

Rights of Parents and Sons

Rights of Parents

It is absolutely impossible for any writer to depict the parents' grandeur and favors on their sons, since they are the supports of merits and success. Parents have done their best and suffered a variety of difficulties for sake of supervising their sons. Mothers, for instance, have suffered the burdens of pregnancy, giving birth, suckling, and the troubles of education. Fathers, on the other hand, have stood the hurdles of seeking earnings for sake of saving the means of good livelihood for their sons.

They have also engaged themselves in the troubles of educating and bringing up sons and preparing comfortable lives. Suffering all these difficulties, parents have been feeling happy, without expecting praise or reward from their sons. Out of their abundant love for their sons, parents have worked diligently for making them precede others in fields of virtue so that they will be the objects of admiration. This nature is in violation of man's tempers. From this cause, parents' favors are regarded as the greatest after God's, and their rights against their sons are very considerable.

Filial Piety

It is binding on noble sons to appreciate their parents' favors by rewarding them with the most deserved form of loyalty, reverence, respect, piety, good turn, nice treatment, and suitable honoring:

“(Concerning his parents), We advised the man, whose mother bears him with great pain and breast-feeds him for two years, to give thanks to Me first and then to them, to Me all things proceed. If they try to force you to consider things equal to Me, which you cannot justify, equal to Me, do not obey them. Maintain lawful relations with them in this world and follow the path of those who turn in repentance to Me. To Me you will all return and I shall tell you all that you have done. (31: 14-5)”

“Your Lord has ordained that you must not worship anything other than Him and that you must be kind to your parents. If either or both of your parents should become advanced in age, do not

express to them words which show your slightest disappointment. Never yell at them but always speak to them with kindness. Be humble and merciful towards them and say, "Lord, have mercy upon them as they cherished me in my childhood." (17:23-4)"

The two aforementioned Quranic texts have expressed the parents' favoring and lofty standing and the necessity of rewarding them by means of many thanks and treating them with suitable piety and kindness. In the first Verse, God, after thanking Him, orders to show gratitude to them, and in the second Verse, He attaches kindness to them to worshipping Him. This is in fact the highest degree of endearment and honoring.

The Prophet (S) said to the man who asked him for advice: "Do not associate anything with Allah (in worship) even if you are burnt with fire and tortured unless your heart is full of faith. You should, too, obey your parents whether they are alive or dead, even if they order you to leave your family and your property. This is surely a part of faith¹."

"If you are pious (to parents), Paradise will be your share. If you are impious (to them), Hell will be your share²."

"Sons' looking at their parents, out of love for them, is a sort of worship³."

Imam al-Baqir (a) said: "Allah does not give permission in three things: keeping the trust of both the pious and the sinful, fulfilling the pledge that is given to both the pious and the sinful, and treating parents kindly whether they are pious or sinful⁴."

Imam as-Sadiq (a) said: "He who desires that Allah will save him from agonies of death must regard his relatives and treat his parents obediently. Allah will surely save him who carries such traits from suffering the agonies of death and will also save him from harshness of poverty as long as he is alive⁵."

Imam as-Sadiq (a) narrated that one of the Prophet's foster sisters visited him. He received her so warmly, laid his personal quilt, asked her to sit on it, and went on facing her and smiling in her face. When she left, her brother came. The Prophet (S) did not treat him as same as his sister. When the man left, the attendants asked him why he had treated the woman so warmly, but had not done the same with her brother. He answered: "She was more obedient to her parents than he was⁶."

Since mothers exert giant efforts and suffer insensitive ordeals for sake of their sons, the Islamic Sharia has conferred upon them with greater deal of obligatory care and piety:

Imam as-Sadiq (a) narrated that, once, a man asked the Prophet (S), 'whom must I treat piously first, God's Messenger?' The Prophet (S) answered, 'you must first treat your mother piously.' 'Then?' asked the man. 'Your mother,' answered the Prophet (S). 'Then?' asked the man. 'Your mother,' answered the Prophet (S). 'Then?' asked the man. 'Your mother,' answered the Prophet (S). 'Then?' asked the man. 'Then comes your father,' answered the Prophet (S).

Ibrahim bin Muhazzim narrated:

After I had left Imam as-Sadiq, one night, I came to my house in Medina and quarreled with my mother who was living with me. The next morning, I visited him after I had offered the Fajr Prayer. He addressed to me, before I said anything, “Abu Muhazzim, what was your matter with Khalida? Last night, you addressed bad words to her. You should have known that her womb was the abode in which you resided, her lap was the cradle in which you slept, and her breast was the bowl from which you drank.”

“Yes,” I answered, “I have known all these.”

“Then,” said the Imam (a), “You should not be coarse with her any more.”

Imam as-Sajjad (a) said in his Treatise of Rights:

“The right of your mother is that you know that she carried you where no one carries anyone, she gave to you the fruit of her heart that which no one gives to anyone, and she protected you with her hearing, sight, hand, leg, hair, and skin as well as all her organs. She was highly delighted, happy, eager, and enduring the harm, pains, heaviness, and grief until the hand of power saved her from you and took you out to this earth. She did not care if she went hungry as long as you ate, if she was naked as long as you were clothed, if she was thirsty as long as you drank, if she was in the sun as long as you were in the shade, if she was miserable as long as you were happy, and if she was deprived of sleeping as long as you were resting. Her abdomen was your container, her lap your seat, her breast your container of drink, and her soul was your fort. She protected you from heat and cold. You should thank her for all that. You will not be able to show her gratitude unless through Allah’s help and giving success.”

Filial piety becomes nicer and more influential when it is done to the aged parents who are in exigent need for affection:

“If either or both of your parents should become advanced in age, do not express to them words which show your slightest disappointment such as ‘ugh’-. Never yell at them but always speak to them with kindness. Be humble and merciful towards them and say, “Lord, have mercy upon them as they cherished me in my childhood.” (17:24)”

It is related that a man asked the Prophet (S), “God’s Messenger, I am treating my aged parents as same as their treatment to me when I was child. Have I now performed their rights that are imposed upon me?” The Prophet (S) answered: “No, you have not, because, when they treated you kindly during your childhood, they wanted you to live. But, now, while you are treating them kindly, you wish they would die⁷.”

Ibrahim Ibn Shuaib narrated: I told Imam as-Sadiq (a) that I used to carry my aged and weak father when he wanted to relieve nature. The Imam commented: “If you can do more than this, you must do it. You should feed him bit by bit, because he will guard you (from Hell) in the morrow⁸.”

Filial piety is not restricted to the living parents. It becomes more necessary for the dead parents, because they are in need for piety more than the alive do.

The Prophet (S) said: “On the Day of Resurrection, a man who treats his parents piously after their departure of life will be regarded as the chief of the pious⁹.”

Imam al-Baqir (a) said: “A servant who is pious to his parents during their lifetimes may be, later on, decided as impious. This may occur when such a servant neglects settling the debts of their dead parents and neglects seeking Allah’s forgiveness for them. Likewise, a servant who is impious to his parents during their lifetimes may be decided as pious. This occurs when such a servant settles the debts of their parents, after their death, and seeks Allah’s forgiveness for them¹⁰.”

Imam as-Sadiq said: “Nothing of the rewarding follows the dead except three: a continuous alms that was dedicated during lifetime, an instruction of right guidance that is followed by others, and a righteous son who supplicates to Allah for him¹¹.”

Filial Impiety

Ingratitude and bad turn are ill manners denied by reason and law and disapproved by sound conscience. Through this criterion, we can feel the hideousness and horribleness of filial impiety, which is a crime taking to Hell. In addition to its being in violation of human principles, reason, and law, filial impiety is an indication to emotionlessness, faithlessness, and fading of human values. Parents exert giant efforts for educating and securing every means that achieves material and mental prosperity for sons who, whatever they do, cannot appreciate their endeavors. How is it then possible for sons to neglect such emotions and repay with mistreatment and impiety?

The Prophet (S) said: “The punishment for three sins are immediate and not postponed to the Hereafter: filial impiety, oppression against people, and ingratitude¹².”

Imam al-Baqir (a) said: “My father, once, saw a man leaning to his father’s arm while they were walking. Out of his detestation of this scene, my father did not speak to him forever¹³.”

Imam as-Sadiq (a) said: “If Allah had known something more trivial than ‘ugh¹⁴’, He would have used it in warning against filial impiety. To look at parents sharply is a sort of impiety to them.”

Disadvantages of Filial Impiety

Serious disadvantages are expected from filial impiety. One of these is that the impious son will unavoidably be the subject of his sons’ impiety.

Al-Asmaee conveyed the following story from a Beduin: I, once, decided to wander in the quarters searching for the most pious of people and the most impious (to his parents).

One day, I passed by an old man in whose neck there was a rope, and he was trying to pull a bucket from a well, while it was so hot that even camels were trying to find shadows to sit in. Furthermore, a young man with a rope as thick as a strap in the hand was beating that old man on the back so cruelly. Astonished by such a scene, I shouted at the young, "Do you not fear God when you treat this weak old man so cruelly? The rope that is in his neck is a sufficient suffering for him, why do you then add to it the suffering of your beating?"

The young man answered: "What is more is that this man is my father!"

I replied: "God may show you no goodness for this!"

He said: "Keep silent! He used to do the same thing that you see to his father. Likewise, his father used to do the same thing to his father, and so on."

I said to myself: "This is unquestionably the most impious to his parents," and went on wandering.

One day, I saw a young man hanging a frail to his neck, and saw in that frail an old man who was as small as a young bird. That young man used to take down that old man from time to time and feed him like birds. I asked the young man: "What is this?"

He answered: "He is my father. As he became senile, I am taking care of him."

Hence, I said to myself, "This is surely the most pious to his parents."

One of the disadvantages of filial impiety is that the impious individuals live in incessant unhappiness and discomfort because their parents curse them.

The Prophet (S) said: "Beware of fathers' imprecations, for they are sharper than swords."

The impious, also, will certainly suffer horrible agonies of death.

Imam as-Sadiq (a) narrated: One day, the Prophet (S) attended before a young man who was suffering death struggles. He tried severally to instruct him to say 'la ilaha illa (a)llah there is no god but Allah', but the man became tongue-tied.

The Prophet (S) asked the lady who was standing nearer to him: "Is this man's mother present?"

She answered: "Yes, it is I."

The Prophet (S) asked: "Are you dissatisfied with him?"

She answered: "Yes, I am. I have not talked to him for six years."

The Prophet (S) then asked her to be pleased with him.

She answered: “As long as the Messenger of God is pleased with him, I am pleased, too.”

Then, the Prophet (S) instructed the dying man to say ‘la ilaha illa (a)llah’, and, finally, he could speak it.

The Prophet (S) asked him: “What is before you, now?”

The dying man said: “I now can see an ugly black man with dirty clothes and bad smell. He is prevailing over me.”

The Prophet (S) instructed: “Say: O You Who accepts the few and pardons the much, accept my few (deed) and pardon my very much (evildoing). You are surely the All-forgiving the All-merciful¹⁵.”

The young man said it.

Then the Prophet (S) asked: “Now, what do you see?”

The man said: “I now can see a white, pretty, sweet-smelling man come to me, while the black one left.”

The Prophet (S) ordered him to repeat reciting the previous supplication, and the man did.

The Prophet (S) then asked him what he could see. The man answered: “I can see only the white man coming to me.”

Few moments later, the man departed life¹⁶.”

Filial impiety is a grand sin for which God threatens hell.

It is worth mentioning that fathers are required to train and educate their sons by means of wisdom so as to save them from impiety to them.

The Prophet (S) said: “Like their sons, parents are required to avoid treating their righteous sons impiously¹⁷.”

“Allah may curse the parents who cause their sons to treat them impiously. Allah may have mercy upon the parents who cause their sons to treat them piously¹⁸.”

Rights of Sons

The righteous sons are the adornment of this life and the dearest and most precious hopes. Thus, the Ahlul-Bayt (a), as well as people of wisdom and letters, praised them.

The Prophet (S) said: “The righteous son is one of the roses of Paradise¹⁹.”

“To have a righteous son is a sign of happiness²⁰.”

Referring to a dead, a wise man said: “If this dead has a son, he is alive then, lest he is surely dead.”

Not only do parents benefit by their righteous sons during their lifetimes, but also they are advantageous for them after their death.

(Imam as-Sadiq (a) related:) The Prophet (S) said: Jesus (a), once, passed by a grave whose occupant was tortured. A year later, he passed by the same grave, but found that torture was ceased. He asked the Lord about this, and he was answered that the son of the occupant of this grave paved a public way and had the custody of an orphan; therefore, Allah forgave the father for the son’s good deeds.

(The Prophet commented) The heritage that Allah gains from the believer is a son who worships Him after the father’s death.

(Imam as-Sadiq (a) then recited the Quranic Verse that tells the words of Zechariah the prophet)

“I am afraid of what my kinsmen will do after (my death) and my wife is barren. Lord, grant me a son who will be my heir and the heir of the family of Jacob. Lord, make him a person who will please you” (19:5-6)²¹.

Righteousness of sons requires excessive attention in fields of education. On that account, it is obligatory upon fathers to train their sons on bases of virtue so that they, later on, will harvest pleasure through their commitment to good behavior. In this regard, Imam as-Sajjad (a) said:

“The right of your child is that you should know that he is from you and will be ascribed to you, through both his good and his evil, in the immediate affairs of this world. You are responsible for what has been entrusted to you, such as educating him in good conduct, pointing him in the direction of his Lord, and helping him to obey Him. So, act toward him with the action of one who knows that he will be rewarded for good doing toward him and punished for evildoing. In his affairs, act like the actions of those who adorn their children with their good deeds and those who are justified before their Lord as long as they did well in the discipline and the custody of their sons²².”

Fathers are responsible for disciplining their sons righteously, otherwise they expose them to various dangers of social and religious corruption. Fathers are recommended to begin with guiding their sons to uprightness from tender age, because they, in such ages, are more responsive than being older. Moreover, fathers must begin educating their sons before their eyes are opened on ill habits and immoralities, lest the mission becomes very complicated.

Wisdom of Discipline

Fathers are required to be moderate with their sons. They should neither subject them by means of excessive rudeness since this may cause them to suffer mental complexities, nor should they neglect punishing them when they show shortcomings, since this may lead them to disobey. It is said that ‘he

who feels safety from punishment will behave improperly.’

The best method of education then is to rectify sons step by step, by way of encouraging them doing charity through words of praise and rewarding, and advising them not to misbehave. If this is useless, fathers should move to the stage of reproach. If this is also useless, then comes the role of punishment and harsh reproach.

The Child’s First School

The child’s first school is home, where he grows up, his personality rises to perfection, and traits mature. The parents’ behavior and morals have the greatest role in the child’s perfection and maturity of personality. As a result, they must behave as ideal examples of their children so that their traits will reflect on the children’s mentalities.

Course of Education

The first step in educating children is to lead them to the etiquettes of sitting to the dining–tables, such as washing the hands before and after each meal, eating with the right hand, chewing the food properly, avoiding looking in the faces of the other eaters, satisfying themselves with the available sustenance, and the like morals. Then, children should be trained on the rules of speech and should be trained to avoid obscenity, backbiting, gossip, and the like indecencies. They should also be trained on good attention and not to interrupt speakers.

The most important point in educating children, however, is to plant the religious concepts in their mentalities and bring them up on belief through teaching them the principles and branches of the religion in such a style befitting their intellectual levels, so that they will have acquaintance of their creed and doctrine and they will be immunized against the deviant suspects arisen by the enemies of Islam:

“Believers, save yourselves and your families from the fire which is fueled by people and stones and is guarded by stern angels who do not disobey Allah’s commands and do whatever they are ordered to do (66:6).”

Fathers must also train their children on practicing the high moral standards, such as truthfulness, faithfulness, patience, and self–reliance, and to observe manners of intimate association with people, such as regarding the old, compassioning the young, thanking the favorer, overlooking the wrongdoer, and treating kindly the poor. Besides, children must be prevented from associating with the evils and the deviant and encouraged associating with the polite. Children in fact imitate their friends’ moralities and natures shortly.

The Prophet (S) said: “Man imitates his friend. You therefore must consider the one you befriend.”

People have witnessed and suffered many tragedies that occurred to the young who went astray and fell

in depths of vices and corruption just because they befriended impolite and evil individuals. Consequently, fathers must search for the talents and qualifications of their sons and, then, guide them in the fields of life that best befit their physical and mental abilities and skills. This will certainly contribute in helping them face burdens of life and save comfortable livings.

1. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 91-2 (as quoted from al- Kafi).
2. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 155 (as quoted from al- Kafi).
3. Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; 16/4/24 (as quoted from Keshf ul-Ghumma).
4. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 93 (as quoted from al- Kafi).
5. Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; 16/4/24 (as quoted from al- Amali).
6. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 92 (as quoted from al- Kafi).
7. Quoted from Sharh us-Sahifat us-Sajjadiyya.
8. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 92 (as quoted from al- Kafi).
9. Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; 16/4/26 (as quoted from al- Imama wat Tabssira).
10. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 93 (as quoted from al- Kafi).
11. Quoted from al-Wafi; 3/92 (as quoted from al-Kafi and at-Tahtheeb).
12. Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; 16/4/23 (as quoted from Sheikh at-Tusi's al-Amali).
13. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 155 (as quoted from al- Kafi).

This is an indication to God's saying: "If either or both of your parents should become advanced in age, do not express to them words which show your slightest disappointment such as 'ugh'-. Never yell at them but always speak to them with kindness. Be humble and merciful towards them and say, "Lord, have mercy upon them as they cherished me in my childhood." (17:24)"

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15. This is a famous supplication whose original text is as follows:

يا من يقبل اليسير ويعفو عن الكثير إقبل مني اليسير واعف عني الكثير إنك أنت الغفور الرحيم

16. Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; 16/4/23 (as quoted from al- Amali).
17. Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; 16/4/22 (as quoted from al- Khissal).
18. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 14 page 50 (as quoted from al- Faqih).
19. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 12 page 196 (as quoted from al- Kafi).
20. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 12 page 196 (as quoted from al- Faqih).
21. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 12 page 197 (as quoted from al- Kafi).
22. Quoted from Imam Ali ibn al-Hussein's Treatise of Rights.

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