



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE MOST GRACIOUS THE MOST MERCIFUL

HOW ISLAM TAUGHT US TO TREAT OUR PARENTS

In this 21st century, we find that a lot of children have completely lost their ability to respect their parents, let alone take care of them. After marriage, children would conveniently leave the family nest in order to set up their own homes, and visit their parents sometimes only once a year during Eid.

We must completely ensure that everyone is crystal clear on their duties to their parents, which would last until their parents' death.

"And We have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents" [al-Ahqaaf 46:15]

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"but behave with them in the world kindly" [Luqmaan 31:15]

Shaykh al-Sa'di (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: *"be dutiful and kind to parents"* means: treat them kindly in all ways, in word and in deed.

Tafseer al-Sa'di, p. 524.

Islam has placed a lot of emphasis on being dutiful to parents. It is an obligation for us to show respect, obedience and kindness to them. In fact, just by googling "kindness to parents", you will find the first 6-7, and thereafter the majority the websites all based on Islamic principles, rather than in any other religions!

FROM THE QUR'AN

Treat parents with honour & speak to them graciously & with humility

"And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And that you be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honour."
(Quran 17:23)

Be grateful to parents but do not obey them if they strive to make you associate things with God

...Be grateful to Me and to both your parents; to Me is the eventual coming. But if they strive to make thee join in worship with Me things of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration), and follow the way of those who turn to me (in love): in the end the return of you all is to Me, then will I inform you of what you did (31:15)

These verses make it clear that we must honour our parents, appreciate their sacrifices and efforts for us, and do our best for them. This is required regardless of whether they are Muslims or not.

Be good to parents and everyone else who you meet

Serve God, and join not any partners with Him; and do good- to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess: For God loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious;- (4:36)

FROM THE HADEETHS

Let's see what Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said about parents in the authentic Hadiths. *Whatsoever the Prophet gives you, take it and whatsoever he forbids you, refrain from it. - Quran 59:7*

Disobedience to parents is a major sin

Anas narrated from Prophet Muhammad ﷺ about the major sins. He (Mohammed) observed: Associating anyone with God, disobedience to parents, killing a person and false utterance. (Muslim)

One of the dearest deeds to Allah is being good & dutiful to parents

Narrated 'Abdullah: I asked the Prophet ﷺ "Which deed is the dearest to God?" He replied, "To offer the prayers at their early stated fixed times." I asked, "What is the next (in goodness)?" He replied, "To be good and dutiful to your parents" ...(Bukhari)

Being dutiful to parents is one of the keys to enter Paradise

Abu Huraira reported Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as saying: Let him be humbled into dust; let him be humbled into dust. It was said: God's Messenger, who is he? He said: He who sees either of his parents during their old age or he sees both of them, but he does not enter Paradise (because he has been undutiful to them). (Muslim)

Acts of kindness we can do for our parents after their death

While we were with Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. A man of Banu Salmah came to Him and said: Apostle of God is there any kindness left that I can do to my parents after their death? He replied: Yes, you can invoke blessings on them, forgiveness for them, carry out their final instructions after their death, join ties of relationship which are dependent on them, and honour their friends. (Abu Dawood)

The above narration urges a Muslim to be kind to his parents whether they are dead or alive. Such obedience occurs by invoking Allaah's forgiveness for them, fulfilling any covenants they made when they were alive, showing homage to their friends and keeping good relations with their relatives.

The High Status given to Mothers

A man came to the Prophet ﷺ and asked him for permission to join a military expedition. The Prophet ﷺ asked him if he had a mother, and when he replied that he had, he said, "Stay with her, for Paradise is at her feet." (Ahmad)

The People Who Most Deserve Good Company

The people who most deserve good company are one's parents. Through good company, one pleases his Lord and hopes for an excellent reward in the Hereafter. Good company means that one should be grateful to his parents and take care of them especially when they are old and need help.

Once, a person came to the Prophet, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, and asked: "Who among the people is the most worthy of my good company?" He, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, said: "Your mother." He again, asked: "Who comes next?" He, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, answered: "Your mother." He asked once more: "Who comes next?" He (the noble Prophet, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said: "Your mother." He finally asked: "Who comes next?" Thereupon he, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, replied: "Your father." [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim]

The Prophet, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, also said: "Allaah enjoins you to keep good relations with your mothers (he repeated it three times). Allaah enjoins you to keep good relations with the nearest of kin then the next nearest of kin and so on." [Ibn Maajah]

Being Kind and Dutiful to Parents Precedes Jihaad

Islam urges us to take care of our parents and it considers this as being equal to Jihaad in the Cause of Allaah. No one is allowed to march for Jihaad while his parents or one of them needs his assistance.

Once, a man came to the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, and said: "I pledge allegiance for Jihaad seeking Allaah's reward." He, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, asked: "Are either of your parents alive?" He said: "Yes, both of them." He, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, asked: "Do you seek reward from Allaah?" He said: "Yes." The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, then said: "Go back to your parents and treat them kindly." [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim]

Another narration reads: A man emigrated to the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, from Yemen to take his permission to participate in Jihaad. He, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, asked (him): "Have you left any (of your relatives) in Yemen?" He replied: "My parents." He, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, asked: "Did they permit you to participate?" He replied: "No." He, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, said: "Go back to them and ask for their permission. If they permit you, then fight (in the cause of Allaah), otherwise keep yourself devoted to them." [Abu Daawood]

Being dutiful to parents even if they are non-Muslims

Moreover, the Prophet, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, instructed his companions to be dutiful to their non-Muslim parents. Asmaa' Bint Abi Bakr, may Allaah be pleased with her, narrated: "During the period of the peace treaty between Quraysh and Allaah's Messenger, my mother came to visit me, and she was a pagan. I consulted Allaah's Messenger, "O Allaah's Messenger! My mother has come to me and she desires to receive a reward from me, shall I keep good relations with her?" He, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, said, "Yes, keep good relations with her." [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim]

Examples of Being Dutiful to Parents:

The companions of the Prophet, sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, and our pious predecessors, may Allaah have mercy on them, were the best examples in being kind and dutiful to their parents. For example, Usaamah Ibn Zayd, may Allaah be pleased with him, had a piece of land cultivated with palm trees. Back then, the price of a palm tree was one thousand Deenaars (a golden currency). One day, his mother wanted to eat the core of a palm tree which is the wet part in the centre. Usaamah, may Allaah be pleased with him, cut a fruit-bearing tree to feed his mother its core. When some people

asked him about what he had done, he said: "If my mother asks for anything in the whole world and I can give it to her, I will do it."

'Ali Ibn Al-Husseyyn, may Allaah have mercy upon him, was very dutiful to his mother, but he would never eat from the same dish that she was eating from.

Someone asked him: "You are one of the most dutiful people to their mothers. Why don't you eat with her from the same dish?" He said: "I am afraid that my hand might take a certain piece of food that my mother wanted to eat, and in this way I would have been undutiful to her."

It is also reported that one night, a woman asked her son to bring her a cup of water. When he went to fetch the water and came back, she had fallen asleep. He was afraid that she might get up and not find him, and at the same time, he did not like to wake her up. Thus, he stayed near her holding the water until the morning.

The Companions' Behaviour

Abdullah ibn Omar, a leading scholar from among Prophet Muhammad's companions once saw a man carrying his mother on his back and going around the Holy House in Mecca[2]. He did not complain or show any signs of annoyance; rather he kept repeating a line of poetry comparing himself to a camel. He looked at Abdullah ibn Omar and asked him whether by so doing he discharged his debt to his mother. Ibn Omar said, "No. You have not even paid back one twinge of the pain she felt when giving birth to you".

Another companion from the early days of Islam, Dhibyan ibn Ali ath-Thowree also used to travel with his mother to Mecca. The journey was long and very hot; on the side of the road during their travels, he would dig a little pool and fill it with cool water. He would then turn to his mother and say, "Mother, sit in this water to cool yourself."

Muslims who are obedient to God can never be unmindful or unkind to their parents. Great reward is offered to those who treat their parents, especially their mothers, with affection and gentleness, but a stern warning is also given. The danger of disrespect is illustrated in the following saying of Prophet Muhammad.

A man came to Prophet Muhammad and said, "A young man is dying and people are asking him to say there is no god but God, but he is unable to do so. "The Prophet then asked, "Did this man offer prayers?" The answer was yes. The Prophet then went to see the man and tried to encourage him to say there is no god but God. Still he was unable to pronounce the words. Prophet Muhammad then called for the dying man's mother. The mother he had persistently disobeyed.

When she appeared, the Prophet asked, 'Respected lady, is he your son?' She replied yes. He then asked, "O respected lady, if we threaten to throw your son into a raging fire, would you recommend him to be forgiven?" The lady replied that she would definitely ask him to be forgiven. The Prophet then said to her, "Then declare, making God and me your witnesses, that you are now pleased with him." The old woman readily declared, "O God, you and your Prophet are my witnesses that I am pleased with this beloved son of mine." Then Prophet then turned to the dying man and asked him to recite, "There is no god but God, He is the One and has no partners and I witness that Muhammad is His Servant and Messenger." (At Tabarani, Ahmad)

Because of his mother's forgiveness, the dying man was able to recite the words that, by the Grace and Mercy of God, may have allowed him to enter Paradise. The good treatment of parents can be the key to Paradise, on the other hand, bad behaviour towards them may result in a punishment in hellfire.

Islam is a religion of justice and compassion. It teaches morality and forbids bad conduct. Special status has been afforded to the elderly; they are treated with respect and dignity. Muslims are urged to honour them and this is especially true when it comes to the treatment of parents. Although death may take us at any age, parents are often elderly and as such require special care and attention. Even though the rigours of old age may cause parents to be demanding, impatient or petulant, a Muslim is still obligated to treat them with kindness and to look after them lovingly. God linked honouring parents to the command to believe in Him Alone.

"Worship God and join none with Him (in worship); and do good to parents..." (Quran 4:36)

One of Prophet Muhammad's companions asked about the deeds God loved most. The Prophet replied, the prayer offered on time and *honouring parents...* (Saheeh Bukhari)

The sayings of Prophet Muhammad abound with words of wisdom about the obligation to be dutiful and kind to parents. He was once heard to say:

"May he perish, May he perish, may he perish". Those around him immediately asked whom he was referring. Prophet Muhammad replied, "He whose parents (one or both) attain old age in his life and he does not enter Paradise (because of his goodness towards them)." (Saheeh Muslim)

Respect for parents is a key to the gates of Paradise. By upholding the commands of God and giving parents the affection and love due to them, we receive the reward of eternal bliss.

IN SUMMARY

What can we do with our parents? In other words, what does Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta'āla*) require from us? To summarize very briefly, if one's parents are alive a number of things can be done. First and foremost, financial rights and obligations. No doubt, parents have financial rights over us.

Secondly, physically helping and serving them. Taking care of their needs, giving them food and water, making food for them. Instead of your mother going to the kitchen to get a glass of water, *wallāhi* this is your duty. If you see your mother stand up to do something, you should stand up and do it for her. The Prophet (*ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said to the *ṣahābi*, "Go and stick to her feet..." This is an Arabic expression and means to go and lower yourself to her and humble yourself to her. You are literally and metaphorically a servant. "Go and stick to her feet because Jannah is under her feet." Thirdly, respecting them, controlling your anger in front of them, and never showing your irritation. Next time you feel irritated against your parents, remind yourself of the verse of Allāh: "Don't say *uff*." Ask Allāh to help you in preventing to say that *uff* even if you feel it and even if you feel the anger and frustration, close it. Withdraw and withhold that sentiment from being expressed.

Lastly, showing your love to them. Going above and beyond the call of duty. This is what Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta'āla*) says: "Lower unto them your wings of mercy."

If your parents have passed away, one or both of them, then no doubt this is a great loss and a very traumatic experience. Once it is narrated that the father of the famous companion al-Ḥarith al-Aqli passed away, and he was uncontrollably crying.

The *ṣahābah* around him consoled him and said, "*Inshā' Allāh* he is in Jannah and *inshā' Allāh* Allāh has forgiven him." He said to them, "Do you think that I am crying because he has passed on? *Wallāhi* I am sad that he has passed on, but that is not why I am crying. I am crying because my main door to Jannah has now been taken away from me. This is how I wanted to get to Jannah."

The father of another *ṣahābi* died and he said, "For one year after he died, every time I raised my hands I could not think of any *du'ā'* except for him. All I could think of was to make *du'ā'* for him."

After a parent dies and moves on to the next life, still a lot can be done. First and foremost, as the *ṣaḥābi* said, seek forgiveness for them and ask Allāh to forgive them and raise their ranks for them. Make *du'ā'* for them. Secondly, make sure that their wishes, requests, and wills were fulfilled. Make sure that anything they wanted done is executed on their behalf. Thirdly, give *ṣadaqah*. Give money and say, "O Allāh, reward my mother for this ten, twenty, thirty dollars." Give regularly - every week, every month. Give something on their behalf and say, "O Allāh, give this reward to my mother and father." Sacrifice an animal, mentioning Allāh's Name and giving it to the poor and saying, "O Allāh, reward my mother for feeding the poor."

Also, make Ḥajj and 'Umrah for them. Making Ḥajj and 'Umrah is one of the greatest and most noble acts that you can do as a son or a daughter as long as you have done Ḥajj and 'Umrah. When you put on ihram, "*Labbayk* on behalf of my mother" or "*Labbayk* on behalf of my father." Then, each and every penny, minute and toil and circumstance that you face, Allāh will reward your mother, and you will be rewarded as a righteous son for doing this for your mother.

Also, the Prophet (*ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said one of the ways we can show respect to the parents and to fulfill their rights after they have moved on is - and this is something hardly anybody does - meet the friends and relatives of our parents who we would not have met otherwise. In other words, our parents have their circle of friends, and because they were alive, we would also go to those friends and distant relatives. When they have moved on, we have no reason to communicate with them. We have nothing much in common. The only thing we have in common is our parents. The Prophet (*ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, "A part of being a good son and a good daughter is that after your parents have moved on, go to those relatives and family members and acquaintances and friends for the sake of your parents."

Some scholars have derived the wisdom behind this, and they say one of the wisdoms is that when you go to these people, and of course they will be of a different age and generation than you, you don't have much in common except one thing: your mother, your father. What will the topic of discussion be? Your mother or your father. What do you think will happen when this person reminds you of how they interacted and what your mother did? How will you feel after that? You will feel so much love and

tenderness and want to go home and give *ṣadaqah* on her behalf and make *du'ā'* for her. That love will be rejuvenated and revived. Therefore, by visiting the friends and relatives of our deceased parents, the love of our parents is once again rekindled within us. This is one of the wisdoms some of the scholars derived from this particular legacy of the Prophet (*ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*).

Let me conclude by quoting a very interesting and beautiful tradition that is reported from the famous companion Ibn 'Abbās (*radīyAllāhu 'anha*). It is narrated that once a man was doing *tawāf* around the Ka'bah and had his mother on his back. He saw Ibn 'Abbās in the distance, so he came running over to him and said, "O Ibn 'Abbās, this elderly lady on my back is my mother. She has been asking to come for Ḥajj for as long as I can remember. She has always wanted to go for Ḥajj, and I could not afford to buy an animal to bring her, so this year I decided to carry her on my back and do Ḥajj with her on my back. Have I now fulfilled the rights of a son to his mother?" Ibn 'Abbās smiled and he said, "You have done good, but you have not even done a fraction of what you should." In other words: "*Alḥamdulillāh*, you are a good son, but don't come and tell me 'Have I fulfilled the rights of my mother?'"

The man said, "O Ibn 'Abbās, I have come from the city of so-and-so [me mentioned a far-away city] carrying my mother on my back, and you are telling me I haven't done even a fraction?" Ibn 'Abbās said one thing, and *wallāhi* this shows their understanding of human psychology and human nature. The *ṣahābah* are at a different level than us completely. Ibn Abbās said, "You haven't done a fraction of what your mother did to you because when your mother took care of you and did everything that she did for you, her goal was to give you life. She did it out of love and to see you flourish. She did it genuinely for your own nourishment and flourishing. Now when you are paying her back, you are doing it as a duty and burden. You are doing it out of a sense of guilt and duty, and you are waiting for the day that she dies. You are not wanting to see her flourish and live. You are simply doing it as a dutiful son. You don't have the same genuine, selfless love that your parents had for you when they did what they did." Simply one psychological statement: your parents did for you everything to see you live and flourish. When you become old and they are now the ones being taken care of, you are not doing it in the same philosophy. You are doing it as a burden and to pay

back. How can you compare the two? One is selfless love and the other a sense of gratitude and duty. How can you possibly compare?

Brothers and sisters, parents are the best blessing that Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta'āla*) has given us after *īmān*. Parents are the largest door to Jannah and the easiest way to get to Jannah. In the famous *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (*ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), and with this *ḥadīth* we will conclude, as he is climbing the steps of the *minbarin* front of hundreds of thousands of *ṣaḥābah* and each time he climbs, he says,

“*Amīn! Amīn! Amīn!*” Then he turns around and says, “I will explain to you why I said, ‘*Amīn.*’ Jibrīl came to me and he told me three things. Every time he told me one thing, he said, ‘Say, “*Amīn,*”’ so I said, ‘*Amīn.*’ The last one that he said was, ‘O Muḥammad (*ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), any person of your *ummah* who manages to catch a parent [in other words: whose parents live to old age] and they still are not capable of having their sins forgiven and entering Jannah [in other words, if Allāh blesses you with an elderly parent and you still cannot earn Allāh’s Pleasure] then may that person perish.” In other words, if you have elderly parents and you are not able to earn Allāh’s Pleasure through them, you will not earn it through any other means. “Say ‘*Amīn,*’ *ya Rasūlullāh.*” So the Prophet (*ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, “*Amīn.*”

Brothers and sisters, simple point. Bottom line. If your parents are alive, the only way to be a pleasing servant to Allāh and the only way to be a good Muslim is to have your parents love you. If your parents are angry with you or if your parents are not happy with you and you are not trying to change that situation, it doesn’t matter what you do in the Eyes of Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta'āla*). The parents have ultimate priority in this world.

May Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta'āla*) allow us to be righteous servants. May Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta'āla*) allow us to be dutiful and loving sons and daughters. May He give us the patience and the *īmān* and the *tawfīq* to take care of our parents the way that they deserve and the way that Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta'āla*) has commanded from us. May He allow us to live as Muslims, to die as Muslims, and to be resurrected as Muslims.