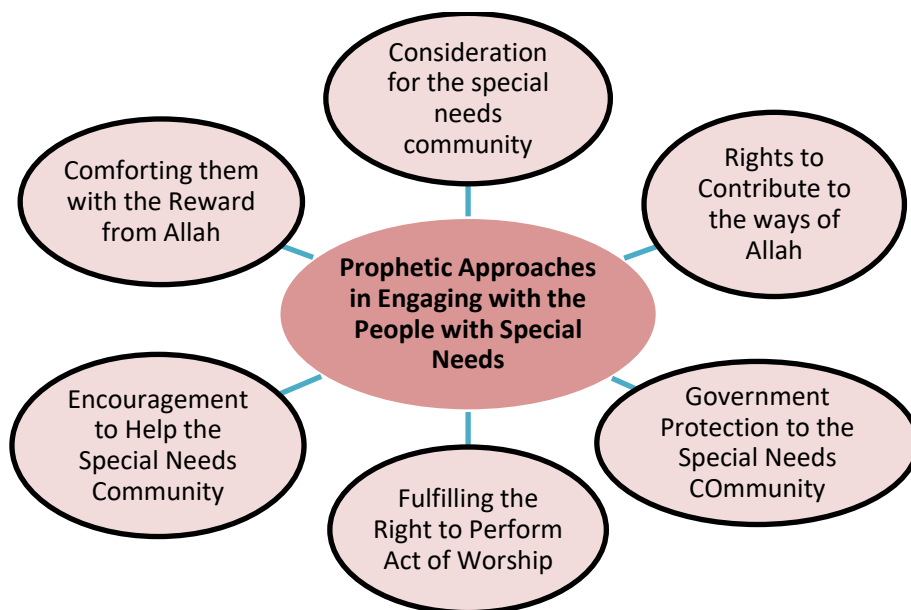
Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah's Messenger PBUH said, "I am closer to the believers than their own selves, so whoever (among them) dies leaving some inheritance, his inheritance will be given to his 'Asaba, and whoever dies leaving a debt or dependants or destitute children, then I am their supporter." (Books of Laws of Inheritance, chapter: The heirs of a lady who dies, leaving two cousins – her maternal brother and her husband., hadith 6745)

The hadith expounds on the statement of the Prophet Muhammad regarding the disposition of belongings and responsibilities after a person's demise. It indicates that if a person passes away, leaving behind an inheritance, it will be rightfully distributed among their heirs. Conversely, if the deceased left behind debts, dependants, or destitute children, they will be taken care of and supported by Prophet Muhammad. Al-Qastalani (1989), in his book of hadith commentary *Irshād al-Sāri li sharh Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* elucidates that the phrase *'ana awla bi*

*al-mu'minīn min anfusihim*' signifies the Prophet's role in overseeing the affairs of the believers after their death. Additionally, he explains that *'fali'ud'a lahu'* conveys the assurance that those left burdened by debts and responsibilities can invoke the Prophet for assistance, as he will sufficiently address their needs and losses. Zakaria Al-Anṣari (2005) in his commentary book titled *Minhāh Al-Bāri bi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, clarifies that *'kallan'* in the hadith refers to heavy burdens such as debts and familial responsibilities.

Thus, it could be understood that The Prophet's message serves as a reminder to the believers that he assumes the responsibility of managing their affairs after their demise. If the deceased leaves behind an inheritance, it will be rightfully distributed, and in the case of heavy burdens like debts and familial obligations, the Prophet will provide support and assistance. The familial duties highlighted in this hadith extend to encompass special needs children, who require additional assistance spanning financial aid, primary care, educational opportunities, facilities, and other essential areas. This hadith underscores the role of the Prophet as the leader of the *ummah*, as he assumed responsibility for those encumbered by debt, dependents, and especially children, particularly those with special needs. This underscores the significance of government safeguarding for the special needs community, empowering them to become self-sufficient individuals who contribute positively to their society members within their capacities. The prophetic approaches mentioned, extracted from the hadith in Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī, can be summarized in the following figure.

Figure 1: Prophetic Approaches in Engaging with the Special Needs Community



## Conclusion

The special needs community often experiences discrimination, stereotypes, and negative perceptions from society. Many individuals within this community are undervalued and underappreciated, with their abilities going unrecognized and untapped, preventing them from making meaningful contributions to society. Empowering the special needs community is

crucial for advancing equality, inclusion, and self-determination. This empowerment also plays a vital role in challenging stereotypes, reducing stigma, and fostering a more inclusive society that values and respects the diverse abilities and contributions of all its members. It is important to recognize that Allah SWT created people with varying abilities to promote mutual understanding and as a test for both the special needs community and society at large. He has provided guidance on how to empower people with special needs in theory, and this guidance has been translated into action by the Prophet PBUH. The Prophet's interactions with members of the special needs community are well-documented in his hadith, and it is incumbent upon society to extract valuable lessons from his approach, using it as a moral compass for all of humanity.

The Prophet's approach to engaging with individuals with special needs was marked by a profound recognition of their abilities. He understood that Allah's design, which included certain limitations for these individuals, required people to show consideration and facilitate their daily lives. Additionally, the Prophet actively encouraged members of society to provide various forms of assistance, including physical and financial support, aiming to boost their confidence and self-esteem. It is important to acknowledge that individuals with special needs have the right to contribute to society and to fulfil the purposes set by Allah. Hence, it is the collective responsibility of humanity to provide them with the opportunities to do so. Moreover, it is incumbent upon governments to protect and empower the special needs community by ensuring equal access to education, job opportunities, and essential facilities, enabling them to become confident individuals who actively participate in the betterment of society. In cases where individuals with special needs are not given opportunities and are not treated with the respect they deserve; it becomes essential for fellow members of society to offer solace by reminding them of Allah's rewards and providing hope in the face of trials designed by Him. Therefore, it is imperative for society to emulate the Prophet's methods of empowering the special needs community, fostering awareness of their existence, and striving to provide them with comfort to the best of their abilities.

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