

The Status of Mothers in Islam

“And We have enjoined man in respect of his parents-- his mother bears him with faintings upon faintings and his weaning takes two years-- saying: Be grateful to Me and to both your parents; to Me is the eventual coming. And if they contend with you that you should associate with Me what you have no knowledge of, do not obey them, and keep company with them in this world kindly...”(The Quran, 31: 14-15)

"And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve any but Him and goodness to your parents."(The Quran, 17:23)

"Heaven lies beneath the feet of mothers". (Prophet of Islam)

"To look affectionately and kindly at one's father and mother is devotion."(Prophet of Islam)

"God's satisfaction lies in the consent of parents, and His wrath in their wrath." (Prophet of Islam)

"If you wish God to grant you a long life, make your parents happy." (Imam Sadiq)

"Heaven lies beneath the feet of mothers."

The above utterance which is a quotation from the Seal of the prophets, is a badge of honour granted to mothers, and if we place all the words, written or spoken, about the position of a mother on one scale and the above sentence on the other scale, the utterance of the Holy Prophet will definitely tip the balance in its favor.

In glorifying the position of a mother, Islam has not confined itself to advice, injunctions and a series of verbal counsels, but as a legislator, it has also regarded the command and prohibition by a mother as something obligatory to follow in some cases.

For example when a case which is recommended by God comes across the prohibition by a mother, children are advised to follow their mother's order. If an offspring wishes to observe a recommended fast for the sake of a spiritual reward or undertake a religiously recommended trip, but his mother forbids it, it

is incumbent upon him to obey his mother; and if he disobeys her in this respect, he does not only fail to get a spiritual reward, but his refusal to obey also means committing a sin.

Another case, in which a mother's order is respected even in comparison with God's command, is when an obligatory divine order comes across a mother's prohibition, on the condition that the action concerned does not fall within the imperative and obligatory injunctions such as daily prayer, or the fast of the month of Ramadhan.

In such a case, obeying a mother's order is prior to God's command. For example, if there is a question of jihad (holy war), those who are able to fight the infidels, must take part in the battle, but if a young man possesses all the qualifications for participation in the holy war, except that his mother does not allow him to go (on the condition that his non – participation causes no damage to the Muslims), he can abstain from participation in the war solely because of his mother's prohibition, and decide to stay by her side.

A man came to the Noble Prophet of Islam, saying: "O, prophet of God! I am young and vigorous, and ready for action and service, and wish to go to the battle–front for the advancement of Islam, but my mother does not let me leave her and go to war."

The Noble Prophet said: "Go and stay with your mother. I swear to the God Who chose me as prophet that the spiritual reward which you receive for serving her even one night and making her happy with your presence, is greater than a one–year long holy war."¹

Islam considers a respect for parents and observance of their rights to be the greatest duty of the people after the divine injunctions. The Quran says in this connection:

أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ

"Be grateful to Me and to both your parents." (31: 14)

Here God Almighty, immediately after referring to His own right, speaks about the right of parents.

A man came to the Seal of the Prophets and said: "O Prophet of God! Guide me, to whom should I be good in order to benefit completely from my good deed?"

He said: "Be good to your mother." He asked: "Next to her?"

The Prophet repeated: "Be good to your mother." He said again: "And next to her?"

The Prophet answered: "To your mother."

The man said: To what other person should be good?"

The Prophet said: "To your father."²

A man asked Imam Sadiq: "What is the favour that God has ordered in the Quran to be shown to parents?" The Imam answered: "It means that you should adopt a fine and admirable way in your association with them and not compel them to ask your help in time of need, but rather try to meet their needs before they ask you."

God says:

لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ

"By no means shall you attain righteousness until you spend benevolently out of the assets you love." (3:92)

If your parents cause you uneasiness, you should not make them uneasy, and if they beat you up, you should not hurt them. You should pray for them and throw nothing but a look of kindness and affection at them. Your voice should never be raised above theirs, and you should never walk ahead of them.³

The fourth Imam says:

و أما حقُّ أمِّك، فأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهَا حَمَلَتْكَ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَمِلُ أَحَدٌ أَحَدًا، وَأَعْطَتْكَ مِنْ ثَمَرَةِ قَلْبِهَا مَا لَا يُعْطِي أَحَدٌ أَحَدًا، وَوَقَّتَكَ بِجَمِيعِ جَوَارِحِهَا، وَلَمْ تَبَالِ أَنْ تَجُوعَ وَتَطْعَمَكَ، وَتَعْطِشَ وَتَسْقِيكَ، وَتَعْرِى وَتَكْسُوكَ، وَتَضْحَى وَتُظْلِكَ، وَتَهْجِرَ النَّوْمَ لِأَجْلِكَ، وَوَقَّتَكَ الْحَرَّ وَالْبَرْدَ، لِتَكُونَ لَهَا، فإِنَّكَ لَا تُطِيقُ شُكْرَهَا إِلَّا بِعَوْنِ اللَّهِ وَتَوْفِيقِهِ.

"It is your mother's right towards you that you should remember that she carried you in her womb for several months and nourished you with the sap of her life. She employed all her essence to keep and protect you. She did not care if she herself went hungry, while you were fed to satiety; or to go thirsty herself, while your thirst was quenched; or to have no clothes, while you were well-covered; or to stay in the hot sun, while you were sheltered; She ignored her sweet sleep and tolerated the pain of sleeplessness for your sake. She protected you against the heat of summer and cold of winter. She bore all that pain in order to have you, and you may have her. You should know that you are unable to thank your mother appropriately unless God helps you and grants you the favour and ability to repay her."⁴

The rights which have been determined in Islam for a mother, and some examples of which have already been mentioned, are due to the pains she has borne in developing the life and body of her offspring, so that after tolerating such back-breaking pains, she may offer a well-bred human being to the society.

Naturally, only such a mother, who performs her motherly duties perfectly, and brings up a useful and competent individual with her overall efforts, can enjoy these rights.

A mother who, for the sake of self-indulgence or for the purpose of attending dance parties or centers of debauchery and nightly revelry, evades her duty of educating her offspring and puts him or her in charge of a nursery or kindergarten, is, in fact, committing an unpardonable injustice towards her offspring, and thus she cannot expect to benefit from a mother's rights and position.

In appearance, the life of children in a kindergarten is fine and pleasant. Their clothes are clean and pretty, their hair is well combed, their school is managed in accordance with hygienic rules, and the rooms are well-equipped and built with due regard to technical criteria. Their beds have clean sheets, and their food is prepared under a proper program. The children get sufficient playing time and timely sleep. In short, a great deal of their physical and psychological inclinations is satisfied.

But there are also other emotions and desires in a child which the social environment of a kindergarten cannot satisfy. The particular caresses which create joy and exhilaration in a child can be provided only in a mother's lap, not in a kindergarten. A child, living among a hundred other infants, has a non-independent life, and consequently he cannot acquire the personality and personal independence which are desired by a human being.

At home, every movement and gesture of a child, and his play and laughter draw the attention of the parents. The child learns much from this attention, and gets much pleasure from it, whereas in the school environment, an infant, surrounded by a hundred other infants, resembles a wave breaking and disappearing amidst a hundred other waves.[5](#)

To educate a child requires constant care, and this can be provided by parents alone, since it is they and especially the mother who, at the commencement of the child's life, recognize those physical and psychological characteristics and aptitudes of the child whose training is considered the goal of education.

The blunder committed by the present-day society is to replace the family hearth and mother's lap by kindergarten and elementary schools. The mothers who send their children to the nurseries in order to free themselves for undertaking office jobs, following their whims, engaging in their own literary and artistic activities or spending their time on playing bridge or going to movies, are actually extinguishing the family hearth where their children may learn many things.

The growth rate of those children who live under the care of their family is greater than those who stay in a boarding school among the children of their own age-group.

A child very soon lays the foundation of his own physical, mental and emotional characteristics within the framework of his environmental conditions. Consequently, he learns little from his fellow-children, and does not show proper growth when he is lowered to an obscure position in the school.[6](#)

Such mothers do not only damage the happiness of their children, but also deal a blow on the body of the society, and furthermore they fail to benefit from such children. A child who has not learnt the lesson

of affection from his mother, and his emotions are not boosted in her lap, cannot be expected to show affection in subsequent years.

- [1.](#) Al-Kafi, Vol.2. P. 130
- [2.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74.
- [3.](#) Al-Kafi, vol. 2.
- [4.](#) Makarem Al- Akhlaq, of Tobarsi. Vol. I, P.486; Risalat al-Huquq, Right 22: The Right of the Mother.
- [5.](#) A child from the viewpoint of Heritage and Education, Vol. I. P.267.
- [6.](#) Undiscovered Man, 260.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/status-mothers-islam-sayyid-muhammad-sohofi/status-mothers-islam#comment-0>