

THE NOTION OF KINSHIP IN ISLAM

Dr. Meraj Ahmad Meraj

Assistant Professor, Department of Arabic, Aliah University, Kolkata

ABSTRACT

The Holy Quran as a book of guidance presents a living force manifest in every aspect of human life. It is a book that teaches human beings the eternal principles of mutual respect, honesty, justice and equality. The Quranic knowledge formulates definitive moral standards of excellence on account of its emphasis on the practical and utilitarian aspects of human life. Islam stresses the practical implications of this relationship and applies the moral criteria to the life ordinary human beings. Islam is the only philosophical system that tackles the problems directly and handles the correlations between moral issue and their human repercussion without the least sense of evasion. The Quranic knowledge spells out suggestions and prescriptions to solve the problems. Bearing this in mind, the Quranic teachings are not only spiritual and intellectual necessity but also a social and universal need. It is not to bewilder man but to guide him. It is to open before him inexhaustible treasure of sound thinking and right action. The Holy Quran educates man and trains him in hope and patience, in love the right and good, in encourage and endurance, that are required for the mastery of the great art of living declaring his rights and responsibilities toward his fellow human beings. In this present paper, a humble attempt will be made to investigate the Quranic teachings regarding the rights and responsibilities of the fellow human beings particularly the rights of parents, kins and Neighbors. The present paper will also discuss applications of Islamic moral code in modern age.

Keywords: Islam, Quran, Parent's Right, Kinship's Right, Neighbors Right, Human Right.

Introduction

Islam is not a mere relationship between the Creator and man; it is not a religion in the limited spiritual sense. Islam is a complete way of life, a perfect ideology. It arranges the relationship of people with Allah and of people amongst themselves. The Quran and the Sunnah provide us with a Ruling System, an Economic System, a Social System, an Education System, a Legal System as well as governing our personal conduct, moral behavior with parents, kins, relatives, neighbors and colleagues. Parents are the couple after they had been endowed with children and became responsible for children and offspring for whose sake they sacrifice, spend long nights

for their comfort and fulfill their rights. Islam put duties on children toward their parents, particularly when parents grow old and become weaker. Allah commands people to be compassionate toward their parents, treat them kindly and mercifully and obey them exactly the same way the parents used to treat their little kids. Islam provides a solution for every aspect of our lives and by its very nature it demands total application in all spheres of life.

Parent's Rights in Islam:

Parents are the couple after they had been endowed with children and became responsible for children and offspring for whose sake they sacrifice, spend long nights for their comfort and fulfill their rights. Islam put duties on children toward their parents, particularly when parents grow old and become weaker. Allah commands people to be compassionate toward their parents, treat them kindly and mercifully and obey them exactly the same way the parents used to treat their little kids. In the form of reciprocation, showing gratitude to the good things parents have done and treating them as kindly and mercifully as they deserve, Islam put duties on children toward their parents, particularly when parents grow old and become weaker. Allah commands people to be compassionate toward their parents, treat them kindly and mercifully and obey them exactly the same way the parents used to treat their little kids. On top of parents' rights is obeying the parents and being compassionate toward the parents. Behind Allah, nobody else except the parents seems to be more compassionate and kind. Due to its importance, Allah when enjoins the duty of being kind and compassionate to their parents in the Quran, this injunction always appears soon after the injunction to worship only one God. Allah exalted He is says in the Quran what means: "Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honor. And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: "My Lord! Bestow on them thy Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood."ⁱ However, the obedience becomes greater when the parents grow old, either one of them, and when the parents become physically and mentally weaker, which may lead to disability. Allah commands Muslims to address their parents in terms of honor and use a highly respectful and soft language as a sign of showing mercy and compassion to the parents, in addition to praying for the parents when they grow old and become weaker and expressing thanksgiving to the parents again and again, which Allah exalted He is connects to His thanksgiving in several Quranic verses. Allah exalted He is says in the Quran what means: "And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: (hear the command), "Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents."ⁱⁱ Unconditional obedience is one of the greatest gates for good. This came in a hadith said by the Prophet, peace be on him, when Abdullah Ibn Masud asked the Prophet: "Which deed is loved most by Allah? The Prophet replied, "To offer prayers at their early (very

first) stated times". Abdullah asked, "What is the next (in goodness)? The Prophet said: "To be good and dutiful to one's parents." Abdullah asked: What is the next (in goodness)? The Prophet said: "To participate in Jihad for Allah's Cause".ⁱⁱⁱ Abdullah Ibn Amr Ibn Al Aas said: A man said to the Prophet, "Shall I participate in Jihad? The Prophet said, "Are your parents living? The man said, "Yes" The Prophet said, "Go back to your parents and give them good company" and in another version, the Prophet said: "Do Jihad for their benefit."^{iv}

One of the greatest duties set by Islam in the context of its tackling of the parents' rights that stated in a hadith narrated by Jabir Ibn Abdullah: A man said: O, Messenger of God, I have property and children and my father wants to take part of my property. The Prophet said: "You and your property belong to your father."^v "It means one should not treat his father the way he treats other people. One is commanded to show compassion to his father and be kind to him in what he is saying and what he is doing to the degree that the father becomes able to access his son's money. The Prophet said: "You and your property belong to your father", but this does not mean that fathers own their sons' property without sons' consent."^{vi} Hadiths and prophetic traditions on the importance of filial obedience, showing kindness and compassion to parents and warning against disobeying the parents are too many to be counted, and they show the Islamic Sharia's super-high level of preserving the pristine values of the society and protecting them from being violated or destroyed.

The rights of parents include respect, love and obedience. This obedience is conditional that it does not contradict obedience to the commands of Allah and His Messenger. It involves care and kindness to both parents, and provision of necessities for elder parents. Humility and respect to both parents equally is an obligation, and any arrogance or insolence is forbidden. Patience and perseverance are required when serving parents, no matter what the circumstances. Allah says in the verse of the Glorious Qur'an: "*And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to your parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them...and address them with good words*"^{vii} The Prophet of Islam said: "Allah's Pleasure (on someone) is based on the pleasure of his parents. The Wrath of Allah is based upon the anger of his parents."^{viii}

Both parents are entitled to this right even if they are not Muslims so long as they do not command their children to do any act of disobedience to Allah. Asmaa -the daughter of the Abu Bakr- said: "My mother came to visit me while still not a Muslim. I asked the Prophet (PBUH) concerning her visit regarding how to treat her while visiting me, I asked, my mother is eager to visit with me. How Should I deal with her? He said: "*Yes, extend courtesy.*"^{ix}

The mother must be given priority in terms of kindness, sympathy, good feelings, love and affection as mentioned by Prophet: "A man came to Prophet and asked him, O, Prophet of Allah!

Who is the most worthy and deserving person of my good treatment and companionship? He replied: "Your mother." The man asked, „who is next worthy person of my companionship? “ The Prophet replied, "your mother." The man asked: who is next? "The Prophet Replied: "your mother". The man asked „who is next? The Prophet of Islam said: "your father." And in another version there is the ending: "your father, and then the next nearest and next nearest."^x

The Rights of Children:

Islam's general approach to children may be summarized in a few principles. First, it is a divine injunction that no child may become the cause of harm to parents.^{xi} Secondly by implication the parents should reciprocate and cause the child no harm either. The Quran recognizes very clearly that parents are not always immune from over protectiveness or negligence. On basis on this recognition, it has, established certain guidelines and pointed out certain facts with respect to children. It points out that children are joys of life as well as a source of pride. Islam is strongly sensitive to the crucial dependence of the child on the parents. Their decisive role in forming the child personality is clearly recognized in Islam. In a very suggestive statement, the Prophet declared that every child is born into the true malleable nature of *fitrah*. It is their parents who make them Jew, Christian or pagan. The rights of the children are numerous, beginning with the entitlement to be given honorable names. The Prophet said: "Verily you will be called by your names and your fathers" names on the Day of Requital, so give yourselves good names".^{xii} Their rights include provision of all the necessities of life like affordable housing, lawful food, beneficial education and proper upbringing. The Prophet said: "It is a sufficient sin to lose and waste those whom you are obligated to support for example by not providing proper care and upbringing."^{xiii}

Kinship in Islam: Its Importance and Rights:

Islam addressed the rights of the immediate members of the family first, then the kindred who have obligations and rights towards each other according to their closeness. The value and the importance of such rights vary according to the kind and degree of relationship. One of the Islamic greatest rules is that the family concept is not confined to the parents and their children but it does also include the relatives and people one must keep in touch with like one's brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts and their children. All these people have a right to be visited and contacted regularly. This right was secured by the Islamic sharia and classified as one of the greatest virtues a Muslim can do. Islam promised the one who maintains the bonds with the kinship with a great reward and menaced the one who severs the kinship ties with the toughest punishment. Islam has put the provisions and systems that ensure the sustainability of the strong relation within that extended family, including the relatives, so that they could help one another, support one another. Islam has also put the system of obligatory spending, inheritance and the

‘aqilah’ which refers to the ‘diya’ ‘blood money’ paid to the family and relatives of a murdered person.

Maintaining the Bonds of Kinship in Islam:

Maintaining the bonds of kinship that means dealing properly with relatives, supporting them with whatever possible and warding off bad things. *Silatur rahim* means visiting the relatives, asking about them, checking on them, giving them gifts when possible, helping their poor members, visiting their sick members, accepting their invitations, having them as guests, feeling proud of them and elevating them. *Silatur rahim* also means joining the relatives in their happy moments, sharing their sadness in their sad moments, in addition to any other practice that may help strengthen and reinforce the relations between members of that small society. Muslims have been commanded to deal properly with their relatives whom must be visited and contacted. Allah exalted He is says: “Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good- to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess.”^{xiv} The Prophet has brought good news to the one who maintains his kinship and the good news is that he shall win a wide sustenance and long healthy life. Anas Ibn Malik, may Allah forgive him, said: I have heard the prophet saying: “Whoever desires an expansion in his sustenance and age, should keep good relations with his Kith and kin.”^{xv} Islam has also warned Muslim against cutting off kinship relations and classified this as a massive bad deed because it severs the ties among people, spreads the spirit of hatred and hostility and destroys the family cohesion between relatives. Allah exalted He is warned He would curse whoever breaks his ties of kith and kin: “Then, is it to be expected of you, if ye were put in authority, that ye will do mischief in the land, and break your ties of kith and kin? Such are the men whom Allah has cursed for He has made them deaf and blinded their sight.”^{xvi} It is reported by Jabir Ibn Muttam that Prophet said:”The person who severs the bond of kinship will not enter Paradise.”^{xvii} There are many harmonious texts asserting the massiveness of the fault of cutting off kith and kin relations. This, at the end of the day, should help create a cooperative, cohesive and brotherly community in which Prophet’s saying. “You see the believers as regards their being merciful among themselves and showing love among themselves and being kind, resembling one body, so that, if any part of the body is not well then the whole body shares the sleeplessness ‘insomnia’ and fever with it.”^{xviii}

The Rights of Relatives in Islam:

Relatives have specific rights entitling them to special attention, visits and support. A wealthier Muslim is obliged to assist his or her relatives, with priority given to the nearest in kin, and then in order of nearness in relationship. A Muslim supports his brothers and relatives in times of need and shares their concerns. In the Glorious Qur'an we find the slaying of Allah the Almighty:

“O, Mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person, and from him He created his wife; and from them He created many men and women; and fear Allah through Whom you demand (your mutual rights) and (do not cut the relations of the wombs). Surely Allah is ever an All-Watcher over you.”^{xi} Islam encourages a Muslim to be kind to his relatives even when they are unkind to him, and asks him to continue his relations even when they cut them off. Boycotting relatives and family members falls into the category of a major sin in Islam. The Quran says: *“Then, is it to be expected of you, if you were put in authority, that you will do mischief, in the land, and break your ties of kith and kin? Such are the men whom Allah has cursed for He has made them deaf and blinded their sight.”*^x

The Rights of Neighbors in Islam:

Islam classifies neighbors into three categories, which are as follows:

1. Relative neighbor: This type of neighbor has three rights over you: the right of kin, the right of neighbors and the right of Islam.
2. Muslim neighbor has two rights: the right of a neighbor and the right of Islam.
3. Non-Muslim neighbor enjoys the right of being a neighbor. Abdullah bin Omar came home once and found that his family members had slaughtered a sheep. He immediately asked: Did you offer some of the sheep’s meat as a present to our Jewish neighbor?” for I heard the Prophet saying: “Angel Jibreel continued to advise me to be kind to my neighbor until I thought that he was going to give him a share in inheritance.”^{xi}

Causing inconvenience to the neighbor is against the Belief. The Prophet said: “By Allah he does not believe, by Allah he does not believe, by Allah he does not believe!” It was said: Who O Messenger of Allah? He said: “The one whose neighbor is not safe from his harm.”^{xii} It is also reported that Prophet Mohammad had illustrated the rights of a neighbor as follows: If a neighbor seeks your help, extend it to him. If a neighbor asks you for a loan, lend him [if you have it. If your neighbor becomes poor, then help him financially and attend to his poverty if you can. If your neighbor becomes ill, then visit him [checking on his health and well-being. If your neighbor is happy on certain gain, then congratulate him. If your neighbor is suffering a calamity, then offer him condolences. If your neighbor dies, then attend his funeral, if you can, Do not raise your building over his building, so that he would have no sun exposure or wind passage. Do not bother your neighbor with the smell of your cooking, unless you intend to offer him some [of the cooked food.”^{xiii}

Conclusion:

Islam places special value on strong family bonds and good relations among relatives. Since the family is the basis and the foundation of the society. Muslims are ordered to show kindness and

compassion to their parents and banned from making even the smallest gesture or uttering even the smallest word of reproach to them. No impatience, disrespect, or contempt may be shown to parents. Allah praised humility only when it comes from children to their parents. Many rules help protect this family against break up and disintegration. Relatives have obligations and rights. One must recognize the rights of kith and kin and consequently satisfy the rights of each relative in the most appropriate fashion. The Holy Quran provides a framework of sound thinking and right action. The Holy Quran educates man and trains him in hope and patience, in love the right and good, in encourage and endurance, that are required for the mastery of the great art of living declaring his rights and responsibilities toward his parents, kins relatives, neighbors and fellow human beings. Islam, as the last and perfect message from Allah to mankind, aims to establish by its principles, a legal framework, a code of ethics, and an ideal society with a balance between protecting the rights of the individual and the rights of the society collectively.

References:

ⁱ Quran:23, 24

ⁱⁱ Quran: Luqman: 14

ⁱⁱⁱ Al Bukhari: Kitab al Adab (Book of Good Manners and Form), chapter Compassion and Relations (5625), and Muslim: Kitab al Eman (Book of Faith), chapter Believing In God Is The Best Deed (137)

^{iv} Al Bukhari: Kitab al Jihad (Book of Fighting For The Cause Of Allah), chapter Fighting for the Cause of Allah with Filial Consent (2842), and Muslim: Kitab Al-Birr Was-Salat-I-Wa>I-Adab (The Book of Virtue, Good Manners and Joining of the Ties of Relationship) chapter Filial Obedience (2549), Ibn Hibbn (419)

^v Ibn Majah: Kitab at-Tijaraat (Book of Trade), chapter What A Man Owns From His Son's Money (2291)

^{vi} Sahih Ibn Hibban (Ibn Hibban's Sound Collection- 2142)

^{vii} (Quran 17:23)

^{viii} Tirmidhi, Hadith No. 1962

^{ix} Muslim, Hadith no. 1003

^x Bukhari, Hadith no. 2227 and Muslim, Hadith no. 2584

^{xi} Quran: 2: 233

^{xii} Abu Dawood, no. 4948

^{xiii} Abu Dawood, no. 1692

^{xiv} Quran: Nisa Women: 36

^{xv} Abu Dawood: Kitab Az-Zakat (Book of Almsgiving), chapter Silatur Rahim (1694), Ahmed (1680), Ibn Hibban (443), al Hakim (7265) and said: This is a right hadith

^{xvi} Quran: Muhammad: 22, 23

^{xvii} Al Bukhari: Kitab al Adab (Book of Good Manners and Form), chapter The Fault of Kith and Kin Severer (5638), and Muslim: Kitab al Adab (Book of Good Manners and Form), chapter Silatur Rahim and Prohibition of Cutting It Off (19)

^{xviii} Al Bukhari: Kitab al Adab (Book of Good Manners and Form), chapter Being Merciful Toward People and Animals (5665), and Muslim: Kitab al Adab (Book of Good Manners and Form), chapter Believers)

^{xix} Quran4:1

^{xx} Quran: 47:22-23

^{xxi} Tirmidhi, Hadith no. 2007

^{xxii} Bukhari, Hadith no. 5670

^{xxiii} Tabrani, Hadith no. 1014