



Fundamental Human Rights in Islam

Rights of Parents

Islam gives them Rights

"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: to Me is (thy final) Goal." (Quran 31:14)

"And remember We took a covenant from the Children of Israel (to this effect): Worship none but Allah; treat with kindness your parents and kindred, and orphans and those in need; speak fair to the people; be steadfast in prayer; and practice regular charity. Then did ye turn back, except a few among you, and ye backslide (even now)." (Quran 2:83)

Story of Three persons

The Prophet said, "While three persons were walking, rain began to fall and they had to enter a cave in a mountain. A big rock rolled over and blocked the mouth of the cave. They said to each other, 'Invoke Allah with the best deed you have performed (so Allah might remove the rock)'.

One of them said, 'O Allah! My parents were old and I used to go out for grazing (my animals). On my return I would milk (the animals) and take the milk in a vessel to my parents to drink. After they had drunk from it, I would give it to my children, family and wife. One day I was delayed and on my return I found my parents sleeping, and I disliked to wake them up. The children were crying at my feet (because of hunger). That state of affairs continued till it was dawn. O Allah! If You regard that I did it for Your sake, then please remove this rock so that we may see the sky.' So, the rock was moved a bit.

The second said, 'O Allah! You know that I was in love with a cousin of mine, like the deepest love a man may have for a woman, and she told me that I would not get my desire fulfilled unless I paid her one-hundred Dinars (gold pieces). So, I struggled for it till I gathered the desired amount, and when I sat in between her legs, she told me to be afraid of Allah, and asked me not to deflower her except rightfully (by marriage). So, I got up and left her. O Allah! If You regard that I did if for Your sake, kindly remove this rock.' So, two-thirds of the rock was removed.

Then the third man said, 'O Allah! No doubt You know that once I employed a worker for one Faraq (three Sa's) of millet, and when I wanted to pay him, he refused to take it, so I sowed it and from its yield I bought cows and a shepherd. After a time that man came and demanded his money. I said to him: Go to those cows and the shepherd and take them for they are for you. He asked me whether I was joking with him. I told him that I was not joking with him, and all that belonged to him. O Allah! If You regard that I did it sincerely for Your sake, then please remove the rock.' So, the rock was removed completely from the mouth of the cave." (Bukhari-3:418)

Which deed is the dearest to God (Allah)?

I asked the Prophet "Which deed is the dearest to Allah?" He replied, "To offer the prayers at their early stated fixed times." I asked, "What is the next (in goodness)?" He replied, "To be good and dutiful to your parents." I again asked, "What is the next (in goodness)?" He replied, "To participate in Jihad (struggle) in Allah's cause." (Bukhari -Narrated Abdullah bin Umar-1:505)

Great sins

The Prophet was asked about the great sins He said,

"They are:--

- To join others in worship with Allah,
- To be undutiful to one's parents,
- To kill a person (which Allah has forbidden to kill)
- And to give a false witness." (Bukhari 3-821)

Allah's Messenger said, "Shall I inform you of the biggest of the great sins?" They said, "Yes, O Allah's Messenger!" He said, "To join partners in worship with Allah, and to be Undutiful to one's parents." (Bukhari 8:290)

Allah's Messenger said. "It is one of the greatest sins that a man should curse his parents." It was asked (by the people), "O Allah's Messenger! How does a man curse his parents?" The Prophet said, "The man abuses the father of another man and the latter abuses the father of the former and abuses his mother." (Bukhari 8:4)

No Paradise for him

Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said: Let him be humbled into dust; let him be humbled into dust. It was said: Allah's Messenger, who is he? He said: He who sees either of his parents during their old age or he sees both of them, but he does not enter Paradise. (Muslim 1160)

Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, "He who casts up the favours he has done, he who is disobedient to parents, and he who is addicted to wine will not enter Paradise."

After their death

While we were with the Messenger of Allah! (PBUH) a man of Banu Salmah came to Him and said: Messenger of Allah is there any kindness left that I can do to my parents after their death? He replied: Yes, you can invoke blessings on them, forgiveness for them, carry out their final instructions after their death, join ties of relationship which are dependent on them, and honor their friends. (Abu Dawood 2440).

Only place when you can't obey them

A man said, "Messenger of Allah (PBUH) what rights can parents demand from their children?" He replied, "They are your Paradise and your Hell."

Do not associate anything with Allah even if you are killed and burnt on that account.

"But if they strive to make thee join in worship with Me (God) things of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration), and follow the way of those who turn to me (in love): in the end the return of you all is to Me, and I will tell you the truth (and meaning) of all that ye did." (Quran 31:15)

"We have enjoined on man kindness to parents: but if they (either of them) strive (to force) thee to join with Me (in worship) anything of which thou hast no knowledge obey them not. Ye have (all) to return to Me and I will tell you (the truth) of all that ye did." (Quran 29:8)

Rights of Children

Now let us see the other side of the coin. We have mentioned that Parent-child relation is a reciprocal one. The Rights of Parents (discussed above) are the Duties of children. Now let us see what are the Rights of Children (and Duties of Parents) in Islam.

The word “children” stands for sons and daughters, who are entitled to indisputable rights of rearing represented in promoting their religious orientation and ethical approach in order to be armed with both merits. Allah, the Almighty, says:

“O ye who believe! save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones,...” (Surah Al Tahrim 66:6)

The Noble Prophet (PBUH) said: “Every one of you is a protector and guardian and responsible for your wards and things under your care and a man is a guardian of his family members, and is accountable for those placed under his charge.” (Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

Children are a trust put in the hands of parents who will be answerable before Allah on the Day of Judgment about their children as they are enjoined to satisfy their offspring’s spiritual and religious urges in order to produce righteous men and women, to be a consolation for the eyes of their parents in both the present world and Hereafter. Allah, the Almighty says:

“And those who believe and whose families follow them in Faith,- to them shall We join their families: Nor shall We deprive them (of the fruit) of aught of their works: (Yet) is each individual in pledge for his deeds.” (Surah Al Tur 52:21)

The Noble Prophet (PBUH) in this context, said: “When a believer dies, his work ceases to be except in three areas: a perpetual Sadaqa (charity), some useful knowledge he leaves and a righteous son praying for him.” (Sahih Muslim)

However, some parents have paid no heed to their children’s rights and shirked away their obligations to them. Consequently the latter have got lost and begun to grope in darkness. Their parents have been too busy in worldly affairs promoting their financial situation and hoarding wealth to enquire about the company in which their children are involved or to guide them to good and make them shun evil, although they are more eligible for parental care, love and attention. Duties of father are not confined to catering for his child’s physical well-being, nutritious needs and clothing only; he is rather demanded to care about the spiritual side of his child’s character, feeding his heart with knowledge and faith and enveloping his soul with a clad of piety and the fear of Allah.

Right to be fed, clothed and protected

Children have the right to be fed, clothed and protected till they grow up to adulthood. It is, primarily, the duty of the father to do that. Mother can provide help if necessary. Protection means protection against physical as well as moral and intellectual harm. Parents are duty bound to see that the child’s personality develops in all fields. So if the parents have to resort to strictness for the sake of disciplining the children and protecting them from intellectually, morally and religiously undesirable behavior, children should not resent their strictness. Let them perform their duty as parents. Children’s duty is not to protest or be rude but to listen and obey. “Their’s not to question why; their’s but to do and die”.

Right to educate

Children have the right to education. In Islam education is not limited to bookish knowledge but includes moral and religious training also. It means healthy all-round growth of child's personality. Parents must not only provide for children's education in schools and colleges but should also take personal interest in their studies, helping them if they can. Parents should sacrifice their own comfort and social activities and must spare some time to take interest in children's studies, especially when they are young. And of course, parents should not forget or neglect imparting religious/moral training to children. A little sacrifice on part of parents will save children from moral disasters. Effective moral training comes not from sermons, advice and precepts but from parents' personal examples of good behavior. It is a famous Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that acquisition of knowledge is a must for every Muslim boy and girl. Another Hadith says, "The best of you is one who gives a good education (intellectual and moral) to his children". Another Hadith lays stress on education of daughters. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) once said, "He who provides good upbringing to 3 daughters shall go to Paradise". A man asked, "what if one has only two daughters". "He also shall go to Paradise". Another man asked, "and what if one has only one daughter?" "He too", replied the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Psychological needs

Children have many psychological needs also. Small children need to be loved, caressed, kissed and hugged. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) loved children greatly. He would allow his grandsons Hassan and Hussain (RA) to ride his shoulders even during his prayers. In streets he would offer 'salaam' to children, play and cut jokes with them. Sometimes he would even kiss small children in the street. Once a Bedouin saw the Prophet (PBUH) kissing a small kid. Out of wonder he said, "I have eight children but I never kiss them". The Prophet (PBUH) remarked, "What can I do if Allah has taken away love and compassion from your heart". The Prophet (PBUH) would show special kindness to orphaned children. Some parents believe that being frank with children is not good from discipline point of view. This is wrong. Love and leniency can do much that fear and strictness cannot do. If leniency leads to rudeness on the part of children it should be mixed with strictness. That will tell the children that parents are basically kind but can be tough if children show rudeness and bad manners. Over-protection and over-care are undesirable. Let the child grow up as a responsible person. Only provide them guidance.

Children have the right to be well provided (materially). A Hadith says, "It is better for parents to leave their children well provided (financially) than to leave them in poverty". This means that parents should not spend all that they have on their own comforts and luxuries but must make provisions for children's welfare after the parents die. They are eligible to be spent on in kindness not with extravagance. Spending on one's children manifests deep gratitude to Allah for the wealth, which the Creator has bestowed on to the father.

Equality in parental attitude

Another right fully due to children is equality in parental treatment. No one should be given preference over the others in gifts or presents. Islam teaches that no child should enjoy privileges to the prejudice of his brothers or sisters; this is injustice on the face of it. Allah forbids injustice because it leads to hatred on the part of the deprived children, and creation of hostility between the ill-treated and the pampered ones or even between the former and their parents. One child could show more honor to his parents than his other brothers or sisters, the thing that invites his parents to single him out for more privileges to the exclusion of the others. This behavior is unjustifiable because the dutiful son is rewarded by his Lord; moreover, a privilege of this sort could on the one hand lead the child to vain glory and on the other, the less fortunate ones could develop a kind of hatred and then overstep the mark and indulge in further disobedience.

Bukhari and Muslim reported a narration from An-Numan bin Bashir that his father Bashir bin Sa'd took him to Allah's Messenger (PBUH) and said, "I have given this son of mine a slave." The Prophet (PBUH) asked, 'Have you given all your sons the like?' He replied in the negative. The Prophet (PBUH) said, 'Take back your gift then.'"

In another narration, the Noble Prophet (PBUH) said: "Be afraid of Allah, and be just to your children."

And in another narration, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "Make anyone else a witness upon this because I cannot be a witness on a Zulm (wrongdoing)."

In clear words, the Noble Prophet (PBUH) described preference of one's child over the others as injustice which is synonymous with Zulm (wrongdoing) and Zulm is Haram (prohibited). However, we must not mix up between preference and making an exception of one child and satisfying his urgent needs; this exception serves special needs and runs in the same channel of supporting one's family.