

# بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



## *The status of Parents and elderly in Islam*

مقام والدین و سالمندان از دیدگاه اسلام

ترتیب و تدوین: پیکار By N.S. Paikar

هدا به جوانان *Dedicated to youth*

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا (17:23) وَانْحَفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا (17:24)

***"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." (Quran 17: 23,24)***

**ترجمه:** " و پروردگارت فرمان داده است: جز او را نپرستید و به پدر و مادر نیکی کنید. هرگاه یکی از آن دو یا هر دوی آنها به پیری رسیدند کمترین اهانتی به آنها روا نداشته و بر آنها فریاد مزن و گفتار سنجیده و لطیف و بزرگووارانه به آنها بگو و بال های تواضع خویش را خاضعانه در برابر آنان فرود آر و بگو: پروردگارا! همانگونه که مرا در کودکی تربیت نمودند، مشمول رحمت شان قرار ده " (17: 23,24)

*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 ﷺ guide us in this matter. The parent-child code of behavior in Islam is unique, since rules were laid down by divine command. References to parents have been made at least 15 times in the Holy Qur'an. There are numerous traditions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ on this subject. I will first quote some of the Qur'anic verses here:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَىٰ وَهْنٍ وَفِصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنِ  
 اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ (31:14)

**"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)**

**ترجمه:** " آدمی را در باره پدر و مادرش سفارش کردیم. مادرش به او حامله شد و هر روز ناتوان تر می شد و پس از دو سال از شیرش باز گرفت. و سفارش کردیم که: مرا و پدر و مادرت را شکر گوی که سر انجام تو، نزد من است."

According to the above verse, gratitude to God and to parents go hand in hand. Gratitude to God is incomplete without showing gratitude to one's parents. Since being grateful to God 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)***

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهَا ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ (45:15)

**ترجمه:** " هر کس کار شایسته کند، به سود خود اوست؛ و هر کس مرتکب کار بدی شود، به زیان اوست. سپس همه بسوی پروردگار تان باز گردانده می شوید."

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (29:8)

***"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)***

**ترجمه:** " به آدمی سفارش کردیم که به پدر و مادر خود نیکی کند. اگر آن دو بکوشند که تو چیزی را که بدان آگاه نیستی شریک من قرار دهی، اطاعت شان مکن. بازگشت همه شما به سوی من است و شما را با کار هایی که می کرده اید آگاه میکنم."

*Some of the traditions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, 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."*

*"God's pleasure is in the pleasure of the father, and God'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, God 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, God 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 Prophet Muhammadﷺ 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 God."*

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

*Prophet Muhammadﷺ 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 God 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 God 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 Prophet Muhammadﷺ 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 God, the Quranic commandments, values, the Prophets and their teachings, and the moral code of Islam as according to the Quran and the Sunnah (teachings) of Prophet Muhammadﷺ.*

*Let us pray to God that He 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 God may be pleased with us, and may He Bless and reward us, both in this world and in the Hereafter;*

## ***Parent-Child Relationship in Islam***

### ***Rights of Parents (and Duties of children)***

*Islam recognises family as a basic social unit. Along with the husband-wife relationship the Parent-child relationship is the most important one. To maintain any social relationship both parties must have some clear-cut Rights as well as obligations. The relationships are reciprocal. Duties of one side are the Rights of the other side. So in Parent-child relationship the Rights of parents are the obligations (duties) of the children and vice versa, the Rights of children are obligations (duties) of parents. Islam clearly defines the Rights of Parents (which mean duties of children) and obligations of parents (which means Rights of children).*

*It is clear that after Allah parents are the persons who give us innumerable favors. They provide protection, food and clothing to the newly born. The mother sacrifices her comforts and sleep to provide comfort to her children. The father works hard to provide for their physical, educational and psychological (and spiritual) needs. It is a matter of common courtesy that if a person does you some favor you feel obliged to him. Verbally you say 'thank you' to him. You try to repay and compensate him for his gifts and favors. You feel a sense of gratitude towards him. So it is with Allah and with parents. Allah's favors cannot be counted or repaid except by thanking Him and obeying His orders. After Allah our parents deserve our thanks and obedience for the favors they had done us. That's why Quran lays stress on feeling grateful to parents, and doing good to them. "And your Lord has ordained that you shall*

worship none save Him and shall do your parents a good turn.” What does a ‘good turn’ mean? It includes obeying them, speaking softly, avoiding harsh words or harsh tone, giving them company when they are lonely, caring for their physical and psychological needs (especially in their old age), and praying to Allah that He may bless them and have mercy on them.

As between parents the mother has more rights than the father. The reason is apparent. Mother has borne the child’s burden during pregnancy, has undergone birth pains in delivering the baby, has sacrificed her own comforts to provide comfort to her children, has looked after them and felt worried for their well-being. That is why mother deserves our good treatment more than the father. A Tradition of the Prophet (ﷺ) tells us that a Companion asked the Prophet, “Who deserves my good treatment most?” “Your mother”, said the Prophet. “Who next?” “Your mother”. “Who next?” “Your mother”. “Who after that?” “Your father”. This means that the mother deserves three times more good treatment from her children than the father deserves. Another Tradition wants us to extend kind treatment to close relations on the mother’s side also (even to her friends). A famous Hadith (Tradition) says, “Paradise lies under the feet of the mother”. This means doing good to our mother lead us to Paradise.

As to the reward for doing good to our parents a Hadith mentions the following story: “Three persons of ancient days were once travelling in a mountaneous region. The rain, thunder and lightning made them take refuge in a cave. Mudslide made a stone block the opening to the cave. The persons were entrapped inside. When the storm stopped they tried to push back the heavy stone to get out of the cave but they could not. They wondered ‘what to do now’. At last seeing that their joint efforts also cannot move the stone they decided to pray to Allah sincerely. One of them suggested, ‘each one of us should relate one good thing he has done in his life and beg

Allah to move the stone. One said, "One night my old mother asked me to bring a cup of milk for her. During the time I milched the goat and brought it to her she had gone to sleep. I did not think it proper to disturb her. So I stood by her bedside for the whole night till she got up in the morning and then I offered her the cup of milk, O God, if this act of mine was approved by You please shift this stone." The stone slipped a little but not enough to let them get out. Similarly, the second and the third man mentioned an act of goodness and prayed to God to shift the stone. The stone slipped down and the entry to the cave opened up. So the men got out. This story shows how service to one's parents leads to blessings from God and rescue from troubles

**Now let us summarize the Rights of Parents (Duties of children):**

**(1) Right to be respected and obeyed:**

Parents have a right to be respected and obeyed by children. All parents are well wishers of children. They issue orders and instructions that are in the best interest of children (though children might think otherwise). So it is the duty of children to obey their orders and act accordingly. Some children listen to parental orders but do not act upon these or show laziness in carrying out these orders. This causes annoyance to parents. Children should remember that annoying one's parents can lead to God's wrath.

**(2) Right to scold and rebuke:**

It is instinctive obligation of parents to protect their children from physical and moral harm. If a small child puts its hand in fire it is natural urge for you to push the child back, even if the child does not want. It is in child's interest. So it is with parents. They are duty bound to protect their children in every way, physical, intellectual, moral. If the children have a temptation to do an act that is not in their long-term interest it is the duty of the parents to



keep them back from that act or behavior. To this end they may resort to advice, rebuke, scolding, even hitting them. Good children should take all this 'harshness' in their own interest. If parents scold them they should bear it calmly. No rude replies, no arguing, no explanations, no comments unless asked for. Parental advice should be listened to and acted upon, even if against children's own wishes.

### **(3) Right to be looked after.**

Parents have looked after the children for decades. So it is the duty of grown-up children to repay them by way of caring for them and looking to their physical and financial needs. A Quranic verse says: "People ask you (O Prophet) how should they spend. Say, 'whatever you spend should be spent on Allah (in good cause), on parents, near relatives, on orphans, destitutes and travelers (who fall short of money in foreign lands)".

### **(4) Right to be helped:**

As parents grow old their energies also decline. So it is the duty of children to help their parents in any household chore in which they can help. Sons can help in lifting heavy things, cleaning home, arranging things etc. Daughters can help in mother's household work—cooking, washing, cleaning, serving food etc. With good children such help should come automatically, not when asked for. Whenever you see your mother or father doing something extend a helping hand to her/him without their asking. This is what Islam expects from children.

### **(5) Right to kind words/good behaviour:**

Quran urges children to be soft-spoken towards parents and show respect and kindness in their behavior towards parents. Unfortunate as it is, the Western societies have forgotten these

lessons. Young children are rude towards parents and show disobedience. As the parents grow old they drive them out from their homes and put them in "Senior Citizens Homes". Grown up children cannot spare time to attend to the needs of old parents. The busy Western life has led to a break-up of the family unit (so much upheld in Islam). As Muslims we expect our children to adhere to Islamic values and show respect, obedience, kindness, leniency and care towards parents, especially in their old age. Children must not forget the favors and sacrifices of their parents. As good mannered persons they must feel and remain obliged towards parents and try to repay them by kind words and deeds, even with money and material needs. These are the Rights of Parents due from their children (or the Duties of Children towards parents). These Rights and obligations are not found in Islam only. Such values are to be found in all true religions. Quran mentions *Hazrat Yahya* (John the Baptist) as "kind towards his parents, not tough and disobedient". Similarly *Hazrat Isa* (Jesus) is quoted saying to his people, "God made me kind towards my mother (Mary) and did not make me tough and disobedient". *Hazrat Yousuf* (Joseph), as a royal Minister in Egypt, called his old, poor parents from their far off home and offered them seats on a high platform (he did not feel shy of behaving in a kind manner to poor parents in the presence of his officials).

## **2) Rights of Children:**

Now let us see the other side of the coin. We have mentioned that Parent-child relation is a reciprocal one. The Rights of Parents (discussed above) are the Duties of children. Now let us see what are the Rights of Children (and Duties of Parents) in Islam. These can be summarized as under:

(1) Children have the right to be fed, clothed and protected till they grow up to adulthood. It is, primarily, the duty of the father to do

*that. Mother can provide help if necessary. Protection means protection against physical as well as moral and intellectual harm. Parents are duty bound to see that the child's personality develops in all fields. So if the parents have to resort to strictness for the sake of disciplining the children and protecting them from intellectually, morally and religiously undesirable behaviour, children should not resent their strictness. Let them perform their duty as parents. Children's duty is not to protest or be rude but to listen and obey. "Their's not to question why; their's but to do and die".*

## ***(2) Right to education.***

*In Islam education is not limited to bookish knowledge but includes moral and religious training also. It means healthy all-round growth of child's personality. Parents must not only provide for children's education in schools and colleges but should also take personal interest in their studies, helping them if they can. This gives children a feeling of 'working with the parents' and encourages them in studies. Parents should sacrifice their own comfort and social activities and must spare some time to take interest in children's studies, especially when they are young. Leaving children to the mercy of teachers or tutors is not a wise policy. And of course, parents should not forget or neglect imparting religious/moral training to children. A little sacrifice on part of parents will save children from moral disasters. Effective moral training comes not from sermons, advice and precepts but from parents' personal examples of good behaviour. It is a famous Tradition of the Prophet (PBUH) that acquisition of knowledge is a must for every Muslim boy and girl. Another Hadith says, "The best of you is one who gives a good education (intellectual and moral) to his children". Another Hadith lays stress on education of daughters. The Prophet (PBUH) once said, "He who provides good upbringing to 3 daughters shall go to Paradise". A man asked, "what if one has only two daughters".*

*“He also shall go to Paradise”. Another man asked, “and what if one has only one daughter?” “He too”, replied the Prophet (PBUH).*

### ***(3) Right to love and affection:***

*Children have many psychological needs also. Small children need to be loved, caressed, kissed and hugged. The Prophet loved children greatly. He would allow his grandsons Hassan and Hussain (R.A) to ride his shoulders even during his prayers. In streets he would offer ‘salaam’ to children, play and cut jokes with them. Sometimes he would even kiss small children in the street. Once a Bedouin saw the Prophet kissing a small kid. Out of wonder he said, “I have eight children but I never kiss them”. The Prophet remarked, “What can I do if Allah has taken away love and compassion from your heart”. The Prophet would show special kindness to orphaned children. Some parents believe that being frank with children is not good from discipline point of view. This is wrong. Love and leniency can do much that fear and strictness cannot do. If leniency leads to rudeness on the part of children it should be mixed with strictness. That will tell the children that parents are basically kind but can be tough if children show rudeness and bad manners. Over-protection and over-care are undesirable. Let the child grow up as a responsible person. Only provide them guidance.*

### ***(4) Right to be well provided (materially)***

*A Hadith says, “It is better for parents to leave their children well provided (financially) than to leave them in poverty”. This means that parents should not spend all that they have on their own comforts and luxuries but must make provisions for children’s welfare after the parents die. These are brief outlines of the Rights and Duties of both parties in the Parent-child relationship. If the parents and children act according to these guidelines they can make*

*the family environment most conducive to peace and satisfaction for the parents and healthy personality growth for children.*

### ***Islamic ethical teaching on the importance of Parents:***

*1- Say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in the terms of honour, (Qurqn 17:23)*

*2- Treat Parents with honour, speak to them graciously and with humility. (hadith)*

*3- Be grateful to parents but do not obey them if they strive to make you associate things with God (Quran)*

*4- Be good to parents and everyone else you meet. (Hadith)*

*5- Disobedience of parents is a major sin. (Hadith)*

*6- One of the dearest deeds to God is being good & dutiful to parents. (Hadith)*

*7- Being dutiful to parents is one of the keys to enter Paradise (Hadith)*

### ***Summary***

*Sometimes we may take our parents for granted and overlook their importance. As Muslims we should constantly be alert to guard ourselves from sins, however, are we guarding ourselves from one of the biggest major sins? Are we honouring and respecting our parents as per their right? Or are we neglecting one of the deeds most dearest to God? Right now the choice is ours! We ask God the Most*

*High, the All-Powerful, to teach us that which will benefit us, and to benefit us by that which we learn.*

*References:* منابع و سرچشمه / ادبیات استفاده شده

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