

## Part 12

﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ﴾

*“The believers are but brethren, therefore make peace between your brethren and be careful of (your duty to) Allah that mercy may be had on you. (49: 10)”*

### Believers are like a single body

It must be understood that the above verse, ordering brotherhood of the Faithful with one another is not only for reconciliation and improvement of relations. That only if there arises a dispute, settle it. This is one of the commands. It is the demands of brotherhood that if two persons or two groups clash it is a must to make a settlement. Yet rights of one another are still more.

The meaning of brotherhood is that a Muslim must not consider another Muslim an alien or not belonging to him. It should be like when a blood related brother comes to him. How he regards him as one of his own. Likewise when a Muslim reaches or approaches another he must consider him as his own not consider him separate. Imam Sadiq is reported to have said, “A believer, for another believer, is like a single body. If one of the organs is in pain all other parts of that body are also troubled.” Similarly when a believer is in trouble all other Muslims too experience pain and restlessness. For example, if one’s tooth pains, his head also aches, his body temperature rises. When you check up you find that only one of his teeth has a trouble which resulted in pain all over the body due to fever. Likewise, it is the natural demand of unity of Muslim brotherhood that if one believer becomes restless all other Muslims must also feel the restlessness. Of course true believers are those who have the spirit of unity, who have given up lust and selfishness and have reached the state of humanity. This couplet of Shaykh Sadi explains this tradition:

All human beings are the organs of a single body as they are created from a single pearl or essence. If one of the body organs is in pain, all other physical parts also become restless.

The narrator asked the Imam, “O Master! Sometimes I get disturbed without any apparent cause for

pain.” The summary of the Imam’s reply is: Muslims have a unity among them. Another believer fell in trouble and so you become restless as an effect of unity and brotherhood. What is meant is the unity of hearts and spirits. It is the unity, agreement and brotherhood of the faithful. In order to bring this desired amity among Muslims there is a chapter of morals in Islam for strengthening this unity day by day. I hint to the first of such etiquettes.

## **Say Salam while visiting and meeting**

One of the rights of Islamic brotherhood is saluting (saying Salamun Alaikum). It is the Muslim duty to say Salam when one meets or visits another. This Salam should be before uttering any other word. The Imam says, “If someone tells you anything before saying Salam, then it is not compulsory to reply.”

There are some such persons who, for instance, ask you: Where is the house of so and so? If he said Salam first only then you should reply. But if he did not, you may not reply so that he may get a lesson in discipline. While meeting another Muslim a Muslim must begin a talk with Salam. Its reply is also compulsory. One who was first in Salam is a wiser Muslim. Even though it was a must for him and similarly it was the duty of the other to give the reply, the one who says Salam first gets a higher reward. This is an exception in the matter of rewards. The Second Martyr, in *Qawaid*, says, “Generally the reward of an obligatory matter is not less than that of a voluntary and recommended deed. But there is exception in three situations: Firstly, the one who is the first in saying Salam gets ninety percent of the reward even though saying Salam is recommended while replying to it is obligatory. One who replies gets ten percent of the reward even though beginning with Salam was not voluntary; it was only recommended.”

A question may come up here. If two persons meet one another at the same time and both say Salam simultaneously and the two Salams meet one another. What about reward proportion? It is advisable that each one should reply to the Salam because as both had the intention to be the first in saying Salam but it happened simultaneously. Since it is obligatory to reply to Salam both must to one another. In brief, the brotherhood duties in Islam start from Salam and then rise higher. All this is to ensure that the unity of the faith of Muslims and the unity of their spirit becomes stronger and perfect. It is recommended that when they meet one another they should first say Salam and then inquire about their health etc.

## **Inquiry about health etc for thanksgiving**

It is written in one of the books authored by scholars of Islamic morality that in the beginning of Islamic era, it was the habit of Muslims that when they met one another, after saying Salam, they were inquiring about their condition and were asking about their health etc so that the replier would say: Praise be to Allah (Alhamdulillah) thereby making the other party thankful to Almighty Allah. Muslim society had adopted this way of initial talks after meeting one another. But it is not the case at present. Now, when

one is asked about his condition the latter opens up a file of complaints to God and discusses adversities to such an extent that you feel sorry for asking! How strange!

## **Shake hands and hug**

Same is the case with shaking of hands, which is ordered for Muslims. One who meets his Muslim brother shakes his hands and sends Salawat. It is narrated that such manner of meeting results in dropping down of the sins of both like the falling of leaves in autumn. This of course is on condition that the handshake must accompany a smiling face. Faces should never be sulky. After the handshake, it is recommended that the two should hug or embrace one another and also kiss the forehead (place of prostration mark) of one another.

Likewise, with regard to visiting one another; it is mentioned in the tenth volume of *Wasa'il 'ush-Shia* that anyone who comes out of his house to visit his brother-in-faith without any self interest (unlike people today who go to meet one another only with a selfish motive and hence do not get any reward in the Hereafter), seventy thousand angels come to him saying, "O fortunate one! Be happy!" Remember God together with whom you are going to meet. Describe the virtues of Ahle Bait. It is mentioned in some traditions that such a meeting is like meeting Almighty God.

Tradition says: One who visits a believer at his house is like the one who visits Allah at His throne (Arsh).

The Prophet says, "O Ali! Walk (travel) even upto to six miles for meeting a servant of God for Allah's pleasure." It is recommended in the manners of meeting that, first of all, go without any selfishness. Go only to earn God's pleasure. Then sit wherever the owner of the house asks you to sit. Never long for a higher place. Accept whatever respect he gives. For example, if he puts before you a mat or a carpet, sit thereon. Do not reject any honor. Consider his trouble or hardship as your own trouble or hardship. Never make that poor person uneasy for providing ease and comfort to you, lest he becomes indebted. The best hosting is that in which whatever is available is presented.

## **Safiya hosts the Holy Prophet**

One day, the last Prophet Muhammad went to the house of Safiya who was his uncle's daughter and the wife of Ammar. This honorable lady of the Quraish, at once, brought whatever was available in her house. It was a piece of barely bread, some vinegar and a little olive oil. Only these three things were then in her house. So she brought them to the Holy Prophet, saying, "O Messenger of God! I feel ashamed. Please excuse me." The Holy Prophet replied, "What do you say? You have brought to me the food of Prophets of God and yet you are saying that it is not enough!"

Barely bread is very important and valuable as it has effects of spiritualism. It is the food of God's messengers.

As regard olive oil, the Qur'an says:

﴿ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ... ﴾

***“...lit from a blessed olive-tree, neither eastern nor western...”<sup>1</sup>***

Olive is very bountiful and having abundance. Similarly, vinegar had also been the food of prophets. One of the bad habits we have (let us hope we will give it up soon – God willing) is that we do not appreciate what is offered by the host and we consider it below our dignity. But from whom is it? From a weak servant among God’s servants. This also is a bounty of God. You know how much one has toiled in fields to get some rice. That oil is also a very great bounty of Allah. That mutton too is very valuable which you must never consider low. No bounty must ever be underestimated. Never tell the host that you have favored him. Rather say: This is the best.

## **Abu Dharr visits Salman**

Another point is that when you are a guest be careful in your speech and actions so that the host may not experience any difficulty. I tell you the story of Abu Dharr and Salman so that you may get my point better.

One day Abu Dharr became the guest of Salman. Salman had only bread and some salt in his house. So he put these things before Abu Dharr. Abu Dharr saw that onion was not there. He should not have said anything about it because had it been there Salman would surely have presented. But Abu Dharr said, “It would have been better if onion too had been there.” Salman got up. He did not have any money. Yet he took up an ewer, went to the market, pawned it and purchased some onion and put them before his guest. Abu Dharr took up a morsel of salt, onion and bread saying, “Thanks to God that we are a contented people.” Salman said, “O Friend! Had there been contentment, my ewer would not have been pawned.”

So do not ask a thing, which can put the host to trouble. The guest must hold himself content to the liking of the host. If he is likely to displease the host he should get up early. The aim of all these manners is to join the hearts. A thing, which can create ill will must be avoided. Such early rising up has especially been recommended in certain occasions, especially while visiting an ill person. An ill person has no strength enough to hear your talks. It can also so happen that the patient desires solitude. He desires to be alone on certain occasions, for instance, taking medicine, purgation etc. It is all right, however, to sit longer in case the patient likes or desires it. You should not go on introducing yourself to him. The real purpose of this visit is to benefit the patient and to please him.

Another manner of visit is that when you sit beside one in a meeting you should ask his name, addressing him with the best words. Then, do not look here and there in the house you visit. You have come to visit for God’s sake. What have you to do with the way of his living and his personal conditions? Woe unto you if you look at his wife or his daughter. In such a situation, it would have been better had

you not visited him.

## **Blind in the house of the host**

It is written in the events of Rabeeah bin Hazeem that he was a friend of Ibn Masood. For some years, he was visiting Ibn Masood daily, who was a reciter of Qur'an and a scholar of Islamic laws so as to benefit from his knowledge. When he did not visit him for some days, Ibn Masood's wife inquired and asked her husband, "Why your blind friend has not come for so many days?" Ibn Masood replied, "I do not have any blind friend." She said, "Why? That gentleman who used to see you almost every day! What about him?" Ibn Masood said, "He is not blind at all." The woman said, "Whenever I saw him his eyes appeared to be closed. I thought he was blind."

Let us be sacrificed over a gentleman who, when he enters someone's house, he never indulges in any interference, does not look through this door or that window, never looks at any woman or daughter. I seek refuge of Allah – such bad behavior makes life upside down. In short, one must always remain careful and control oneself. All such meetings and visits of the faithful are aimed at strengthening and furthering friendship in faith and mutual sincere love for the pleasure of Allah. It is not for fanning passions and lusts. Islamic visits and revisits are only for pleasing God. Visiting a patient and attending a funeral is also for this purpose.

## **Manners for attending meetings**

Among the manners and etiquettes of brotherhood and rights of brother-in-faith, it is necessary that when a brother is speaking, you must not interrupt him. It is ordered that you should listen to him patiently and reply only if necessary after he finishes what he is saying. Another point is that never say anything, which can make your friend angry. If, God forbid, your friend in faith becomes angry you should try your best to calm him. It is mentioned in a narration that you must calm him by making an excuse in any way so that the meeting may end nicely.

One more point is that if you have to sit in a meeting with the faithful, you have no right to tell others what you saw in him. Here is a story of magnanimity.

## **He deafens himself for lifetime**

It is written in the events of Shaykh Hatim Asamm that He was a scholar and a judge in the court of Khorasan. A respectable lady of Khorasan once sent a word to this judge that: I want to say something to you in private concerning a case. She took an appointment with the Shaykh went inside his room and began to talk about her case. During this talk, wind passed off her involuntarily. Naturally, a lady who has self-respect and is honorable in society becomes extremely ashamed and that too before of a judge of the town.

The judge said, “Do you not know that my ears have become hard for hearing for quite some time? I do not follow what you are saying. So please speak somewhat loudly so that I can hear what you are saying.” The lady felt happy to know that the Shaykh was deaf and he could not hear that which could have disgraced her. She asked, “Sir, from when have you been afflicted by this trouble?” The Qazi said, “Do you not know it? For quite some time, and I could not hear anything of what you are saying now. Please therefore speak out loudly what you have to say.” Thus not only at that time but also for a long time thereafter the Shaykh presented himself as one who did not hear clearly. He came to be known as Hatim the Deaf (Asamm). It is written that he was not really deaf but had pretended to be thus, so as not to put a lady to shame.

The summary is that you should not reveal anyone’s secret. Do not spread whatever you saw in somebody. The Holy Prophet has said, “Gatherings are trusts.” So much so that it is ordered that even if a body washer sees any defect in any dead person he must not reveal it to others. Such orders are for protecting brotherhood. **Indeed the believers are brothers.** The faithful are eyes and ears of one another. So it should be up to this level of goodwill and well wishing for one another. If a Muslim raises a complaint, it is obligatory on all other Muslims to reach him to help him, whoever or whatever he or she may be. It is said, “If any Muslim cried, ‘O Muslims! Please help me’, then the one who does not go forth to help him is out of Islam.”

## [Faithful jinn comes to help faithful men](#)

This story is written in *Usul al-Kafi*. Some Muslims were traveling in a forest (perhaps in Africa). It was burning hot. All had become extremely weak due to thirst. Everyone had understood that he will be dead soon. Suddenly a man clothed in white came up to them and shouted, “Please get up and drink this water.” When they raised their heads they saw this white clad person with a vessel of water. All drank from it and got back to life and asked that person who he was? O servant of God! Who are you? You have come up to help us so kindly in this red-hot desert! Had you not helped us we were almost dead. We got back our lives. He replied, “I am one of the Muslim jinns. Like humans the jinns also have faithful persons and faithless fellows among them.

There are mischief-makers as well as sympathetic jinns. I myself am one of the Muslims and I myself have heard the Holy prophet saying, “A Muslim is the brother of another Muslim”, and that a Muslim should never leave another Muslim without helping him and that he should not be dishonest towards his Muslim brother. I saw that my brothers in faith were in trouble. So I brought water for you.” Then the jinn disappeared.

What I mean to say is that even Jinns have followed and believed in the brotherhood of faith and they act according to this principle, but what about the human Muslims. Should you not remember: The believers are but brethren? Should you not act accordingly and help your Muslim brother? If a troubled Muslim brother comes to you, you must help him with all the power at your disposal and remove his

hardship for the sake of God, for His pleasure.

Now just listen to this good tiding.

## Helping a believer equals ten rounds of Ka'ba

Both Imam Baqir and Imam Sadiq are quoted in *Biharul Anwar*, vol. 16 that they first, pointed towards the Holy Ka'ba and said, "Whoever circles it (does Tawaf) seven times gets the reward of six thousand good deeds and six thousand sins drop down from his scroll of deeds and he gets six thousand rank promotions," and then they said with regard to this tradition: "Anyone who fulfills the need of his brother-in-faith gets the reward of Tawaf and Tawaf and Tawaf...(and he went on counting till ten)."

Of course, this is in proportion to the need which has been met with and that what was the need and for whom and from whom.

Once Imam Hasan was in Etekaaf (worship seclusion in mosque during the last ten days of Ramadhan) and it is known that during an Etekaaf, one should not get out of the Mosque as far as possible. One of the Shias came up and said, "I am indebted and one to whom I am indebted is not prepared to give me any respite. Please help me." The Imam said (summary of the story): I am really not in a position to meet your need (Whatever I have is not sufficient for your purpose).

The man said, "Then please make a recommendation and get some respite for me." The Imam got up, took up his shoes and came out of the mosque. One of his companions came up to him and asked, "O Master! Where are you proceeding, O son of the Holy Prophet!" The Imam replied, "I intend to stand a surety for this indebted man." The companion said, "But, O Master! You are in Etekaaf!" The Imam replied, "I have heard from my father, Amirul Momineen, that the Holy Prophet said, 'One who fulfills any need of his brother-in-faith gets the reward of a Hajj, an Umrah and Etekaaf of two months.'" Then he went out, fulfilled the need of that believer brother and returned to continue his Etekaaf.

O Muslims! Fulfill the needs of your Muslim brothers to the best of your ability. A man comes to you. This believer brother of yours wants you to help him in the matter of money, honor or loan. Consider any kind of help a valuable occasion for yourself. How lucky is the man whose hand does a good deed and the trouble of a believer is removed. Win the heart of a believer. Make you believer brother happy. When such a helping believer comes out of his grave, he sees that an extremely beautiful person has come up to him saying, "Come up." The believer comes out of his grave without any fear and fright. Then that handsome personality leads this believer on the Sirat bridge right upto Paradise. When he intends to depart the believer asks, "O God's servant! Who are you? Where is Sirat (bridge over hell) and Grand Gathering (Mahshar)?" The bright face replies, "We have crossed both." The believer becomes highly astonished and asks, "Your company had made me so glad and happy that I did not have any fear. Who are you?"

The companion replies, "I am the same happiness, which you gave to such and such believer at such

and such time. You won the heart of that helpless person. You repaid the debt of that weak person. You pleased a believer!”

## **Equality with a Believer**

There are so many narrations regarding mutual help in the book *Al Ashrah al Wasail* that I say with wonder: O God! For whom are all these orders and rules? It is obligatory for us to tell them to one another and also it is a must for us all to act accordingly. All these narrations are for being acted upon. They are divided into chapters; like chapter of brotherhood and rights of brotherhood and then there is the chapter of equality. This equality or mutual help is one of the conditions of brotherhood. It means, if you want to ascertain whether one is worthy of brotherhood or not, then see if he has equality or not?

## **Muhammad and Ali like the two brothers Musa and Haroon**

It is necessary for me first to take up the matter of virtues of my master, Ali, the Victorious Lion of Allah and it is brotherhood of the Holy Prophet with Ali. That is, establishing of brotherhood by the Holy Prophet. It mentioned in a large number of narrations of both Sunnis and Shias. The Prophet made Ali his brother by selecting him for himself. This is in addition to the general command of, “The believers are but brethren”. It is indeed a wonderful narration. Muhammad wants to establish Islamic brotherhood. All know what kind of selection Muhammad has. What an important selection! For example, he established this sort of brotherhood between Abu Bakr and Umar, Talha and Zubair, Abdur Rahman bin Awf and Uthman, Salman and Abu Dharr and between Miqdad and Ammar. This brotherhood was so wide that, for instance, if one of such two brothers goes to war front in jihad, the other who does not go should take care of the household requirements of the former. In short, the Holy Prophet made pairs of such brothers among the Muslims. The only one for whom he did not mention a brother was Ali bin Abi Talib.

Now, according to both Shia and Sunni narrations, Ali became gloomy. He said, “O Prophet of Allah! What has happened? You fixed brothers for everybody but not for me!” The Holy Prophet replied, “I have reserved you for myself.” Then the Prophet went up the pulpit and declared, “O people! This man is my brother. O Umar! Your brother is Abu Bakr. O Uthman! Your brother is Abdur Rahman. But as for Ali, his brother is Muhammad: You are my friend and helper. You are my brother. You are my flesh and blood. You are my inheritor...”

Sometimes Ali himself lamented and said, “O Muslims! Who among you was the one whom the Holy Prophet made his brother except me?” That is, O unjust ones! O those who went forth and brought others ahead of me! What ruthlessness and what perversity!

## **Making brothers is a recommended deed**

It is from this matter of making brothers by the Holy Prophet that the Islamic jurists and scholars

have derived that it is a recommended deed to make such brotherhood with one or two or more Muslims. So it is mentioned in the narrations of Ahle Bait that it is desirable that a believer should find out a brother-in-faith for such brotherhood. So see who among the believers is more suitable for such brotherhood and give hand in his hand so that he may be your brother and helper, not only till the time of death but also right upto Paradise. Such brother forever has no selfishness, passion, lust or greed to weaken the bond of fraternity. Such brotherhood is not possible where there is self-interest. With such selfishness the claim of brotherhood is false. Anything against ones wishes ends this brotherhood.

Eternal spiritual fraternity requires that there must not be any selfishness and passion. Egotism destroys brotherhood. My comfort, my rest, my pleasure my taste, my entertainment; it takes one away from real friendship. Faithful friendship demands that 'I' and 'my' should become 'We' and 'Our'. One must become a lowly servant having humility, who sacrifices himself for other good persons among his brothers. Only such behavior fulfills the covenant of spiritual brotherhood.

This is why, the Imam in a narration, points out two signs for such persons.<sup>2</sup> If these two signs are present the brotherhood will last. One when the time for prayer arrives, he sets aside all other affairs and proceeds to pray. Another sign of a faithful and reliable friend is that he helps his brothers in faith both in ease as well as in hardship.

In other narrations, it is also mentioned that a faithful friend not only ever gives trouble to others for his comfort but he also distributes his own comfort to his friend who does not have it. So much so that if one has two wives and his friend has none, he divorces one of his two wives and gives her away to his friend in marriage.

If he has two houses he gives one to his friend for the sake of equality. If he has only one servant, and if his friend has none, the former asks his servant to give some hours' service to his friend. Not only monetary help but there is sacrifice of life also in a real spiritual brotherhood.

وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّءُوا الدَّارَ وَالْإِيمَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّونَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ، وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِمَّا أُوتُوا، وَيُؤْتُونَ  
عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ، وَمَنْ يُوقِ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٣﴾

***“And those who made their abode in the city and in the faith before them love those who have fled those who were driven from to them, and do not find in their hearts a need of what they are given, and prefer (them) before themselves though poverty may afflict them, and whoever is preserved from the niggardliness of his soul, these it is that are the successful ones.”<sup>3</sup>***

I am afraid if I explain this fully you may say this is strange and that now man is without a friend. I tell you a story of self-sacrifice for brotherhood in Islam.

## Example on self-sacrifice

It is mentioned in *Tafsir Majma-ul-Bayaan* that once someone brought a gift for the Holy Prophet. The Prophet gave it to one of his neighbors. The latter too had a neighbor. So he gave it to his neighbor, as he was poorer than himself. Thus the gift went over to seven houses and, at last, came back to the Holy Prophet. How wonderful!

In this Tafsir it is also mentioned that Hisham said, "During the battle of Uhad, I went to see my cousin. When I saw him I found that he was breathing his last. I knew from his dry lips that he was extremely thirsty and was unable even to speak. So I brought some water. When I tried to drop that water in his mouth, he closed his lips tightly and pointed towards another wounded brother-in-faith near him. When I went to the other person I found he also was about to die of thirst. I tried to drop some water in his mouth but he also closed his lips and pointed towards a third wounded warrior.

When I reached the third man I found that he had already died. So I returned to the second gentleman and I saw that he also was no more. Then I turned towards my cousin who also had already met his Lord. So I returned with the pot of water." Now what Almighty God will give to such selfless Muslims? And what about those who snatch things from one another? But a true believer sacrifices his own life so that the life of his brother-in-faith may remain safe. The one who observes the rights of others gives benefit only to himself. Helping others is, in truth, helping oneself.

[1.](#) Surah Nur 24:35

[2.](#) Safinatul Bihar, vol. 2, pg. 44

[3.](#) Surah Hashr 59:9

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