

The Duties of Muslims towards Others

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These duties can be described as follows:

The Duty of Muslims towards His Parents

Parents are the means of the creation of a child and the imparters of his initial education and training; therefore, the holy religion of Islam has placed a great deal of emphasis on children's obeying to them and on their respect to an extent that the Almighty Allah has commanded the people to be kind and generous to their parents right after mentioning Tawhid (the Oneness of Allah) and states:

"And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve (any) but Him and has commanded goodness to your parents...(17:23)." In ahadith enumerating mortal sins, misconduct towards parents ranks second to shirk (polytheism). The Almighty Allah states: "...If either or both of them reach old age with you, say not to them (so much as) "ugh" nor chide them, and speak to them generous words. And make yourself submissively gentle to them with compassion, and say: 'O my Lord! have compassion on them, similar to what they had on me when they brought me up (when I was) little' (17:23-24)."

How well did an old woman say to her child when she saw him powerful and bulky.

If you recalled your childhood

When you were helpless in my arms,

You would not treat me unkindly today

As you are a brave man and I am an old woman.

In the holy religion of Islam, obedience of the parents is wajib except in the case when they order the children to give up one of the wajib deeds of religion or perform a religiously haram act. It has been proven by experience that those who tease their parents do not remain happy and prosperous in their lives and consequently they will not attain salvation.

The Rights of Parents

In a family circle, the relationship of parents to their children is like that of the roots of a tree to its branches because the continuity and survival of the branches of the tree depend upon its roots. Parents are also the founders of the children's life. Since the human society is comprised of the two categories, i.e., parents and children, parents are the main roots of the human society.

Besides being an utmost ingratitude and cowardice, misbehaviour towards the parents and annoying them also cause the decadence of humanity and the annihilation of the society. This is because the disrespect of children towards their parents will be reflected by the parents in the form of unkindliness and disfavour towards them.

On the other hand, if the children look towards their parents with disrespect and lowliness, they cannot expect anything better from their own children and will not depend upon the help of their children when they reach the age of debility and infirmity. Thus they naturally become disappointed to form a family, as is the case with many of the young people of the present age. Generalization of this kind of thinking will definitely obstruct the path of regeneration and reproduction, because a wise man will never devote his valuable life to nurture a young tree from whose fruits he will not benefit, under whose shadow he will not sit, and that looking towards it will render him no benefit but grief and anguish. We might assume that the governments can encourage the people to set up families by giving them various rewards and incentives and thus eliminate the problems of regeneration and reproduction; but it should be noted that the social methods and customs that are devoid of natural backing (like parent-children affection) cannot last.

Besides this fact, not benefiting from one of the natural instincts will inevitably deprive man of a series of pure spiritual pleasures.

The Rights of Children on Parents

The works that a man must perform for someone who is the beneficiary are called huquq (rights) and the works that a person must perform are called duties, orders, and obligations. For instance, it is the duty of an employer to pay the wages of his employee and it is the right of the employee to receive it after performing a task for him. If the employer does not pay the wages, the employee can demand it and defend his right.

Since man is created in such a manner that his life is not everlasting in this world and because willingly or not he dies after some time, Allah has established the method of reproduction, has provided people with the means of reproduction, and has directed man's inner feelings towards it in order to safeguard the mankind from total annihilation.

It is because of this overall mobilization that man naturally considers his child to be an inherent part of himself and assumes his child's survival to be that of his own. For this very reason, man goes through all kinds of endeavours and makes efforts for the comfort and happiness of his children and endures various hardships, for he considers the annihilation of his child or his child's personality to be his own annihilation or the annihilation of his own personality.

Indeed, man obeys the order of the world of creation which demands the survival of mankind. Thus it is the duty of parents to implement the order enjoined by conscience and religious laws with regard to their children and to bring them up very well, so that they may grow into decent human beings. Parents are also duty bound to consider rightful for their children those things that they consider rightful for themselves from the viewpoint of humanity. Some of the duties of parents are as given below.

(1) Parents must establish and make firm the foundation of praiseworthy ethics and decent attributes in the natures of their children from the very first day that they begin to understand words and signs. They must not frighten their children with superstitious subjects as much as they can.

They must prevent them from committing evil and unchaste acts. The parents, too, must avoid lying, ill-speaking, and using bad language and obscene words in front of the children. The parents should perform decent deeds, so that the children might be brought up as chaste and magnanimous people.

Parents must endeavour and show motivation and justice, so as to transfer to their children the love for justice and humanity through the law of "the transfer of ethics" in order to keep their children away from oppression, meanness, and selfishness.

(2) Parents should patronize their children for their eating, sleeping, and other requirements for living until they attain the age of discernment. They must have consideration for the physical health of their children so that they may have a healthy body and a strong mind and temper ready to be educated and trained.

(3) Parents should put their children under the care of a teacher from the time they get aptitude for education (usually from seventh year of their age). Parents should make every effort to place their children under the care of a decent teacher, so that they may get good and desirable impressions from what they hear and so that such a teacher would become the source of inspiration and cause the refinement of their spirit, the purification of their soul, and the cultivation of their ethics.

(4) Parents should take their children along with them to gatherings in order to familiarize them with social customs and praiseworthy etiquette when their age calls for participation in social gatherings or family visits.

Respect for the Elders

It is also required to respect the elders, as the Holy Prophet (SA) states: "The glorification and respect for the elders is the glorification and respect for Allah."

The Duty of Muslims towards His Relatives

The paternal and maternal relatives, who have a consanguineous and near relationship, are the natural means for the formation of the society. Due to the similarity of blood and cells, man becomes part of a family. For the sake of this unity and natural relationship, Islam orders its followers to observe the kinship bonds with kindness. Strong recommendations have been made in the Qur'an and the ahadith of religious leaders in this respect. The Almighty Allah states:

"...And be careful of (your duty to) Allah, by Whom you demand one of another (your rights),
and (to) the ties of relationship; surely Allah ever watches over you (4:1)."

The Holy Prophet (SA) states: "I enjoin my Ummah (people) to observe the kinship bonds with kindness. Even if the relatives are separated from one another by a year-long distance, they should not disconnect the kinship bonds of their relationship."

The Duty of Muslims towards His Neighbors

Since neighbours very often come in contact with one another due to the proximity of their residential area and naturally - as they constitute a larger family, the good behaviour and the misbehaviour of one of them will have more effect on other neighbours than that of all others. He, who spends the night with clamour in his house, does not annoy anyone residing in the remote corner of the city, but he disturbs his neighbour's peace. A wealthy man who spends his life in feasting and drinking in his beautiful palace is far away from the sight of the poor, but he burns the heart of his indigent neighbour living in a clay-hut. Surely, a day will come when this wealthy man will duly be punished. For this reason, taking care of the neighbours has been highly emphasized in the holy religion of Islam.

The Holy Prophet (SA) stated: "Jibril recommended to me about the neighbours to such an extent that I thought the Almighty Allah would appoint one's neighbour as one of his heirs." He also stated: "whoever believes in Allah and in Ma'ad, never does injustice to his neighbour, lends him money if he asks for it, and shares his grief and happiness. One should not annoy his neighbour even if he is an unbeliever."

He also states: "He, who hurts his neighbour, will not smell the fragrance of Paradise and he, who disregards the rights of his neighbour, is not my follower. Whoever has had enough to eat and does not help his neighbour after knowing that he is hungry, is not a Muslim."

The Duty of Muslims towards the Inferior and the Poor

There is no doubt that the establishment of a society is to fulfil the needs of the individuals.

The most important duty of the members of any society is to help the helpless and the weak and to eliminate in some way the needs of those who are unable to eliminate these by themselves.

It has been thoroughly clarified nowadays that the carelessness of the rich towards the difficulties of the poor is the greatest danger that can destroy a society and that the rich will be the first victim of this danger.

Taking this danger into consideration, fourteen centuries ago, Islam ordered the rich to distribute a portion of their wealth among the poor and the helpless annually. If the said amount is sufficient to eliminate the needs of the poor, it is recommended that the rich donate as much as they can for the cause of Allah so as to improve the living conditions of the poor.

The Almighty Allah states:

"By no means shall you attain to righteousness until you spend (benevolently) out of what you love... (3:92)." The ahadith on the subject of serving the humanity are innumerable. The Holy Prophet (SA) stated: "The best of men is one who is more beneficial for the people." He also stated: "In Ma'ad, a person who has taken greater steps towards charitable acts for the servants of Allah will be placed in a higher status before the Almighty Allah."

Help friends at the time of calamity so that you may have favours of Allah. Somehow you will someday reap the seeds of goodness that you sow today.

The Duty of Muslims towards the Society

As we know, human beings work with joint effort. They take advantage of each others' endeavours to eliminate the needs of their life. The society established by these individuals is similar to a "great man" and each individual is like an organ of this great man's body.

Each organ of the body performs its own specific function and makes up for its own weaknesses by benefiting from the functions of other organs; that is, in its sphere of activity, each organ provides its interests while providing the interests of other organs and continues its life in the light of the life of other organs. If some organs acted selfishly and were of no use to other organs; for example, if while the hands or feet were functioning, the eyes did not cooperate with them or if the mouth only contented itself with chewing and enjoying the food without swallowing it to satisfy the needs of the stomach, man would die and, as a result, the same self-centred and self-seeking organ would also die.

The duty of the members of a society is exactly like the duty of the organs of a body, i.e., man must look for his interests within the framework of the interests of the society. He must consider what benefits the society would derive from his efforts so that by his efforts all are

benefited and he also gets benefited. He must defend the rights of others so that his own rights would not be violated.

This is a fact which we realize with our Allah-given nature. The holy religion of Islam, which is established on the basis of nature and creation, does not have the commandments and views other than these on this matter.

The Holy Prophet (SA) states: "A Muslim is one from whose hand and tongue Muslims are safe."

He further states: "Muslims are brothers and are like a single-hand, single-heart, and single-direction against aliens." He also states: "Whoever does not care about the affairs of the Muslims is not a Muslim."

For the Battle of Tabuk when the Holy Prophet (SA) set out with the army of Islam for the frontier of Rome, three Muslims did not participate in the battle. After the return of the army of Islam, when these three persons welcomed and greeted the Holy Prophet (SA), the Prophet (SA) turned his face and did not answer their greetings. In the like manner, the Muslims also turned their faces from these three men.

No one, in Madinah, not even their wives, talked to them. Consequently, they became helpless and sought refuge in the mountains of Madinah and engaged themselves in repentance and contrition until Allah accepted their repentance after several days and then they returned to the .city