

FROM THE MINBAR

IHTIRAMUL WALIDAIN: RESPECTING PARENTS

Khutbah delivered by Imam Dr. Zijad Delic at SNMC on February 24th, 2012 corresponding to Rabi'ut Thani 2nd, 1433 H.

BACKGROUND

Indeed all praise is for God, Lord of the worlds. Peace and blessings of God be upon Muhammad (S), his family, Khulafai Rashidin, all his Companions, and all those who follow in their footsteps until the Last Day. All praise is for God! We praise Him. We seek His help and ask for His forgiveness. We seek God's refuge from evils of ourselves and from our evil actions. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except God, alone, having no partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad (S) is His Messenger.

My dear brothers and sisters in Islam ~ As Salamu 'Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuhu.

INTRODUCTION

The greatest right over humanity is that of Almighty God. Belief in Him and obedience to His rules are the first and foremost responsibilities that believers have towards Him. After these are the responsibilities of domestic life. Fulfillment of these responsibilities is a social need as well as a religious duty. One of the greatest duties of believers after servitude to Almighty God is Ihsan to their parents.

While parents are naturally disposed to love their children, children are often disposed to disregard their parents. It is impossible to estimate the depth of attachment and compassion parents feel for their children, nor is it possible to calculate the troubles and hardships they go through as parents while bringing up their kids.

For this and many other reasons, respecting them is a debt of human gratitude as well as a religious obligation. It is for this reason, and because of the enormous debt that an individual owes to his/her parents, that the Qur'an and Hadith have made it compulsory, indicating with clear guidelines as how to provide Ihsan to both parents.

TERM DEFINITION

This term '*Ihsan*' has been used as a special term to describe our relationship with our parents. In Arabic language, Ihsan means a state of a relationship in which a person is pleased even when he/she receives less than his/her due right or offers more than what his/her duties call for.

It is clear from this definition that the Qur'an does not merely ask us to treat our parents on the basic of equality and justice. It commands us, rather, to be pleased with whatever our parents could offer us. It also commands us to try our best to please them by giving them our greatest love, respect and obedience.

If we fail to do as God ordered to us, we shall be guilty of disobeying Him – the Creator. Disobedience towards one's parents is linked with disobedience to God just as treating them with kindness and respect is connected to belief in Almighty God. Disobedience towards one's parents is a great transgression that the true Muslims fear to commit, because it will demolish their reward in this world and is, in fact, viewed as one of the worst sins.

TEXTUAL REFERENCES

It was reported that Muhammad (S) asked the Sahabah three times: "Shall I tell you the greatest sins?" We said, "Yes, O Messenger of God." He said: "Associating partners with God and disobeying one's parents." {Bukhari, Muslim}

The Messenger of God, Muhammad (S) warned us in following words: "God defers (the punishment of) all sins



to the Day of Judgment except disobedience to parents, for which God punishes the sinner in this life before his/her death." {Al Hakim}

Almighty God says in the Qur'an: "And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you show kindness to parents. And if one of them or both of them attain old age with you, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honor. And lower unto them the wing of submission through mercy, and say: My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy as they did bring me up when I was small." {Al Isra' 23, 24}

As we can understand from this verse, God has asked human beings to recognize their parents after recognizing Almighty God, Himself. The recognition and respect of parents is mentioned in the Qur'an eleven times and in every instance, God reminds children to recognize and to appreciate the love and care they have received from their parents.

The rights of parents are from the category of greatest rights - '*a'zami huquq*'. God (SWT) demands from human beings kindness, which is Fard 'Ayn on every Muslim to the parents. One of the main distinguishing characteristics of the true Muslim is his/her respectful and kind treatment of the parents, because to treat them with respect and kindness is one of the greatest commandments of Islam, as explained in the two primary sources of Islam – Qur'an and Sunnah.

"And We have enjoined on man to be good and dutiful to both parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship, and his utter dependence on her lasted two years. Hence, O man, be grateful to Me and to your parents and remember that unto Me is the final destination." {Al 'Ankabut 8}

DUTIES TOWARDS PARENTS

1. **Show goodness and mercy and act in righteousness towards them and consider this conduct (Fard 'Ayn), as an act which will earn God's grace in Duniya and in Akhirah.**

Next to God, a person owes the greatest obligation to his/her parents. That can be realized from the fact that the Qur'an at several points mentions the rights of God and the rights of parents simultaneously at one place. Many of Ayat reinforce the message that pleasing one's parents comes second only to pleasing Him, and respecting them is counted as a human virtue that is just one step below belief in Him. In Surah Al Isra', ayah 23 God reminds us: "And Your Lord has decreed that you should worship none but Him, and that you show kindness to parents."

This is the commandment from Almighty God to the Muslims, which is presented in the form of an ultimate and inescapable decree of obedience. The mentioned words

from Surah Al Isra' represent the strong connection between worshipping God and treating parents with kindness, mercy and respect, thus raising the status of parents to the level that wise people, reformers and philosophers have never managed to ascribe to them.

2. **Be grateful to them, offering gratitude to them for all that they have done for us, protecting us and bringing us up so that we can grow to the age of maturity.** The extraordinary self-sacrifice, unparalleled devotion and deep affection with which they bestowed on us, demands that our hearts should be filled with sentiments of reverence, love and acknowledgment of that which they have done. It is for this reason that Almighty God has ordained the offering of gratitude to parents along with thanksgiving to Him: "Anishkur li wali walidayka - We willed that you should offer thanks to Me and remain grateful to your parents."

3. **Always try to make your parents happy. And when they attain old age do not reject them using harsh language and words of disrespect.** As parents age, they tend to become more irritable and short-tempered, therefore, the children must respond to these changes with patience and tolerance.

Parents deserve our respect at all times, but especially when they become old, and are at their most difficult. It is now, when they are most nagging and critical, that we should be all the more compassionate and forgiving. Make them understand that even when being in their weakness, they will be respected and are important to us. It was narrated that the Messenger of God, Muhammad (S) said three times: "May his/her nose be rubbed in dirt. When he was asked to whom was he referring, he said: 'The one who witnesses one or both parents live to old age, and does not enter Jannah (by no serving them and not treating them with Ihsan).'" {Muslim}

The expression 'May his/her nose be rubbed in dirt' which was mentioned three times by the Messenger of God, Muhammad (S) is a form of rebuke. This Hadith reminds the believers that when parents reach old age, Jannah comes within our reach. If we wish to enter Jannah, we should take utmost care of our parents and serve them well. Abu Umamah related that a man asked: "O Rasulallah! What are the rights of parents over the children?" He answered: "They are your Jannah or Jahannam." {Ibn Majah}

God warns us: "And if one or both of them attain old age with you, say not to them a word of disrespect (even the word uff), nor shout at them."

4. **Respect your parents and do not show disrespect to them by a single word or action.** Children under all circumstances must adopt attitudes of humbleness, politeness and obedience towards their parents. God has ordered that children should not let their parents hear an evil word, even the slightest word of disrespect – uff.

This Issue 'From The Minbar' presents:

⇒ IHTIRAMUL WALIDAIN: RESPECTING PARENTS

⇒ In next issue: Canadian Muslim Family

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The Qur'an affirms it: "Say not to them a word of disrespect (uff), nor shout at them, but address them in terms of honor."

A man asked Sa'id ibn Sal Musayyib (r.a): "I understand all of the Ayah about kindness and respect towards parents, apart from the phrase 'But address them in terms of honor.' 'How can I address them in terms of honor?' Sa'id replied: 'It means that you should address them as a servant addresses his/her master.' The true Muslim who understands the true meaning of this Qur'anic guidance and the teachings of the Rasulallah, Muhammad (S) on this topic cannot but be the best and kindest of all people towards his/her parents, at all times. This was the practice of the Sahabah and those who followed them sincerely.

5. Be faithful, kind and humble towards your parents at old age. Allah guides us in this regard saying in the Qur'an: "And lower unto them the wing of submission through mercy."

In many so called modern societies, there are different care facilities for the elderly people. These facilities are the major fragmentation in the family and social fabric that has occurred over time and the wrong changes in values and life style. These facilities that are called 'Senior Housing' have become the transitional place where elderly people spend their last days of life, which they were supposed to enjoy the family, before they depart from this world and move into their graves. Parents are left on their own and visited on some occasions or only called when needed for the will. It seems that the days when children used to check on their parents first, before anything else, are gone.

A Muslim does not regard his parents as a burden, no matter how demanding their care may be. A Muslim will always lower the wing of mercy towards those who cared about him/her when he/she was small. To a Muslim, the idea of putting the elderly into such homes, which are in reality custodial institutions, where they go to vegetate and die in loneliness and despair, so that one does not have to be burdened with their care, seems totally inhuman and selfish.

It is an ungrateful return for all they did for us when we were more helpless than they are now. For a Muslim it is simply obvious and understood that when parents reach this stage of life, it is their children's turn to take care of them. A moving story is told about a Muslim who carried his old invalid mother in his arms for Tawwaf around the Ka'bah. "I know I am a very heavy burden for you, my son," she said, striking his hair, "but do you know that your carrying me once around the Ka'bah is not equivalent to one pain I had in giving you birth?"

Besides this, offer prayer for them as we are taught in the Qur'an: "Wa qur rabbirhamhuma kama rabbayani sagira - and say: My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy as they did bring me up when I was small."

As Muslims, it is not only a social obligation, but also it is our duty to Almighty God to care for our parents in their old age, as they cared for us in childhood. This is the least anyone can do for his/her parents and it is only appropriate in this regard to remember the saying: 'Whatever you do to your parents your children will do to you.'

6. Even if one's parents are non-Muslims, and that often occurs in Canada, treat them well and show respect to them. The Messenger of God, Muhammad (S) raised his teaching to a new peak when he addressed his followers to treat their parents with kindness and respect even if they follow a religion other than Islam. This is clear from the Hadith As Sahih narrated by Asma bint Abi Bakr As Sidiq, who said: "My mother came to me, and she was a Mushrik at the time of the Messenger Muhammad (S). I asked the Messenger (S): 'My mother has come to me and needs my help, so should I help her?' He said: 'Yes keep in touch with your mother and help her.'" [Bukhari, Muslim]

In the case of parents who would ask or command their children to do any kind of sinful act, children will not follow their demand. Imam Muslim reported the story of Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas whose mother took an oath and vowed that she would not talk to him and that she would

neither eat nor drink until he left Islam. She said: "God has enjoined you to obey the parents. I am your mother."

She eventually was passing out until someone had given her some water. Because of this, the following verse was revealed: "And We have enjoined on man to be good and dutiful to his/her parents, but if they strive to make you commit Shirk with Me of something which you have knowledge of, obey them not." {Ankabut 8}

Almighty God informs us in another verse: "But if they strive with you to make you join with Me others that of which you have no knowledge, then obey them not, but behave with them in the world kindly and follow the path of him who turns to Me in repentance and in obedience." (Luqman 15)

These verses have made the matter of dealing with non-Muslim parents very clear. One should not imagine that obeying them in matters of sinfulness is being good or see it as a matter of doing Ihsan to them; the rights of Almighty God take precedence over everyone else's.

Some people get frustrated with their parents and their demands and cut off relationships with them because they do not understand son's or daughter's new way of life, or because they say things that annoy their children. If we carefully consider the previous verses we can notice that it does not ask from us to cut them off, but rather 'obey them not', in matters of Shirk and sinful acts. As far as being dutiful and kind towards them is concerned, then that is still required as the following words of Allah clarify it: "But behave with them in the world (Duniya) kindly."

Unfortunately, many new Muslims do not follow this guidance. It is not proper for them to cut off their parents and take them out of their lives completely. If it is not matter of belief and the foundation of our Din, the rule is to be good with them and do Ihsan for them. Being kind to them and loving them is our obligation. That is the best thing a person can do for his/her non-Muslim parents.

If parents are deviating from the true teachings of Islam, the dutiful children should approach them in a gentle and sensitive manner. Parents are the closest and most beloved of kin.

7. The rights of parents in Islam are so unique and important that they don't come to an end even after their death. Even when our parents die, we may honor them with following:

a) Du'a (supplication). The supplication of a child for his/her parents reaches and benefits the Mayyit (deceased) parents as mentioned in the authentic Ahadith. A man from the tribe of Banu Salamah approached the Messenger of God and asked him: "O Messenger of God, is there any kindness left that I can do to my parents after their death?" He replied: "Yes, you can invoke blessings for them, ask forgiveness for them, carry out instructions after their death, join ties of relationship which were dependent on them and honor their friends." {Abu Dawud, Tirmithi, Ibn Majah}

b) Treat parents' friends well. Islam did not stop at teaching its followers to treat their parents with kindness and respect, but it also enjoins them to show respect to those whom their parents loved. It was reported from Ibn Omar (r.a) that the Messenger of God, Muhammad (S) said: "The best kind of goodness (Birr) is that a man should keep in touch with and respect his father's friend even after his/her father has passed away." [Muslim]

The highest form of love, faithfulness and respect that a child can show to his/her parents, is to keep in touch with their friends, both during their lifetime and after their death.

The true Muslim always seeks to strengthen the ties of friendship with those whom his/her parents loved. He/she continues to care about his/her parents even after they have died, so he/she never forgets those old friendships and he/she maintains his/her ties with the circle of friends forged by the parents. Noble human feelings such as these, and sincere friendships, add beauty and enjoyment to life, and all of this depends on the presence of true Muslim in Duniya.

Abdullah ibn Dinar reported that Abdullah ibn 'Umar met a Bedouin on his way to Makkah. He greeted him and asked him if he was so and so, the son of so and so. The man replied, 'yes'. Abdullah ibn 'Umar gave his donkey and asked him to ride it. He also gave him his turban and asked him to cover his head with it. Some of the companions told him: 'May God bless you! He is just a Bedouin and the Bedouins are pleased with only a little thing. You gave him your donkey and turban whereas you needed them yourselves. Abdullah ibn 'Umar answered: 'His father was the friend of my father and I have heard Rasulallah (S) saying: 'One of the most virtuous act is that a person should be benevolent towards his father's friends and their family members.'" [Muslim]

In today's time, the child leaves the parents when he/she reaches the age of maturity and breaks the ties of kinship, never meeting the parents or showing any compassion or feelings towards them. The child goes his/her own way not showing any respect towards those who gave him/her all what they had, the best days of their lives.

c) Give a charity on their behalf (Waqf), distribute Islamic literature on their behalf, and perform Hajj on their behalf (or ask someone else to do that on their behalf).

After parents' death, their children can pay back what they owed to their Creator in terms of Hajj, Sawm and to the people in terms of their debts. A woman came to the Messenger of God and said: "O Messenger of God, a month of fasting was due on my mother, may I fast on her behalf?" He replied: "Fast on her behalf." She said: "She never performed the Hajj, so may I do so on her behalf?" He replied: Yes, perform the Hajj on her behalf." [Muslim, Abu Dawud, Tirmithi]

CONCLUSION

In conclusion I would say that respect for parents is a primary and sacred obligation of Muslims. Those who can judge the value of their parents rightly and regard them as a means to obtain God's Rahmah, are the most prosperous in Duniya and Akhirah. But the ones who, by contrast, regard them as a burden or who do not treat them as Almighty God commanded and have failed to show respect to them, are unfortunate ones who will inevitably suffer the most severe of hardships in Duniya by falling sooner or later into ill-treatment of others and the final punishment is in the Akhirah.

Ya Allah! Accept our humble prayers, and help us to be obedient servants to You and respectful children to our parents. Allahumma Amin. .

AN ACTION ITEM

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