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## Fraternity in Islam

One of the strongest links joining people together is the relationship of brotherhood. People love and sympathize with each other and share in the delights and miseries of their fellow brethren. There is the possibility of occasional differences between them, but soon it is changed into love and affection through forgiveness.

As Islam aims at solidarity of society and strengthening human relations, it has fostered this relationship and has declared that all Muslims and believers are brothers to each other.

Islam regards the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s. a.w. a.w.) 1 as the father and all Muslims as his children; therefore the Muslims are brothers to each other.

This feeling of brotherhood of Islam knows no boundary whatsoever, and all Muslims irrespective of their colour, place of birth and language, are equal and brothers to each other. The Qur'an dictates:

The believers are but brothers to each other, so make reconciliation between your two brothers, and fear Allah that you may receive mercy. (49:10)

As is evident from History, the pre-Islamic period was full of hatred, enmity and strife amongst people. Islam, through its teachings, infused a new life of fraternity in humanity, thus giving rise to Islamic brotherhood. The Qur'an again emphasizes this point:

And hold fast all together by the rope of Allah and be not divided among yourselves, and remember Allah's bounty on you, for you were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, you became brethren; and you were on the brink of the pit of fire; and He saved you from it . (3:103).

Islam has laid down the mutual rights and obligations of Muslims towards each other and they are obliged to discharge the same. Al-Imam Zaynu 'l-'Abidin (a. s.)2 has written in his Risalatu 'l-Huquq:

And it is the duty of your fellow co-religionists in general to have peaceful feelings amongst them, and to spread the wings of mercy upon them; to be gentle towards the wrong doers among them and to reform them (by earning their love); to be grateful to those who are virtuous in their character or are generous

towards you; because their righteousness of character (without any apparent of benefits to you) is in itself a generosity towards you, as they have thus saved you from their misbehaviour and spared you the effort of protecting yourself from them, and kept their troubles away from you.

Therefore, pray, while you pray, for all of them and treat all Muslims according to their proper position. Keep the elders in the position of your father, the youths in the place of your child, the contemporaries in the position of your brother.

Thus, treat any of them who comes to you with grace and love; and convey to your (Muslim) brother whatever is incumbent on a brother from a brother3.

The sixth Imam, Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

A Muslim is brother of another Muslim, and he is his eyes (to look through good and evil) and his mirror (to point out his merits and demerits) and his guide. Never does he betray him nor does any injustice to him nor deceives him nor tells him any lie nor backbites him.4

The Holy Prophet said about the mutual rights of Muslims towards each other:

... (A Muslim) must forgive the mistakes (of his fellow Muslim) and should sympathize (with him) in his distress; should cover his defects and pardon his slips; should accept his apology, protect him in his absence (against his backbiters) and continue giving him good advices; should preserve his friendship ... visit him in sickness ... accept his invitation and gift, and equally compensate his favour; should have regard for his affection; talk to him gently ... and love his friends and should not be jealous of them ... should not leave him in the thick of miseries and (lastly) should like for him whatever good he likes for himself, and should hate for him whatever evil he hates for himself.5

The sixth Imam, Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

Like for your Muslim brother what you like for yourself. In the event of need, ask from him, and if he asks for something give it to him. Do not be reluctant in doing a good to him and he should not be reluctant in doing a good to you. Be his support because he is your support. Protect him in his absence and visit him when he is present. Respect him and have regard for him since he is from you and you are from him. If he becomes angry do not break off your relation with him, but accept his excuse instead. If good befalls him, thank Allah (on his behalf), and if he is in trouble, rush to his help. If his enemies deceive or try to trap him, help him and protect him from victimization.

The above examples show how Islam has emphasized the fraternal rights of Muslims.

Apart from these general rules, Islam has laid down detailed rules which deal with the duties of Muslims towards each other in all walks of life and which have been much emphasized by the leaders of Islam.

1. (s.a.w.a.w.) is the abbreviation of Arabic phrase sal 'Allahu `alayhi wa aalihi wa sallam (may Allah's pcace and benediction be upon him and his progeny).

- $\underline{\textbf{2.}} \; (a.s.) \; \text{is the abbreviation of Arabic phrase `aalay-hi / ha / himu 's-salam (may peace be upon him/her/them)}.$
- 3. Tuhafu 'l`uqul, p.195
- 4. al-Kafi, vol. 2, p.166
- 5. Biharu 'l-anwar, Kitabu 'l-`ishrah, vol. 74, p. 236
- 6. al-Kafi, vol.3, p.170

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