

Interaction in social life

Introduction

Each society has its own social circumstances with its own traditions, formalities, values and customs. It is natural that the values and customs of societies in foreign countries would differ from those of our Muslim societies. These differences place the Muslim living in such societies, in a constant state of questioning about what is permissible for him and what is not.

Becoming part of societies that cater for Western values imposes upon the immigrants (from Muslim countries) the resistance against becoming absorbed in the melting pot of the new values, and the protection of themselves and their children from gradually melting into it. This is bound to put upon them extra hardship to protect themselves, their families and children from the societies destructive influences.

General Rules

Rights of one's Relatives

298. Maintaining **ties with one's relations** (*silatur rahim*) is obligatory upon Muslims, and severing those ties (*qat'ur rahim*) is one of the major sins. Since maintaining the ties is obligatory and severing them is a major sin for which Allah has threatened Hell-fire, the need for maintaining the ties becomes more important in foreign lands; and observing this obligation takes greater priority in countries where relations are few, families break up, religious bonds erode, and material values rule supreme.

Allah, the Almighty, has forbidden the severing of ties with one's relatives. He said in the Holy Book:

“But if you held command, you were sure to make mischief in the land and cut off the ties of kinship! Those it is whom Allah has cursed so He has made them deaf and blinded their eyes.”
(47:22)

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said, “A family that is united and whose members support one another, Allah gives them sustenance, even if they be sinners; a family that is divided and severs ties with one another, Allah

deprives them [from sustenance], even if they be pious.”¹

It has been narrated from Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) that: “In the book of ‘Ali [it says], ‘There are three traits whoever possesses them shall not die until he sees their evil consequences: adultery, severing the ties with one’s relations, and a false oath in which Allah is invoked. Indeed the good deed that expedites reward is maintaining the ties with one’s relations. There could be a people, who are sinners, yet they maintain ties with one another, and so their wealth increases and they have affluence. Verily a false oath and severing of ties will destroy populated centres.”²

299. It is *haram* to cut the ties with one’s relation even if that person had severed his ties [with you]. It is *haram* to do so, even if he or she is negligent of *salat*, a drunkard, and takes some religious injunctions lightly (for example by not observing the *hijab*, etc) to the extent that there is no use in advising, counseling or warning him or her. This prohibition is only lifted when maintaining the ties encourages that relation to continue in his or her immoral ways.

Our holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said, “The best of virtues is to maintain the ties with one who has severed it; to give in charity to one who has deprived you [of help]; and to forgive one who has done wrong to you.”³ He also said, “Do not sever the ties with your relations even if they have severed them with you.”⁴

300. Probably the least of deeds that a Muslim can do (within the realm of possibility and ease) in order to maintain the ties with his relations is to visit them and meet them; or to inquire about their well being by enquiring even from far [via telephone, etc].

Our noble Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said, “The good deed that brings rewards faster [than other deeds] is maintaining the ties with one’s relations.”⁵ Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said, “Maintain the link with your relations even by greeting. Allah, the Almighty, says,

‘Be careful of (your duty towards) Allah by whom you demand of one another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship; surely Allah ever watches over you.’ (4:1)⁶

Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said, “Maintaining the ties and charity make the reckoning [of the Day of Judgement] simple, and protects from the sins. Therefore, maintain the ties with your relations and be charitable towards your brethren even by greeting kindly and replying to the greetings.”⁷

The Parents

301. The most serious type of severing the ties is **causing distress (*‘uqûq*) to the parents** whom Almighty Allah has enjoined kindness and compassion. The Almighty says in His noble Book,

“And your Lord enjoins that you should not worship but Him and be kind to the parents. If either or both of them reach old age with you, say not to them (so much as) ‘ugh’ nor chide them, and

Speak to them a generous word.” (17:23)

The Imam says, “The lowest kind of ‘*uqûq* is to say ‘ugh’. If Allah the Almighty had known anything lower than that, He would surely have forbidden it.”⁸

Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said, “Anyone who looks towards his parents with hatred, even if they had been unjust to him, Allah shall not accept his *salat*.” There are many such *ahadith*.⁹

302. As opposed to the above is **being kind to one’s parents** which indeed is the best means of attaining the pleasure of Almighty Allah. He has said in the holy Qur’an:

“...and lower for them the wings of humility out of mercy, and say, ‘My Lord! Have mercy on them as they had nourished me when I was an infant.’” (17:24)

Ibrahim bin Shu‘ayb narrated that he said to Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.), “My father has become very old and weak so much so that we carry him [to the toilet] when need be.” He said, “If you can help him in that, then do so, and [also] feed him with your hand because this [service] will be a shield [against the hell-fire] for you tomorrow [i.e., in the next world].”¹⁰

Maintaining the ties with one’s **mother before the father** has also been mentioned in many noble *ahadith*. Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said, “A person came to the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) and said, ‘O Messenger of Allah! To whom should I do a good deed?’ He replied, ‘To your mother.’ Then the person asked, ‘Then who?’ The Prophet replied, ‘Your mother.’ Then the person asked, ‘Then who?’ The Prophet replied, ‘Your mother.’ Then the person asked, ‘Then who?’ The Prophet answered, ‘Your father.’”¹¹ (See the question-answer section below.)

303. In some *ahadith* the right of the **eldest brother** over the younger ones has been mentioned. This right should be observed and implemented in order to strengthen the ties of brotherhood within the single family and to guarantee its survival as a strong and well-knit structure if and when it goes through a rough patch. The Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said, “The right of the eldest brother over the younger ones is like the right of the father over his child.”¹²

304. Besides the guardian of the child or someone authorized by him, no one is allowed to physically **punish a child** when he commits a forbidden act or causes harm to others. The guardian and someone authorized by him are allowed to discipline a child. [However, there are limits that must be observed:] the act of, say, hitting should be light, not agonizing, and should not be such that it leaves bruises on the child’s skin; that it should not exceed three hits [in one instance]; and that also only when disciplining the child depends on corporal punishment.

Therefore, the elder brother does not have the right to hit the younger brother unless he is the legal guardian of the child or authorized by the guardian. It is not permissible at all to hit a school pupil without the permission of his guardians or someone authorized by the guardian. (See the question-answer

section below.)

305. It is not permissible to hit a *baligh* child in order to prevent him from an evil act, except in accordance with the conditions of *al-amru bi 'l-ma'rûf wa 'n-nahi 'ani 'l-munkar* (enjoining the good and forbidding the evil) with the permission of the religious authority. Based on obligatory precaution, a *baligh* child should not be hit at all.

The Elderly

306. **Respecting the Elders:** The noble Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) has asked us to respect the elderly and honour them. He said, "One who recognizes the virtue of an elder person and honours him for his age, Allah shall protect him from the fear of the Day of Judgment."¹³ He also said, "One way of exalting Allah, the Almighty, is to honour the believer with a white beard."¹⁴

Visiting One Another

307. Many noble *ahadith* from the Prophet (s.a.w.) and the Imams (a.s.) have emphasized the idea of visiting one another, maintaining cordial relationship among the believers, making the believers happier, fulfilling their needs, visiting their sick, participating in their funerals, and helping them in good as well as restrained circumstances. Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said, "Anyone who visits his brother [in faith] for the sake of Allah, Almighty Allah will say, 'You have visited Me, therefore your reward is upon Me, and I will not be satisfied with a reward for you less than Paradise.'"¹⁵

The Imam said to Khaythamah, "Convey our greetings to those who love us and advise them to fear Allah, and that the affluent and strong ones among them should visit the poor and weak ones; they should participate in their funerals and meet one another in their homes."¹⁶

The Neighbour

308. The right of the **neighbour** is close [in importance] to the right of kin. A Muslim and a non-Muslim neighbour are equal in this right because the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) established the right of the non-Muslim neighbour when he said:

"There are three kinds of neighbours: 1. Some of them have three rights [upon you]: the right of Islam, the right of neighbourhood, and the right of relationship.

2. Some have two rights: the right of Islam and the right of neighbourhood.

3. Some have just one right: the non-Muslim who has the right of neighbourhood."¹⁷ The Prophet said, "The best neighbourly act is to be trustworthy for those who are your neighbours."¹⁸

In the advice Imam 'Ali gave to Imams al-Hasan and al-Husayn after the accused Ibn Muljim had

wounded him, he also talked about neighbours. He said, “be mindful of your duty towards Allah regarding your neighbours because it was the advice of your Prophet who continuously talked good about them until we thought that he might give them a share in our estate.”¹⁹

Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said, “Accursed, accursed is he who harasses his neighbour.”²⁰ He also said, “One who does not maintain good neighbourly relations with his neighbours is not one of us.”²¹(See the question–answer section below.)

309. Among the qualities of the good believers is to emulate the noble character of Prophet Muhammad (a.s.) whom the Almighty has described in His Book as follows: “*And you verily are on a high level of noble character.*” (68: 4–6.)²²Indeed the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said, “Nothing will be placed on the scale of the Day of Judgement better than good character.”²³ Once the Prophet was asked, “Who is the best in faith among the believers?” He replied, “The best among them in character.”²⁴

Truthfulness

310. Among the qualities of good believers is **truthfulness** in speech and action, and fulfilling the promise. Almighty Allah has praised Prophet Isma‘il (a.s.) by saying: “*He indeed was true in [fulfillment of] promise and was a messenger, a prophet.*” (19:54)

The noble Prophet said, “One who believes in Allah and the Last Day should fulfill whatever he promises.”²⁵

The importance of truthfulness and fulfillment of promise is more emphasized when we realize that many non-Muslims judge Islam by the action of Muslims. As much good a Muslim does, he positively portrays Islam to non-Muslims through his good conduct, and as much evil a Muslim does, he negatively portrays Islam through his bad conduct.

Husband and Wife

311. Among the qualities of a **good wife** is refraining from harassing, hurting, and irritating her husband. Among the qualities of a **good husband** is refraining from harassing, hurting, and irritating his wife. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said, “If a man has a wife who harasses him, Allah will neither accept her ritual prayer (*salat*) nor any of her good deeds —until she has pleased him— even if she fasts and prays at all times, emancipates slaves, and gives away her wealth in charity for the sake of Allah. She will be the first to enter the Fire.” Then he said, “And the husband has the same burden and chastisement, if he is a harasser and unjust [in his behaviour towards his wife].”²⁶

Friendship with non-Muslims

312. A Muslim is allowed to take **non-Muslims for acquaintances and friends**, to be sincere towards

them and they be sincere towards him, to help one another in fulfilling the needs of this life. Almighty Allah has said in His noble Book:

“Allah does not forbid you in regard to those who have not made war against you on account of (your) religion, and have not driven you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly; surely Allah loves the doers of justice.” (60:8)

When these kinds of friendship produce good results, it guarantees that the non-Muslim friend, neighbour, or colleague and business partner will know about the values of Islam, and it will bring him closer to this upright religion. The Prophet said to Imam ‘Ali, “If Allah guides through you a single person from His servants, that is better for you than anything upon which the Sun shines from the East to the West.”²⁷ (See the question-answer section below.)

313. It is permissible to greet *Ahlul Kitab* (the Jews and the Christians, etc) and also the non-*Ahlul Kitab* on the occasions they celebrate like the New Year, Christmas, Easter, and the Passover.

Al-Amr bi ‘l-Ma‘rûf and an-Nahi ‘ani ‘l-Munkar

314. **Enjoining good and forbidding evil** are obligatory rituals, whenever the conditions exist, on all believing men and women. Almighty Allah has said in His noble Book: *“There should be a group among you who should be calling (people) to the good, enjoining the good, and forbidding the evil; they are the successful ones.”* (3:104) He also said, *“The believing men and the believing women are helpers of one another, they enjoin the good and forbid the evil.”* (9:71)

Our noble Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said, “My community will continue to be blessed as long they enjoin the good and forbid the evil, and help one another in good deeds. When they do not do this, blessings will be withheld from them, and some [evil persons] among them will have hegemony over the others; and they shall have no helper neither on the earth nor in the heaven.”²⁸

Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq (a.s.) qualified the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) as saying, “How will it be with you when your women will become corrupt and, your youths sinful while you will not be enjoining the good nor forbidding the evil?” The people said, “Will this happen, O Messenger of Allah?” He replied, “Yes; and even worse than that. How will it be with you when you will be enjoining the evil and forbidding the good?” The people said, “O Messenger of Allah! will this actually happen?” He said, “Yes, and even worse than that. How will it be with you when you will think of good as evil and of evil as good?”²⁹

These two obligations become more pressing when the person neglecting the good or committing the evil is one of your family members. You might find someone among your family who neglects some obligations or takes them lightly; you might find some of them

performing *wudhu* or *tayammum* or *ghusl* incorrectly, or does not purify his body and clothes from impurities correctly. Or does not recite the two *surahs* and the obligatory recitations in *salat* correctly; or

does not purify his wealth by paying *khums* and *zakat*.

You might find someone among your family members committing some sins like masturbation or gambling or listening to songs or drinking intoxicants or eating *haram* meat or devouring people's property unlawfully or cheating and stealing.

You might find someone among the women in your family not observing *hijab*, not concealing her hair; and you might find that she does not remove the nail polish at the time of *wudhu orghusl*. You might even find among them someone who wears perfume for men other than her husband; and does not conceal her hair or body from the eyes of her cousins (maternal or paternal), brother-in-law, or husband's friend with the justification that they all live in the same house, and under the pretext that he is like her brother, or other similar groundless excuses.

You might find someone in your family who habitually lies, backbites and infringes upon the rights of others, usurps people's property, supports the wrong-doers in their unjust activities, and harasses his neighbour, etc.

If you find any such situations, you should enjoin the good and forbid the evil by applying the first two methods: that is, expressing your displeasure at the situation, and then speaking about it. If these two methods do not work, then apply the third method (after asking the permission from the *mujtahid*): adopting practical [or physical] measures moving from softer to harsher ones. If that person is ignorant of the religious rules, it is your duty to teach them, if they have the intention of learning and acting accordingly.

Kindness towards People

315. **Kindness towards people**, all the people, is among the recommended rituals that have been emphasized by our religion. The Messenger of Allah said, "My Lord has commanded me to be kind towards the people just as He has commanded me to fulfill the obligatory [prayers]." He also said, "If a person does not have three things, his deeds are not complete: [spiritual] armor that prevents him from disobeying Allah; noble character by which he shows kindness towards the people; and forbearance by which he repels the foolishness of the ignorant person."³⁰

Kindness is not limited to the Muslims only. It has been narrated that Imam 'Ali (a.s.) became a travelling companion of a non-Muslim on the way to Kufa. When they reached to a crossroad, the Imam walked with him for a distance before saying farewell. The non-Muslim asked him why he walked that extra distance, the Imam replied, "This is the right of companionship, i.e. see them through for a short distance when they separate. This is what our Prophet has ordered us to do."³¹ That man accepted Islam because of this noble gesture.

An interesting story was narrated by ash-Sha'bi concerning the justice of Imam 'Ali with one of his non-

Muslim subjects. He narrated that one day ‘Ali bin Abi Talib went to the market and saw a Christian selling a coat of arms. ‘Ali (a.s.) recognized that coat of arms and said to the seller, “This is my body armour; let us go to the judge of the Muslims.” The Muslim judge was Shurayh, and ‘Ali himself had appointed him in that position.

When they went to Shurayh, he said, “What is the matter, O *Amiru ‘l-mu‘mineen*?” ‘Ali (a.s.) said, “This is my coat of arms which I have lost since a long time now.” Then Shurayh asked the seller, “O Christian, what do you have to say?” The Christian seller said, “I am not accusing *Amiru ‘l-mu‘mineen* of lying, but the coat of arms is my property.” So Shurayh turned to ‘Ali (a.s.) and said, “I do not see [any ground on which] you can take it from his possession. Do you have a proof [supporting your claim]?” Since ‘Ali (a.s.) had no proof, he said, “Shurayh is correct [in his judgement].”³²

On hearing the judgment, the Christian seller said, “I bear witness that these are the laws of the prophets: the Leader of the Believers comes to a judge appointed by himself, and the judge passes a judgment against him! By God, O *Amiru ‘l-mu‘mineen*, this coat of arms is yours—I followed you in the army, and the coat of arms slipped down from your camel, so I took it. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.” ‘Ali (a.s.) said, “Now that you have become a Muslim, it belongs to you.” Then he carried it on a horse. Sha‘bi said that he subsequently saw the man fighting the non-Muslims. This version of the *hadith* has been narrated from Abu Zakariyya.³³

Similarly, we have heard from *Amiru ‘l-mu‘mineen* ‘Ali (a.s.) what could be considered as a historical precedence of social security that is so commonly practiced at present in the Western world. ‘Ali did not differentiate between a Muslim and a non-Muslim in the Islamic state. The narrator said that one day an old blind person passed by him begging. Imam ‘Ali (a.s.), “What is this?” Those who were around him said, “O said, he is a Christian!” Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) answered, “You have used him until he became old and incapable, and now you are depriving him [of the benefits]! Provide for him from the public treasury.”³⁴ It has also been narrated from Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.), “If a Jewish person comes to sit with you, make that a good meeting.”³⁵

Making Peace Between People

316. There is a great reward in **making peace between people**, reconciling their differences, making them friends of one another, and lessening the gulf of disagreement between them. More so when making peace is done in a non-Muslim land far away from the homeland, family, relations, and friends. Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) had given certain advice to his sons, al-Hassan and al-Husayn, just before his death after the Kharijite Ibn Muljim al-Muradi had injured him. He said, “I advise you both, all my children and family members, and whosoever to whom this letter of mine reaches: to fear Allah, to organize your affairs, to establish peace because I have heard your grandfather (s.a.w.) say, ‘Making peace is better than a whole year of praying and fasting.’”³⁶

Sincere Advice for Muslim Brethren

317. **Sincere advice** —that is, to wish that the blessings of Allah may continue on the believing brethren, to dislike that evil may afflict them, and to exert efforts in guiding them towards what is good for them— is among the deeds loved by the Almighty Allah.

3.8

318. There are countless *ahadith* on the importance of sincere counsel. For instance, the Prophet (s.a.w.) said, “The person with greatest status in the eyes of Allah on the Day of Judgement will be the person who worked most in His earth to give sincere counsel to His creatures.”³⁷ Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) said, “The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said, ‘A person from among you should give sincere advice to his brother in faith as if he is advising himself.’”³⁸ Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said, “It is necessary for a believer to sincerely advise another believer in his presence as well as in his absence.”³⁹ He also said, “You should be careful about advising Allah’s creatures sincerely for His sake because you can never meet Allah with a deed better than that.”⁴⁰

Spying

319. **Spying** —that is, snooping in order to gain information and embarrass people— is forbidden in Islamic laws. Almighty Allah has said in His Book:

“O You who believe, refrain from most of suspicions because some suspicions are sins, and do not spy...” (49:12)

Ishaq bin ‘Ammar, a companion of Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.), said: I heard as-Sadiq (a.s.) saying, “The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said, ‘O you who have accepted Islam with your tongue [i.e., with your verbal declarations of faith] and faith is yet to enter your hearts! Do not disparage the Muslims nor disclose their frailties, because whosoever discloses their shortcomings, Allah shall disclose his; and he whose weaknesses are disclosed by Allah, will indeed be disgraced, even if he is inside his house.’”⁴¹

Backbiting, Namimah

320. **Backbiting** means “speaking ill of a believer in their absence with the purpose of disparaging or not, and no matter whether the alleged shortcoming was related to his body, lineage, behaviour, deeds, statements, religion, or life, and other defects which are [usually] concealed from the people. Similarly, it does not matter whether the description was done by words or by gesture.”⁴²

Almighty Allah condemned backbiting in His noble Book and has described it such that mind and body feel abhorrence towards it. He said,

“And some of you should not backbite the others: would anyone of you like to eat the flesh of his

dead brother? No, you abhor it.” (49: 12)

The Prophet (s.a.w.) said, “Be careful of backbiting because backbiting is worse than adultery, in that a person who commits adultery can repent and ask forgiveness from God, and Allah can forgive him whereas Allah will not forgive the backbiter until the person who was at the receiving end forgives him.”⁴³

It is not appropriate for a believer to listen to backbiting against his believing brother. Indeed, it appears from the sayings of the Prophet and the Imams (may Allah bless them all) that it is obligatory upon one who hears backbiting to support the person who is being disparaged; and that if he does not repel the backbiting [against his believing brother], Allah will abandon him in this world as well as in the hereafter, and he shall be held accountable just like the one who did the backbiting.

321. When we talk about backbiting, another religious terminology also comes to the mind of the believer that has been equally forbidden by Islam for the sake of holding the society together. It is the term known as “***an-namimah***” which means sowing dissension by statements like “So and so was saying this and that about you” with the intention of damaging the relationship between the believers or increasing bitterness between them.

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) has said, “Shall I not inform you of the worst person among you?” People said, “Yes, O Messenger of Allah!” He said, “Those who spread slanderous rumours; those who divide friends.”⁴⁴ Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) said, “Paradise is forbidden upon the backbiters and those who spread slanderous rumours.”⁴⁵ Similarly, Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said, “The spiller of blood [i.e., murderer], the alcoholic, and the one who spreads slanderous rumours will not enter Paradise.”⁴⁶

322. **Suspicion.** Almighty Allah has forbidden us from having suspicious thoughts. He says in His noble Book,

“O you who believe! Refrain from most of the suspicions because some suspicions are a sin.”
(49: 12)

Based on this noble Qur’anic verse, it is not permissible for a believer to entertain suspicious thoughts about his fellow Muslim without any clear proof and evidence, because no one other than Allah knows the inner-most thoughts of a person. So, as long as it is possible to place the action of a believer in a proper context, we should do so until it is proven otherwise. Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said, “Place the affair of your brother in the best possible [context] until you get a proof which convinces you [of the contrary]. And do not have suspicious thoughts about a word that comes out of your brother [in faith] while you have a positive context for it.”⁴⁷

Extravagance and Waste

323. Extravagance and waste are two bad qualities condemned by Almighty Allah. He says,

“Eat and drink but do not waste because He does not like the squanderers.”(7:31)

He has also condemned those who engage in waste by saying,

“Verily the wastrels are brethren of the Satans, and verily the Satan was ungrateful to his Lord.”(19:27)

324. Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) wrote a letter to Ziyad in which he condemned wastage and squandering. He wrote: “Give up lavishness and be moderate. Every day remember the coming day. Hold back from the funds what you need and send forward the balance for the day of your need. Do you expect that Allah may give you the reward of the humble while you yourself are arrogant in His view? And do you covet that He may give you the reward of those doing charity while you enjoy comforts and deny them to the weak and the widows? Certainly, a man is rewarded according to what he has done, and he shall meet what he has sent forth.”⁴⁸

Charity

325. Charity for the sake of Allah: Allah has encouraged us in His noble Book to give charity for His sake and has described it as a deal which will never go sour. He says,

“Those who recite the Book of Allah, establish the prayer, and give in charity secretly as well as openly out of what We have given them, they hope for a deal that will never go sour. Allah shall pay them their rewards in full and give them more out of His grace; indeed He is Forgiving, Multiplier of rewards.” (35:29–30)

In another chapter,

He says, “Who is there that will offer to Allah a good loan so that He will double it for him, and he shall have an excellent reward. On that day you will see the believing men and the believing women while their light shall be running before them and on their right side—[they will be told:] ‘good news to you today: gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide therein, that is the great achievement.’” (57: 11–12)

In a third verse, Allah reminds us to hasten to giving charity before death strikes. He says,

“And give in charity out of what We have given you before death comes to one of you, so that he should say, ‘My Lord! Why did Thou not respite me to a near term, so that I should have given alms and been of the doers of good deeds?’ And Allah does not respite a soul when its appointed

term has come, and Allah is Aware of what you do.” (63: 10–11)

Then Allah clarifies the end of those who hoard wealth and do not spend in charity for His sake. He says,

“(As for) those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in Allah’s way, announce to them a painful chastisement on the day when it shall be heated in the fire of hell, then their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded with it; this is what you hoarded up for yourselves, therefore taste what you hoarded.” (9:34–35)

Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) was the living example and the embodiment of the great values of Islam; he gave in charity whatever his hands could hold, preferring frugality in this transitory world and avoiding its beauties and luxuries while he had the control of the entire public treasury of the Muslims. He describes himself [in letter to his governor in Basra] as follows:

“If I wished I could have taken the way leading towards (worldly pleasures like) pure honey, fine wheat and silk clothes, but it cannot be that my passions lead me and greed takes me to choosing good meals while there may be people in the Hijaz and in Yamamah who have no hope of getting bread or who do not have a full meal. Shall I lie with a full belly while around me there may be hungry bellies and thirsty livers? Or shall I be as the poet has said, It is enough for you to have a disease that you lie with your belly full while around you people may be badly yearning for dried meat?”⁴⁹

Various sayings have come from the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) and the Imams (a.s.) describing clearly the benefits gained by the person who gives in charity, not only in this world, but also more than what he expects on “the day when neither wealth shall benefit [a person] nor children.”

Sustenance is one reward that a generous person gets. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said, “Let sustenance flow [from God] through charity.”⁵⁰

Curing disease is another benefit of giving in charity. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said, “Cure your sick ones through charity.”⁵¹

Prolonging life span and averting tragic death is another result of giving in charity. Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) said, “Benevolence and charity eliminate poverty, prolong life span, and spare the charitable person seventy kinds of tragic deaths.”⁵²

Fulfillment of debts and [increase in] blessings are also benefits of giving in charity. Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said, “Charity fulfills the payment of debts and yields.”⁵³

The children of a charitable person are taken care of after blessing his death. Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said, “No person has given good charity in this world but that Allah has made good provision for his children after his departure [from this world].”⁵⁴

Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) said, “If I could take care of a Muslim family, feeding the hungry among them, clothing the naked among them, and protecting their honour in society [their having not to beg], this is preferable than going for hajj, [then another] hajj, [then a third] hajj until I go ten times or even until I go seventy times.”⁵⁵

Doing charity for the sake of Allah is a vast subject that cannot be fully covered in this short treatise.⁵⁶

Gifts for Family members

326. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) had encouraged heads of family to buy gifts for their families so as to make them happy. Ibn ‘Abbas narrates from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) that he said, “Whosoever enters a market and buys a gift, and takes it to his family is like a person who do charity to those who are in need of it.”⁵⁷

Concern for the Muslim Ummah

327. One of the issues that the Islamic shari‘a has emphasized is the the of being concerned for the affairs of Muslims. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said, “Whosoever get up in the morning and has no concern for the affairs of Muslims is not a Muslim.”⁵⁸ He also said, “Whosoever gets up without being concerned with the affairs of Muslims is not one of them.”⁵⁹ There are many other sayings on this issue cannot be mentioned here.⁶⁰

Questions and Answers

328. **Question:** Is it permissible to participate in the **funeral** ceremony **of a non-Muslim**, if he was, for example, a neighbour?

Answer: If the deceased and those organizing the funeral are not known to have hatred towards Islam and Muslims, there is no problem in participating in the funeral. However, it is better to walk behind the coffin and not in front of it.

329. **Question:** Is it permissible to exchange greetings and gifts with a non-Muslim, if he is a neighbour or a co-worker, etc.?

Answer: If he does not express hatred towards Islam and Muslims in words or actions, there is no problem in doing what is required in friendship like being good and charitable towards him. Almighty Allah has said,

“Allah does not forbid you in regard to those who have not made war against you on account of (your) religion, and have not driven you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly; surely Allah loves the doers of justice.” [60:8]

330. **Question:** Is it permissible for the people of *Ahlul Kitab* and other **non-Muslims to enter the mosques** (*masjid*) and other Islamic places of worship [like *husayniyya* or *imambargah* which are not *masjid*]? And is it necessarily for us to enforce the *hijab* on those [non-Muslim women] who do not observe *hijab* and allow them to enter [the mosque or places of worship], if it is permissible?

Answer: Based on obligatory precaution, it is not permissible for them [i.e., non-Muslims] to enter the mosque (*masjid*). As for their entering the places of worship, etc, there is no problem in it. If their entry [in *imambargah* or a *husayniyya* or a center] without *hijab* is considered as a sign of disrespect, *hijab* should be enforced on the [non-Muslim] women.

331. **Question:** Is it permissible to harass a Jewish, or a Christian, or an Atheist neighbour?

Answer: It is not permissible to harass them without justification.

332. **Question:** Is it permissible to give charity to the poor among non-Muslims? Would a person get reward [*thawab* from Allah] for this charity?

Answer: There is no problem in extending charity to [a non-Muslim] who does not show hatred against Islam and Muslims; and one who gives such a charity will be rewarded for this deed.

333. **Question:** Is it obligatory to enjoin the good (*amr bi 'l-ma'rûf*) and forbid the evil (*nahi 'ani 'l-munkar*) in regard to those who are not followers of Islam or are from *the Ahlul Kitab, who are receptive*, without any harm coming our way?

Answer: Yes, it is obligatory, provided that the other conditions also exist. One of those other conditions is that the person to be admonished should not have an excuse for doing the evil or neglecting the obligation. Being ignorant out of negligence is not an acceptable excuse. So, such a person should first be guided to the right conduct, and then if they do not act accordingly, they should be asked to do good or be forbidden from doing evil.

However, if the evil deed is of a category that one knows Allah does not like it to happen in any circumstances —like creating corruption in the earth, killing an innocent person, etc— it is necessary to prevent it, even if the doer is ignorant out of innocence.

334. **Question:** In European schools, there are teachers who do not believe in any religion and reject the idea of God in front of their pupils. Is it permissible for Muslim pupils to remain in such schools, knowing that they can be greatly influenced by their teachers?

Answer: It is not permissible; and the guardian of the child is fully responsible for that.

335. **Question:** Is it permissible for male and female pupils /students in elementary and secondary schools to mix when one knows that this mixing will surely lead one day to a forbidden act by the male or the female student, even if that is just [as minor an act as] a forbidden glance?

Answer: It is not permissible under the circumstances described [in the question].

336. **Question:** Is it permissible for a Muslim man to go to a mixed swimming pool with the knowledge that the women there swimming suits form and would not listen to any admonishing?

Answer: Although looking without bad thoughts or lustful intentions at the women who are indecently dressed (and who would not listen to you if you wish to admonish them) is allowed, yet based on obligatory precaution, going to such places is absolutely forbidden.

337. **Question:** Is it permissible for those who reside in the West to send their *muhajjaba* daughters to co-ed schools (irrespective of whether or not education is compulsory) while there exist non co-ed schools which obviously are expensive, located faraway or of a low academic standard?

Answer: It is not permissible, [even] if it [just] corrupts their character, let alone if it harms their beliefs and commitment to the faith which is what normally happens!

338. **Question:** Is it permissible for a Muslim youth to accompany the girls who study with him in foreign universities for walking together, in vacation tours, etc.?

Answer: It is not permissible, except with surety that he will not commit a forbidden act.

339. **Question:** Is it permissible to look at a passionate scene taking place on the street?

Answer: It is not permissible to look at it with lustful intentions or with ill thoughts; rather, based on obligatory precaution, one should refrain from watching it totally.

340. **Question:** Is it permissible to go to a mixed [i.e., co-ed] cinema and other *haram* places of entertainment without having any guarantee that one will not engage in a forbidden act?

Answer: It is not permissible.

341. **Question:** Is it permissible to swim in a mixed swimming pool without having any lustful intention?

Answer: Based on obligatory precaution, it is not permissible to go to the places of indecency at all.

342. **Question:** Is it permissible to go to sea beaches and public parks during sunny days for walking while one might come across scenes which are against the norm of decency?

Answer: Without a guarantee that one will not commit a forbidden act, it is not permissible.

343. **Question:** In European countries, public baths are built with certain considerations. Whether or not it is in the direction of *qibla* is not one of their considerations unlike the situation in Muslim countries:

a. Is it permissible for us to use such facilities, if we do not know where the direction of the *qibla* is?

b. And if we know the baths do face the direction of the *qibla*, is it permissible for us to use them? If it is not permissible, what is the solution?

Answer:

a. In the first case, based on obligatory precaution, it is not permissible to use them except after failing to know the direction of the *qibla* and that it is not possible to wait or that waiting would entail harm and place the person in difficulty.

b. In the second case, based on obligatory precaution, it is necessary —while using the bathroom— to refrain from facing the *qibla* or turning one's back to it. However, in the event of emergency, one should sit with their back towards the *qibla*. This is based on obligatory precaution.

344. **Question:** Suppose that Muslim, residing in a non-Muslim country finds a suitcase (full of clothes) with or without the owner's nametag on it. What should he do with it?

Answer: A suitcase of personal belongings normally has the nametag through which the owner can be contacted. If he knows that it belongs to a Muslim or a non-Muslim whose property is sacrosanct (or even if there is a likelihood —a considerable likelihood— [that it belongs to a non-Muslim whose property is sacrosanct]), it is necessary for him to announce it for one whole year that he has found that item [so that the owner can come forward and claim it]. If he cannot find the owner [even after the lapse of one year], he should, based on obligatory precaution, give it in charity.

345. However, if he knows that it belongs to a non-, it is permissible for him to keep it provided that he is not legally bound to announce what he finds in that country or to hand it over to the authorities, etc.⁶¹ In the latter case, he is not allowed to take possession of it; rather it is compulsory on him to act in accordance with the legal undertaking.

346. **Question:** If I find an item in a European country without any distinctive sign on it [identifying the owner], is it permissible for me to keep it?

Answer: If it has no distinctive sign by which one can contact the owner, it is permissible for you to keep it except in the case [of the legal undertaking] mentioned earlier.

347. **Question:** Some people, be they Muslim or non-Muslim, in the West approach you with expensive items for sale at a price so cheap that the potential buyer is almost convinced that the item is stolen. Is it permissible to buy it, if one knows for sure, or feel a strong probability, that it is has been stolen from a Muslim?

Answer: If one knows or gets a strong feeling that the item has been stolen from a person whose property is sacrosanct, it is not permissible to buy it or keep it.

348. **Question:** The price of cigarettes is very high in Western countries. Would it be forbidden to buy

them because of extravagance and waste, especially when one knows that they are harmful [to one's health]?

Answer: It is permissible to buy them; and using them would not become *haram* for the reasons mentioned [in the question]. Of course, if **smoking** causes great harm to the smoker while quitting it can cause him no harm or lesser harm, it is necessary for him to quit it.

349. **Question:** There are machines used in telephone tapping. Is it permissible to use such devices without the knowledge of the intended person in order to use it against them when the need arises?

Answer: It is not obligatory on one speaker to ask the permission of the other speaker to record the conversation on the telephone line. However, he is not allowed to publicize it or let others listen to it if it will cause an insult of a *mo'min* or disclose his secret — unless that is over-ridden by another equal or more important obligation.

350. **Question:** A photographer is asked to take pictures at a wedding reception where intoxicating drinks are served. Is this permissible for him?

Answer: It is not permissible to take pictures of the scenes of drinking intoxicants and other forbidden substances.

351. **Question:** What are the limits of obeying one's parents?

Answer: The duty of a child towards his parents is of two kinds:

a. The First: To be kind towards them by providing for them, if they are in need. To provide for their day-to-day needs. To respond to their requests that are related to their daily lives at a level that is normal and usual for a human being, in the sense that if he refuses to fulfill them, it would be regarded as “not being good to them” — and that would differ depending on whether they are healthy and strong or ill and weak.

b. The Second: To behave towards them kindly, by not offending them in word or action, even if they are unjust to him. In some religious text, it says, “And if they hit you, do not shun them; instead say, ‘May Allah forgive you.’”

This is as far as it relates to the parents' situation. As for those issues concerning the affairs of the child himself by which he could offend one of the parents, these are of two kinds:

a. The First: If the parent's distress results from his concern for the child, it is forbidden for the child to do something that would distress his parent, irrespective of whether or not the parent has prevented him from it.

b. The Second: If the parent's distress results from of his own evil characteristics (for example, dislike

for the good of this world or the hereafter for his child), this kind of distress has no bearing on the child, thus, it is not obligatory on the child to submit to this kind of desires.

It becomes clear from this that, on its own, obeying the parents in their personal commands is not obligatory. And Allah knows the best.

352. Question: Some parents fear for their concerning enjoining the good and forbidding the evil [and, therefore, ask them not to embark on this road]. So, is it obligatory to obey them in this matter, especially if the child knows that his advice will be effective and there is no danger to him [in doing *amr* or *nahi*]?

Answer: When it becomes obligatory upon the child [to do *amr* or *nahi*], with all the conditions present, no creature can be obeyed in exchange of disobeying the Creator.

353. Question: A son argues with his father or a daughter with her mother, over a serious day-to-day issue, in a heated manner that causes distress to the parents. Is this permissible for the children, and what is the limit when a child is not allowed to argue with the parent?

Answer: A child is allowed to discuss with the parents in matters that he or she thinks are not right; but the child must observe politeness and respect in the discussion; he or she should not angrily look at them, nor raise his voice over theirs, let alone use harsh words and expressions.

354. Question: If a mother advises her son to divorce his wife with whom she has differences, is it obligatory upon him to obey her in this matter? What if she says, “You are an ‘*aq* child,62if you do not divorce her”?

Answer: It is not obligatory on him to obey her in this matter, and her statement [about him becoming disobedient] has no effect whatsoever. Of course, as mentioned earlier, it is necessary for him to hold back from any insulting statement or action towards her.

355. Question: A father hits his child severely that it leaves blue or red marks on his skin—is it obligatory upon the father to pay indemnity for bodily injury? Is the rule different if the person who hit the child was not his father?

Answer: The indemnity is obligatory upon the one who hits [in the way described above], regardless of whether he is the father or someone else

356. Question: If a Muslim is sure of his father’s displeasure —although he has not heard him say no—in his travelling abroad, is it permissible for him to travel, should he know that the journey is good for him?

Answer: If being kind towards the father —in the context mentioned earlier in the answer to a previous question— demands that the son should be close to him, or that the father will be in distress out of his

concern for the son, he should not embark on travelling as long as he will not be in loss; otherwise, it is not necessary for him to refrain [from travelling].

357. Question: Is it part of righteousness for the wife to serve in-laws? Is it part of kindness for the husband to be considerate of his in-laws, especially in foreign countries?

Answer: There is no doubt it is part of righteousness and an example of kindness towards the husband or the wife; but it is not obligatory.

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1. Al-Kulayni, al-Usûl mina 'l-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 348.
 2. Ibid, p. 347.
 3. An-Naraqî, Jami'u 's-Sa'adat, vol. 2, p. 260.
 4. Al-Kulayni, al-Usûl mina 'l-K?fi, vol. 2, p. 347; also see as-Sadûq, Man La Yahdhuruhu 'l-Faqih, vol. 4, p. 267.
 5. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 152.
 6. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 155.
 7. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 157.
 8. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 348.
 9. Ibid.
 10. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 162.
 11. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 160.
 12. An-Naraqî, Jami'u 's-Sa'adat, vol. 2, p. 267.
 13. As-Sadûq, Thawabu 'l-A'mal wa 'lqabu 'l-A'mal, p. 225.
 14. Ibid.
 15. Al-Kulayni, al-Usûl mina 'l-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 176.
 16. Ibid; for more information, see the sections "Fulfilling the Needs of Believer" (vol. 2, p. 192), "Striving for Need of a Believer" (vol. 2, p. 196), "Relieving the Suffering of a Believer" (vol. 2, p. 199) of al-Usûl mina 'l-K?fi of al-Kulayni.
 17. An-Nuri, Mustadraku 'l-Wasa'il ("Kitabu 'l-Hajj"), section 72.
 18. An-Naraqî, Jami'u 's-Sa'adat, vol. 2, p. 267. Also see the section on "rights of the neighbour" in al-Usûl mina 'l-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 666.
 19. Nahju 'l-Balagha (ed. Subhi as-Salih) p. 422.
 20. Mustadraku 'l-Wasa'il, vol. 1, section 72.
 21. An-Naraqî, Jami'u 's-Sa'adat, vol. 2, p. 268.
 22. To know more about the noble character of the Prophet (a.s.), see at-Tabrasi, Makarimu 'l-Akhlaq, p. 15ff, and the various books of history and hadith.
 23. An-Naraqî, Jami'u 's-Sa'adat, vol. 1, p. 443.
 24. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 331. Also see al-Usûl mina 'l-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 99 and Wasa'ilu 'sh-Shi'a, vol. 15, p. 198ff.
 25. An-Naraqî, ibid. Also see al-Usûl mina 'l-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 363ff.
 26. Al-Hurr al-'Amili, Wasa'ilu 'sh-Shi'a, vol. 20, p. 82. Also see 'Abdu 'l-Husayn Dastghayb, adh-Dhunûbu 'l-Kabirah, vol. 2, p. 296-297.
 27. An-Nuri, Mustadraku 'l-Wasa'il, vol. 12, p. 241.
 28. Al-Hurr al-'Amili, Wasa'ilu 'sh-Shi'a, vol. 16, p. 396.
 29. Ibid, vol. 16, p. 122.
 30. Wasa'ilu 'sh-Shi'a, vol. 12, p. 200.
 31. Ibid, p. 135.
 32. Translator's Note: Shurayh's judgement was based on the principle that possession is itself a proof of ownership, and that the claimant has to provide the proof in support of his claim.

33. As-Sayyid al-Milani in Qadatuna, quoting al-Bayhaqi, as-Sunanu 'l-Kubra, vol. 4, p. 135.
34. At-Tusi, at-Tahdhib, vol. 6, p. 292.
35. Wasa'ilu 'sh-Shi'a, vol. 12, p. 201.
36. Nahju 'l-Balagha (Subhi as-Salih's edition) p. 421.
37. Al-Usûl mina 'l-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 208.
38. Ibid; also see Jami'u 's-Sa'adat, vol. 2, p. 213.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 164; for more information see the relevant sections in Wasa'ilu 'sh-Shi'a, vol. 16, p. 381-384.
41. Ibid, vol. 12, p. 275.
42. As-Sayyid as-Sistani, Minhaju 's-Saliheen, vol. 1, p. 17.
43. An-Naraqî, Jami'u 's-Sa'adat, vol. 2, p. 302
44. An-Naraqî, Jami'u 's-Sa'adat, vol. 2, p. 276.
45. Al-Usûl mina 'l-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 369.
46. As-Sadûq, Thawabu 'l-A'mal, p. 262.
47. Wasa'ilu 'sh-Shi'a, vol. 8, chapter 161.
48. Nahju 'l-Balagha, letter no. 21.
49. Nahju 'l-Balaghah, letter no. 45.
50. Al-Majlisi, Biharu 'l-Anwar, vol. 19, p. 118.
51. Al-Himyari, Qurbu 'l-Asnad, p. 74
52. As-Sadûq, al-Khisal, vol. 1, p. 25.
53. Wasa'lu 'sh-Shi'a, vol. 6, p. 255.
54. Ibid, vol. 19, p. 118
55. As-Sadûq, Thawabu 'l-A'mal, p. 172.
56. For more information on this, see as-Sayyid 'Izzu 'd-Din Bahru 'l-'Ulûm, al-Infaq fi Sabilillah.
57. As-Sadûq, Thawabu 'l-A'mal, p. 239
58. Jami'u 's-Sa'adat, vol. 2, p. 229.
59. Ibid.
60. See al-Usûl mina 'l-Kafi, section on "Being Concerned for Affairs of the Muslims."
61. Translator's Note: Agreement, in the above context, means "the immigration agreement made between the host country and the immigrant."
62. âq means a child who is disobedient to his parents.

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