

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُصَلِّي عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ وَاتَّبَعْنَاهُ
حَمَلَةَ الدِّينِ الْقَوِيْمِ

The Rights and Virtues of Women in Islam by Shaikh Mohammad Iqbal

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About the Author

In the name of Allah, The Compassionate, The Merciful

About the Author The author, Shaikh Muhammad Iqbal, started his educational career at Nadvatul Ulema under the supervision of the learned Shaikh Abul Hassan Ali Nadvi. He then benefited for a long period of time from the training and company of the Late Shaikhul Hadith M. Zakariya Kandhalvi, who along with Shaikh Abul Hassan Ali Nadvi conferred deputy ship to the author in the line of Tariqet. The respected Shaikhul Hadith entrusted the author to write numerous works on current issues. The present book was written during the author's visit to Canada from Madina Munawarra in 1986.

THE AIMS OF MARRIAGE

The concept of marriage, from the Islamic perspective, is not that it is solely a need without whose

fulfillment the enjoyment of life cannot be attained. On the contrary, Islam has explained the spiritual dimension of this union by defining it a form of worship by which one may achieve nearness to Allah.

(Allah is an Arabic word for Almighty God , Name of Creator of Universes

According to a hadith: (saying or actions of Our Holy Prophet)

"When the servant of Allah marries he has fulfilled half the (responsibilities laid on him by the) faith" (Mishkat)

The final Prophet of Allah, Muhammad (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) demonstrated the perfect example of this form of worship. In his practice one sees an attitude of such great respect and consideration for the delicate feelings of women that it remains unparalleled by any champion of women's rights. His efforts to comfort and please his pious wives; his sharing in their innocent leisure activities; his regard for their emotions; and his fair treatment of them is unique in history.

"Allah, Most High, has says in Holy Qur'an

Among His signs is [the fact] that He has created spouses for you among yourselves so that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has planted love and mercy between you. In that are signs for people who reflect

[Quran 30.21]

In this verse, Allah has described the creation of women as a token of His Wisdom and Power. As a favor to men, He has revealed that women were created for their benefit, namely peace and comfort. The fruitful end result of all the needs of men associated with women is tranquility, peace and comfort. Therefore the outcome of all conjugal affairs should be peace and comfort. The families which have achieved this treasure are in harmony with the purpose of their creation, whereas homes which lack inner peace, despite possessing the material means for outward comfort, are absolute failures in realizing the real aims of marriage. The object of marriage outlined above can only be achieved if the husband and wife recognize and fulfill their mutual rights. Otherwise quarrels evolve and destroy domestic peace. The nature of husband-wife transactions is such that no man-made law can enforce the complete fulfillment of rights, nor can courts of law do full justice in these matters.

The fear of Allah and of being held responsible on the Day of Judgment are the only successful motivators that can ensure the discharging of rights. Allah, Most Merciful, has blessed us with another favour, that the matter of mutual rights has not been left dependent solely upon Islamic law and the courts. He has made the desire for discharging these rights intrinsic in human nature by infusing mutual love and compassion in the hearts of spouses. Allah, Most Exalted, has said:

He has planted affection and mercy between you. (Quran 30:12)

This special quality enables the couple to care for each other beyond the stipulated minimum.

Tolerance enjoined on men

Besides this natural disposition of mutual love, both the husband and the wife have been given distinct rights. Allah, Most Exalted, has revealed that:

Women have the same [rights in relation to their husbands] as are expected in all decency from them; while men have a degree over them. Allah is Powerful, Wise." [Quran 2:228]

In this verse, Allah , Most Merciful, has alluded to the rights of women before referring to the rights of men. A point of expediency in this sequence is that men invariably secure their rights by sheer strength but women are usually unable to secure their rights by force, therefore the need for safeguarding their rights is more serious. [Tafseer Maarif al Quran].

Another textual indication in this sequence is that men should take the initiative in fulfilling the rights of women. The seniority of men referred to in the Quranic verse neither implies greater rights of men nor suggests any excellence in terms of the life hereafter.

The following Quranic revelation conveys this reassurance:

Verily men who submit [to Allah] and women who submit,

and men who believe and women who believe,

and men who are obedient and women who are obedient,

and men who speak the truth and women who speak the truth,

and men who are patient and women who are patient

and men who are humble and women who are humble,

and men who give alms and women who give alms,

and men who fast and women who fast,

and men who guard their modesty and women who guard (their modesty),

and men who remember Allah much and women who remember,

Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward.

(Quran 33:35).

In fact there are many subtleties in this Divine statement. As explained by Abduliah bin Abbas (radhialiaho anho), a companion of the Prophet (Sallallaho alaihi wasallam), expalains that

" It simply suggests that men should have greater forbearance towards women. The implication is that should women be remiss in discharging the rights of men, it is expected that they would tolerate such lapses but not fall short themselves in fulfilling the rights of women."

We have observed the spiritual elders exercising such magnanimity. Other beneficial purposes and points of wisdom about this issue can be found in the various interpretations of the Quran. The gist of those explanations is that this degree of seniority is also for the benefit of women. The Holy Prophet (sallallaho alaihi wasallam), a blessing for all the worlds, was especially compassionate and lenient towards women and exalted their status. He had a deep concern about protecting them from all kinds of loss and discomfort, and he equated the reward of their routine activities with the rewards which men earn only after making tremendous sacrifice and effort. While Allah, Most High, in His wisdom has made women physically delicate, at the same time He has thrust the load of the hard struggles and burdens of their lives upon men. Thus men have been charged with the responsibility of maintaining women and being lenient, compassionate and forgiving. They have also been strictly forbidden from dealing harshly with women. Following are the sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sallallaho alaihi wasallam) concerning these concessions, virtues and the status of women.

The Virtues of Muslim Women

A warning for men.

Jabir (radhiallaho anho) narrates that the Prophet (sallallaho alaihi wasallam) also gave these instructions in his sermon during the Farewell Pilgrimage. "Fear Allah regarding women; for you have taken them (in marriage) with the trust of Allah. (Mishtat)

This warning establishes the sanctity and inviolability of women's rights. In this teaching men have been cautioned that although they are guardians of women, they should not exercise this responsibility without concern and fear of accountability to Allah. They should be mindful that Allah is a witness between them and their wives and it is through His commandment and permission that women have been made lawful for them through marriage. Women are therefore

in Allah's protection. If the husbands are cruel they are guilty of breaching their trust with Allah. How big an honour this is for women and how stern is the warning for their guardian husbands, that they should remember that women are in Allah's protection. (Ma 'Arif al-Hadith)

The wife is therefore entrusted to the man on a sacred pledge to which Allah is a party. Islam teaches that in this union the function of the woman is not only for the gratification of physical drives. On the contrary she is viewed as the most qualified partner of man in shaping the character of family and society for the realisation of the ultimate aims of human existence.

Farewell advice for men

The Holy Prophet (Sallalloho alaihi wasallam) has said: O people, your wives have a certain right over you and you have certain rights over them. Treat them well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers. (Tirmidhi)

Fair dealings and good behaviour is necessary towards everyone, but the Prophet (Sallalloho alaihi wasallam) the mercy for all mankind, emphasised it especially towards women.

Kindness to the wife, an aspect of faith

A'isha, (radhialiaho anha) reported Allah's messenger as saying, "Among the believers who show most perfect faith are those who have the best disposition, and are kindest to their families." (Tirmidhi)

Note: A'isha (radial ho anha), the Holy Prophet's wife, is one of the most famous women in Islamic history. She was gifted with an outstanding intelligence and memory and is considered to be one of the most reliable narrators of ahadith

The Best men

Abu Huraira (radhialiaho anho) reported Allah's messenger as saying, "The believers who show the most perfect faith are those who have the best disposition and the best of you are those who are best to their wives " (Tirmidhi)

Behaving with women emphasised

For the benefit of the believers who love and follow him, the Prophet Sallalloho alaihi wasallam) cited his own example to make these instructions more effective, he remarked:

**The best of you is he who is best to his family, and I am the best among you to my family.
[Tirmidhi]**

Easy entry in paradise

Umm Salma (radhiallahohunha) reported Allah's messenger as saying, "Any woman who dies when her husband is pleased with her will enter Paradise." [Tirmidhi]

should the husband be displeased with his wife without any fault of hers, she will of course be innocent in Allah's sight and the responsibility for annoyance shall rest with the husband.

Spending for wife's comfort

It is narrated by Abu-Darda (radhiallahohunho) that the Prophet (sallallahohunalaihi wasallam) instructed me: "Spend as much as possible upon your family. . . " (Kanz)

This is indeed a source of encouragement to spend for the comfort of women. The husband is also under an obligation to maintain his wife irrespective of whether she is rich or poor .

Those who are not generous with their wives should take heed of this advice.

Reward of everyday chores

The Prophet (sallallahohunalaihi wasallam) has said; "Homemaking (Allah-willing) raises the station of a woman to the level of those who make Jihad " (Kanz)

Jihad means striving the utmost in Allah's Path. Such a striving has many forms. Outwardly, this refers to the defense of the oppressed. Allah, Most Merciful, has revealed in the Holy Quran:

"Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! Allah loveth not aggressors" (Quran 2:190).

"If it were not because Allah repels some men by means of others, cloisters, churches, synagogues and mosques where Allah's name is mentioned frequently would have been demolished" (Quran 22:40).

"Why should you not fight for Allah's sake and of the oppressed men and of the women and the children who are crying: Our Lord! Lead us out of this town whose people are oppressors! Grant us a patron from Your Presence and grant us a defender from Your Presence" (Quran 4:75).

Efforts to restrain the nafs (the vain desires of the lower soul) has been called the greatest Jihad. The Holy Prophet (sallallahohunalaihi wasallam) explained this mode of striving when

returning from an expedition: "We are returning from the lesser Jihad (against our outward enemies), to the greater Jihad (against the nafs -the vain desires of the lower soul))"

Just as the foremost role of man within the context of his family is that of a provider, that of a woman in normal circumstances is the nurturing and management of domestic affairs. Despite this division of responsibilities being consistent with nature and optimal for maintaining the structure of a harmonious and organised society, Allah in His infinite mercy has blessed men and women with rewards for carrying out their respective primary roles.

Although this exceedingly great reward is a tremendous favour, the wife is at liberty to forego it and is fully entitled to ask the husband to arrange for domestic help. The wife's maintenance is not in lieu of any household services. Thus according to Shariah, housework or attending on the husband and children cannot be imposed on the wife as her religious obligation. On the other hand, remedial disciplinary recourse exists within the legal framework of Islam against husbands who deliberately abandon their primary responsibilities to the detriment of their wives.

Sharing domestic work with the wife.

The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) has said; "Helping wives (in their domestic work) earns (men) the reward of charity." (Kanz)

Narrated Al-Aswad (radhiyallahu anho): I asked A'isha (radhiyallahu anha), "What did the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) do at home? " She said, "He used to work for his family and when he heard the call for the prayer, he would go out." (Sahih al-Bukhari)

This demonstrates the great inducement to care for women by sharing their domestic chores.

Paradise welcomes the wife

Anas (radhiyallahu anho) reported Allah's messenger as saying, "When a woman observes the five times of prayer, fasts during Ramadan, preserves her chastity and obeys her husband, she may enter by any of the gates of paradise she wishes (in other words nothing will prevent her from entering paradise)." (Mishtat)

Thus if women are mindful of the compulsory injunctions of religion, there is no need for them to toil hard in performing strenuous acts of worship. By doing just the above they merit the same lofty ranks as awarded to men who perform demanding forms of worship. This is indeed one of the innumerable favours of Allah.

Allah's creation prays for the wife

The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) has said: "The birds in flight, the fish in the rivers, the angels in heaven and the animals in the jungles seek repentance for the woman who is obedient and submits to her husband."

It is worth considering that merely upon doing the above women earn this great reward. It is to be noted that if there are any sins in one's account, those are forgiven by repentance and subsequent repentance causes elevation of one's grade in paradise.

Obedience towards the husband is not unqualified. The scope of obedience extends to those matters which are classified as the rights of the husband. Another rule is that the husband or anyone else cannot be obeyed if the act required amounts to disobedience of Allah.

None can be obeyed in acts of transgression to Allah.

Wives to enter paradise before men

The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) has said: "O women, the pious among you will enter Paradise before pious men. When the husbands will enter Paradise these women will be presented to their husbands after being bathed and perfumed. These women will be on red and yellow coloured conveyances accompanied by children (as beautiful) as scattered pearls."

A great saint has remarked: "O Ladies! What other superiority do you want? You will enter Paradise prior to men. Of course, being pious is a necessary condition, and this is not difficult.

Allah's special mercy on the wife

The Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) has said: "May Allah show mercy to a woman who gets up during the night and prays, who wakens her husband and he prays, but if he refuses, sprinkles water on his face."

Reward for martyrdom

The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) also said in the above detailed hadith: "The woman who dies during pregnancy gets the status of a martyr. . . "

Rewards beyond imagination

Addressing Salamah (radhiyallahu anha), the nurse of his son Ibrahim (radhiyallahu anho), the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said, "Does it not please any one of you that if she

conceives by her husband and he is satisfied with her that she receives the reward of fasting and vigil for Allah's sake. And none of the dwellers of Heaven or Earth know about the coolness of her eyes (a unique repose) she will get for the labor pains she suffered. When she delivers, not mouthful of milk flows from her and not an instance of the child's suck, but that she receives for every suck and mouthful, the reward of a good deed. If she is kept awake by her child during the night she receives the reward of freeing seventy slaves for the sake of Allah."

The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) then said: "O Sallamah do you know which women are being referred to? Those who despite piety and enjoying a respectable position obey their husbands and do not belittle them." (Al-Tabarani)

Reward through husband's earnings

The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said: "When a woman spends (in the Path of Allah) from her husband's wealth, not wasting it (but spends reasonably and within permissible limits) she will have her reward for what she gave and her husband will have his for what he earned. The same applies to the storekeeper. The reward of any of these persons does not diminish the rewards of the others." (Bukhari)

In the life of this world, the title or ownership of wealth is outwardly assigned to human beings through apparent means such as earnings or inheritance, due to the necessity of organising the affairs of an orderly society. However all human beings are on an equal footing in terms of real ownership of possessions, in view of the fact that it is not man but Allah Who is the Absolute Owner. The husband, the wife, and even an employee who arranges for the charity payment to be made, are all rewarded due to their respective roles in facilitating the giving of charity and not on account of their temporary ownership of what was donated. This saying of the Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) is a source of profound reassurance for ladies not to fear that giving charity without having personally earned the money carries no reward.

Reward for pilgrimage

Narrated A'isha (radhiyallahu anha), the mother of the faithful believers: I requested the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) to permit me to participate in Jihad, but he said, "Your Jihad is the performance of Hajj." (Bukhari)

Note: Hajj: The pilgrimage to the Kabah is obligatory on Muslims (The first House of Allah founded on earth for His worship in Makkah), once in a lifetime, provided one has the means to undertake the tourney.

According to another narration, the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) remarked, "The (best) Jihad (for women) is (the performance) of Hajj." (Bukhari)

Jihad is the most difficult form of worship and women merit its reward by just performing Hajj which is very easy compared to Jihad. It is to be noted that there were many honourable Muslim ladies who participated in the early Jihads. The above ahadith refer to those circumstances in which Jihad is Fard-i-Kifaya (an obligatory duty which if fulfilled by a part of the community, absolves the rest).

Reward earned in the safety of the home.

The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) has said: "Waging Jihad is not obligatory for women (as long as it remains Fard-e-Kifaya), nor is attending (congregational) prayers on Fridays and accompanying funerals." (Kanz)

Imagine the great reward that women earn within their homes!

Reward for the loving wife

The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) has said:: "Allah likes the woman who obeys and loves her husband and protects herself from other men." (Kanz)

The above implies that the woman should not consider it beneath her dignity to love and obey her husband.

Men counterparts of Women

The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said: "Women are twin halves of men." (Kanz)

The creation of Hawwa (Eve) from Adam (alaihis salam) is well known. Both men and women being from the same essence, their rights and obligations are also similar. Therefore even if the virtues of women had not been detailed separately, it would not have been a cause of concern, as they are automatically covered by the same rewards. Thus the virtues of good deeds earned by men are the same as those which women earn.

Leniency towards women enjoined

The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) instructed in the longer hadith: "Act kindly toward women, for a woman is created from a rib. . ." (Bukhari)

This teaches men not to demand infallibility from women. If some incompatibility of temperaments persists in the relationship, the husband should give up his obsession to change the wife's nature. Just ponder how much leniency and forbearance is enjoined by the Holy Prophet

(sallallahu alaihi wasallam) towards the lapses of women.

The Best women

Abu Huraira (radhiallaho anho) told that when Allah's messenger was asked which woman was best, he replied, "The one who fills [her husband] with joy when he sees her, obeys him when he directs and does not oppose him by displeasing him regarding her person or property." (Mishkat)

Prayer for modest women,

The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said: "May Allah have mercy on women who wear the sirwal (loose fitting lower garment)." (Kanz)

Our natural instinct of bashfulness prompts us to cover the body adequately, nonetheless the Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam), in his boundless compassion for women, prayed for those who dress modestly.

The great value of women's actions.

The Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) has said: "The vice of an immoral woman is equal to the vice of a thousand immoral men while the virtue of a pious woman is equal to the reward of worship of seventy saints." (Kanz)

What a great reward for a virtuous deed of a woman. It is indeed a great favour and a source of felicity for women.

Honourable mention of the wife.

The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) has said: "The best among your wives is the one who is chaste and loves her husband." (Kanz)

Purity and loving the husband is only natural, yet women are rewarded for it.

Verbal honour earns reward

A companion said, "O Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) I have a wife, When I meet her she says, 'Welcome my chief and the chief of my household. ' When she finds me in a sad mood she says, 'Why worry about this world when the provision for your after-life is being earned (anyway)?" ' Upon hearing this the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said; "Inform that lady that she is among the workers of Allah , and she earns the rewards of

half Jihad." (Kanz)

This is the great reward for just verbally honouring the husband.

Quality of reward with men

Asma (radhiallahohunha), reported that she approached the Prophet (sallallahohunalaihi wasallam) on behalf of women and mentioned that men have excelled women due to their participation in Friday and congregational prayers, visiting the sick, attending funeral prayers, performing the Hajj; and Umra and due to participation in Jihad. The Prophet (sallallahohunalaihi wasallam) replied: "Go and inform the women that their beautification for their husbands, discharging their rights, seeking their pleasure and obeying them is equal in reward (to the above mentioned acts) of men." (Kanz)

The great reward for nurturing

The Holy Prophet (sallallahohunalaihi wasallam) said: "From the instant of conceiving up to the delivery and nursing of the baby, the woman gets the same reward as the one who has been appointed to guard the boundaries of Islam and remains steadfast for Jihad. If she dies during this period, she gets the reward of a martyr." (Kanz)

Besides the mother's exclusive opportunity to be rewarded in the hereafter, she enjoys vast authority and status in addition to her spousal rights. In her role of motherhood she has an unquestionably privileged position in relation to her husband. The following is a very brief but exact picture of these Islamic teachings.

"We have enjoined man to respect his parents; his mother bears him in weakness upon weakness, while his weaning takes two years. Thank Me as well as your parents; unto Me is the journeying." (Quran 31:14)

Your Lord has decreed that you should worship none except Him, and (that you show) kindness to your parents. If one or both of them attain old age (while they are) with you, never say to them 'Shame!' nor scold either of them. Speak to them in a respectable fashion and lower unto them the wing of submission through mercy, and say: My Lord! Have mercy on them both as they did care for me when I was little. (Quran 17:23,24)

Worship none save Allah (only) and be good to parents and also near relatives, orphans and the needy. (Quran 2:83)

A few sayings of the Holy Prophet (sallallahohunalaihi wasallam) are also cited which enjoin kindness towards the mother:

Jahmah (radhiyallahu anho) said to the Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam), "O Messenger of Allah, I desire to go on a (military) expedition and I have come to consult you." He asked him if he had a mother, and when he replied that he had, he said: "Stay with her because Paradise lies beneath her feet." (An-Nasai)

A man asked the Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) to whom he should show kindness and he replied: "Your mother" He asked who comes next and he replied, "Your mother." He asked who comes next and he replied, "Your mother." He asked who comes next and he replied, "Your father, then your relatives in order of relationship." (Tirmizi, Abu Da'ud)

According to the learned scholars of Islam the reason for giving preference to the mother is on account of her exceptional efforts such as the difficulties of pregnancy, delivery and nurturing. Therefore she alone is blessed to deserve recompense for this in the hereafter as well as greater honour in this life.

Narrated Anas (radhiyallahu anho): A man came to the messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) and said: I longed to go on Jihad but I was not able to. He said: Is either one of your parents still alive? The man said: My mother. He said: Allah has instructed us in devotion to her, so if you do thus, you are as one who has made the Hajj, the umrah and participated in jihad." (At-Tabarani)

“Narrated Ibn 'Abbas (radhiyallahu anho): Do not leave your mother unless she gives permission or death takes her, because that is the greatest (deed) for your rewards." (Al-Kabir):

"Narrated Abdullah Ibn Amr Ibn Al-As (radhiyallahu anho) about the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) that he said: The major sins are associating anything with Allah, and rudeness to parents, and killing anyone and swearing a false oath purposefully." (Bukhari)

Narrated Abu Isa Al-Mughirah (radhiyallahu anho) that the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said: Verily, Allah forbade for you, rudeness to mothers." (Muslim)

It is to be noted that the Muslim women enjoy special privileges not only as mothers and wives but also as daughters

The Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said: "Whoever brings up two girls until they attain adulthood, he will be with me on the Day of Judgement, and so close to me as these two (adjacent) fingers of mine (and he pointed to his two fingers joined together). (Muslim)

Narrated Ibn Abbas (radhiyallahu anho): There is no Muslim, whose two daughters reach the age (of adulthood), and he is good to them as a companion, and they do not cause him to

enter Paradise." (Bukhari)]

Angels applaud women

The Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said: "Each time the baby sucks milk the nursing woman gets the reward as of giving life to a mortal and when she completes the feeding the angels pat her on the shoulders and declare that all her past sins have been forgiven." (Kanz)

Minor sins are implied in this hadith, but this too is no small favor.

Pleasant after-life assured

A'isha (radhiyallahu anha) narrates the hadith that the woman whose husband is absent and she guards herself in such a manner that she does not adorn herself, and stays home and observes the prayers regularly, will be raised as a virgin on the Day of Judgment. If her husband was a believer she will be his wife in Paradise. If he was not a believer (e.g. Allah forbid he turned a disbeliever and died in that condition), Allah will marry her to a martyr." (Kanz)

The price of leadership

A'isha (radhiyallahu anho) said that a man does not become the head of the household until he gives up the concern (out of consideration for the other members of his family) about what he wore and what food he ate to satisfy his hunger. (Kanz)

This is an admonition for those who are heedless of their family members due to their preoccupation with food and clothe

Some essential duties of husbands

Once the Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) was asked about the obligations of the husbands in relation to their wives, and he said, "You should feed her when you eat; clothe her (in a fitting manner) when you clothe yourself; neither strike her on the face, nor use impolite language (when addressing her), nor separate from her except in the house (should it become necessary)." (Mishtat)

Should there be any argument in the family, the husband is urged not to leave the home, as such a separation would cause distress and worry to the wife.

Husband forbidden to hate wife.

Abu Huraira (radhiallaho anho) reported Allah's Messenger (sallalloho alaihi wasallam) as saying; "A believing man must not hate a believing woman. If he dislikes one of her characteristics he will be pleased with another (of her good qualities)." (Mishtat)

Men should forbear any shortcomings of women in view of this teaching and the following Quranic injunction:

“Live with them in kindness; even if you dislike them, perhaps you dislike something in which Allah has placed much good. (Quran 4:19)

Patience earns Paradise.

The Prophet (sallalloho alaihi wasallam) said: "None of you will lose three children by death and accept it (as Allah's will with the intent of earning reward) without entering Paradise." (Muslim)

In the above, similar hadith, a lady enquired, "O Prophet of Allah! what if only two children die?"

Prophet (sallalloho alaihi wasallam) informed that the recompense is the same even for two.

According to another narration, a companion enquired' about the death of only one child. In this case also the Prophet (sallalloho alaihi wasallam) conveyed the glad tidings of a great reward.

The Holy Prophet (sallalloho alaihi wasallam) said in the above, longer hadith: "If a woman has a miscarriage, even the (still-born) foetus will drag its mother to Paradise provided she forbears with the intention of earning reward. . . " (Kanz)

Wife best Treasure of man

The Holy Prophet (sallalloho alaihi wasallam) said: "The best treasure is an obedient wife having a good disposition so that her husband is pleased to see her and she obeys him and when the husband is not home she protects her chastity.

Should an attitude of defiance be adopted (as opposed to that of mutual consultation) it will naturally lead to discord the family which will be ruinous for all. This hadith therefore enjoins loyalty and faithfulness with a promise of a vast reward. (Ma 'Arif al Hadith)

Pleasant attitude with the wife

A'isha (radhiallaho anha) has related that the Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) would enter the house with a pleasing disposition and a smile on his lips. (Uswa-i-Hasna)

Ibn Mastud (radhiallaho anho) said, "Mix with the people on the condition that your religion is not injured, and joke with your family." (Bukhari)

Affinity with the wife

The Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) has said: "O men. There is a reward in your affinity with the wife." (Ibn Hiban)

Tender dealings with women

During the farewell Pilgrimage the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said to the camel driver: "Anjasha, drive slowly; for you are carrying (on the camels, women, delicate like fine) glassware." (Muslim)

‘Narrated Abu Qatadah (radhiallaho anho): The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said: When I stand for prayer, I intend to prolong it, but on hearing the cries of a child, I cut it short, as I dislike to trouble the child's mother." (Bukhari)

Advice for Husband

Women's rights are duties of men

After perusing the preceding teachings of Allah and His beloved Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam), the religious minded will hopefully become happily willing to grant the rights of women. If it is still a burden for anyone's ego then it should be kept in mind that fulfilling the ordained rights is not merely for the sake of the person entitled to those rights. By discharging the rights, one is actually fulfilling his own duty.

The verse of the Holy Quran

Women have the same [rights in relation to their husbands] as are expected in all decency from them; while men have a degree over them. Allah is Powerful, Wise." [Quran 2:228]

outlines the mutual rights of spouses, and emphasises that men are under the same obligation to grant women's rights as women are to grant the rights of men.

A subtle hint in this verse is that instead of each demanding his, or her, rights, they should be mindful of their duty towards each other. This will eliminate the problem of demanding one's

rights because the rights of women are nothing but the duties ordained for men. Likewise men's rights are merely duties enjoined upon women. Thus when the respective duties are performed, the rights of each party will automatically be fulfilled.

Nowadays, the root cause of disputes is that everyone keeps his rights in focus but is heedless of his own obligations. This attitude leads to bitter quarrels among couples or other parties having mutual dealings. The above interpretation of the Quranic verse teaches the method of avoiding this sad trend by emphasising that each should make all conceivable effort to fulfil the rights of the other, while at the same time adopt leniency, flexibility and forgiveness concerning assertion of his own rights. Allah's pleasure can be earned by giving up the exacting fulfilment of one's own rights.

Wife's freedom

May thousands of blessings be upon the Holy Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam), a mercy for the worlds, and blessings also upon the true religion of Allah revealed to him. Islam has brought the world out of darkness by establishing the criterion of right and wrong and has taught respect for others. It has established justice and enjoined the rights of women and men as being duties to be performed by each. Islam has bestowed freedom and independence upon women and has also conferred upon them full ownership and authority over their lives and property, like it has upon men. No one, be he a father a grandfather can oblige a woman to marry someone against her wishes. Should she be married without her consent, the validity of such a contract becomes solely dependent upon her whole hearted acceptance, failing which it is annulled.

It is the wife's right to be provided with a suitable residence which allows her comfort and privacy. To ensure the wife's independence, the Islamic Law (Shariah) has given her the exclusive right over her home, in that none of the husband's dependants or relatives may live in the same dwelling without her willingness and consent.

Providing a separate dwelling may become mandatory even if the in-laws insist on living together. However if the parents are crippled, they may be included in the family (Durr-i Mukhtar).

Another consideration from the requirements for suitable residence is that the neighbourhood should be of virtuous people amidst whom the wife does not experience fear or loneliness

House women wherever you reside, according to your circumstances, and do not harass them in order to make life difficult for them. (Quran 65:6)

Kind and friendly treatment towards the wife's relatives is expected of the husband, so much so that her senior blood relations should also be regarded as his elders. If the wife's parents are ill or incapacitated with no one to serve them, the wife has the right to look after them as often as required even if they are disbelievers. The husband has no right to prevent her from doing so.

Asma (radhiallahohunha) said, "My mother who was a pagan, came with her father during the period of the peace pact between the Muslims and the Quraish infidels. I went to seek the advice of the Prophet (sallallahohunalaihi wasallam) saying, My mother has arrived and she is hoping (for my favour)." The Prophet (sallallahohunalaihi wasallam) said, "Yes, be good to your mother." (Good treatment implies good behaviour; helping her financially; visiting her etc.) (Bukhari)

Islam has granted both married and single women the incontestable right to retain any wealth or properties in their own names, and they have the unequivocal authority to independently carry out any transactions of acquisitions and sales concerning such holdings.

Thus no male has the authority to spend from the wealth and property of a female without her permission. Women remain fully independent and cannot be coerced in any way. Even in the event of divorce or their husband's death, women get their share of inheritance as stipulated by Islamic Law in the same way as men get their share. However, unlike men, women are not responsible for maintaining any relative, irrespective of their sound financial standing. The husband is not at liberty to help his relatives at the detriment of his own family.

Narrated Abu Huraira (radhiallahohunanho): Allah's Apostle (sallallahohunalaihi wasallam) said, "The best alms is that which you give when you are rich, and you should support your dependants first." (Bukhari)

Abu Huraira (radhiallahohunanho) reported Allah's Messenger (sallallahohunalaihi wasallam) as saying: Of the dinar (money) that you spend as a contribution in Allah's path, or to set free a slave, or as charity given to a needy, or to support your family, the one yielding the greatest reward is that which you spent on your family. (Muslim)

If the husband does not provide for his family, the wife can take of his wealth what is sufficient for her needs and the needs of her children, in a reasonable way.

The Islamic Law revealed to the Prophet, upon whom be thousands of blessings, teaches that pleasing women and spending for their welfare is a form of worship. Should the husband fail to grant her essential rights, she has the recourse of Islamic Law to secure the same or else compel him to divorce her. (The vast rights of women in matters of divorce, alimony, child custody, etc., may be seen in books of Islamic Jurisprudence)

To prevent injustice and distress, it is insufficient to fulfil rights that merely satisfy the letter of the Law. The underlying spirit of the Law is equally important. Therefore, according to Islam the social norms are an additional criterion to determine if the parties are suffering injustice. Hence Islam forbids those attitudes and dealings which inflict injury or annoyance according to the established norms of society. For example, ignoring someone in a given society might be more

painful than in another society. These matters cannot be dealt with in courts of Law, therefore they are encompassed by this provision of "social norms."

Common usage is (binding like) a condition

Removing ladies from the guardianship of men leads to chaos and is in itself a form of encroaching upon women's rights. Just as Islam has checked the cruelty and injustice of violating the rights of women, likewise it upholds that burdening them to fend for themselves and their withdrawal from the leadership of men is an infringement of their rights. Neither can the woman's delicate constitution endure this hardship nor can her management of domestic affairs and her honourable natural function of nurturing her children bear this distraction. Therefore, along with mentioning women's rights, the Quran declares that men are a degree above women, which simply alludes to their obligation of being responsible for women, as explained earlier. There are dire warning for any negligence on the part of men in fulfilling this ordained duty. Allah has warned:

You who believe, shield yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel will be men and stones. . . " (Quran 66:6)

In preceding verses, the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) was enjoined to urge his wives to do good. The above verse emphasises this as a duty for all Muslims. Men have been exhorted not to be heedless about shaping the character of their family.

When this ordinance was revealed, Umar (radhiallaho anho) mentioned, "O Messenger of Allah ! It is understandable to worry about saving oneself from Hell-fire (by avoiding sins and adhering firmly to the Divine Commandments), but how can we save our families from Hell?" Allah's Prophet responded: "This can be achieved by dissuading your family from whatever Allah has forbidden you and by enjoining the deeds which Allah has enjoined on you. Your family can thus be saved from Hell."

The Muslim jurists have explained that it is obligatory to arrange for the religious education and training of the wife and children. Men whose families are ignorant of religion will suffer the most severe punishment in the Hereafter. The following forewarning is included for those who believe in Allah as their Lord on Whom we are totally dependent, and who also believe in the compassion of His Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alaihi wasallam).

Beware, each of you is a guardian and each of you will be questioned about your wards. The man is the guardian of his family and will be answerable about every member of it. . . (Mishkat)

According to another hadith:

The one to whom Allah entrusted the responsibility of supervision but he did not perform

this duty satisfactorily, and did not impart good instructions; will not even smell the fragrance of Paradise. (Mishkat)

Guidelines for men

In carrying out the entrusted duty of supervision, men should proceed gradually and sensibly, exercising magnanimity and patience. The learned scholars should be consulted to avoid extremes, because an unbalanced attitude causes cruelty, and quarrels. Instead of producing a virtuous result, the immoderate approach results in evil and sin.

The blessed Islamic Law has also forbidden unfounded suspicion, mistrust, inquisitiveness and undue investigation. On the contrary, Islam teaches wise and subtle manners for a pleasant social life. For example, it is also from among the mannerisms of returning from a journey that the husband should convey the news about his return to his family, so that they might not be taken by surprise.

The following saying of the Prophet (sallalloho alaihi wasallam) narrated by Jabir (radhialloho anho) contains this teaching:

We were with the Prophet (sallalloho alaihi wasallam) on an expedition. When we were about to enter Madina the Prophet (sallalloho alaihi wasallam) told us to wait until later in the evening in order that the lady with unkempt hair may comb it and the woman whose husband has been away may get herself clean. (Muslim)

This teaching suggests that the wife should be informed about the return to avoid something surfacing that might be misconstrued by the returning husband, or which might arouse his suspicion. On the whole, all the sayings of the Prophet (sallalloho alaihi wasallam) emphasise the importance of women and reflect the deep concern of Islamic Law about their issues.

A note for women

When an educator performs the function of teaching, his instructions are sometimes heavy on the pupil's ego. This is a natural reaction beyond one's control. But to interpret it negatively, or positively, is within one's control. Therefore when some responsible person carries out his duty of imparting instructions for the benefit of his dependants, the latter should not feel negatively about the advice. The recipients should rather express their gratitude and pray for the teacher. Children cannot fully appreciate this due to their immaturity. But the attitude of pious ladies should be according to the teachings of religion.

Mutual rights and religion

Islam is a natural religion formulated by our Creator Who is fully knowledgeable about the ways that are compatible and beneficial for us.

Allah says in the Holy Quran:

Should He not know what He created? He is the Gracious, the Informed! (Quran 67:14)

Hence there must be inherent goodness in each Islamic teaching. But it should be understood that Divine injunctions are interrelated. The various aspects of religion are interconnected, say, like the components of a machine. If an important component is removed it will fail to perform any useful purpose, or at least its benefit will be partial. Similarly, besides having worldly ramifications, our deeds are also related to beliefs whose outcome will manifest in the life hereafter. Therefore the complete benefit of such teachings result when the religion is practised as a whole. Mutual rights can be satisfactorily fulfilled only upon adhering to the entire religion. Only then will the blessings and benefits be fully obtained. The following can help in realising this aim:

1.To acquire and correct one's beliefs. In other words, one must believe in the articles of faith and associated matters.

2.To practice the fundamentals of Islam and the good deeds taught in religion.

3.Adopt the means of achieving a firm and intimate connection with Allah . This gives rise to sincerity, conviction and certainty (yaqin), and in turn facilitates the performance of good deeds and enhances their value and reality.

Resisting unfair tendencies

When the self desires to be unfair with women by inducing the person to usurp their rights, a great struggle against this tendency is needed. This should be viewed as a trial from Allah in which it is being tested whether one follows the unfair demands of one's desires (nafs) or whether one submits to the orders of Allah and His Prophet (sallallohu alaihi wasallam) by restraining these impulses. One should think it over that if the passions of the lower soul (nafs) are followed one would suffer great loss in this world and in the hereafter, disproportionately more previous than the gain of momentary obedience to those desires.

To repel this tendency it may help to address oneself as follows: "I disobey Allah so often. What would become of me if He were to take account of my deeds while I am alive? Besides this the retribution in the hereafter will certainly befall."

Consequences of violating women's rights

The consequence of even a small unfairness concerning the rights of others is so serious that the rewards of the offender's arduous and valuable acts of worship and good deeds will be transferred to the account of the wronged.

Should his good deeds be insufficient for full compensation, the burden of the bad deeds which the oppressed might have performed will be thrust upon the account of the oppressor. It is narrated in the sayings of the Prophet (sallalloho alaihi wasallam) that the real pauper is the one who, despite having performed an abundance of good deeds, will be impoverished by his reward being snatched away due to his violation of the rights of others. This is a point of grave concern and fear. May Allah help us in overcoming the evil incitements of our lower soul.

Immediate repentance must be made, should one under the impulse of anger, ignorance or negligence become guilty of violating the physical, psychological or monetary rights of others. The offender must also have feelings of intense remorse, heartfelt shame, and make earnest supplication with humility, pledging that the blunder will not be repeated.

Duty to compensate the wife

According to Islamic law, it is imperative to make up for infringed or outstanding monetary rights. If the rights in question are such that their infraction caused some other form of physical or psychological loss (e.g. ignoring, abusing or rebuking the relatives; hurting them physically and mentally, backbiting or slandering them), then it is also necessary to apologise and somehow satisfy and please the injured. The offender should not shy away, irrespective of how much he might have to efface and humble himself to secure the apology, because forgiveness is a means of earning the pleasure of Allah and escaping His Wrath.

Sometimes one may have to apologise to the wife or one's subordinate or an employee, but this should not be viewed as a deterrent to seeking forgiveness. It is to our advantage to compensate the wronged, because, Allah forbid, if this folly is not forgiven in this world, the matter of the Hereafter is more serious.

Fulfilling the rights of human beings is a delicate issue. Any sin concerning the rights of Allah is forgiven by mere repentance, but any offence in connection with the rights of human beings can be made up only by apologising to the injured along with making true repentance. The following is an example for those who make verbal claims of piety and of emulating the Holy Prophet (sallalloho alaihi wasallam).

An eye opener

Our supreme benefactor, the beloved of Allah, is our dear Prophet (sallalloho alaihi wasallam), for whose sake the entire Universe was created, and in whose honour Allah has said:

Lo!Thou art of a tremendous nature. (Quran 68:4)

Furthermore, his companions were so sacrificing that they were willing to lay down their lives if it would remove the slightest discomfort of their beloved Prophet. Regardless of all this he was so cautious about the rights of others that despite the distress of his fatal illness, he went to the mosque where the following conversation took place.

Fazl (radhiallahohunho) reported: "I found the Holy Prophet (sallallahohunho) suffering from fever, his head bandaged, he said: "Hold my hand." I took his hand and helped him to the pulpit of his mosque. Upon his instructions I made an announcement and summoned the people. After praising Allah, the Holy Prophet (sallallahohunho) said: "The time of my parting with you is approaching, so if I have caused any injury to the skin of anyone, here is my back; he can take recompense. If there is anyone whose honour I have damaged; let him damage mine. If I owe aught to anyone, here is my property; the claimant may take it. None should say, I fear enmity and grudge of the Apostle of Allah. Harboursing rancour is neither my nature nor is it befitting for me. Know that among you, the most faithful to me is the one who has such a claim against me and then he either secures his rights or absolves me, so that I can meet my Lord cheerfully after I have been absolved. I consider it insufficient to announce this only once; I will repeat it again. "Having said this he climbed down from the pulpit. After performing Zuhr prayer, he went to the pulpit and repeated the announcement. He reiterated his previous reassurance for people not to worry about any ill will towards any claimant. He also advised that anyone who owes any right should fulfil it without the fear of being disgraced, because the shame suffered in this world is insignificant compared to the humiliation of the Hereafter. A man stood up and said; "You owe me 3 dirhams. "The Prophet (sallallahohunho) said: "I neither accuse anyone of falsehood nor ask (the claimant) to make his claim under oath, but I wish to be reminded about the nature of this debt. " The man replied. "A beggar once came to you and you instructed me to give him 3 dirhams." Upon hearing this the Prophet (sallallahohunho) instructed Fazl (radhiallahohunho) to give 3 dirhams to the claimant. Thereafter various people asked the Prophet (sallallahohunho) for his prayers and narrated their lapses to him. Umar (radhiallahohunho) objected about these people making their sins public. The Holy Prophet (sallallahohunho) instructed him to observe silence and said; "The disgrace in this world is very light compared to the ignominy of the Hereafter. " During this episode, Umar (radhiallahohunho) said something else to the audience, at which the Prophet (sallallahohunho) remarked; "Umar is with me and I am with Umar. After me the truth will be with Umar whatever he does." After this the Prophet (sallallahohunho) went to the residence of his wife A'isha (radhiallahohunha) and made a similar announcement in the assembly of women. (Shamail Tirmidhi & Khasa'il-e-nabwi)

Discarding incorrect strategies

It is important for the husband and wife to watch out for the machinations of the Devil for he might whisper in the mind of one of the two parties that the other is usurping his or her rights or is involved in such and such a sin, therefore, as a redress, one should also violate the spouse's rights or indulge in a similar sin.

This line of thinking is damaging and incorrect. Each person will be buried in his own grave and will be held accountable for his own deeds. Allah will question everyone as to how he fared in fulfilling the responsibilities delegated to him. By suppressing one's pride and making some effort one could escape a grievous torment and render the after life eternally blissful. This temporal life could also become joyous for the couple who heeds this. Even if only one of the partners follow this advice it will be beneficial at least in terms of the life to come. Allah willing, that person will experience special peace and protection from hardships and loss in an inconceivable manner. We believe that Allah's Judgment will surely come to pass. He has assured:

"....Allah will grant a way out for anyone who heeds Him, and provide for him in a manner he could never anticipate. Allah suffices for anyone who relies on Him. . . " (Quran 65:23)

The fruits of fulfilling the rights of Allah and His creation will then become evident. Our Creator has said:

We shall let anyone who acts honourably, whether it is a man or woman, provided he is a believer, live a happy life and reward them with their earnings for the finest deeds they have been doing. (Quran 16:97)

The interpreters of the Holy Quran, such as Abdullah bin Abbas (radhiallaho anho), have explained that the life indicated in the above verse refers to the life in this world. Peace and tranquillity is implied by "happy life." Only those can attain it, who are reconciled with whatever Allah has decreed, and are free of greed. It is obvious that such blissful life is granted only to those who have submitted to the true religion of Allah. Those who are rebellious to their Creator cannot be blessed with this boon. On the contrary, despite possessing innumerable means of outward comfort, their lives are miserable. Greed gives rise to such discontentment that these people remain worried about amassing wealth. Should something happen contrary to their plans, their state of shock, triggered by not reconciling with the Divine Decree, may even lead to suicide. This subject has been referred to as follows:

Anyone who fails to remember Me will have a meager living, and We shall summon him as a blind person on the Day of Resurrection. (Quran 20 :124)

Thus it is necessary to learn the mandatory aspects of Islamic teachings from someone who practices what he teaches. By practising the teachings detailed in authentic religious books one can embark upon the route to peace and tranquillity in this life and the eternal life of the hereafter.

May Allah bless us with correct understanding and help us perform good deeds

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