

In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful*

THE STATUS OF PARENTS IN ISLAM

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All religions and all societies have given parents an honorable status. From a purely material viewpoint, we find ourselves indebted to our parents, particularly our mother. She not only nourished us in her womb, but went through pain and suffering. She loved us even before we were born. She toiled when we were totally helpless infants. She spent sleepless nights caring for us. Our parents as a team provided for all our needs: physical, educational, psychological, and in many instances, religious, moral, and spiritual. Our indebtedness to our parents is so immense that it is not possible to repay it fully. In lieu of this, it becomes obligatory for us to show the utmost kindness, respect, and obedience to our parents. The position of parents, and the mutual obligations and responsibilities, have been addressed in Islam in great detail. The Qur'anic commandments, as well as the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh&p**), guide us in this matter. The parent-child code of behavior in Islam is unique, since rules were laid down by Divine command.

Reference to parents has been made at least 15 times in the Holy Qur'an. There are numerous traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh&p) on this subject. I will first quote some of the Qur'anic verses here:

"And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents. In travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in two years was his weaning. Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents; to Me is thy final goal." (Chapter31: verse14)

According to the above verse, gratitude to Allah (swt***) and to parents go hand in hand. Gratitude to Allah (swt) is incomplete without showing gratitude to one's parents. Since being grateful to Allah (swt) is a form of *Ibadah* (worship) which earns heavenly rewards, it can therefore be said that being grateful to one's parents also earns heavenly rewards.

"Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or more 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." (17: 23, 24)

"We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents; in pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth." (46:15)

Thus, Allah (swt) has enjoined on us to show kindness, respect, and humility to our parents. We are commanded to do this, even though they may have injured us. The only exception to the above command is made in the following verse:

"We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents; but if they strive (to force) thee to join with Me anything of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not." (29:8)

Some of the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), and of the learned members of his family, about our responsibilities toward our parents are quoted here:

- "Paradise lies under the feet of the mother."
- "Allah's pleasure is in the pleasure of the father, and Allah's displeasure is in the displeasure of the father."
- "He who wishes to enter Paradise through its best door must please his parents."
- "It is a pity that some people may not attain Paradise, on account of not serving their old parents."
- "If a person looks with love at his parents, Allah writes in his favor the reward equal to the performance of one Hajj." [Someone asked, "will this promise be good if one looks at his parents one hundred times a day?" The Holy Prophet (pbuh) replied, "even if one does so a hundred thousand times a day, Allah gives the reward accordingly."]
- "A man or woman is bound to be good to his or her parents, even though they may have injured him or her."

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (A.S#.), the great-great-grandson of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have quoted Imam 'Ali (A.S.) that, "disobedience to parents is a major sin." He

also stated that, "If a person looks at the face of his or her parents with wrathful eyes, despite the fact that injustice was done to him or her by the parents, his or her *salah* (prayer) will not be accepted by Allah."

According to one of the *Hadith-e-Qudsi*, the following is reported about the status of parents:

"Allah has commanded that if anybody prays equal to the invocations performed by the prophets, such prayers will do no good if that person has been cursed by his or her parents."

It has also been related that the very first words which have been written on the *Lauh-e-Mahfuz* (The Heavenly Preserved Tablet) are:

"I am Allah, and there is no deity except Me. I am pleased with those with whom their parents are pleased, and I am displeased with those with whom their parents are displeased."

The Holy Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have said: "On the Day of Judgment, my person will not be seen by those who drank liquor, those who on hearing my name did not invoke the blessings of Allah on me, or those who were cursed and disowned by their parents."

'Ali ibn al-Husain (A.S.) is reported to have said: "The right of your mother on you is that you should know that nobody could endure the trouble and the conditions under which she protected you and nourished you, with the juice of her life, and tried with her heart and soul to satisfy all your needs in relation to hunger, thirst, dress, etc. She passed sleepless nights, suffering anxieties. She provided you with shelter against heat and cold, and protected you from ailments. It is not possible for you to compensate her, or thank her enough for all the services, except that Allah may give you guidance for that. The right of your father on you is that you should know that it is he who brought you into existence, and you are a branch of the tree of his life."

According to a reliable tradition, it is related that a man came to the Holy Prophet (pbuh) and asked him to whom he should render kindness. The prophet told him to be kind to his mother. Three times he put the same question to the prophet, and three times he got the same answer. When he asked the question the fourth time, he was told to be kind to his father, indicating that the mother's right took precedence over that of the father.

Parents' duties: Islam has assigned certain duties to parents that they must fulfill. If they fail in those, they will be questioned about it. Besides providing the basic necessities of life, Islam requires that the parents teach their children about the Oneness of Allah (swt), the Quranic commandments, values, the Prophets and their teachings, and the moral code of Islam as according to the Qur'an and the Sunnah (teachings) of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Let us pray to Allah (swt) that He will guide us to be respectful, kind, and obedient to our parents, and that we continue to show them humility regardless of the power, position, wealth, and influence we may possess. Let us also pray that we be patient, kind, thoughtful, and friendly with our children, as we guide them through their lives, and that we discharge our responsibilities towards them as required by our religion, so that Allah (swt) may be pleased with us, and may He Bless and reward us, both in this world and in the Hereafter; Aameen.

THE END

References:

- *Holy Qur'an*, Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali's Translation
- *Bedtime Stories*, by Peermohammed Ebrahim Trust

* **Allah** is the proper name for **God**, the supreme deity
** **Pbuh&p** means Apeace be upon him & his purified progeny
*****swt** means AGlorified be He the most High@
A.S. means upon him be peace