



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL

MAINTAINING TIES OF KINSHIP

From the Qur'an -

There are many verses in Holy Quran related to upholding ties of kinship. Some of them are given below:

- Allah Almighty says in Holy Quran: *“O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him (Adam) He created his wife [Hawwa (Eve)], and from them both He created many men and women and fear Allah through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship). Surely, Allah is Ever an All-Watcher over you”* (Quran, 4:1). From this verse, we can say that we should not sever ties of kinship because Allah Almighty does not like those who do so.
- In another verse of Noble Quran Allah (SWT) says: *“Let not those among you who are endowed with grace and amplitude of means resolve by oath against helping their kinsmen, those in want and those who migrated in the path of Allah. Let them forgive and overlook. Do you not wish that Allah should forgive you? Indeed Allah is oft-Forgiving, most Merciful.”* (Quran, 24:22)
- One must maintain ties of kinship and treat one's family with kindness, even if that family does not treat you with kindness. Allah Almighty says in Holy Quran: *“Surely all believers are brothers. So make peace between brothers and fear Allah that mercy may be shown to you.”* (Quran 49: 10)

From the hadeeths -

We can learn about keeping ties of kinship from the life of our beloved Prophet (SAW). We have various Hadiths on upholding ties of kinship some of them are mentioned below:

- *“Allah, the Exalted, says: I am the Most Merciful, I created Ar-Rahim and I cut out a name for it from my name, so whoever keeps good ties with it, I will keep good ties with him, and whoever cuts it off, I will cut him and finish him off.”* (Abu Dawud)

STEPS2ALLAH

- *“There is no sin that Allah more readily inflicts the punishment for in this life, in addition to what Allah keeps as punishment for the sinner in the Hereafter, than the sin of transgression and cutting off relations with relatives.” (At-Tirmidhi)*
- *“Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should maintain good relation with his kindred.” (Al-Bukhari)*
- Keeping ties of kinship is a sign of faith. Abu Hurayrah (RA) narrated that the Prophet (SAW) said: *“Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should be hospitable to his guest, and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should maintain his kinship ties; and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should speak well or remain silent.”(Al-Bukhari)*
- It is a cause for increased blessings in one’s provisions and age. Anas (RA) narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said: *“Whoever loves to be granted ample provisions and a long life, should maintain good ties with his or her relatives.”(Al-Bukhari).*
- *“A Muslim is not allowed to abandon another Muslim brother for more than three days” (Sahih Bukhari)*
- In another Hadith Holy Prophet (SAW) said: *“Never hate each other, never be jealous of each other; never think ill of each other, never boycott each other, always remain brothers unto one another, Oh servants of Allah.” (Sahih Bukhari)*
- Duas to be fulfilled. *“A person’s dua will still be answered as long as his dua does not involve sin or breaking ties of kinship and so long as he does not become impatient” (Muslim)*
- In another Hadith Holy Prophet (SAW) said: *“Do you know what is better than charity and fasting and prayer? It is keeping peace and good relations between people, as quarrels and bad feelings destroy mankind” (Muslim)*

Who is this “kinship” in Islamic terms?

Relatives are of two types: mahrams and non-mahrams. The guideline on mahram relatives is: each two persons who, if one were male and the other female, it would not be permissible for them to get married, such as fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, grandfathers and grandmothers no matter how far the line of ascent reaches, children and grandchildren no matter how far the line of descent reaches, paternal uncles and aunts, and maternal uncles and aunts.

With regard to the children of paternal uncles and aunts and maternal uncles and aunts, they are not mahram relatives, because it is permissible to marry them.

Non-mahram relatives are all other relatives, such as the son of your paternal aunt, the daughter of your paternal aunt, the son of your maternal aunt, the daughter of your maternal aunt, and so on.

Some fuqaha' are of the view that the relatives with whom ties of kinship must be upheld are the mahram relatives only. As for non-mahram relatives, it is mustahabb to uphold ties with them but it is not obligatory. This is the view of the Hanafis and is the lesser-known view of the Maalikis; it is also the view of Abu'l-Khattaab among the Hanbalis. Their evidence is that if it is obligatory to uphold ties of kinship with all relatives, it would be obligatory to uphold ties of kinship with all of the children of Adam, and that is impossible, so it is essential to set guidelines on the relationship which makes it obligatory to uphold and honour ties of kinship and makes it forbidden to cut those ties, and that is the mahram relatives.

They also quoted as evidence the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): "One should not be married to a woman and her paternal aunt, or a woman and her maternal aunt, at the same time." Narrated by al-Bukhaari and Muslim (1408). Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar said: al-Tabaraani added to the hadeeth of Ibn 'Abbaas: "If you do that, you have severed your ties of kinship." This was classed as saheeh by Ibn Hibbaan. And Abu Dawood narrated in *al-Maraaseel* a report from 'Eesa ibn Talhah that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbade being married to a woman and any of her relatives at the same time, for fear of severing ties of kinship. End quote from *al-Diraayah fi Takhreej Ahaadeeth al-Hidaayah* (2/56).

The way in which they understood this hadeeth to prove their point was explained by some of the Maaliki scholars (may Allaah have mercy on him). Al-Quraafi said: The eighth issue regarding the obligation of upholding ties of kinship: Shaykh al-Tartooshi said: one of the scholars said: rather upholding ties of kinship is obligatory if the relatives are mahrams, which refers to each two persons who, if one were male and the other female, it would not be permissible for them to get married, such as fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, grandfathers and grandmothers no matter how far the line of ascent reaches, children and grandchildren no matter how far the line of descent reaches, paternal uncles and aunts, and maternal uncles and aunts. As for the children of these, upholding ties of kinship between them is not obligatory, because it is permissible for them to get married. The soundness of this view is indicated by the fact that it is haraam to be married to two sisters, or to a woman and her paternal aunt or to a woman and her maternal aunt at the same time, because that leads to severing the ties of kinship, and avoiding something haraam is obligatory, and honouring them and not harming them is obligatory. But is it permissible to be married to two female paternal cousins or two female maternal cousins at the same time, even if they are jealous of one another and sever ties with one another, and that is because upholding ties of kinship between them is not obligatory. End quote from *al-Farooq* (1/147).

The second opinion concerning this issue is that it is obligatory to uphold ties of kinship with all of them, with no distinction between mahrams and non-mahrams. This is one view of the Hanafis and is the well known view of the Maalikis. It was also stated by Ahmad, and it is what may be understood from the general terms in which the Shaafa'is discussed this issue, because none of them singled out the mahram relatives in this regard. *Al-Mawsoo'ah al-Fiqhiyyah al-Kuwaitiyyah* (3/83).

See also: *Ghadha' al-Albaab* by al-Safaareeni (1/354) and *Bareeqah Mahmoudiyyah* (4/153).

There are other opinions concerning this matter. It says in *Subul al-Salaam* (2/628): It should be noted that the scholars differed concerning the definition of the relatives with whom it is obligatory to uphold ties of kinship. It was said that it is relatives with whom marriage is haraam, such that if one of them were male marriage to the other would be forbidden. Based on that, it does not include the children of paternal or maternal uncles and aunts. Those who hold this view quote as evidence the fact that it is haraam to be married to a woman and her paternal aunt or maternal aunt at the same time, because that leads to severing of ties of kinship.

And it was said that it is those who are connected by inheritance which is indicated by the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), "then the next closest and the next closest."

And it was said that it refers to those who are related to one another regardless of whether they are connected by inheritance or not.

Moreover, upholding of ties of kinship, as al-Qaadi 'Iyaad said, is of varying degrees, some of which are higher than others. At the very least, it is not forsaking one another, and upholding ties by speaking, even if it only saying salaam. That varies according to possibility and need. It may be obligatory or mustahabb. If a person upholds ties to some extent, even if it is not to the fullest extent, he cannot be called a breaker of ties of kinship, and if he fails to do what he is able to do and should do, then he cannot be called an upholder of ties of kinship.

Al-Qurtubi said: The degrees of relationship which must be upheld are general and specific. The general relationship is that which is based on religion, which must be upheld by means of mutual love, sincerity, fairness and fulfilment of rights both obligatory and mustahabb.

In addition to that, the specific relationship also involves spending on relatives, checking on them and overlooking their mistakes. End quote.

Your mother is the closest relative to you and the one more deserving of your kind treatment, and then your father. Abu Hurairah (radiyallaahu-anhu) reported that a man said: O Messenger of Allaah! Who among the people is the most worthy of my good companionship? The Prophet (sallal-laahu-alayhi-

wasallam) said: Your mother. The man said, 'Then who?' The Prophet said: Then your mother. The man further asked, 'Then who?' The Prophet said: Then your mother. The man asked again, 'Then who?' The Prophet said: Then your father. [Hadeeth reported by Muslim]

After your mother and father, those who are closest to you are your children, blood brothers and sisters, uncles (or aunts) and cousins. And whenever a person is closer to you as a relative, he (or she) is entitled to more rights from you. Keeping the ties of kinship should be established in accordance with one's ability, so if your relatives live with you in the same country or close by, it is obligatory to visit them, honour them, show them kindness and assist them if they are in need.

Islam calls for the upholding of the ties of kinship because of the great effect that this has on achieving social cohesion and perpetuating cooperation and love among the Muslims. Upholding the ties of kinship is a duty because Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"... and fear Allaah through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship)..."

[al-Nisa' 4:1]

"And give to the kindred his due and to the miskeen (poor)..."

[al-Isra' 17:26]

Allaah has warned us against cutting the ties of kinship (interpretation of the meaning):

"And those who break the Covenant of Allaah, after its ratification, and sever that which Allaah has commanded to be joined (i.e., they sever the bond of kinship and are not good to their relatives), and work mischief in the land, on them is the curse (i.e., they will be far away from Allaah's Mercy); And for them is the unhappy (evil) home (i.e., Hell)." [al-Ra'd 13:25]

What punishment could be worse than the curse and the evil home that awaits those who sever the ties of kinship? They deny themselves the reward for upholding the ties of kinship in the Hereafter, in addition to denying themselves much good in this world, which is a long life and ample provision. The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Whoever would like his rizq (provision) to be increased and his life to be extended, should uphold the ties of kinship." (Reported by al-Bukhaari, 5986 and Muslim, 2557). Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: "The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'Allaah created the universe, and when He had finished, kinship (al-rahm) stood up and said, "This is the standing up of one who seeks Your protection from being cut off." Allaah said, "Yes, would it please

you if I were to take care of those who take care of you and cut off those who cut you off?" It said, "Of course." Allaah said, "Then your prayer is granted." The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, "Recite, if you wish (interpretation of the meaning): *'Would you then, if you were given the authority, do mischief in the land, and sever your ties of kinship? Such are they whom Allaah has cursed, so that He has made them deaf and blinded their sight.'* [Muhammad 47:22-23]." (Saheeh Muslim bi Sharh al-Nawawi, 16/112).

Once we understand this, we need to ask: who is the one who upholds the ties of kinship? This was explained by the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) when he said: "The one who maintains a relationship with his relatives only because they maintain a relationship with him is not truly upholding the ties of kinship. The one who truly upholds those ties is the one who does so even if they break off the relationship." (Reported by al-Bukhaari, 5645).

If the relationship is merely one of returning favours and giving like in return for like, and not taking the initiative, then this is not upholding the ties of kinship, it is only responding in kind. Some people follow the principle of giving a gift in return for a gift, and visiting in return for a visit, so if someone does not give them a gift, they do not give him a gift, and if he does not visit them, they do not visit him. This is not what is meant by upholding the ties of kinship at all, and this is not what is required by Islam. This is merely responding in kind, it is not the higher degree which Islam urges us to reach. A man said to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), "I have relatives with whom I try to keep in touch, but they cut me off. I treat them well, but they abuse me. I am patient and kind towards them, but they insult me." The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, "If you are as you say, then it is as if you are putting hot dust in their mouths. Allaah will continue to support you as long as you continue to do that." (Reported by Muslim with commentary by al-Nawawi, 16/115). Who could bear to put up with hot dust? We seek refuge with Allaah from cutting off the ties of kinship.

WHY IS IT DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN TIES OF KINSHIP?

1. Shaytan
2. Hasad
3. Culture
4. Constant back biting and evilness of the tongue
5. Love of the dunya
6. Lack of knowledge on the Deen
7. Lack of patience

HOW TO MAINTAIN TIES OF KINSHIP

1. Seek knowledge

- On patience
- Read the Qur'an and hadiths, and attend circles of knowledge
- *"The word 'Ar-Rahm' (womb) derives its name from Ar-Rahman (i.e., one of the names of Allah) and Allah said: 'I will keep good relation with the one who will keep good relation with you, (womb i.e. Kith and Kin) and sever the relation with him who will sever the relation with you, (womb, i.e. Kith and Kin)" [Bukhari].*
- On how to protect from shaytan
- On how to maintain intention
- On focussing on akhirah and less dunya
- On controlling the tongue

2. Find out who your relatives are

This is an obvious first-step, but many people skip it out of embarrassment of admitting that they don't know all their relatives. Have a sit-down with your parents and ask them about their brothers/sisters/uncles/aunts, etc. Draw a family tree and keep a digital copy on your computer or on paper.

3. Find out their contact details

Whether it's a phone number, an e-mail address, Facebook profile, MSN messenger, Skype or Twitter ID! (trust me, you'll be surprised!) Find out all your relatives' contact details and update your address book accordingly. You'll probably find it easier to get this information through your parents but you can also try with cousins, uncles and aunts.

4. Get in touch

If your relatives are using any of the online social tools, get in touch with them online with a simple salam. I'm sure they'll be pleasantly surprised to hear from you (who does not like to meet someone online they actually relate to?!). If a good old phone call is the only way to get in touch with them and if you don't know them very

well, rather than making a cold phone call, start breaking the ice by sending them regular text messages to their mobile phones ending with your name and perhaps a “son of so and so” or “daughter of so and so” so they can recognize you. After a while, give them a call (either with your parents around to ease the introduction) or on your own and inquire about your ‘text messages’ ;). There are lots of other ways of ‘breaking the ice’ this is just an example.

5. Interview the gran-grans

It may be a moving interview about his life story and one that our entire family cherishes. There’s so much wisdom, experience, lessons that can be learnt from our elders. Just sit with them, ask them some questions and press record. No need to make it formal, just sit and listen.

6. Visit/invite for meals

If your relatives are in the same city, you should invite each other to meals. If parents aren’t keen because of issues between relatives, try to do it amongst the ‘youngsters’ or the ‘cousins’. Then at the meals you can discuss various ways to resolve family feuds and stay in touch with the family.

7. Set up internet/video chat

Next time you visit ‘back home’, the family village, or your grandparents house, take with you one of the latest electronic notebooks with a front facing video camera and Skype (they are relatively cheap and pretty robust). Find out how you can set up internet (ideally wireless) for your family there and teach them the simple steps of making Skype calls/video calls. Once they figure it out, forget long distance calls, Skype would be the next thing in the village!

8. Spend charity/zakat on them

Unfortunately, these days a lot of Muslims have forgotten about spending charity/zakat on their poor relatives and family members. I'm not sure if it's embarrassment or 'fear' that the relative may start 'relying' on us for their well-being or is it our laziness and over reliance on international charity organisations to deliver our Zakat and Sadaqah. Whatever it is, we have no excuse. Especially when we have clear instructions from Allah (glorified and exalted be He) that our charities/Zakat should be for our relatives as well as the poor and needy in other parts of the world. In fact, scholars emphasize that we should prioritize our charities/socket so it goes to those closest to us first then to the wider Muslim community. There are ways of doing this practically, including giving your sadaqah to the poor relative through another member of the family who's more senior, or you could sponsor one of your poor relatives' BIG expenses, e.g. their child's education or a medical operation, etc.

9. Be the focal point for your family

If you implement some of the advice above, you'll soon be THE focal point for family ties/meetings for your family. Happily take this responsibility and try to arrange various activities for your family, e.g. arranging family trips, draw family tree day, family fundraising for an Islamic project, e.g. mosque/orphanage, etc.

10. Resolve old issues once and for all

Once things start 'warming up' between relatives and you can see an opportunity to resolve old issues, try to resolve them formally, ideally through a senior member.

LASTLY, DO BE CAREFUL

Be careful on getting too close on relatives who are NOT your mahram. There are boundaries which must NOT be breached, and therefore shaking hands, kissing on the cheeks are all NOT permissible in Islam.

May Allah Grant us ease and patience to maintain our ties of kinship with our loved ones and Reward us for our efforts and perseverance.