

The Rights of the Subjects

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Right n. 18: The Right of Subjects through Authority

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فَأَمَّا حُقُوقُ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِالسُّلْطَانِ فَإِنَّ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّكَ إِنَّمَا اسْتَرَعَيْتَهُمْ بِفَضْلِ قُوَّتِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ فَإِنَّهُ إِنَّمَا أَحَلَّهُمْ مَحَلَّ الرِّعِيَّةِ لَكَ ضَعْفُهُمْ وَذُلُّهُمْ، فَمَا أَوْلَى مَنْ كَفَاكُهُ ضَعْفُهُ وَذُلُّهُ حَتَّى صَبَّرَهُ لَكَ رَعِيَّةً وَصَبَّرَ حُكْمَكَ عَلَيْهِ نَافِذًا، لَا يَمْتَنِعُ مِنْكَ بِعِزَّةٍ وَلَا قُوَّةٍ وَلَا يَسْتَنْصِرُ فِيمَا تَعَاظَمَهُ مِنْكَ إِلَّا [بِاللَّهِ] بِالرَّحْمَةِ وَالْحَيَاظَةِ وَالْأَنَاءِ، وَمَا أَوْلَاكَ إِذَا عَرَفْتَ مَا أَعْطَاكَ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِ هَذِهِ الْعِزَّةِ وَالْقُوَّةِ الَّتِي قَهَرْتَ بِهَا أَنْ تَكُونَ لِلَّهِ شَاكِرًا، وَمَنْ شَكَرَ اللَّهَ أَعْطَاهُ فِيمَا أُنْعَمَ عَلَيْهِ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

Then the right of your subjects through authority is that¹ you should know that you have authority over them due to your power over them, and that they have been made your subjects through their weakness and humility. What do they deserve whose weakness and humility have made them your subjects, and made your authority over them effective? They do not disobey you by their own might and power.²

They cannot find a supporter against your power except by God, by His Mercy and Protection, and patience. How proper it is for you to recognize that God has granted you this increased might and power with which you have subdued others. You should be thankful to God. And God will increase His Graces to those who thank Him. And there is no power but in God.

Regarding the rights of the ruler, Imam Sajjad said that the people should obey him and avoid fighting him. Here he stresses the right of the people and states that the ruler should be fair to the people due to the power that he has. The Imam points out several important issues here. At first, the ruler should be just. Secondly, the Imam says that the ruler should act similar to a kind father. Thirdly, since the people might make mistakes during their life, the ruler should be forgiving. At last, the Imam says that the ruler should be thankful to God for the power that He has granted him.

Justice in Leadership

People consider a person who is not wishing bad for others, does not violate their rights, does not treat the people with prejudice, and treats everyone under his rule equally, to be a just ruler. On the other hand, they consider a person who violates their rights; practices prejudice, sides with the oppressors, and oppose the weak, to be an oppressive ruler. Thus, we can say that human justice implies respecting human rights, and honoring everybody's rights. This is what is meant by justice based upon rights. God has invited all men to justice in the Holy Qur'an as we read in the following verse:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ

“God commands justice, the doing of good...” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Na' 16:90]

The Prophet Muhammad said:

يَبْقَى الْمُلْكُ بِالْعَدْلِ مَعَ الْكُفْرِ، وَلَا يَبْقَى بِالْجَوْرِ مَعَ الْإِيمَانِ.

“Rule can be sustained with unbelief, but it can never last with oppression.”³

He also said:

عَدْلُ سَاعَةٍ خَيْرٌ مِنْ عِبَادَةٍ سِتِّينَ سَنَةً.

“An hour of justice is better than sixty years of worship.”

The Difference between Generosity and Justice

Imam Ali beautifully expressed the difference between generosity and justice. When asked about this, he replied:

الْعَدْلُ يَضَعُ الْأُمُورَ مَوَاضِعَهَا وَالْجُودُ يُخْرِجُهَا مِنْ جِهَتِهَا وَالْعَدْلُ سَائِسٌ عَامٌّ فَالْجُودُ عَارِضٌ خَاصٌّ فَالْعَدْلُ أَشْرَفُهُمَا وَأَفْضَلُهُمَا.

“Justice puts everything in its right place, but generosity takes them out of their places. Justice is a universal caretaker, but generosity will only benefit the one with whom you are generous. Therefore justice is nobler and more excellent.”⁴

The Prophets and Their Call to Justice

All the divinely appointed Prophets to invite the people to God have declared man's prosperity and development subject to the development of ethics and the practice of justice. Let us look at the following verse in this regard:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۗ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ۗ اْعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ
لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for God, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just. That is next to piety: and fear God. For God is well acquainted with all that ye do.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Ma'ida 5:8]

No issue in Islam is as important as the issue of justice. Justice is similar to the issue of the unity of God. Both issues highly affect all the major and minor principles of Islam. Likewise, none of the practical or ideological, personal or social, and moral or legal issues are separable from the subject of the unity of God. We shall not find any of the above issues void of the concept of justice.

Therefore, it is not surprising to realize that justice has been recognized as one of the major principles of our religion, and as one of the firm ideological foundations of the Muslims. An important issue pointed out in the above verse is that grudges, tribal animosities, and personal quarrels can all hinder the practice of justice, and might lead to the violation of other people's rights. Therefore, such practices that will lead to deviation from true justice should be abandoned since justice is more important than all of them. Therefore, practice justice since it is the most fundamental basis for piety and abstinence.

Justice in Speaking

Consider the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَأَوْفُوا بِالْكَيْلِ وَالْمِيزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۗ لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا
وَإِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ وَبِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ أَوْفُوا ذَلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُم بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

“And come not nigh to the orphan's property, except to improve it, until he attains the age of full strength; give measure and weigh with (full) justice. No burden do We place on any soul, but that which it can bear. Whenever ye speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is concerned, and

fulfill the Covenant of God. Thus doth He command you, that ye may remember.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-An’am 6: 152]

In this verse, God invites the guardians of the orphans, salespersons and those who weigh goods that they sell to adhere to justice, and even more important than this is justice in speaking. This verse recommends justice in speaking, justice in transactions, and justice when dealing with those members of the society who do not have parents.

When talking about the orphan’s property, God uses the phrase “come not nigh to the orphan’s property” which means do not approach it. This concept has also been used regarding some other tempting sinful acts such as prostitution, fornication, and stealing the properties of orphans who have no supporters. God admonishes the people not to approach these deeds so as to be safe from their strong and hard to resist temptations.

Justice in Judgment

Consider the following verse of the Holy Qur’an:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا

“God doth command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due. And when you judge between man and man that ye judge with justice. Verily how excellent is the teaching which He giveth you! For God is He Who heareth and seeth all things.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nisaa’ 4:58]

In this verse, God advises us to return what we are entrusted with to its owner. Then God stresses the importance of justice when we make a judgment between people. This advice to adhere to justice has been described to be an excellent teaching, and the judge has been warned that God hears and sees everything, so he should be careful not to misjudge.

In addition, God has established justice and doing good deeds as equal to one another as expressed in the following verse:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

“God commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion. He instructs you that ye may receive admonition.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Na’i 16:90]

Also, consider the following verse:

يَا دَاوُدُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَى فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ

“O David! We did indeed make thee a vicegerent on earth. So, judge thou between men in truth (and justice). Nor follow thou the lusts (of thy heart), for they will mislead thee from the Path of God. For those who wonder astray from the Path of God is a Penalty Grievous, for that they forget the Day of Account.” [The Holy Qur’an, Sad 38:26]

In this verse, God first stresses vicegerency on the Earth. Next God admonishes the Prophet David to adhere to justice in his judgments. At last, God admonishes against following lust that will mislead us to deviate from justice and forget the Resurrection Day and the Reckoning that is sure to come. We presented the above verses of the Holy Qur’an as a sample here in order to express the degree of importance of justice, and to stress that a ruler must be fair with all the people in the society. Next, we will look at several traditions regarding the issue of justice.

Abu Ali al-Ashari quoted on the authority of al-Hasan ibn Ali al-Koofi on the authority of Ubays ibn Hisham on the authority of Abdulkarim Halabi on the authority of Abi Abdullah : “Justice is more delicious than water is for a thirsty person. How extensive is justice when it is put in effect, even if it is done a little.”⁵

Hasan ibn Ali quoted on the authority of Ibn Mahbooh on the authority of Mu`awiyah ibn Wahab on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

الْعَدْلُ أَحْلَى مِنَ الشَّهْدِ وَأَلْيَنُ مِنَ الزَّبَدِ وَأَطْيَبُ رِيحاً مِنَ الْمِسْكِ

*“Justice is sweeter than honey, softer than butter, and more fragrant than musk.”*⁶

It has been narrated that Ibn Abi Ya’fur asked Imam Sadiq : “How is one’s justice recognized among Muslims so that his witnessing for or against someone can be accepted?” The Imam replied:

أَنْ تَعْرِفُوهُ بِالسَّتْرِ وَالْعَفَافِ وَكَفِّ الْبَطْنِ وَالْفَرْجِ وَالْيَدِ وَاللِّسَانِ، وَيُعْرِفُ بِاجْتِنَابِ الْكِبَائِرِ الَّتِي أَوْعَدَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا النَّارَ مِنْ شُرْبِ الْخَمْرِ وَالزَّانَا وَالرَّيْبَا وَعُقُوقِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْفَرَارِ مِنَ الرَّحْفِ وَغَيْرِ ذَلِكَ.

*“You will recognize it through his modesty and chastity, and his restraining his stomach, private parts, hand and tongue. It will be known by his avoidance of major sins for which God has threatened (the punishment of) the Fire such as drinking wine, fornication, usury, undutiful behaviour towards parents, fleeing from a holy war, etc.”*⁷

Mutual Rights of the People and the Ruler

Imam Ali expresses the mutual rights of the people and the ruler in *Nahjul Balaghah* as follows:

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ! إِنَّ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ حَقًّا وَلَكُمْ عَلَيَّ حَقًّا. فَأَمَّا حَقُّكُمْ عَلَيَّ فَالنَّصِيحَةُ وَتَوْفِيرُ فَيْئَتِكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَعْلِيمُكُمْ كَيْلَا تَجْهَلُوا
وَأَدَابُكُمْ كَيْمَا تَعْلَمُوا. وَأَمَّا حَقِّي عَلَيْكُمْ فَالْوَفَاءُ بِالْبَيْعَةِ وَالنَّصِيحَةُ فِي الْمَشْهَدِ وَالْمَغِيبِ وَالْإِجَابَةُ حِينَ أَدْعُوكُمْ
وَالطَّاعَةُ حِينَ أَمُرُّكُمْ.

“O people! I have rights incumbent upon you, and you have rights incumbent upon me. Your rights incumbent upon me include my advising you, paying your dues fully, educating you so that you do not remain ignorant, and training you until you learn. And my rights incumbent upon you include your remaining loyal to your pledge of allegiance to me, sincerely advising both in public and private, responding when I call you, and obedience when I command you.”⁸

Imam Ali mentions the rights of the people incumbent upon the ruler as giving them advice, counseling them on social and economical issues, and providing them with equal educational opportunities. The ruler should attend to the economic and educational needs of the society. The right of the ruler is that the people should remain loyal to their pledge of allegiance, and give him counsel sincerely both in private and public. The people should also stand ready to respond to the call of the ruler and obey his orders. Imam Ali also said:

وَأَعْظَمُ مَا افْتَرَضَ سُبْحَانَهُ مِنْ تِلْكَ الْحُقُوقِ حَقُّ الْوَالِي عَلَى الرَّعِيَّةِ. وَحَقُّ الرَّعِيَّةِ عَلَى الْوَالِي فَرِيضَةٌ فَرَضَهَا اللَّهُ
سُبْحَانَهُ لِكُلِّ عَلَى كُلِّ فَجَعَلَهَا نِظَامًا لِأَلْفَتِهِمْ وَعِزًّا لِدِينِهِمْ فَلَيْسَتْ تَصْلُحُ الرَّعِيَّةُ إِلَّا بِصَلَاحِ الْوَلَاةِ وَلَا تَصْلُحُ الْوَلَاةُ إِلَّا
بِاسْتِقَامَةِ الرَّعِيَّةِ. فَإِذَا أُدَّتِ الرَّعِيَّةُ إِلَى الْوَالِي حَقَّهُ وَأَدَّى الْوَالِي إِلَيْهَا حَقَّهَا عَزَّ الْحَقُّ بَيْنَهُمْ وَقَامَتْ مَنَاهِجُ الدِّينِ
وَأَعْتَدَلَتْ مَعَالِمُ الْعَدْلِ وَجَرَتْ عَلَى أَذْلَالِهَا السُّنَنُ فَصَلَحَ بِذَلِكَ الزَّمَانُ وَطُمِعَ فِي بَقَاءِ الدَّوْلَةِ وَبَيَسَتْ مَطَامِعُ الْأَعْدَاءِ.

“The most important of these rights which God the Almighty has made incumbent are the rights of the ruler incumbent upon the people, and the rights of the people incumbent upon the ruler. God has made these mutual rights incumbent upon each one of them. He has established these rights as measures to safeguard order, friendliness, and honor in their religion.

The affairs of the people shall not improve unless the rulers are good people. Rulers will not be good people unless the people are hard-working and steadfast. If the two respect each other's rights, then their religion will be honored, and its practice will survive. Then the signs of justice will be established firmly, and divine traditions will take their natural course. If these principles are recognized and these rights are respected, then there will be an era of improvement and progress. The rule of government will last, and the enemies will be disappointed.”⁹

Imam Ali continues:

وَإِذَا غَلَبَتِ الرَّعِيَّةُ وَالْيَهَاءُ أَوْ أَجْحَفَ الْوَالِي بِرَعِيَّتِهِ اخْتَلَفَتْ هُنَالِكَ الْكَلِمَةُ وَظَهَرَتْ مَعَالِمُ الْجَوْرِ وَكَثُرَ الْإِدْغَالُ فِي الدِّينِ وَتُرِكَتْ مَحَاجُّ السُّنَنِ فَعَمِلَ بِالْهَوَى وَعَطَلَتْ الْأَحْكَامُ وَكَثُرَتْ عِلَلُ النُّفُوسِ فَلَا يُسْتَوْحَشُ لِعَظِيمِ حَقِّ عَطَلٍ وَلَا لِعَظِيمِ بَاطِلٍ فَعَمِلَ فَهُنَالِكَ تَذَلُّ الْأَبْرَارِ وَتَعَزُّ الْأَشْرَارِ وَتَعْظُمُ تَبِعَاتُ اللَّهِ عِنْدَ الْعِبَادِ

“But if on the other hand, the people do not pay any attention to their ruler, or the ruler oppresses the people, then there will be discord and an increase in oppression. Then things that corrupt the religion will be mingled with religion. Divine traditions will be forced off their right course, and people will follow their desires and laws will be neglected. Diseases of the soul will increase and there will be no feeling of desolation for the great rights that have been neglected or the the major crimes committed. Then the good-doers will be humiliated and the wrongdoers will be honored. Under these circumstances, the consequences of the people’s sins will be much more severe before God.”¹⁰

In this sermon, Imam Ali has stressed on the causes of the stability of a government, and the means of existence of peace between the people and the ruler, and its consequence as national prosperity. He also outlines the roots of lack of social peace and security, and the causes of the collapse of a government.

He expresses the conditions that lead to humiliation of good people, and their exclusion from assuming social responsibilities, and the coming into power of wicked people. Then all religious affairs will be called off, corruption and deviations will become widespread and the society will be on the verge of collapse.

Imam Ali expressed the following in a letter he wrote to the border patrol:

أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَإِنَّ حَقًّا عَلَى الْوَالِي أَنْ لَا يُغَيِّرَهُ عَلَى رَعِيَّتِهِ فَضْلٌ نَالَهُ وَلَا طَوْلٌ خُصَّ بِهِ وَإِنْ يَزِيدُهُ مَا قَسَمَ اللَّهُ لَهُ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ دُنُوًّا مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَعَطْفًا عَلَى إِخْوَانِهِ

“Moreover, the right that is incumbent upon the ruler is not to withdraw his donations to the people from the blessings that he obtains. He should not change his ways. He should grant to the people of the special grants he receives. He should give some of what God has given him as his share to the people as to be closer to them. He should treat his brothers with kindness and benefit from their affection”¹¹

Imam Ali himself acted accordingly, and his rule was truly a just rule. He was like a kind and sympathetic father for the society and said:

أَأَقْنَعُ أَنْ يُقَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَا أُشَارِكُهُمْ مَكَارِهِ الدَّهْرِ؟

“Should I be content with being called the Commander of the Faithful, and not share their hardships in this world?”¹²

No, it will never be so.

Imam Sajjad said:

“A ruler should be like a kind father and consider the members of the society as his children, and treat them equally.”

This was put into practice during the rule of Imam Ali and the Imam made the following recommendations to Malik al-Ashtar in his well-known letter to him:

وَأَشْعِرْ قَلْبَكَ الرَّحْمَةَ لِلرَّعِيَّةِ، وَالْمَحَبَّةَ لَهُمْ، وَاللُّطْفَ بِهِمْ، وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ سُبْعاً ضَارِياً تَغْتَنِمُ أَكْلَهُمْ، فَإِنَّهُمْ صِنْفَانِ:
إِمَّا أَخٌ لَكَ فِي الدِّينِ، وَإِمَّا نَظِيرٌ لَكَ فِي الْخَلْقِ.

“Let your heart harbor feelings of mercy for your subjects, and love and kindness for them. Do not be like a rapacious beast of prey against them, seizing them in order to devour them, for people are in two groups: either they are your brothers in religion or they are equal to you in creation.”

Imam Sajjad said:

“The people have faults which the ruler should forgive and forget.”

Imam Ali said the following in his letter to Malik al-Ashtar:

فَإِنَّ فِي النَّاسِ عُيُوباً إِلْوَالِي أَحَقُّ مِنْ سَتْرَهَا، فَلَا تَكْشِفَنَّ عَمَّا غَابَ عَنْكَ مِنْهَا، فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ تَطْهِيرُ مَا ظَهَرَ لَكَ.

“Indeed people have faults, and the ruler is the one who is most suitable to cover up their faults. Therefore do not reveal those faults that are hidden from you, for your duty is only to remove what is apparent to you.”

An important point has been considered here, that is to ignore or act as if you do not know the faults of the people. Any ruler or government should be this way. The last subject related to the rights of the people that Imam Sajjad presents is that the ruler should be grateful to God for the blessing of ruling over the people.

He should realize that he does not possess any power on his own and it is in fact God who has granted him this power. He should realize that he himself is only a weak person. Imam Ali instructs Malik al-Ashtar:

وَإِذَا أَحْدَثَ لَكَ مَا أَنْتَ فِيهِ مِنْ سُلْطَانِكَ أُبْهَةً أَوْ مَخِيلَةً فَانظُرْ إِلَى عِظَمِ مُلْكِ اللَّهِ فَوْقَكَ وَقُدْرَتِهِ مِنْكَ عَلَى مَا لَا تَقْدِرُ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ، فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ يُطَامِنُ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ طِمَاحِكَ، وَيَكْفُفُ عَنْكَ مِنْ غَرَبِكَ، وَيَفِيءُ إِلَيْكَ بِمَا عَزَبَ عَنْكَ مِنْ عَقْلِكَ.

“Should you ever feel proud and haughty due to your rule, consider the Majesty of God’s dominion above you and His power over you in what you yourself have no control. This will hinder you from your disobedience, prevent your harshness and return to you what has departed from you of your intellect (which has become subject to your haughtiness).”

Then it is best for a ruler to be grateful for this divine blessing.

1. In the other version it continues: ”they have been made subjects through their weakness and your strength. Hence it is incumbent on you to act with justice toward them and to be like a compassionate father toward them. You should forgive them their ignorance and not hurry them to punishment and you should thank God for the power over them which He has given to you.”
2. That they do not have.
3. Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v.1, p.385.
4. Nahjul Balaghah, Fayz al-Islam, wise saying no.429.
5. Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p. 146.
6. Ibid. p.147.
7. Al-Mizan, v.6, p.221.
8. Nahjul Balaghah, Fayz al-Islam, sermon no.34.
9. Nahjul Balaghah, Fayz al-Islam, sermon no .207.
10. Ibid.
11. Nahjul Balaghah, Fayz al-Islam, sermon no. 50.
12. Nahjul Balaghah, Subhi Salih, no.45.

Right n. 19: The Right of Subjects through Knowledge

حق الرعية بالعلم

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِالْعِلْمِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ جَعَلَكَ لَهُمْ فِيمَا آتَاكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ وَوَلَاكَ مِنْ خَزَائِنِ الْحِكْمَةِ، فَإِنْ أَحْسَنْتَ فِيمَا وَوَلَاكَ اللَّهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَقُمْتَ بِهِ لَهُمْ مَقَامَ الْخَازِنِ الشَّفِيقِ النَّاصِحِ لِمَوْلَاهُ فِي عِبِيدِهِ، الصَّابِرِ الْمُحْتَسِبِ الَّذِي إِذَا رَأَى ذَا حَاجَةٍ أُخْرِجَ لَهُ مِنَ الْأَمْوَالِ الَّتِي فِي يَدَيْهِ كُنْتَ رَاشِدًا، وَكُنْتَ لِدَلِكِ أَمِلًا مُعْتَقِدًا وَإِلَّا كُنْتَ لَهُ خَائِنًا وَلِخَلْقِهِ ظَالِمًا وَلِسَلْبِهِ وَعِزِّهِ مُتَعَرِّضًا.

And the right of your subjects through knowledge is that you should know that God established you over them through what He has granted you of knowledge, and the authority He has assigned you over His treasures of wisdom.

If you do well in what God has given you authority over and serve as a compassionate caretaker for them, sincere to his master in the affairs of his slaves, the steadfast one seeking reward through his good deeds, who, when he sees a needy person, takes out for him from the wealth under his control – then you will be rightly guided and will be hopeful and faithful.

Otherwise, you will be regarded as betraying Him, unjust to His creatures, and exposing yourself to God's seizing His Graces and Power from you.

And in the other version we read: “And the right of your subjects through knowledge is that you should know that God established you over them through what He has granted you of knowledge and what He has granted authority over His treasures of wisdom.

If you do well in teaching the people, not treating them roughly or annoying them, then God will increase His bounty toward you. But if you withhold your knowledge from people or treat them roughly when they seek knowledge from you, then it will be God’s right to deprive you of the knowledge and its splendor and make you fall from your place in the people’s heart.”

Imam Sajjad has pointed out the following:

- 1 – What one has learned of knowledge, and whatever he has gained of wisdom are all blessings of God. One does not have any of this on his own. Therefore, after considering these points one should not become haughty.
- 2 – What one has control over of knowledge and wisdom is only a portion of God’s treasure. He is only considered to be a trustee and a gatekeeper. He should warmly welcome others, and kindly grant them from the treasures with which he is entrusted.
- 3 – Imam Sajjad considers knowledgeable wise men as gatekeepers of the treasures of knowledge and wisdom. He does not deem it proper to be stingy about knowledge or wisdom, as it is not proper to be stingy with wealth.
- 4 – If the one who possesses knowledge acts upon his duties, he is like a sympathetic counselor who has seriously safeguarded what he is entrusted with. Otherwise, he is like one who has betrayed his master. By not respecting the rights of his subjects through knowledge, he has oppressed them, and has deprived them of their rights to be honored.

Therefore, one who possesses knowledge should seek ways to teach his students that would encourage them to learn. Any form of bad-temper, ill conduct or anger with the students will make the students lose their interest. It might even force them to quit their studies. In fact, this implies that the one who possesses knowledge has hoarded up his knowledge, and is being stingy with his knowledge by showing this kind of behavior.

A Good Teacher's Characteristics

A good teacher is one who possesses the following desirable characteristics in teaching and encountering his students:

- 1 – A good teacher is one who does not assume the responsibility of teaching until he attains all the desirable qualities and capabilities of a teacher. This is to be recognized by good people.
- 2 – A good teacher is one who does not entrust his knowledge to bad people to be abused and debased.
- 3 – A good teacher should put his knowledge to practice, and the society should be given the chance to benefit from the fruits of this act. If not, he is like those admonished in the following verse:

أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

“Do ye enjoin right conduct on the people, and forget (to practice it) yourselves.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2:44]

Regarding the following verse of the Holy Qur’an:

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ

“Those truly fear God, among His servants, who have knowledge.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Fatir 35:28]

Imam Sadiq said:

الْعَالِمُ مَنْ صَدَّقَ فِعْلُهُ قَوْلَهُ وَمَنْ لَمْ يُصَدِّقْ قَوْلُهُ فِعْلُهُ فَلَيْسَ بِعَالِمٍ.

“A knowledgeable person is one whose deeds confirm his words. One whose deeds do not confirm his words is not a knowledgeable person.”¹

4– A good teacher should be good-tempered and humble. He should train his students with patience and kindness. The Prophet of God said the following regarding scholars:

عُلَمَاءُ أُمَّتِي كَأَنْبِيَاءِ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ.

“My nation’s scholars are like the Prophet of the Israelites.”²

This implies that the same patience and good-temper that is necessary for the Prophets to succeed in their inviting the people to follow God, is also necessary for teachers to be successful in teaching their students.

5 – A good teacher should not use the student’s lack of sincerity and intent to learn as an excuse not to teach him. Rather he should admit him, and slowly develop this sincerity and intention to acquire knowledge in the student in the process of teaching. This is because knowledge without sincerity is similar to jewelry hanging around a pig’s neck as Imam Ali said:

لَا تُعَلِّقُوا الْجَوَاهِرَ فِي أَعْنَاقِ الْخَنَازِيرِ.

“Do not hang jewels around a pig’s neck.”³

6 – A good teacher should not hesitate to teach whenever he finds a student ready to learn. Jabir Jo’afi quoted on the authority of Imam Baqir:

زَكَاةُ الْعِلْمِ تَعْلِيمُهُ عِبَادَ اللَّهِ.

“The alms due to be paid on your knowledge is teaching it to God’s servants.”⁴

7 – A good teacher is one whose deeds do not negate his words. An example of this might be his declaring something to be illegitimate, but doing it himself.

8 – A good teacher should be determined to express what is right as much as is in his power to do so. The Prophet of God said:

إِذَا ظَهَرَتِ الْبِدْعُ فِي أُمَّتِي فَلْيُظْهِرِ الْعَالِمُ عِلْمَهُ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَفْعَلْ فَعَلَيْهِ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ.

“When innovations (in religion) appear in my nation, then let the person of knowledge confront it. Whoever does not do so, upon him be the curse of God.”⁵

A Good Teacher’s Duties to His Students and Class

The following are the duties of a good teacher to his students and class:

1 – A good teacher should foster good manners, proper ethics and religious knowledge in his students step by step. He should develop their sense of abstaining from this world.

2 – A good teacher should explain the value and the nobility of knowledge to his students. He should help them understand that the men of knowledge stand in the ranks of the Prophets.

3 – A good teacher should like for his students what he likes for himself, and should dislike for them what he dislikes for himself.

4 – A good teacher should advise his students not to follow bad examples and not to commit the forbidden acts or what might harm them.

5 – A good teacher should not be haughty with his students. Rather he should be humble with them since the Prophet of God said:

لِيُنُوا لِمَنْ تُعَلِّمُونَ وَلِمَنْ تَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُ

“Be gentle with those you teach and those you learn from.”

6 – A good teacher should always be sympathetic with his students. Whenever one of them is absent, he should ask the reason. He should check on them every now and then either in person or through someone else. He should visit them if they get ill. He should try to help fulfill their needs when they become needy if he is able to assist them.

7 – A good teacher should get to know the names and characteristics of his students.

8 – A good teacher should seek the easiest way to teach. In the beginning, he should teach whatever must be taught first in order to make them understand what he is teaching. He should present the material to his students at a level that is understandable by them.

9 – A good teacher should be enthusiastic about going to class, and should avoid presenting material beyond the mental ability of his students to comprehend.

10 – A good teacher should treat all of his students the same. If they are all of the same rank, he should not prefer some to others. In addition, if there is an age-related difference in their rank, he should show more respect for the students with a higher rank to encourage the rest to work hard to attain a higher rank.

What a Teacher Should Practice

1 – A teacher should be clean, wear clean clothes, walk calmly towards his class, and enter the class with utmost dignity.⁶

2 – A teacher should remember God, and say supplications transmitted to us through the Prophet of God and the Immaculate Imams stressing the highest spiritual meanings. He should pray God to help guide him, and help him understand well, and then start to teach.

3 – A teacher should greet his students upon entering the class. If he is teaching in a mosque, he should

at first say two units of prayers, ask God to save him from making any mistakes, and help him succeed.

4 – When he wants to sit down in class, he should be calm. He should sit down with dignity and having previously prepared his lecture, he should start to teach.

5 – He should sit down facing the Qiblah⁷ whenever possible and avoid vain talk.

6 – He should be sincere in his intentions to teach when he sets out to go to class. He should establish the propagation of knowledge and divine decrees as his main goal.

7 – He should avoid undue jokes while teaching. However, he should use jokes mildly and at proper times to break the ice and eliminate the highly formal atmosphere of the classroom.

8 – He should sit where every student can see him. He should look at him and reply.

9 – He should be happy and pleasant when he is teaching, and avoid frowning, or being bad-tempered.

10 – He should bless his class by starting his lecture with some verses from the Holy Qur'an.

11 – It is very important for a good teacher to confess that he does not know the answer to a question asked for which he does not know the answer. He should do so bravely since Imam Ali said:

إِذَا سُئِلْتُمْ عَمَّا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ فَاهْرُبُوا... تَقُولُونَ: اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ

“If you are asked about what you know not, then flee.” He was asked how. He replied: “Flee by saying God knows best.”

One should realize that acknowledging that you do not know the answer to that question does not reduce your status. Rather it will strengthen your status in the hearts of the people since then they realize that you are pious.

The Worth of Knowledge-Seekers in the Eyes of the Prophet

The late Al-Shahid al-Thani⁸ expresses more characteristics of a good teacher in the book Muniat al-Mureed. However, we will suffice with the above and direct our attention to the worth of the knowledge-seekers, and the reward that God has established for them.

1 – God's Prophet said:

مَنْ طَلَبَ عِلْمًا فَأَدْرَكَهُ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ كِفْلَيْنِ مِنَ الْأَجْرِ، وَمَنْ طَلَبَ عِلْمًا فَلَمْ يُدْرِكْهُ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ كِفْلًا مِنَ الْأَجْرِ

“God will grant two rewards to whoever seeks knowledge and acquires it. And God will grant one reward

to those who seek knowledge, but do not acquire it.”

2 – God’s Prophet said:

مَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يَنْظُرَ إِلَى عِتْقَاءِ اللَّهِ مِنَ النَّارِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ إِلَى الْمُتَعَلِّمِينَ: فَوَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ مَا مِنْ مُتَعَلِّمٍ يَخْتَلِفُ إِلَى بَابِ الْعَالِمِ إِلَّا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِكُلِّ قَدَمٍ عِبَادَةَ سَنَةٍ وَيُنَى اللَّهُ لَهُ بِكُلِّ قَدَمٍ مَدِينَةً فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَيَمْشِي عَلَى الْأَرْضِ وَهِيَ تَسْتَغْفِرُ لَهُ وَيُمْسِي وَيُصْبِحُ مَغْفُوراً لَهُ وَشَهِدَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَنَّهُمْ عِتْقَاءُ اللَّهِ مِنَ النَّارِ.

“Whoever likes to see those saved by God from the Fire (of Hell) should take a look at those who seek knowledge. I swear by the One who possesses full control over my life that God grants the reward of one year of worshipping Him for each step that the knowledge-seekers take while going to and returning from the house of the knowledgeable ones. For each step they take, God builds them a city in Heaven. The Earth prays for them and seeks their forgiveness as they walk on it. Their mornings and evenings are accompanied by God’s forgiveness and the angels witness that they have been freed by God from the Fire.”⁹

3– God’s Prophet said:

مَنْ طَلَبَ الْعِلْمَ فَهُوَ كَالصَّائِمِ نَهَارَهُ وَالْقَائِمِ لَيْلَهُ وَإِنْ أَبَا مِنَ الْعِلْمِ يَتَعَلَّمُهُ الرَّجُلُ خَيْرٌ لَهُ مِنْ أَنْ يَكُونَ أَبُو قُبَيْسٍ ذَهَباً فَأَنْفَقَهُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ.

“Whoever seeks knowledge is like one who fasts in the daytime and stays up at night to worship God. For him each chapter that he learns is better than giving as much gold in charity as Mount Abu Qubays for the sake of God.”¹⁰

4– God’s Prophet said:

مَنْ جَاءَهُ الْمَوْتُ وَهُوَ يَطْلُبُ الْعِلْمَ لِيُحْيِيَ بِهِ الْإِسْلَامَ كَانَ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ دَرَجَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ.

“Whoever dies while seeking knowledge with the intention of reviving Islam, then there is one rank in Heaven between him and the Prophets.”¹¹

This was a brief summary of the values of students that the Noble Prophet expressed.

¹. Usul al-Kafi, v. 1, p.36.

². Munyah al-Murid, p.182.

³. Ibid. p.184.

⁴. Usul al-Kafi, v. 1, p.41.

⁵. Usul al-Kafi, v. 1, p.54.

⁶. Munyah al-Murid, pp. 204–210.

7. The direction towards the Holy House of God in Makkah to which Muslims turn when they pray.
8. Zayn al-Din al-Juba'i al-'Amili.
9. Zayn al-Din al-'Amili.
10. Zayn al-Din al-Juba'i al-'Amili.
11. Ibid.

Right n. 20: The Right of the Wife

حق الزوجة

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِمِلْكِ النِّكَاحِ فَإِنَّ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ جَعَلَهَا سَكَنًا وَمُسْتَرَاحًا وَأُنْسًا وَوَأَقِيَةً، وَكَذَلِكَ كُلُّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْكُمْ يَجِبُ أَنْ يَحْمَدَ اللَّهَ عَلَى صَاحِبِهِ، وَيَعْلَمَ أَنَّ ذَلِكَ نِعْمَةٌ مِنْهُ عَلَيْهِ، وَوَجِبَ أَنْ يُحْسِنَ صُحْبَةَ نِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ وَيُكْرِمَهَا وَيَرْفُقَ بِهَا وَإِنْ كَانَ حَقُّكَ عَلَيْهَا أَعْلَطَ وَطَاعَتُكَ بِهَا أَلْزَمَ فِيمَا أَحْبَبْتَ وَكَرِهْتَ مَا لَمْ تَكُنْ مَعْصِيَةً، فَإِنَّ لَهَا حَقَّ الرَّحْمَةِ وَالْمُؤَانَسَةِ، وَمَوْضِعُ السُّكُونِ إِلَيْهَا قِضَاءُ اللَّذَّةِ الَّتِي لَا بُدَّ مِنْ قِضَائِهَا وَذَلِكَ عَظِيمٌ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

And the right of your subject through matrimonial contract¹ is that you should know that God has made her a repose, a comfort and a companion, and a protector for you. It is incumbent upon each of you to thank God for the other and realize that the other one is God's blessing for you. It is obligatory to be a good companion for God's blessing, and to honor her and treat her gently.

Yet, your right over her is more incumbent² and she must obey you in every matter that you like or detest - except in acts of disobedience to God. She should enjoy the rights of mercy and intimacy, as she is an object of tranquility. You should care for her through consummation of the lust that must be consummated. And that is surely great. And there is no power but in God.

“The right of your wife (*zawja*) is that you know that God has made her a repose and a comfort for you; you should know that she is God's favor toward you, so you should honor her and treat her gently. Though her right toward you is more incumbent, you must treat her with compassion, since she is your prisoner (*asir*) whom you feed and clothe. If she is ignorant, you should pardon her.”³

This statement can be read in Makarim ul-Akhlaq: “She also has the right to have mercy on her, since she is subject to you. You must feed and clothe her. Whenever she makes a mistake out of ignorance, you should forgive her.”

We already discussed the issue of marriage and establishment of a family in chapter 9 in detail. In that chapter which was about sex, we explained that the best way to prevent adultery and the corruption of the society is through marriage and the establishment of family. We described the physical, spiritual and

psychological harms of sexual corruption and fornication. Now in this chapter we will briefly discuss the duties of a spouse as viewed in the Qur'an and the traditions – as expressed by Imam Sajjad .

We already mentioned that marriage is a blessed foundation of a family. The husband and wife make a promise to each other that this relationship will last to the end of their life. This structure is not built using bricks, steel rods and cement. It is a home built upon love, comfort and delight in which the couple shall live together their whole life, and raise boys and girls to continue the human society. We shall remind you that this structure is only firm if the husband and wife know about what Islam has set forth as rightful decrees. Otherwise, this structure will be shaken up by the erupting quakes of disharmony and bad temper.

Love and Mercy

The first characteristics mentioned by Imam Sajjad are tranquility and dwelling in love. God has considered the creation of man and woman, and their dwelling together as signs in the Holy Qur'an:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ
يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“And among His signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them. And he has put love and mercy between your (hearts): Verily in that are Signs for those who reflect.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Rum 3:21]

This issue of dwelling together in love is also stated in the following verse:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا

“It is He Who created you from a single person, and made his mate in order that he might dwell with her (in love).” [The Holy Qur'an, al-A'raf 7: 189]

The two concepts of tranquility and dwelling together, which are major God-given blessings, are presented in these verses. This includes physical and spiritual as well as individual and social aspects of tranquility and mutual life. No one can deny the physical ailments due to not marrying. Everyone is familiar with the spiritual problems and psychological disturbances that unmarried people have to deal with.

Unmarried people feel less social responsibility. This is why more cases of suicidal attempts are seen among unmarried people. They also commit more crimes. A person who gets married is no longer single. He discovers a new character within himself, and feels a lot more responsible.

In these verses, love and mercy have been expressed after tranquility and living together in peace which is the best form of life. Everyone is seeking a peaceful life. In fact, love and mercy constitute the glue and cement for the structure of the human society. There are some differences between love and mercy.

1 – Love is the initial motivation for establishing a relationship. However, at the end of life one or the other one gets weak, and mercy is needed.

2 – Love exists between the adults who can serve each other. However, children need mercy to grow up.

3 – Love is usually a mutual feeling, while mercy is unilateral and mixed with self-sacrifice.⁴

When the life of a couple is filled with tranquility, is based on love, and is accompanied by mercy, it is firmly established. On the other hand, a life without these is a shaky life, ready to break apart. Marriage is like the first level of social life. Through marriage, one can study and learn about the rights.

There are two kinds of rights established between a couple: legal rights and moral rights. The legal rights include the right that the husband must feed and clothe his wife and provide for her shelter. They also include the right that the woman should obey her husband. These rights are the fundamentals of mutual life, and are needed in order to provide for life – just like the foundation and the structure of a building.

However, moral rights are those which both the husband and the wife are morally bound to adhere to. Should they not adhere to these rights, there is no legal obligation for them to do so. However, the beauty and pleasure of life is dependent upon performing these duties. Acts like compliance, friendship and love fall in this group. One can consider these rights as the decorations of life such as painting and fine plaster work.

“The law of creation has made men and women in need of each other in order to better unite men and women together, and strengthen the family which is the main basis for human prosperity. If men have been established as the ones for the women to financially rely on, women have been created for men to spiritually rely on. These different needs attract them to each other, and finally unite them.”⁵

Head of the Household in the Family Structure

Consider the following verse:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ وَاللَّاتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَأَهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاصْرَبُوهُنَّ فَإِنِ اطَّعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا

“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because God has given the one more

(strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what God would have them guard. As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next) refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly): But if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance). For God is Most High, Great (above you all). [The Holy Qur'an, al-Nisaa 4:34]

We must realize that the family is a small society, and it needs a head and a leader. The man is the head of the household. The woman is his assistant and is under his supervision. We must know that this position is granted to him due to the characteristics that exist in men. Such characteristics are his ability to let his mind rule over his feelings – as opposed to women, and his possession of more power and physical strength.

Men can use the first to plan for their life, and use the second to safeguard their family. The phrase “because God has given the one more (strength) than the other” in the above verse refers to this point. However, it is clear that entrusting men with this duty neither is considered to be a reason for their possessing a higher human character, nor is it to be a privilege for them. It is clear that in general, the human character of an assistant may be loftier than that of his boss in some aspects. However, the boss is usually more suitable than his assistant, for the performance of the duty he is made responsible for.

In this verse, women are classified into two groups. The women in the first group are righteous ones. They are humble. They respect the family structure. They are highly responsible, and perform their duties and responsibilities well. Regarding the rights that God has established and are expressed in the above verse as “what God would have them guard.” they perform their responsibilities well.

This they do regarding financial issues, and guarding their honor. The women in the second group are the disobedient ones who are seen to have signs of possible disloyalty and ill-conduct. Men are supposed to honor and respect the first group of women, and admonish, or refuse to sleep with the second group. Should these measures not work, men are supposed to punish them as decreed by Islam.[6](#)

We presented the above verse to show that according to the Holy Qur'an, men are responsible for protecting and maintaining women. Imam Sajjad stressed their right to be fed and clothed by men. All the major jurists have also decreed they have the right to be fed and clothed: “It is obligatory for men to pay for the living expenses of their permanent wives.

These expenses include food, clothes, shelter, and living necessities such as rugs, blankets, cleaning apparatus, and things that women usually need during their life. This is required if she lives in his house and is obedient to him. Therefore, if she leaves the house without a religiously acceptable excuse, and leaves him then she does not deserve to be maintained. It is well-known that this responsibility of maintaining his wife is only up until the time when the wife is complaisant, and is lifted if she becomes

disobedient.”[7](#)

It was said that women have two types of rights. One is her legal right to maintenance. Should the man not pay for her maintenance, she has the right to legally claim and receive it. However, rights of the second type are moral, humane rights. Respecting these rights will cause tranquility, peace, and will strengthen life and aid its continuation.

Now we will attend to these rights. The Noble Prophet has made several recommendations regarding women on various occasions. We will present only a few here. The Prophet said:

خَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِهِ وَأَنَا خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِي.

“The best of you are the ones who treat their family the best. And I am the best of you towards my family.”[8](#)

He also said:

عِيَالُ الرَّجُلِ أَسْرَاؤُهُ، وَأَحَبُّ الْعِبَادِ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى أَحْسَنُهُمْ صَنِيعاً إِلَى أَسْرَائِهِ.

“A man's dependants are his prisoners. And the servants most loved by God are the ones who best treat their prisoners.”[9](#)

Imam Baqir quoted on the authority of God's Prophet :

أَوْصَانِي جِبْرِئِيلُ بِالْمَرْأَةِ حَتَّى ظَنَنْتُ أَنَّهُ لَا يَنْبَغِي طَلَاقُهَا إِلَّا مِنْ فَاحِشَةٍ بَيِّنَةٍ.

“Gabriel advised me about women so much that I thought she could not be divorced unless she clearly commits adultery.”[10](#)

In another tradition, The Prophet said:

مَنْ احْتَمَلَ مِنْ امْرَأَتِهِ وَلَوْ كَلِمَةً وَاحِدَةً أَعْتَقَ اللَّهُ رَقَبَتَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ وَأَوْجِبَ لَهُ الْجَنَّةَ وَكَتَبَ لَهُ مِائَتِي أَلْفٍ حَسَنَةٍ وَمَحَا عَنْهُ مِائَتِي أَلْفٍ سَيِّئَةٍ وَرَفَعَ لَهُ مِائَتِي أَلْفٍ دَرَجَةٍ وَكَتَبَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِكُلِّ شَعْرَةٍ عَلَى بَدَنِهِ عِبَادَةَ سَنَةٍ.

“God will save whoever bears his wife – even if it is just one (bad) word – from the Fire. God will assure him of Heaven and record two thousand good deeds for him. God will wipe out two hundred thousand of his wrong-doings and raise his rank two hundred thousand levels, and establish as many years of worshipping for him as there are hairs on his body.”[11](#)

These words of the Noble Prophet are the best advice we have received regarding women. A man is supposed to be kind and polite to his wife. He is supposed to ignore her mistakes. He is supposed to be patient with her bad temper to be granted the divine rewards that the Noble Prophet promised.

There is no doubt that there are problems in every house. At times incompatibilities may cause quarrels that might cool their relationship. This will place a gap between them, and will drive them more apart from each other. If not prevented, this might lead to separation and divorce. A young inexperienced husband and wife who still follow their lust may get angry quickly, and attempt to take revenge on each other. In order to prevent this, Islam has advised men and women to forgive each other, and ignore one another's faults.

Ishaq ibn Ammar asked Imam Sadiq regarding the rights of a woman upon her husband. Imam Sadiq said:

يُشْبِعُ بَطْنَهَا وَيَكْسُو جَنْتَهَا وَإِنْ جَهَلْتَ غَفَرْ لَهَا. إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلَ الرَّحْمَنِ شَكَا إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خُلُقَ سَارَةَ فَأَوْحَى اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ أَنْ مَثَلُ الْمَرْأَةِ مَثَلُ الضِّلْعِ مَثَلُ الضِّلْعِ إِنْ أَقْمَمْتَهُ انْكَسَرَ وَإِنْ تَرَكْتَهُ اسْتَمْتَعْتَ بِهِ.

“He should fill her stomach, and cover her body. If she makes a mistake, he should forgive her. Abraham – the friend of the Merciful – complained to the Almighty God about Sara’s bad temper. God revealed to him: The similitude of a woman is like that of a dry bent stick. It will crack if you try to straighten it, but you will benefit from it if you leave it as it is.”¹²

Therefore, there is no use in being harsh with your wife. Nothing can be gained but misery and bitterness. The most important issue that a man should realize in life is that his wife is his life-partner. She is neither his slave, nor his housemaid. Therefore, from the viewpoint of religious jurisprudence, a man does not have the right to force his wife to work, or to take the results of her efforts in his own possession. More importantly, he should realize that he must help his spouse. Our Immaculate Leaders have outlined many rewards for men who help their wives. We will mention a few here.

The Rewards of Helping the Wives

God's Prophet told Ali :

إِسْمَعْ مِنِّي يَا أَبَا الْحَسَنِ! وَمَا أَقُولُ إِلَّا مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي: مَا مِنْ رَجُلٍ يُعِينُ امْرَأَتَهُ فِي بَيْتِهَا إِلَّا كَانَ لَهُ بِكُلِّ شَعْرَةٍ عَلَى بَدَنِهِ عِبَادَةٌ سَنَةً صِيَامُ نَهَارِهَا وَقِيَامُ لَيْلِهَا وَأَعْطَاهُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الثَّوَابِ مِثْلَ مَا أُعْطِيَ الصَّابِرِينَ وَدَاوُدَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَعِيسَى عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ.

“O father of Hasan! Listen to me. I will not tell you anything but what my Lord commands. God will establish the reward of as many years of fasting in the daytime and staying up at night to pray, as there

are hairs on one's body for helping his wife with the housework. The reward will be similar to what He has granted to the patient ones and the Prophet David , Jacob and Jesus .” [13](#)

Surely, this reward will encourage believing men to help their wives, and abstain from being forceful and bossy.

God's Prophet said:

يا عَلِيُّ! مَنْ كَانَ فِي خِدْمَةِ الْعِيَالِ فِي الْبَيْتِ وَلَمْ يَأْتَفْ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ اسْمَهُ فِي دِيْوَانِ الشُّهَدَاءِ وَكَتَبَ لَهُ بِكُلِّ يَوْمٍ وَلَيْلَةٍ ثَوَابَ أَلْفِ شَهِيدٍ وَكَتَبَ لَهُ بِكُلِّ قَدَمٍ تَوَابَ حِجَّةٍ وَعُمْرَةٍ وَأَعْطَاهُ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ عِرْقٍ فِي جَسَدِهِ مَدِينَةً فِي الْجَنَّةِ.

“O Ali! God will record in the book of the martyrs the name of whoever serves his family at home, and does not disdain it. God will establish the reward of one thousand martyrs for each day and night, and will grant him the reward of the pilgrimage to the Holy House of God for every step he takes in this regard. God will reward him with a city in Heaven for every vein in his body.” [14](#)

God's Prophet said:

يا عَلِيُّ! خِدْمَةُ الْعِيَالِ كَفَّارَةٌ لِلْكَبَائِرِ وَتُطْفِئُ غَضَبَ الرَّبِّ وَمُهْرُ الْحُورِ الْعِينِ وَتَزِيدُ فِي الْحَسَنَاتِ وَالذَّرَجَاتِ

“O Ali! Serving the family is considered to be expiation for major sins. It will quench the Lord's wrath, and be considered as the nuptial gift for the ‘Houris’. It will be a cause of raised ranks, and increased, recorded good–deeds.” [15](#)

Admonishing Strict Men

God's Prophet said:

مَنْ ضَرَبَ امْرَأَةً بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ فَأَنَا خَصْمُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ. لَا تَضْرِبُوا نِسَاءَكُمْ، فَمَنْ ضَرَبَهَا بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ فَقَدْ عَصَى اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ.

“On the Resurrection Day I am the enemy of any man who unduly beats his wife. Do not beat your wives. Thus whoever unduly beats his wife has surely disobeyed God and His Prophet.” [16](#)

God's Prophet said:

لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ وُضِعَ عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ قَتَرَ عَلَى عِيَالِهِ

“Whoever is affluent but is stingy with his wife does not belong to our nation.” [17](#)

Improving the Spouse's Living Conditions

It has been narrated that Imam Sajjad said:

أَرْضَاكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَوْسَعُكُمْ عَلَى عِيَالِهِ.

*“Whoever provides most amply for his family will be the most pleasing one near God.”*¹⁸

Imam Ridha said:

يَنْبَغِي لِلرَّجُلِ أَنْ يُوسِعَ عَلَى عِيَالِهِ لئَلَّا يَتَمَنَّوْا مَوْتَهُ.

*“A man should provide abundant provision for his family so that they do not wish for his death.”*¹⁹

So far we discussed how men should be kind to their wives, not bother or hurt them; not be strict with them, but help them. Now let us see what Islam instructs women to do to counter men's services, and what role women should play in life.

The Rights of Men Incumbent Upon Women

Al-Hasan ibn Mahboob quoted on the authority of Malik ibn Atiyeh on the authority of Muhammad ibn Muslim on the authority of Imam Baqir that once a woman went to the Prophet of God and asked: “O' Prophet of God! What is the right of a man incumbent upon the woman?” The Prophet replied:

أَنْ تُطِيعَهُ وَلَا تَعْصِيَهُ، وَلَا تَصَدَّقَ مِنْ بَيْتِهِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ، وَلَا تَصُومَ طَوْعاً إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ، وَلَا تَمْنَعَهُ نَفْسَهَا وَإِنْ كَانَتْ عَلَى ظَهْرٍ قَتَبٍ، وَلَا تَخْرُجَ مِنْ بَيْتِهَا إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ، وَإِنْ خَرَجَتْ بِغَيْرِ إِذْنِهِ لَعَنَتْهَا مَلَائِكَةُ السَّمَاءِ وَمَلَائِكَةُ الْأَرْضِ وَمَلَائِكَةُ الْغَضَبِ وَمَلَائِكَةُ الرَّحْمَةِ حَتَّى تَرْجِعَ إِلَى بَيْتِهَا.

فَقَالَتْ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَنْ أَعْظَمُ النَّاسِ حَقّاً عَلَى الرَّجُلِ؟ قَالَ: وَالِدَاهُ. قَالَتْ: فَمَنْ أَعْظَمُ النَّاسِ حَقّاً عَلَى الْمَرْأَةِ؟ قَالَ: زَوْجُهَا.

قَالَتْ: فَمَا لِي عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ مِثْلُ مَا لَهُ عَلَيَّ؟ قَالَ: وَلَا مِنْ كُلِّ مَائَةٍ وَاحِدَةً.

فَقَالَتْ: وَالَّذِي بَعَثَكَ بِالْحَقِّ لَا يَمْلِكُ رَقَبَتِي رَجُلٌ أَبَداً.

“She should obey him, and not rebel against him. She should not give away anything from his house as charity unless by his permission. She should not fast when not required to do so unless by his permission. She should not withdraw herself from him even if they are riding a camel. She should not leave the house without his permission. Should she ever leave the house without his permission, she will be cursed by the angels in the heavens and on the Earth, and the angels of wrath and mercy until she returns home.”

The woman asked: “O' Prophet of God! Who has the most rights over a man?” He said: “His parents.” She asked: “Who has the most rights over a woman?” He said: “Her husband.” She asked: “Do I have the same rights over him that he has over me?” The Prophet said: “No. Not even one one-hundredth.” Then she said: “I swear by the One who rightfully appointed you to Prophethood that no man will ever own me.”[20](#)

The Prophet said:

حَقُّ الرَّجُلِ عَلَى الْمَرْأَةِ إِنْارَةُ السِّرَاجِ وَإِصْلَاحُ الطَّعَامِ وَأَنْ تَسْتَقْبِلَهُ عِنْدَ بَابِ بَيْتِهَا فَتُرْحَبَ بِهِ وَأَنْ تُقَدِّمَ إِلَيْهِ الطَّشْتَةَ وَالْمِنْدِيلَ وَأَنْ تُوضِيَهُ وَأَنْ لَا تَمْنَعَهُ نَفْسَهَا إِلَّا مِنْ عِلَّةٍ

“The right of the man over his wife is that she should turn on the light, prepare the food, and rush to warmly welcome him when he comes home. She should take him some water and a towel, wash his hands and not withdraw herself from him unless she has an excuse.”[21](#)

The Prophet said:

لَا تُؤَدِّي الْمَرْأَةُ حَقَّ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ حَتَّى تُؤَدِّيَ حَقَّ زَوْجِهَا

“A woman has not fulfilled God's rights unless she properly fulfills her husband's rights.”[22](#)

Imam Sadiq said:

أَيُّمَا امْرَأَةٍ بَاتَتْ وَزَوْجُهَا عَلَيْهَا سَاخِطٌ فِي حَقِّ لَمْ تُقْبَلْ مِنْهَا صَلَاةٌ حَتَّى يَرْضَى عَنْهَا

“The prayers of a woman who passes a night while her husband is unhappy with her regarding his rights, will not be accepted until he is pleased with her.”[23](#)

The Women's Holy War

Imam Baqir has been narrated to have said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ كَتَبَ عَلَى الرِّجَالِ الجِهَادَ وَعَلَى النِّسَاءِ الجِهَادَ؛ فَجِهَادُ الرَّجُلِ أَنْ يَبْذُلَ مَالَهُ وَدَمَهُ حَتَّى يُقْتَلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ، وَجِهَادُ الْمَرْأَةِ أَنْ تَصْبِرَ عَلَى مَا تَرَى مِنْ أَدَى زَوْجِهَا وَعَيْرَتِهِ.

“God, the Almighty has decreed holy war for both men and women. The holy war for men is to expend their property and their blood until they attain martyrdom in the way of God. A woman’s holy war is to be patient with troubles she experiences from her husband and his jealousy.”²⁴

Imam Baqir has considered the house to be the front in this tradition. The soldiers who fight in this front are the women. The most important weapon they use in this war is their patience. The swords and the spears are the troubles she experiences from her husband. The woman should not escape from this front. She should withstand all this with patience and perseverance until her life terminates with a good ending.

Many of the women who have not been properly educated in this respect, and are inexperienced may lose the war, abandon their house, and deprive their dear children of maternal love. Thus, they choose eternal bitterness for themselves, their husband and their children. On the other hand, there are some patient women who diligently guide the vessel of life through the stormy waves of their husbands’ wrath, zeal and bothering until they settle down, and attain victory and prosperity for themselves and their children.

Imam Sadiq has admonished women not to make up for men other than their husband. He said:

أَيُّمَا امْرَأَةٍ تَطَيَّبَتْ لِغَيْرِ زَوْجِهَا لَمْ يُقْبَلْ مِنْهَا صَلَاةٌ حَتَّى تَغْتَسِلَ مِنْ طَيِّبِهَا كَغَسَلِهَا مِنْ جَنَابَتِهَا.

“God will not accept the prayers of any woman who puts on perfume for a man other than her husband until she bathes from her (having applied) perfume just as she bathes after intercourse.”²⁵

Regarding the woman's gratefulness for her husband's efforts, Imam Sadiq said:

أَيُّمَا امْرَأَةٍ قَالَتْ لِزَوْجِهَا: مَا رَأَيْتُ مِنْكَ خَيْرًا قَطُّ، فَقَدْ حَبَطَ عَمَلُهَا.

“The good deeds of any woman who tells her husband that she has never seen any good from him during her life will be cancelled, and wiped off from her record of deeds.”²⁶

We briefly discussed the rights of men and women. If the men and women abide by these rules in the Islamic society, they shall have a sweet and prosperous life. There is a delicate point in a verse in the Holy Qur’an:

أَحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ

“Permitted to you, on the night of the fast is the approach to your wives. They are your garments, and ye are their garments.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2: 187]

This is a beautiful point. The husband and wife are like garments for each other. Garments are used for coverage, tranquility, and the protection and beauty of the body. Couples cover up each other's faults, and are a means of each other's comfort and tranquility, too. This coverage encompasses all aspects of their life.

They are supposed to cover up each other's faults. They are not supposed to talk about each other's bad temper with other people. They should not divulge their private secrets. They should respect each other. As we said before while discussing the previous traditions, they should not accuse each other, since then they will both be subject to destruction.

They should be patient and withstand each other's bad temper, so that God grants them the great promised rewards. The husband and wife are great blessings for each other as Imam Sajjad said. They should share the sweet moments of life as well as its hardships. They should possess a high spirit and ambition so that their children grow up to be eminent people. Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of the Noble Prophet of God :

قَوْلُ الرَّجُلِ لِلْمَرْأَةِ إِنِّي أُحِبُّكَ لَا يَذْهَبُ مِنْ قَلْبِكَ أَبَدًا.

“The words of a man who tells his wife ‘I love you’ will never leave her heart and mind.”²⁷

This will cause the wife to love her husband and be his support during times of hardship.

1. Your wife.
2. In the other version it is followed by: “you must treat her with compassion, since she is your prisoner whom you feed and clothe. If she is ignorant, you should pardon her.”
3. As translated by William Chittick.
4. Tafsir-i-Namunah, v. 16, p.393.
5. Nizame Huquq Zan Dar Islam, p.242.
6. Tafsir-i-Namunah, v.3, p.372.
7. Minhaj al-Salihin, v.2, p.279.
8. Makarim al-Akhlaq, p.216.
9. Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 14, p. 122.
10. Ibid.
11. Makarim al-Akhlaq, p.216.
12. Makarim al-Akhlaq, p.216.
13. Jami' al-Sa'adat, v.2, p. 142.
14. Jami' al-Sa'adat,
15. Ibid. p. 143.
16. Irshad al-Qulub, v. 1, p. 175.
17. Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.2, p.643.
18. Ibid.
19. Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 15, p.249.

- [20.](#) Makarim al-Akhlaq, p.214.
[21.](#) Makarim al-Akhlaq, p.214.
[22.](#) Ibid. p.215.
[23.](#) Ibid.
[24.](#) Ibid.
[25.](#) Makarim al-Akhlaq, p.215.
[26.](#) Ibid.
[27.](#) Furu' al-Kafi, v.5, p.569.

Right n. 21: The Right of your Slave

حق الرعية بملك اليمين

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِمَلِكِ الْيَمِينِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ خَلَقُ رَبِّكَ، وَلِحُمُكَ وَدَمُكَ وَأَنَّكَ تَمْلِكُهُ لَا أَنْتَ صَنَعْتَهُ دُونَ اللَّهِ وَلَا خَلَقْتَ لَهُ سَمْعًا وَلَا بَصَرًا وَلَا أُجْرِيَتْ لَهُ رِزْقًا وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ كَفَاكَ ذَلِكَ، ثُمَّ سَخَّرَهُ لَكَ وَأَنْتُمْ مَنَّكَ عَلَيْهِ وَاسْتَوْدَعَكَ إِيَّاهُ لِتَحْفَظَهُ فِيهِ وَتَسِيرَ فِيهِ بِسِيرَتِهِ فَتَطْعِمَهُ مِمَّا تَأْكُلُ وَتُلْبِسُهُ مِمَّا تَلْبَسُ وَلَا تُكَلِّفُهُ مَا لَا يُطِيقُ، فَإِنْ كَرِهْتَ [هُ] خَرَجْتَ إِلَى اللَّهِ مِنْهُ وَاسْتَبَدَّلْتَ بِهِ وَلَمْ تُعَذِّبْ خَلْقَ اللَّهِ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of your subject through being your slave is that you should know that he is a creature of your Lord and is made of the same flesh and blood as you. And you only own him, but you have not created him apart from God. And you have not created his hearing and sight, nor do you provide his daily sustenance; rather it is God who gives you sufficiency for that.

Then He subjugated him to you, entrusted him to you, and provisionally consigned him to you so that you may protect him there,¹ and treat him as well as He has treated you. So feed him with what you eat yourself, and clothe him with what you clothe yourself. And do not burden him with what he cannot withstand. And if you dislike him, you ought to let him go and replace him, but do not torment God's creature. And there is no power but in God.

We discussed what Imam Sajjad presented about the right of the trainer through ownership earlier in Chapter 17. In this chapter, we shall discuss the right of the slaves. There we stated that at the beginning Islam accepted the issue of slavery and did not issue a decree as to the slaves' freedom all at once since it was not economically feasible. However, since the issue of slavery was unavoidable at first, Islam established certain rights for slaves, and advised the Muslims to wholeheartedly honor their rights.

Islam and the Worth of the Slaves

1 – Islam eliminated the distinctions between the master and the slave, and it declared all equal. The Noble Prophet Muhammad said:

إِخْوَانُكُمْ جَعَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِتْنَةً تَحْتَ أَيْدِيكُمْ فَمَنْ كَانَ أَخُوهُ تَحْتَ يَدِهِ فَلْيُطْعِمْهُ مِنْ طَعَامِهِ وَلْيَلْبِسْهُ مِنْ لِبَاسِهِ وَلَا يُكَلِّفْهُ مَا يَغْلِبُهُ فَإِنْ كَلَّفَهُ مَا يَغْلِبُهُ فَلْيَعِزَّهُ.

“Your slaves are your brothers. God has set them as a trial under your authority. Therefore whoever has mastery over one of his brothers should feed him from what he eats himself, and should clothe him with what he wears himself, and should not burden him with tasks beyond his strength, and should assist him in doing whatever hard work he asks him to do.”²

2 – The Prophet of Islam has honored slaves so much that he has not even allowed anyone to call them a slave or a maid:

لَا يَقُلْ أَحَدُكُمْ: هَذَا عَبْدِي وَهَذِهِ أَمْتِي. وَلْيَقُلْ: فَتَايَ وَفَتَاتِي.

“No one is allowed to say this is my slave or that is my maid. You should say this is my young man, and that is my young lady.”³

3 So much was done to improve the conditions of slaves in Islam, and they were so honored so much that no one dared beat his slave lest he would be recognized as the worst person in the world. This was done so that no one can beat someone else just because he is a slave, so that no one can hurt one of the servants of God nor oppress them. Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet : “Do you want me to tell you who the worst people are?” The companions said: “Yes. O Prophet of God!” Then the Prophet said:

مَنْ سَافَرَ وَحْدَهُ وَمَنْعَ رِفْدَهُ وَضَرَبَ عَبْدَهُ.

“Those who travel alone, do not admit guests, and beat their slaves.”⁴

You can see from this tradition that the Prophet has introduced those who beat or hurt their slaves as the worst of the people.

Imam Ali and his Generosity with His Slave

Once Imam Ali went to the bazaar and purchased two garments. He bought one for two Dirhams and the

other one for three Dirhams. He donated the one he had bought for three Dirhams to his slave Qanbar and took the other one for himself. His slave said: “You are the Commander of the Faithful. You climb up the pulpit and deliver sermons to the people. You deserve more to wear the more expensive garment.” Imam Ali replied: “I am ashamed to seek superiority over you in this respect. I heard God’s Prophet say:

أَلْبَسُوهُمْ مِمَّا تَلْبَسُونَ وَأَطْعِمُوهُمْ مِمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ

“Clothe them with what you wear yourselves, and feed them with what you eat.”⁵

The Prophet of Islam said:

“Your slaves are your brothers. Treat them with kindness. Seek their help in performing your hard tasks, and help them in the performance of difficult tasks.”⁶

He also said:

أَوْصَانِي حَبِيبِي جِبْرِئِيلُ بِالرَّفْقِ بِالرَّقِيقِ حَتَّى ظَنَنْتُ أَنَّهُ سَيَضْرِبُ لِي أَجَلًا يَخْرُجُ فِيهِ حُرًّا

“My friend Gabriel advised me about treating my slaves with gentleness so much that I thought he would soon establish a deadline for freeing them.”⁷

Abu-Dharr and Donating a Garment

Abu-Dharr al-Ghifari owned two long expensive togas with which he covered himself. After a while, he used one of them to make himself a garment. He used to wear a cloak on top of that. He donated the other one to his slave. When the people found out, they blamed him and said: “You would have looked more handsome if you used both togas to make an attire for yourself.”

Abu-Dharr replied: “But I heard the Prophet of Islam say: “Clothe your slaves with what you wear yourselves, and feed them with the same with which you feed yourselves.”⁸ Once the Prophet of Islam noticed a man was riding while his slave was walking behind him. The Prophet said: “Let your slave ride with you since he is your brother. His spirit is similar to your spirit.”⁹

Imam Ridha and Slaves

Yaser and Nader were both slaves of Imam Ridha . They said that Imam Ridha told them: “Whenever you see me while you are sitting down and eating, do not move until you finish your meal.”¹⁰

Imam Sadiq and Slaves

Once Imam Sadiq asked one of his slaves to go and do something. He went, and did not return on time.

The Imam went after him, and found him asleep. He sat there and waited until he woke up. Then Imam Sadiq faced him and said: “O man! Why do you sleep both at night and during the daytime? The night is for you to rest, and the day is for you to struggle to fulfill your needs.”¹¹ The few examples above are only cited to illustrate how the Immaculate Imams treated their slaves and how much they honored them and respected them.

Pledges for the Slaves

The Prophet of Islam did a lot to raise the status of the slaves. As an example, he made a pledge of brotherhood for slaves such as Bilal al-Habashi (the Abyssinian), Zayd ibn Harithe and Kharizat ibn Zayd with free Muslims such as Khalid ibn Rowayhe Khasami, Hamza ibn Abi Talib and Abu Bakr ibn Abi Quhafah. He also married off many of the women from noble families to the slaves. He first married off his own aunt’s first daughter named Zaynab, the daughter of Jahsh to the slave named Zayd ibn Harithe.

Then he married off the daughter of the head of the Bani Bayazeh tribe – the daughter of Zeyad ibn Lobayd to Jowbayr. In addition to this, he appointed Usama ibn Zayd (the son of a slave) to be the head of the Islamic armed forces and go to Syria to fight with the Roman enemies. This he did even though there were many brave free men such as Umar, Abu Bakr, and others from among the immigrants¹² and the helpers¹³ available to fill that position.

The Rewards for Freeing Slaves

So far, we have expressed the importance of the rights of the slaves as expressed by the Noble Prophet of Islam and the Immaculate Imams . Now we shall discuss the rewards for freeing slaves. We have already discussed the rights of the trainer through ownership, and the issue related to free slaves. There is a section in Wasa`il al-Sha`h by Sheikh Toosi called “Kitab ul-‘Itq”. In the first chapter of this section called “Bab ul-Estehbabe” there are many traditions regarding the rewards for freeing slaves. We will mention a few of them here.

In the first tradition in this chapter we read: “Muhammad ibn al-Husayn quoted on the authority of al-Husayn ibn al-Sa’ed on the authority of Abi Abdullah Ja’far ibn Muhammad :

يَعْتِقُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِكُلِّ عَضْوٍ مِنْهُ عَضْوًا مِنَ النَّارِ

“God the Exalted the High will save whoever frees his slave from the Fire. For every organ that he frees, God will save one of his organs from the Fire.”¹⁴

In the fourth tradition in this chapter we read: “Husayn ibn Muhammad quoted on the authority of al-Hasan ibn Ali on the authority of his grandfathers on the authority of Bashir an-Nab’bal that he heard

Imam Sadiq say:

مَنْ أَعْتَقَ نَسَمَةً صَالِحَةً لِرُوحِهِ اللَّهُ كَفَّرَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ مَكَانَ كُلِّ عَضْوٍ مِنْهُ عَضْوًا مِنَ النَّارِ.

“God will forgive whoever frees a good servant of God for God’s sake. God will save his organs from the Fire (of Hell) – an organ will be saved for each organ freed.”¹⁵

The Evening of the Day of ‘Arafah⁴⁹⁸ and Freeing Slaves

In the sixth tradition of this chapter, Imam Sadiq has been quoted as saying: “The Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali freed one thousand slaves using money he earned with his own hard work.” In the second chapter of this section, it has been stated that it is recommended to free slaves on the evening of the day of ‘Arafah. Two traditions from Imam Sadiq have been narrated to support this. The first one is:

يُسْتَحَبُّ لِلرَّجُلِ أَنْ يَتَقَرَّبَ إِلَى اللَّهِ عَشِيَّةَ عَرَفَةَ وَيَوْمَ عَرَفَةَ بِالْعِتْقِ وَالصَّدَقَةِ.

“It is recommended for man to seek proximity to God on the day and evening of ‘Arafah by freeing slaves and giving charity.”¹⁶

Thus from what we have described one can better comprehend the depth of the meaningful words of Imam Sajjad regarding slaves. Therefore, we should treat them as the Noble Prophet and the Immaculate Imams did.

- ^{1.} In your shelter.
- ^{2.} Islam and Human Rights, p.204, quoted from Nahjul Fasahat, p. 120.
- ^{3.} Ibid. from Shubhat al-Islam, p.34.
- ^{4.} Islam and Human Rights, p. 204, quoted from Bihar al-Anwar, v. 16, p.40.
- ^{5.} Ibid.
- ^{6.} Ibid. p.206.
- ^{7.} Ibid. quoted from “The History of Slavery” (Persian text), p.74.
- ^{8.} Islam and Human Rights, quoted from Bihar al-Anwar, v. 16, p.40.
- ^{9.} Ibid. quoted from The History of Slavery (Persian text), p.74.
- ^{10.} Ibid. quoted from Bihar al-Anwar, v. 15, p.41.
- ^{11.} Ibid.
- ^{12.} Those who emigrated from Makkah to Madina.
- ^{13.} Those who lived in Madina and helped the Prophet and the other emigrants who accompanied him.
- ^{14.} Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 16, pp. 2-4.
- ^{15.} Ibid.
- ^{16.} Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 16, pp.2-4

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