

Islamic Ethics in the Family Structure

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The Prophet (Pbuh) said: I recommend you to have good morality, since verily this will take you to heaven, and you should not be foul tempered since that will undoubtedly take you to Hell.

[[Vasa'il, v.16, p.29, Al-i-Bayt Press

The Value of Good Morality

It is necessary for the parents to consider a few things which are repeatedly stressed in the Holy Quran for the sake of themselves and their children. It is not difficult to have good morals and avoid evil acts. It is easy to put morals into action and avoid unethical acts in a short period of time. This will not only ease our progress on the highway towards God, but it will also strengthen our marriage; increase our mutual love; and serve as a lesson for others, especially our children. Mutual adherence to morals will create an atmosphere of love and affection; peace and security; and health and purity and will make all aspects of our life delightful. In several verses, the Holy Quran has praised the noble Prophet for being good-tempered and adhering to this attribute.

It is part of the Mercy of God that thou dost deal gently with them. Wert thou severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about thee: [Holy Quran: Al-i-Imran 3:159]

And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character. [Holy Quran: Qalam 68:4]

The Prophet (Pbuh) said: Islam means being good-tempered. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.3, pp.137-138]

Imam Mujtaba (Pbuh) said: The best goodness is a good temper. [Ibid]

The Prophet (Pbuh) said: Good temper is accompanied by the good of this world and the Hereafter. [Ibid]

Imam Ali (Pbuh) said: A good temper is at the head of all goodness. [Ibid]

The sixth Imam (Pbuh) said: There is not a better life than that of the one with a good temper. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.71, pp.388-389] The Prophet (Pbuh) said: God will raise the position of the one who is good-tempered to that of the one who fasts and stays up at night standing in prayer. [Ibid]

He also said: The first thing that is counted on the Day of Judgment is one's good temper. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.71, p.385] He also said: The one dearest and closest to me amongst you in the Hereafter is the one with the best temper, and the humblest. [Ibid]

The Prophet (Pbuh) told the Commander of the Faithful (Pbuh): Shall I inform you of your closest trait to me? He answered yes. The Prophet (Pbuh) said: The one with the best temper, the one who is the most persevering, the one who helps his relatives the most, and the one who is most fair to others regarding himself. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.77, p.58]

Nobility and a good temper are so valuable that the noble Prophet of Islam (Pbuh) has declared it to be the reason for his appointment to the Prophethood. It is certain that I was appointed to perfect your good temper, and nothing else. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.3, p.149]

I was appointed to perfect your good temper. [Ibid]

Being good-tempered and having good morals are rays of God's attributes, the way of the Prophets and the Immaculate Imams and the cause of goodness and blessings for the one with these attributes.

A bad temper and foul behavior are satanic and are the causes of disruption of life, insecurity, separation, and hatred of people; and will ruin the life here and in the Hereafter. I will refer to several points which should be adhered to by any couple in order to strengthen their relationship, and continue their love and affection. I hope that God the Almighty will adorn us .all with a good temper and morals and help us avoid bad morals

Love and its Expression

God has established love in our hearts as husbands or wives and recognizes this to be one of the signs of His Existence. This fact is a manifestation of the importance and extent of love and especially the love and affection of man towards a woman.

And among His signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect. [Holy Quran: Rum 30:21] This love and affection blossoms early in marriage and even before the religious wedding ceremony, and it grows until it reaches its final extent. It is the responsibility of both partners in marriage to maintain this given blessing and this excellent spiritual state of love which is the main cause of happiness and pleasure in life. This can be done by mutual support, being good-tempered, forgiving, cooperation, reasonable expectations, mutual respect, avoiding arguments and fights. The couple should avoid what might harm their loving relationship. They should know that any attempt to maintain a loving relationship is considered to be worship and any act that might hurt the foundation of love is undoubtedly a sin and deserves God's punishment, and also causes grief and hurt in this life. Regarding those who have the power to attract others' affection, Imam Sadiq (Pbuh) said: May God bless those who can attract people's affection.

[Mizan al-Hikmat, v.2, p.205]

If there is no intellectual or religious legitimate reasons, converting love and affection into hatred, grudges and animosity is considered to be ungrateful for God's blessings. On the other hand, maintaining a loving relationship and extending love to others is a cause of happiness in this world and the Hereafter.

Imam Sadiq (Pbuh) said: Woe to those who are ungrateful for God's blessings, and blessed and prosperous be those who love each other for God. [Vasa'il, v.16, p.171, Al-i-Bayt Press]
The Commander of the Faithful (Pbuh) said: Regarding love and affection, the best of you are those who are the ones who strive to be the first to be kind to others. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.2, p.210]

Man is instructed to be affectionate to all the people who deserve his kindness, love and affection. Thus, our spouses and children who are even much closer to us require our love and affection. It has been written in a Qudsi Tradition: The creatures are my spouse. The dearest one to me is the one who is kindest to my creatures, and one who exerts the most effort to satisfy their needs. [Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p.199]

Based on what was said, the love of a man for a woman and the love of a woman for a man is one of the signs of God which is placed in the heart. It is one of the especial signs of God's existence, and one of His Especial Blessings. This love is the best reason for the establishment of a healthy mutual life, and its continuation. It is the cause of happiness and pleasure in life. That is why it is necessary to maintain and try to strengthen it and avoid actions which might harm it. Imam Sadiq (Pbuh) said: Love of women is one of the Prophets' characteristics. [Vasa'il, v.20, pp.22-23, Al-i-Bayt Press]

The Prophet (Pbuh) said: Prayer is the apple of my eyes, women are my pleasure in life, and my scented flowers are Hassan and Husayn. [Ibid]

Imam Sadiq (Pbuh) said that there is nothing more enjoyable than women in this world and the Hereafter. God has said:

And among His signs is this, that he created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect. [Holy Quran, Rum 30:21] Fair in the eyes of men is the love of things they covet: women and sons; [Holy Quran: Al-i-Imran 3:14] The Prophet of Islam (Pbuh) said: The inhabitants of Heaven enjoy nothing more than marriage: even more than foods and drinks. [Vasa'il, v.20, pp.23-24]

The Prophet of Islam (Pbuh) said: When a man expresses his love to his wife, it will never be removed from her heart. [Ibid] Imam Sadiq (Pbuh) said: The stronger will a woman's faith become, the more she is loved by her husband. [Ibid]

It must be noticed that love of one's wife should not become too excessive, since this will also prevent a man from walking on the right path and doing good deeds. One should especially be careful that his wife does not try to rule over him through her love, and force her excess wants upon him. A man's love and affection for his wife or anything else should be subject to his belief in God and the Day of Judgment, and it should not prevent him from his progress towards perfection and doing good deeds. If the love for women should become a bedrock for sin and wastefulness, or jealousy and greed, or abstaining from doing obligatory religious acts, then this kind of love- accompanied by a satanic state is far away from God's pleasure and .satisfaction

Lowering Expectations

Each man and woman has his/her own physical and spiritual strength which can only be realized after some time of natural, and moral encounters. A husband and wife get to know each other's physical and spiritual status and get to understand one another after a while. They must realize that God has considered two very important facts when He ordained duties upon man. Firstly, He has not required us to do what is beyond our capabilities. Secondly, He has made our moral and religious responsibilities based on our ability not our power. Most researchers believe that our responsibility is much less than our capability. This is only due to God's kindness and mercy upon His servants. He has referred to this fact in verses 233 and 286 of Chapter Baqara, verse 152 of Chapter An'am and verse 42 of Chapter A'raf and verse 62 of Chapter Mo'minun in the Holy Quran.

No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear.

On no soul doth God place a burden greater than it can bear.

For this reason, both men and women must consider this noble and kind characteristic of God in their expectations of one another. Firstly, they should not ask for anything beyond the other person's power, whether material or spiritual. This is because forcing such an unreasonable want upon the other party is considered to be oppressive, and it darkens the spirit and results in divine retribution. Secondly, they should not consider the other side's power in their expectations, rather they should reduce their wants and expectations to within their own limits. They should serve each other by performing their own duties, and invite each other to do so pleasantly. They should and can reduce their expectations of each other, since this is one of the characteristics of the Prophets and Imams.

Having excessive expectations is sometimes the same as asking the other one do what is beyond his/her power. Undoubtedly, when this want is not fulfilled, there will be bad feeling and even hatred, and this will end up in the destruction of the foundation of mutual love. Excessive

expectations are a result of having a bad character, pride and haughtiness. It is a sort of mental and psychological illness. Reduced expectations however result from politeness, nobility, knowledge and humbleness. If you want your life to be sweeter than honey, and never run into any quarrels, then reduce your expectations in all aspects of life. Your spouse will then not become hurt or belittled by you. These bad feelings will also not carry over to others. God will then be pleased with you.

Anyway, both husband and wife should be good-tempered and a source of love and happiness. They should take it easy on each other. This is one of the elements of what is known as "the good way". Those who follow this way are cleansed of moral and spiritual vice, are favored by God and deserve receiving beautiful rewards. The Prophet (Pbuh) said: The good way and those who follow it will first enter Heaven and sit by me beside the Kawsar pond. [Vasa'il, v.16, p.303, Al-i-Bayt Press]

Imam Sadiq (Pbuh) said: There is a gate to Heaven called the Good, and no one but those who follow the good way shall enter through that gate, and those who follow the good way in this world, shall also be followers of that way in the Hereafter. [Vasa'il, v.16, pp.304-305]

The Prophet (Pbuh) said: Any good deed is charity. [Ibid]

The Holy Quran has declared a ten-fold reward for any good deed. He that doeth good shall have ten times as much to his credit: [Holy Quran: An'am 8:160] Lowering expectations is a form of doing good, is one of the good spiritual deeds, and is one of the forms of Islamic charity. It has a ten-fold reward. Why shouldn't a couple take part in this profitable business? Why shouldn't they benefit from this divine fact throughout their lifetime? Remember that forbidding oneself the Mercy and Favor of God is a great sin and a tremendous oppression which cannot be compensated for

Forgiving

A couple may at times mistreat one another. The wife may make a mistake in her household duties, or in raising the children, or pleasing her husband. The husband too may make mistakes in running the affairs of the family, or in making a judgment about his wife. Such mistakes are forgivable from either side. It is exactly in such situations when forgiving makes sense: There is no need to forgive if all systems go. It is morally incumbent upon both husband and wife to forgive each other. In such cases haughtiness, selfishness and disrespecting the other party, and not following God and the Prophets' orders is improper, and even in some cases it is forbidden and deserves divine punishment. As the Quran states forgiving is loved by God:

And pardon (all) men; for God loves those who do good; [Holy Quran: Al-i-Imran 3:134]

It is so important that the Quran has declared the reward of those who forgive to be due from

God.

But if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from God: [Holy Quran: Shura 62:40] Imam Sadiq (Pbuh) said: There are three noble acts in this world and the Hereafter: Forgiving one who has oppressed you. Going to visit one who has cut off his relations with you, and acting with patience with one who has treated you with ignorance.

[Bihar al-Anwar, v.71, p.400]

The Prophet (Pbuh) said: Truly God is Forgiving and loves those who forgive. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.6, p.367] He also said: God will forgive one who forgives a Muslim. [Ibid]

Imam Sadiq (Pbuh) said: We are members of a household with our manhood being forgiving those who oppress us. [Ibid] The Prophet (Pbuh) said: Forgive the people, and God shall repel the Fire of Hell from you. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.6, pp.368-370] The Commander of the Faithful (Pbuh) said: The worst trait for one is to be unforgiving, and one of the greatest sins is rushing to take revenge. [Ibid]

He also said: The worst of the people are those who do not forgive and do not cover up other people's mistakes. [Ibid] Imam Sadiq (Pbuh) said: One must forgive without blaming, penalizing, and force. [Ibid]

Based upon the traditions and the verses of the Holy Quran, forgiving is loved by God; the reward of one who forgives is considered to be one of the nobility of this world and the Hereafter, and is a means of freedom from the Fire of Hell, and is a means of being similar to the members of the Household of the Prophet.

Not forgiving someone is a sign of illness, a spiritual defect and a sign of our soul's wickedness.

Why shouldn't a couple forgive each other's mistakes? Why shouldn't they be loved by God and benefit from divine rewards? Why shouldn't they be considered a source of nobility in this world and the Hereafter? Why shouldn't they be similar to the Immaculate Imams? All these are by-products of a spiritual and divine deal. It is not wise to lose this deal, and it is very easy to be gained. If a couple try this method for a few times, then they will soon become adorned with .this divine characteristic after a short time of practicing forgiving

Feigning

Feigning is one of the very good attributes few people have. Seeing someone's mistakes and acting as if you didn't, so that the one who made the mistake really believes you didn't notice his/her error is one of the best spiritual attributes. Feigning in regards to your wife's errors is a very noble act which must be continued into the future. The Commander of the Faithful (Pbuh) said: Half of a wise person's existence is patience and perseverance, and the other half is

feigning. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.7, p.268]

He also said: A noble man's most honorable attribute is feigning. [Ibid]

He also said: There is no measure better than pretending not to notice, and no patience is better than feigning. [Ibid] As the Commander of the Faithful (Pbuh) has said, being extremely picky and expecting total innocence and blaming others for mistakes is a cause of ruining our life. [Ibid]

It is necessary for a couple to forgive and feign and with such good attributes, life goes on with pleasure, the nerves are calm and the body is safe and immune from many diseases. Forgiving and feigning are the sweet by-products of controlling one's anger. Stubbornness, anger and quarreling are despised by God and are signs of flames of the Fire of Hell, a bad character, and a cause of the disruption of life. This may end up in divorce or separation, or delving into sin or corruption. There are many traditions regarding the harm of stubbornness and quarreling. A man addresses Imam Husayn (Pbuh), the Master of the Martyrs in a distasteful manner: Let's sit down and argue about religion. The Imam said: O' man, know that I am aware of my religion, and God's guidance is as clear as daylight for me. However if you have any problems in this regard you had better go and do something about your ignorance. What do I have to do with quarreling, as this is just a result of Satan's temptation to trap man in sin. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.2, p.135]

If verbal arguments are designed to prove the existence of God, they are considered to be good, and they will cause progress in science and discovery of the truth and God. However, if they are due to stubbornness and for defeating the other side, or for disrupting peace, then they are undoubtedly forbidden and one who argues is rebellious and deserves punishment. Imam Reza (Pbuh) told Abdul Azim Hassany: Send my greetings to my friends, and tell them not to let Satan penetrate their hearts in any way, and advise them to be honest, truthful and quiet, [and avoid quarreling over what has no profit for them. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.74, p.230]

Anger

The Quranic verses and Islamic traditions have advised all to avoid anger and consider it destructive; a sign of light-headedness; a cause of destruction; fire from Satan and consider it to be a form of insanity: They consider it to be the source of all evils. The Commander of the Faithful (Pbuh) has expressed these concepts in his wise words: Anger is an evil which when let free to take over will destroy you. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.7, p.231]

He also said: Anger is the vehicle of the light-headed ones. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.7, pp.230-231]

And also: Anger will raise the flames of hidden hatred. [Ibid]

Imam Sadiq (Pbuh) said: Anger is the key to all losses. [Ibid]

That's right. An angry person will make many mistakes and attack the honor of the other party. It will put pressure on his heart and nerves, his face will get red and he will hit, destroy, divorce, harm, cause damages and so on. The Prophet (Pbuh) said: Anger is fire from Satan. [Ibid] Hazrat Ali (Pbuh) said: Anger is a form of insanity. One who gets angry will then become sorry.

If he does not, his insanity is serious. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.7, pp.232-233] He also said: Anger will spoil the brain and terribly distract man from the truth and righteousness. [Ibid] He also seriously condemned this Satanic state and said: One who does not control his anger is not one of us. [Ibid]

And he also said: One who is totally driven by anger and lust is an animal. [Ibid] Regarding control of one's anger, Imam Baqir (Pbuh) has said: In the Hereafter, God will fill the heart of one who has the power to let out his anger but controls it with peace and faith in the Hereafter. Ali (Pbuh) said: God will cover up the faults of those who control their anger. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.7, p.236]

Imam Ali (Pbuh) wrote to his loyal friend Hareth Hamedany: Control your anger, forgive when in power, be patient when angry, cover up the faults of those who make mistakes, even though you have power. Then you may prosper. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.7, p.236] In the books Usul al-Kafi, Vasa'il al-Shiia, and Bihar al-Anwar, we read in many traditions that controlling one's anger towards everyone will be rewarded with immunity from God's anger and receiving His Mercy in the Hereafter. Jesus (Pbuh) was asked about the cause of anger. He said: There are three roots and reasons for anger: Haughtiness, selfishness and belittling the people. The Prophet (Pbuh) has recommended the Commander of the Faithful (Pbuh): Do not get angry. Sit down when you get angry, and think about God's power and rule over His servants and God's patience. If while you are angry you are told of fear ing God, then you can control your anger .and return to your normal state of patience

Arrogance

Arrogance is one of the bad traits, and is considered to be a sin in Islam. One who has this satanic attribute deserves God's punishment unless he/she repents and returns to humbleness and politeness. A couple have religious and moral responsibilities towards each other and have seen and accepted each other before getting married, knowing about each other's family, wealth and beauty and have lived together. When they have a problem they should not use their family, wealth, beauty, knowledge and age to bother the other party. They should avoid arrogance since it will hurt and at times may cause hatred and animosity or reaction. It may even lead to quarrels or divorce, in which case the responsibility is on the shoulders of the

arrogant one. The Commander of the Faithful (Pbuh) said: There is no foolishness greater than arrogance. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.7, p.414] He also said in these wise words: Discard arrogance and haughtiness and remember your tomb. [Ibid]

Arrogance is so bad that in his nineteenth book, Imam Sajjad (Pbuh) has said to God: Please guard me against arrogance. Ali (Pbuh) said: How can Adam's offspring be arrogant? Their starting point is a sperm, and their end is a badly-smelling corpse. Their daily bread is in the hands of someone else, and they have no power to escape death. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.73, p.294] God's book has mentioned the fact that God does not like the arrogant and haughty people in several verses.

For God loveth not any arrogant boaster. [Holy Quran: Luqman 31:18]

Anyway, a couple should avoid arrogance in regards to their family, beauty, wealth, savings or knowledge and should realize that all these may vanish some day. This satanic trait is only a .source of trouble, hurt, loss of love, cause of fights, and losing one's respect in God's sight

Behavior

A couple's behavior towards each other must be accompanied by politeness, nobility, friendship, cooperation, love and humbleness. Their acts should be based on mutual respect and honor. A man should realize that a woman is a delicate creature with love, affection, and modesty. All these traits must be considered when dealing with a woman. A woman must realize that a man is a strong and robust creature having stronger physical and mental states and know that the stability of life is reliant upon him. Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because God has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. [Holy Quran: Nisaa 4:34]

It is for this reason that noble wives respect their husbands, and gentlemen treat their wives with honor. A peaceful mutual life is only possible through mutual consideration of the above facts. We must try to be a practical model of good acts and proper deeds in the way we treat each other, so that we not only pass the days of our lives, but also gain the reward of the .Hereafter and please one another with our deeds

Talking

A couple should talk to each other in a tone which is filled with love, affection and passion, and their words must be filled with manifestations of understanding, wisdom, conscience and justness. When we speak we must follow the verses of the Quran regarding speaking, that is speaking justly; speaking fair; speaking mildly; speaking kindly; and calling men to God. Whenever ye speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is concerned... [Holy Quran: An'am:

152] Speak fair to the people... [Holy Quran: Baqara 2:83]

But speak to him mildly; perchance he may take warning or fear (God)... [Holy Quran: Taha 20:44]

Yet speak to them a word of easy kindness... [Holy Quran: Bani-Israel 17:28]

Who is better in speech than one who calls (men) to God... [Holy Quran: Fussilat 41:33]

When what is said is Godly, when the judgment that is made is right, when what is said is simple and softly spoken, it will bless your life with love, happiness, warmth and stability. When what is said is right and it is said kindly and passionately, then it will be rewarded by being heard and realized. The Prophet (Pbuh) said: If it were not for your talking too much, and if !your heart was not the place for Satan, you would see what I see and hear what I hear

Kanzulemal

It is better to avoid talking too much or saying what is not good for either this world or the Hereafter. The Prophet (Pbuh) said: One of the good things in Islam for man is to avoid vain talk. [Mizan al-Hikmat, v.8, pp.434-440]

The Commander of the Faithful (Pbuh) once passed by a man who talked too much. He told him: "You are filling your record of deeds with extra talk. This record will be presented to your Lord, so you better say useful things and avoid vain talk". Abuzar said: You can summarize the world in two words, one in search of what is lawful in all respects, and the other in search of the Hereafter. All else is useless and harmful, and you better not engage in it. [Ibid]

The Prophet (Pbuh) said: All that the son of Adam says is to his loss, not to his benefit; except his advice to do good deeds, and remember God and his warning against doing evil deeds. [Ibid]

The Commander of the Faithful (Pbuh) said: One who talks too much shall make many mistakes. One who makes many mistakes will be less modest. One with less modesty shall be less pious. Such a person's heart shall die and he will enter Hell. [Ibid] A couple should talk to each other about the affairs of the house, their needs and those of their children, express their love and affection for each other, advise each other to do right and to persevere, safeguard each others' secrets, and not talk about their personal affairs with their family or friends. And they should establish their home as a center of God's words, prayer, the Quran, no lying, gossiping, swearing or belittling, since as it can be understood from the verses of the Quran and the traditions, such bad deeds will deprive us of God's Mercy and may even bring His punishment. A man should avoid bringing sinful folks home, or giving sinful parties since this will bring harm to him and his household, and will cause him to lose out on the Hereafter. A wife should avoid wastefulness which is sometimes the sour result of keeping up with the

Joneses, since she will be accountable for each penny wasted in the Hereafter. A man and his wife should try to practically foster nobility, politeness, and spiritual health in their children and those around them with their manners, words and deeds, since the reward of guiding even one .person is equal to that of guiding all the people