

Kindness in Islam

Allah ﷻ has sent Rasulullah ﷺ with Islam, the complete and perfect code of life. The prophethood of Rasulullah ﷺ is universal and thus extends to all nations, through all eras, until the day of Qiyaamah. Hence, the religion of Islam is a universal religion that will stand the tests and challenges of all times. The comprehensive guidance which Islam provides man with, to lead him through every moment in his life, is unparalleled and unprecedented. Among the salient features of Islam is showing compassion towards the creation. The Holy Qur'an and the Mubaarak Ahaadith of Rasulullah ﷺ are replete with commands and exhortations regarding fulfilling the rights of the creation and showing kindness to them. Islam is second to none in sympathising with the orphans, widows, destitute and taking care of the old, the sick and all those in financial constraints and difficulties. Islam teaches us to pour out our hearts to the creation and assist -to the best of our ability- those who are in need, morally, financially or physically, regardless of whether they enjoy family ties with us or not. This aspect of kindness and compassion formed a prominent part of the noble character of Rasulullah ﷺ and was among his sublime qualities throughout his mubaarak life, even before prophethood.

After the first encounter with Hazrat Jibreel ؑ, when prophethood was conferred to Rasulullah ﷺ, Rasulullah ﷺ was greatly concerned regarding how he would fulfil the mission of prophethood. On that occasion, Hazrat Khadijah ؓ comforted him and reassured him that Allah's ﷻ divine help was with him on account of the noble qualities and praiseworthy attributes he possessed. Hazrat Khadijah ؓ said to him: "Nay! Accept the glad tidings (of Allah ﷻ). By Allah! Allah ﷻ will never ever disgrace you, for by Allah, you are the one who maintains good ties with your family, you always speak the truth, you carry the burden of the one in difficulty, you earn for the one who does not possess wealth, you extend hospitality to your guests and you always assist those who are afflicted with natural disasters and calamities." (Bukhaari #4953)

Taking Care of the Widows and Orphans

Special rewards have been promised in the Mubaarak Ahaadith for those who take care of the orphans and widows and fulfil their needs. Nabi ﷺ said: "The best home is the home wherein an orphan child is taken care of with love and compassion, and the worst home is the home wherein an orphan child is ill-treated." (Abu Dawood #3679) In another Hadith, Rasulullah ﷺ mentioned: "The one who takes care and looks after the orphan will be this close to me in Jannah," and he indicated by bringing his two fingers, the index finger and the middle finger, close to each other, showing the proximity they will enjoy with him in the Aakhirat. (Bukhaari #6005). In another Hadith, Rasulullah ﷺ said: "The one who fulfils the needs of the widows and destitute will receive the reward of one striving in the path of Allah ﷻ, or one who stands in Salaah during the night and fasts during the day." (Bukhaari #5353)

Fulfilling the Rights of Parents

As far as the rights that one owes towards his parents are concerned, Allah ﷻ states in the Qur'an: "Allah ﷻ has ordained that you worship Him alone and show kindness to parents." (Surah 17:23) In this verse, we notice that after commanding man to worship Allah ﷻ, the Qur'an immediately thereafter commands him to show kindness towards his parents. We thus understand that kindness towards parents has been afforded such a lofty position in Deen that it has been joined to the worship of Allah ﷻ. It is reported in the Hadith that one's parents are his Jannah or Jahannam. (Ibnu Maajah #3652) By obeying them and showing kindness to them, he will earn Jannah, and by disobeying them and ill-treating them, he will earn Jahannam. Special mention is made in the Qur'an regarding showing love and affection towards one's parents when they reach old age and are unable to fend for themselves. Allah ﷻ says: "If any one of them or both reach old age, do not say to them words of contempt, and do not scold them, and address them with words of honour. And lower your side of humility for them out of compassion, and say: My Lord! Bestow mercy upon them as they have raised me (with mercy) in my childhood." (Surah 17:23-24)

On one occasion, during the Mubaarak era of Rasulullah ﷺ, a Sahaabi came to Rasulullah ﷺ seeking permission to go out in Nafil Jihaad. Rasulullah ﷺ asked him if he had parents and whether they were in need of his service. The Sahaabi replied that he had aged parents whom he had left crying, due to them not wanting him to go in Nafil Jihaad as they were in need of his service. Rasulullah ﷺ instructed him to remain behind and serve his aged parents. Rasulullah ﷺ said: "Make them happy as you had made them cry." (Ibnu Maajah #2782) In a similar narration, Rasulullah ﷺ said to another Sahaabi who wanted to leave his parents and participate in Nafil Jihaad: "Serve them, for your Jihaad lies in serving them." (i.e. through serving them, Allah ﷻ will grant you the reward of Nafil Jihaad). (Bukhaari #3004) Imagine the great rewards one will reap through participating in Nafil Jihaad. Yet, despite that, Rasulullah ﷺ informs the Sahaabi that serving his aged parents who were in need of his service was more pleasing to Allah ﷻ than participating in Nafil Jihaad.

The Need of the Time

In this belated era, where every effort is directed towards worldly progress and material acquisition, we find Muslims drifting from the Mubaarak way of Rasulullah ﷺ and the Sahaabah. The rapid degeneration of Islamic values is being witnessed around the globe due to Muslims being consumed by the alien culture of the West. As a result, taking care of one's parents, grandparents or any old member of the family has become a major problem and is viewed as a burden. This lamentable situation has reached the point where people regard taking care of the old to be an obstacle in the path of their worldly pleasures and comforts. This becomes more evident during the vacation period when people embark on holiday trips and abandon the old to feel neglected and distraught, whereas taking care of the old and ill are among the great, blessed opportunities that Allah ﷻ offers for one to earn His divine pleasure and the great rewards of the Hereafter. Rasulullah ﷺ said: "You gain divine assistance and are blessed with sustenance from Allah ﷻ on account of the weak (and old) among you." (Bukhaari #2739) On one occasion, Rasulullah ﷺ informed the Sahaabah that he had seen a dream wherein he was taken to Jannah and shown the various bounties therein. Rasulullah ﷺ said: "While I was in Jannah, I heard the recitation of the Sahaabi, Hazrat Haarithah bin Nu'maan ؓ", whereas this Sahaabi was still alive in this world. Rasulullah ﷺ thereafter mentioned that Allah ﷻ had granted him this honour on account of his obedience and kindness to his mother. (Musnad Ahmad #24080)

Fulfilling the Rights of Family Members and the Muslims in General

In the aforementioned verse, after commanding man to fulfil the rights he owes towards his parents, Allah ﷻ commands him to fulfil the rights he owes to his family. Allah ﷻ says: "Give your family their rights, and the poor and the traveller (who does not have provisions), and do not waste. Those who waste (their wealth) are in reality the brothers of Shaytaan." (Surah 17:26) The commentators of the Qur'an have explained that the link between both commands (i.e Allah ﷻ commanding man to fulfil the rights he owes towards his family and thereafter cautioning him against wastage of wealth and calling such people who waste "the brothers of Shaytaan") is that when Shaytaan encourages one to spend his wealth in amusement, entertainment and avenues that Allah ﷻ did not allow, he begins to neglect his responsibility towards his parents, family members and the poor and needy of the Ummah and thus deprives them of their haqq (rights). As a result, he resembles Shaytaan who was ungrateful to Allah ﷻ for the favours with which Allah ﷻ had bestowed him.

If each person in the Muslim Ummah leads his life in accordance to the spirit of Islam, fulfilling the obligations that he owes towards Allah ﷻ and the creation (his family and the Muslims in general), this world will be an abode of happiness, peace and comfort for one and all. During the reign of Hazrat Umar bin Abdul Aziz ؓ, when Islam was followed and upheld throughout the length and breadth of the Islamic world, and the rights of each Muslim were respected and fulfilled with honour and dignity, people witnessed the wolves grazing with the sheep on account of the justice that prevailed in the land, and people would come out to pay their zakaat, yet they would struggle to find any recipient, as people would say that they have sufficient wealth and are not eligible for zakaat. (Tabaqaat Ibn Sa'd 5/301)

Q & A

Maintenance and Expenditure

Q: If a person is terminally ill and unable to earn for himself, who will be responsible for taking care of him?

A: In regard to providing maintenance for a person who is terminally ill or poor and unable to earn for himself, the Shar'ee ruling will differ according to the situation. Below we will explain a few pertinent situations in regard to this mas'alah:

1. If the sick person has children, then the responsibility of looking after him will be shared by his children equally.
2. If the sick person has neither children nor grandchildren but has parents, then the responsibility will be borne by the father alone.
3. If the sick person has no children and his father as well as his grandparents, both maternal and paternal have passed away, and only the mother is alive, then the mother alone will bear the responsibility.
4. If the mother and father are not alive then the responsibility will be on the paternal grandparents and the maternal grandmother in proportion to their shares of the inheritance. The responsibility will not be placed upon the maternal grandfather as he is not an heir in the presence of these relatives.

5. If the sick person has neither children, parents nor grandparents, but has grandchildren, then all the grandchildren will bear the maintenance expenses equally i.e. the grandchildren from the sons and daughters, whether male or female, will all be equal in sharing the responsibility. If the sick person has no parents, grandparents, children nor any grandchildren, it will be the duty of the Mahram relatives (siblings, uncles and aunts, etc) to look after the sick person in proportion to their shares of inheritance from the sick person.

NOTE: 1. These laws pertain to the situation where the above-mentioned people are wealthy. In the situation where there is a poor person amongst them, he will not bear the responsibility. Rather, the responsibility will be shared by the remainder heirs. 2. This is merely a basic outline and the ruling can thus differ in certain situations. Therefore, one should refer to the Ulama for the ruling of one's exact situation.

Khidmat of People who are Terminally ill

Q: Is it permissible for a husband to prevent his wife from visiting her terminally ill parents who live near her home and are in need of her Khidmat as there is no one else to make their Khidmat? If she goes to make Khidmat of her ailing parents against her husband's will, will she be sinful? What does Shari'ah command her to do in such a situation?

A: Islam is a religion of compassion and mercy. Islam has

afforded exclusive huqooq (rights) to various people and commanded that their rights be fulfilled. Just as the wife has an obligation towards her husband and is commanded to fulfil his rights, similarly she has an obligation towards her ailing parents and is commanded to fulfil their rights as well. In the situation where her aged parents are in dire need of her khidmat and there is no one else to fulfil this need, then it is compulsory upon her to see to them. The Fuqahaa have written that even if one's aged parents are disbelievers and they are in dire need of one's khidmat, then in such a situation, it is compulsory upon one to take care of them. Therefore, it is not permissible for the husband to stop her from fulfilling the Shar'ee obligation that she owes towards her ailing parents. Hence, if she makes Khidmat of her ailing parents and takes care of them, she will not be sinful, rather she will be rewarded. (Fataawa Qaazi Khaan 1/443)

Q: If one's parents are not bed-ridden, but due to old age or sickness they are unable to take care of themselves, whose responsibility will it be to look after them and assist them?

A: The responsibility of looking after them will fall upon their children. (Shaami 3/624,612)

Q: What should a person do in the situation where he needs to bring his ailing mother into his home so that he can look after her, but his wife is unhappy with this? He has explained to his wife that he will look after his mother and tend to her, yet she is still upset and refuses to speak to him. What does Shari'ah instruct in this situation?

A: He should not worry about his wife's attitude. He should serve his ailing mother and continue showing kindness to her with the greatest love and respect. (Aalamgiri 1/564)

Salaah

Q: Is Salaah compulsory upon a person who is aged and is unable to perform his Salaah correctly due to forgetting the number of Rakaats he has performed and the sequence of the postures of Salaah? If yes, how should he perform his Salaah?

A: On account of old age or illness, one is not exempt from performing Salaah. One is commanded to fulfil the obligation of Salaah under all circumstances. It is recorded in the Hadith that if one is unable to perform the Salaah standing, then he should sit and perform the Salaah, and if he is unable to sit and perform the Salaah, then he should perform the Salaah while lying down with gestures. Similarly, if one is unable to make Wudhu due to illness, one is commanded to make Tayammum and perform the Salaah. In regard to a person who is aged and finds difficulty in performing his Salaah due to forgetfulness, the Fuqahaa have explained that the solution for such a person is for someone to remain at his side and guide him throughout his Salaah by guiding him through the postures of Salaah and informing him of what to do. (Fataawa Laknawi Pg. 337 ; Tahtaawi Pg. 115/431)

Q: Is it permissible for a person who is able to perform the entire Salaah standing, together with making the ruku' normally and performing sajdah on the ground, to sit on a chair and perform Salaah?

A: It is not permissible for one who is able to perform Salaah standing, together with making ruku' and performing

the sajdah on the ground, to sit on a chair. If the one who is able to perform the Salaah in this manner sits on a chair and performs Salaah, the Salaah will not be valid. However, if a person cannot manage standing and is unable to perform sajdah on the ground, then it will be permissible for him to sit on a chair and perform the Salaah. (Tahtaawi Pg. 431)

Q: A patient in hospital is put on drips. He is unable to perform Wudhu and perform Salaah facing the Qiblah. How should he perform his Salaah?

A: If he is unable to make Wudhu due to his illness, then he should make Tayammum. If he is unable to make Tayammum by himself then he should ask someone to assist him make the Tayammum. When making the Tayammum, it is necessary for the patient to make the niyyat of Tayammum. After making Tayammum, he should perform his Salaah with gestures while facing whichever direction he is able to. (Shaami 1/237,432)

Q: An individual is paralysed from the waist downwards. He is unable to make Wudhu and there is no one present to help him make Wudhu. How will such a person perform his Salaah?

A: If there is no person present who will be able to assist him make Wudhu, he will not perform the Salaah. Rather, he will imitate a person performing Salaah by carrying out the postures of Salaah without making niyyat of Salaah and reciting anything during the Salaah. Later on, when he is able to make Wudhu, he should make Qadha of the Salaah. (Shaami 1/252-253)

Istinja, Wudhu and Ghusal

Q: What is the Shar'ee ruling regarding an old person who is unable to make Istinja properly due to old age?

A: If he has a wife, she may assist him make Istinja. However, if he does not have a wife, then his son, brother or any other person may assist him to make Istinja. If they assist him to make Istinja, they should ensure that they do not look at his private parts nor touch it with their bare hands. They may pour the water for him and allow him to wash himself. If there is no one to assist him, then he should clean himself to the best of his ability. In this condition, Istinja and cleaning himself properly will not be compulsory upon him. However, he will not be absolved of performing Salaah. Hence, he should perform his Salaah even if he is not entirely clean. (Aalamgiri 1/49)

Q: If a person is bed-ridden, how should those attending to him clean him after he relieves himself or at the time of Ghusal? Is it permissible for them to look at or touch his private parts while cleaning him? Also explain the ruling with regard to a woman who is bed-ridden.

A: If a man is bed-ridden and unable to clean himself at the time of Istinja or Ghusal, then if he has a wife who is able to clean him, she should do so. Similarly, if a woman is bed-ridden and she is unable to clean herself, then if she has a husband who is able to clean her, then he should do so. It will be permissible for the husband and wife to look at the private parts of one another and touch them while cleaning. If any other person is assisting besides the spouse, they should refrain from looking

at or touching the private areas of the person while cleaning. They may use a glove or cloth to clean the bed-ridden person. However, it should be borne in mind that if the person bed-ridden is a male then he should be assisted by male attendants, and if the person bed-ridden is a female then she should be assisted by female attendants. (Aalamgiri 1/49)

Q: If a person is unable to make Fardh Ghusal on account of illness or extreme weakness, what should be done and how should he perform his Salaah?

A: In such a situation, Shari'ah commands him to make Tayammum and perform his Salaah. The Tayammum will suffice on behalf of the Ghusal. (Shaami 1/232)

Maintenance and Medical Expenses

Q: Who will bear the medical expenses of the sick father?

A: If he is wealthy, his medical bills will be paid from his wealth. If he is poor and has children, it will be the duty of the children to assist him pay for his medical bills. (Shaami 3/612)

Q: Which parent is responsible for the maintenance of the children and till what age?

A: In the case of a daughter, the father is responsible for her maintenance till the time she marries. In the case of a son, the father is responsible for his maintenance till the time he becomes baaligh. This ruling applies in the case where the daughter and son do not possess wealth. If they have their own wealth, their needs will be fulfilled from their own wealth. (Shaami 3/612 ; Ahsanul Fataawa 5/463)

Q: In the case where one's parents have reached old age and are terminally ill and the children do not wish to make khidmat of their aged parents, what should be done? Can the children leave their aged, sickly parents in an old age home?

A: Parents are among the greatest bounties of Allah ﷻ in the world. The Ahaadith are replete with promises of the abundant rewards and blessings that one will receive for showing kindness to his parents. The Hadith explains that Jannah lies beneath the feet of the mother. In another Hadith it is reported, the pleasure of Allah ﷻ lies in the pleasure of the father and the displeasure of Allah ﷻ lies in the displeasure of the father. In yet another Hadith, it is mentioned that your parents are your Jannah or Jahannam (i.e. through fulfilling their rights, one will be blessed with Jannah and by not fulfilling their rights, one will earn Jahannam). One should reflect over the extent of sadness and grief that one will cause to the heart of that sickly, aged mother or father who has been torn from their family and abandoned in an old age home. When they had raised their children with so much of love and care, without expecting any worldly remuneration, is this the reward they deserve from their children? On the contrary, if they remember the kindness they received from their parents in infancy and fulfil their rights with love and compassion, Allah ﷻ will bless them with success in this world and the hereafter. Respecting and taking care of the old is the way of Islam and neglecting the old is the way of the kuffaar.

Q: If a woman is ill, is it permissible for her to go to a male doctor for treatment? If permissible, then can she expose her body before the male doctor?

A: Hazrat Moulana Ashraf Ali Thaanwi ﷺ has written in Baheshti Zewar, that if a woman requires medical treatment, she should go to a Muslim female doctor. If she is unable to find a qualified Muslim female doctor to treat her, then she should refer to a non-muslim female doctor. If a non-muslim female doctor is not available, then she may refer to a Muslim male doctor. If there are no Muslim male doctors available, then as a last resort, she may go to a non-muslim male doctor. In the situation where a woman is forced to visit a male doctor for treatment, she should ensure that she does not remain in seclusion with the doctor at any time. As far as a woman exposing her body before a male doctor is concerned, then she should only expose that part of her body which requires medical treatment. Other parts of her body should not be exposed and extreme caution should be exercised in this regard. (Baheshti Zewar Pg. 818)

Sunnats and Aadaab of Visiting the Sick

Visiting the sick is among the rights a Muslim owes to his Muslim brother. Great virtues and rewards have been recorded in the Ahaadith for visiting the sick. Through visiting the sick, one receives the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. Seventy thousand angels invoke Allah's ﷻ mercy for the person who visits the sick and he will receive a garden in Paradise. When a believer sets out to visit his sick brother, an angel calls out from the sky: "May you remain in ease and comfort. How excellent is your walking to meet your brother and through this action you have built a palace for yourself in Jannah." (Tirmizi #969 ; Ibnu Maajah #1443) Below are some Aadaab that one should adhere to when visiting the sick.

1. One should not prolong one's stay by the sick, thereby causing him discomfort. Rather, one should leave after a short while. (Shuabul Imaan #8786)
2. Console the sick and give him encouragement and hope of recovery. (Bukhaari #3616)
3. It is incorrect for the doctor to inform the patient that there is no hope left for him in any given situation. (Ibnu Maajah #1438)
4. Whenever the opportunity arises to visit a Muslim who has fallen ill, one should do so, even though the sick may not be from one's family or friends. (Abu Dawood #3099)
5. When visiting the sick, one should recite the following Duaa:

لَا بَأْسَ طَهُورٌ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

Do not grieve (do not worry), Insha Allah through this sickness you will obtain purity (from your sins) (Bukhaari #3616)

One may also recite the following Duaa seven times:

أَسْأَلُ اللَّهَ الْعَظِيمَ ، رَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ، أَنْ يَشْفِيكَ

I beseech Allah ﷻ, the Almighty, the Lord of the great throne, to cure you. (Abu Dawood #3108)

6. If it will not cause any inconvenience, then one may ask the sick person to make Duaa to Allah ﷻ on his behalf. (Ibnu Maajah #1441)
7. It is Sunnah for one to make Wudhu before visiting the sick. (Abu Dawood #3099)

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