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Seventh Greater Sin: Qat’a ar-Rahm

Breaking up relations

The seventh Greater Sin is Qat’a ar-Rahm, the breaking up of relations with one’s kith and kin. This is clearly verified by Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) as well as Imam Musa al-Kadhim (a.s.), Imam ‘Ali ar-Riḡa (a.s.) and Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.). The Qur’an has also decreed Hell-fire and the curse of Allah (S.w.T.) upon those who cut off ties with their relatives.

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“Beware of those who cut off relations because I have found them cursed thrice in the Qur’an.”

1) ***Whoever break the covenant of Allah after its confirmation and cut asunder what Allah has ordered to be joined, and make mischief in the land, these it is that are the losers. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:27)***

In the Qur’anic terminology when the word Khḡsir (loser) is used it denotes the one who is to be in loss, or rather the one who is cursed.

2) ***And those who break the covenant of Allah after its confirmation and cut asunder which Allah has ordered to be joined and make mischief in the land; (as for) those, upon them shall be curse and they shall have the evil (issue) of the abode. (Surah ar-Rḡd, 13:.25)***

3) ***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. (Surah Muhammad, 47:22-23)***

The Denouncement of “Cutting Off Kinship Ties” in the

Traditions

Numerous traditions have reached us in this regard. A few of these reports are quoted here:

The Holy Prophet (S) states:

There is destruction in enmity, especially with the relatives. I do not mean the destruction of the law but rather the destruction of the religion. (Enmity among people not only harms the hair and the body, but it also destroys one's religion).¹

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“Protect yourself from ‘Haliqa’ for it destroys the people.” The narrator asked “What is ‘Haliqa’”, Imam replied, “To sever relations.”

The Worst Deed in the Eyes of Allah (S.w.T.)

A man approached the Holy Prophet (S) and enquired, “What is the worst deed in the eyes of Allah?”

The Holy Prophet (S) replied,

“To attribute partners to Allah.”

The man then asked, “After this which is the worst sin?”

The Holy Prophet (S) said:

“To sever relations”.

After this the same person asked, “After this which is the worst sin?”

The Holy Prophet (S) replied:

“To enjoin the evil and to forbid the good (deeds).”²

Goodness in Return of Ill-Treatment

A man complained to Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) about his relatives. Imam (a.s.) said,

“Swallow your anger and behave nicely with your relatives.”

The man said, “My relatives give me all sorts of troubles and there is hardly any cruelty they have not committed upon me.” The Imam (a.s.) told him,

“Do you also want to cut off relation with them? If you also become like them, then Allah will never have

mercy for you.”

Allama Majlisi (r.a.) says, “If one behaves kindly to the relatives who are bad, they would at one time or the other regret their behaviour. Then the Mercy of Allah (S.w.T.) will be upon both of them. If the ill-behaved relatives do not rectify their ways then at least the Mercy of Allah (S.w.T.) will be upon the one who continues kindness to them (the relatives).

It is very clear to us that we must not sever relations even with those relatives who are unkind to us and who want to cut off the relationships.

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

“Do not sever relation with your kindered even if they cut off relations with you.”³

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) states:

“There are Three sins whose punishment has to be borne in this world itself:–

The first is injustice, the second is breaking of relationships and the third is false oath.”⁴

Life is Shortened

Hazrat ‘Ali (a.s.) says in one of his sermons: –

“I seek refuge from the sins which cause the hastening of death.”

Someone asked him, “Maula, Is there any sin by which the death is hastened?” He replied,

“Yes, the breaking up of the family ties.”

Families who live with co-operation and care for each other are given increase in sustenance by Allah (S.w.T.) and those who remain divided and are aloof from each other, Allah (S.w.T.) removes the bounty from their sustenance and their lifespan shortens even if they are all pious (in other respects).

Death due to Qat’a ar-Rahm

A companion of Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) complained about the ill-treatment given to him by his relatives,

“My own brother as well as my paternal cousins are harassing me. They have snatched the house that rightfully belonged to me and have given me only a room to live in. If I complain to the government, I shall be able to recover all my property.

Imam (a.s.) said,

“Be patient, everything will be alright.”

The man returned satisfied. In the year 131 A.H. there was a terrible plague. All the relatives of the man perished. Thereafter when he arrived before Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.), he (Imam a.s.) asked,

“How are your relatives?”

The man said, “By Allah all of them are dead.” The Imam (a.s.) said,

“Their deaths have been due to their ill-treatment and Qat’a ar-Rahm of relatives like you, not recognizing your right and cutting off relationships.”

Bereft of Divine Mercy

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) relates from the Holy Prophet (S) that he said:

“When people claim to possess knowledge but do not act upon it, when they claim to profess love but harbour malice in their hearts and sever relations, in such a condition Allah removes mercy from them and makes them undiscerning to logic.⁵

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

“Among the various sins, injustice and cutting off relationships are such that one who commits these is punished in this world itself. Apart from this the punishment for these sinners has already been prepared in the Hereafter.”⁶

At another occasion the Holy Prophet (S) has informed:

“One who severs relationships will not enter Heaven.”

Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari (r.a.) has related from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) that he quotes the Holy Prophet (S) as follows:

“Jibrīl (a.s.) has informed me that even at a distance of a thousand years man will be able to smell the fragrance of Heaven , but one who disobeys his parents, the one who breaks ties with the kith and kin, or the aged adulterer will not be able to smell it. In fact, the fragrance of Paradise will be felt even at a distance of two thousand years, but not by those who disobey their parents and those who break ties with the relatives.”

The exalted Prophet of Islam (S) has also informed that the invocation of the person who breaks family ties shall not be answered. “In the chapter on the merits of Shab al-Qadr the Prophet (S) has stated that in the night of Qadr Allah (S.w.T.) forgives the sins of all the people except of those who drink wine, who disobey their parents, and those who break ties with the relatives or harbour enmity towards the

believers.”

Kindness to Relatives is Obligatory

The Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) says in the Qur’an:

“...and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship;” (Surah an-Nisā’ 4:1)

According to Imam al-Baqir (a.s.), the notable point in this verse is that the fear of Allah (S.w.T.) is mentioned alongwith the fear one should have about breaking relations with kith and kin.

In the book al-Kāfi there is a tradition from Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.). He says:

“The relatives in this Ayat, include all, and not only the nearest ones. Certainly Allah has ordered kindness towards all the relatives. Allah has given so much importance to this deed that he mentions it with his exalted name.”

Kindness to Relatives is Commanded in the Same Way as Salāt and Zakat

It is related from Imam ‘Ali-ar-Riḍā (a.s.):

“Allah has ordered Three things along with Three others, in the glorious Qur’an:

- 1) Salāt is ordered along with Zakat. If one offers Salāt but does not pay Zakat (when it is due upon him) then his Salāt will not be accepted.
- 2) Allah has ordered thankfulness to Himself along with the thankfulness to one’s parents. If one is not grateful to one’s parents it is as if he has not been grateful to Allah.
- 3) Allah has ordered piety along with kindness to ones kith and kin. Then one who is not kind towards the relatives is not pious.”

Rights of the Relatives and the Ease in Reckoning

The Creator of the Universe, Almighty Allah remarks in the Holy Qur’an:

“Certainly Allah orders equity, kindness (to people) and the giving (of what they need) to the relatives.” (Surah an-Nahl 16:90)

In Surah ar-Rḍ is the following verse:

“And those who join that which Allah has bidden to be joined and have awe of their Lord and fear the evil reckoning.” (Surah ar-Ra’d 13:21)

The expression ‘reckoning’ in this Ayat denotes the accounting of one’s deeds with regard to his duty of kindness towards relatives. This Ayat shows that kindness towards the kith and kin shall be an important factor to ease the difficulty of the accounting for one’s deeds.

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) explains as follows:

“Kindness to relatives makes the reckoning (of the Hereafter) easy.”⁷

The Inimical Relative of Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.)

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) made a will in his last moments:

“Pay seventy Dinars to my paternal cousin Hasan Aftas.”

He was asked, “Master you are making a gift to someone who has attacked you with a sword?”

Imam (a.s.) replied,

“Do you think I should not be included among those concerning whom the Qur’an says:

‘And those who join that which Allah has bidden to be joined and have awe of their Lord and fear the evil reckoning...’ (Surah ar-Ra’d: 13:21)

Allah has created Paradise, purified it and made it fragrant. Its fragrance is felt at a distance of two thousand years (of travel). But the one who disobeys his parents or breaks ties with the kin will be so far away from Paradise, that he will not even experience its fragrance.⁸

Traditions Regarding Kindness to Relatives

There are numerous traditions to the fact that Silet ar-Rahm is obligatory. In one of such traditions Imam Baqir (a.s.) relates from the Holy Prophet (S) that he said:

“I will (command) all the people of my Umma, whether present or not, and those generations which are to come till the Qiyama, who are still in the loins of their father and wombs of their mothers, that they should be kind to their relatives (and visit them) even if they live at a distance of a year’s journey. Because kindness to relatives is one of the commands which is made an integral part of the faith (Iman).”

One Who is Kind to the Relatives Will be Able to Cross the Bridge of Sirat Smoothly

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) relates from Hazrat Abu Zar Ghaffari (r.a.) who quotes the Holy Prophet (S) to have remarked:

‘Sirat (the bridge passing over Hell that everyone has to cross) will have on each side (of it) ‘Silet ar-Rahm’ and ‘Amanat’ (keeping a trust) one who performs the act of Silet ar-Rahm and maintains trusts (Amanat) shall be able to cross the ‘Sirat’ easily and will reach Paradise.

None of the good deeds will benefit those who have broken ties with relatives or committed breach of trust. They will slip from the bridge of ‘Sirat’ and drop into Hell-fire.⁹

The Worldly Benefits of Kindness to Relatives

Numerous reports (*Rawayt*) testify that Silet ar-Rahm (kindness to one’s relatives) also has worldly benefits. Like, increase in the life-span, postponement of death, increase in the number of descendants etc., Hazrat Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) related Three traditions from the Holy Prophet (S) in the court of Mansur Dawaniqi (l.a.).

1) “A man who has only Three years of life remaining, performs an act of kindness to his relatives and Allah increases his life by thirty years. In the same way a man has thirty years of life but due to his breaking off the ties of relationship, his (remaining) life is decreased to Three years. Then the Holy Prophet (S) said: Whatever Allah wills He erases and whatever He wills He writes.

It means that if Allah wills He can alter (certain destinies) due to one’s actions and deeds.”¹⁰

2) “Fulfilling the rights of kith and kin increases the life-span even if the relative is a sinner.”¹¹

3) Silet ar-Rahm (kindness to relatives) is a cause for the easy accounting of one’s deeds on the day of Qiyama and it (Silet ar-Rahm) protects one from sudden death.”

Hazrat Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) has told Maysar:

(O’ Maysar) the time of your death has arrived many times but Allah has postponed (your death) due to your kindness to the relatives and good behaviour towards them.

‘Silet ar-Rahm’ Prolongs Life

It is reported from Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said to Maysar,

“O Maysar, truly your lifespan has increased, what good actions have you been performing?”

Maysar replied, "In my youth I used to earn from my labours an amount of five Dinars a day and I used to give these to my maternal uncle."

Yaqūb Magribi was once in the presence of Imam Musa al-Kadhim (a.s.). Imam (a.s.) said,

"You and your brother had an argument over the ownership of a house. So much so that you abused each other and broke up the ties of relationship. Such a thing is not from my religion, neither is it from the religion of my ancestors. Then fear Allah, the One Who is without any partner. Fear the Divine Punishment. Due to this sin, death shall soon separate you (two). Your brother will die in this journey and you shall regret your actions."

The man asked, "May my life be sacrificed upon you, when will I die?"

Imam (a.s.) replied,

"Your death had also arrived but you did an act of kindness to your father's sister (your aunt) and thus your lifespan increased by twenty years (or months)."

As Imam (a.s.) has predicted, Yaqūb's brother died before he could reach home and was buried on the way.¹²

The Benefits of Silet ar-Rahm in the Hereafter

The practice of Silet ar-Rahm (kindness to kith and kin) accrues worldly advantages, spiritual benefits and bounties of the Hereafter.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq says:

"Silet ar-Rahm perfects the morals and encourages charity. When one performs Silet ar-Rahm he has to be benevolent towards his relatives. The continuous practice of Silet ar-Rahm brings refinement in his morals. In the same way repeated acts of kindness inculcate a benign and compassionate feeling in the person, and the soul is purified (from the sin of jealousy and enmity).¹³

Silet ar-Rahm Causes All the Good Deeds to be Accepted

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) states:

Silet ar-Rahm (kindness to relatives) purifies deeds. Purification of deeds means, that the shortcomings in all the good deeds of a person practicing Silet ar-Rahm are naturally compensated and all his good deeds are accepted by Allah.

It increases wealth, wards off difficulties and calamities. The accounting of your actions on the day of Qiyāma is made easy. Even the ordained time of death is postponed.

Extending Hand of Friendship Towards Those Who Want to Break the Ties (Qat'a ar-Rahm)

Imam Sajjad (a.s.) says:

There are two actions, towards which, a step taken is liked by Allah more than anything else. One is the step taken to join a row formed in the name of Allah (for Jihad or Salāt); the second is the one taken to extend a hand of friendship towards kith and kin who want to break relations.¹⁴

The Holy Prophet (S) said:

“Certainly there is a section in Paradise which can not be attained except by Three kinds of people. First the just Imam, second, the one who does Silet ar-Rahm, and third the one who has family (and children) but remains patient (in poverty and difficulties).¹⁵

The Reward of Silet ar-Rahm

The reward for Silet ar-Rahm has been described by the Holy Prophet (S) in one of his traditions. He says:

“When a person goes towards his relatives so that he can fulfill his rights with his life and his wealth, Allah bestows upon him the reward of a martyr at every step he takes. He (Allah) writes down forty thousand Hasana (the unit of Divine rewards) and He erases forty thousand of his sins and He elevates him by forty thousand grades. The person achieves the position of one who has worshipped Allah for a hundred years.”¹⁶

At another place the Holy Prophet (S) says, regarding the rewards for Silet ar-Rahm:

“The reward for Sadaqah in the way of Allah is ten times, whereas the reward for giving a loan is twelve times (because in giving a loan the dignity of the Loanee is maintained). The reward for the good behaviour to the believing brothers is twelve times and the reward for Silet ar-Rahm is twenty four times.”¹⁷

The Meaning of Silet ar-Rahm and Qat'a ar-Rahm

The Shari'a of Islam has not provided any fixed definition for these two terms. In this case the meaning as judged by common sense and reason must be accepted. We must consider all the relatives from the father's side and mother's side, irrespective of whether they are close or distant, to be our kith and kin who have a right on us. In the same way the children of the daughters and their descendant also come in this category as the Qur'an says:

‘Those who join together (do Silet ar-Rahm) those things which Allah has commanded to be joined.’ (Surah ar-Ra’d 13:21)

Urwah Ibn-Yazid asked Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) the meaning of this Ayat (Surah ar-Ra’d 13:21), the Imam (a.s.) replied;

“You have been commanded to do Silet ar-Rahm towards all your relatives. Whether they are Mahram (in the prohibited category of marriage) or Non-mahram, (not in the prohibited category) whether they are distant relatives or closely related, whether they are immediate relatives or separated by several generations.”¹⁸

No Discrimination Between the Affluent and the Poor Relatives

It is generally observed that people tend to behave graciously towards their wealthy relatives and avoid the poor ones. The faith of Islam does not differentiate or discriminate between the rich and the poor relatives. What is important is the closeness of relationship. The more closely a person is related to you, the more important and necessary it is to fulfill his rights.

What is Silet ar-Rahm?

Any behaviour which is generally regarded by people as good, kind, gracious or obligatory, when directed towards your relatives is Silet ar-Rahm.

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“The kindness towards relative and goodness towards the believing brother makes easy your reckoning on the Day of Judgement and protects you from sins. So you should be kind to your relatives and be good to your believing brothers even if it is as little as a sincere ‘salām’ (salutation) or a hearty reply to a salām.”¹⁹

At another place the Sixth Imam (a.s.) remarks:

“Do Silet ar-Rahm towards your relatives and the near ones even if it is just by offering a glass of water to them.”²⁰

The Different Grades of Silet ar-Rahm

Shahid al-Thani²¹ (r.a.) describes the grades of Silet ar-Rahm in the following words:

It is deduced from the traditions that the highest stage of Silet ar-Rahm is to consider the relatives as our own selves. That is, we should wish for our relations whatever we wish for ourselves.

The next stage of Silet ar-Rahm is to help relatives overcome the difficulties and hardships they may be facing. Next, we must earnestly try to benefit our kith and kin as much as possible, in areas where they need help and of course in a manner permitted by religion. This benefit can be either economic or by way of making a person independent, by securing for him a job or initiating him into a trade. It can also be in the form of a sound advice, spiritual guidance and religious teachings.

The fourth stage of Silet ar-Rahm is towards those people who are dependents of our relatives. For example, the brother's wife or the step-mother.

The simplest kind of Silet ar-Rahm consists of salutations, a lesser kind is the conveying of Salām (through someone). The smallest kind of Silet ar-Rahm is to pray for relatives in their presence and to encourage them.

The Difference Between Breaking Relations With Nearest Kin and With Distant Relatives

Qat'a ar-Rahm and Silet ar-Rahm with respect to the close kith and kin could be different from that with the distant relatives. It is possible that a certain action or attitude towards close relative would amount to Qat'a ar-Rahm but the same towards a distant relative may not be regarded as such. Also a certain behaviour with a knowledgeable and a pious relative may be termed as Qat'a ar-Rahm but with respect to other relatives it may not be so. It is best to refrain from every act that could possibly amount to Qat'a ar-Rahm. We must observe extreme precaution in this matter lest we bring upon ourselves the severe punishment of a Greater Sin.

Arrogance Towards Poor Relatives is Qat'a ar-Rahm

The ones most guilty of Qat'a ar-Rahm are the rich and affluent who do not acknowledge their connections with their poor relatives and deal with them with pride and arrogance, while they are polite and kind to their wealthy relatives. To neglect one's duty and give importance to material possessions, contradicts the laws of Islam both in the letter and spirit.

What is the Least Amount of Silet ar-Rahm That is Wajib

Every kind of Silet ar-Rahm, the failure of which is viewed as a sort of Qat'a ar-Rahm, is obligatory for us. For example, if a person is unable to fulfill his needs due to poverty or is unable to get medical aid for any reason, or is in debt; and he approaches a rich relative for help; it is obligatory on the rich person to help him. Even if the rich person is not approached directly but comes to know the predicament of his poor relative, it is obligatory on him to help this less fortunate relative. The wealthy man who fails to carry out these obligations will be guilty of Qat'a ar-Rahm.

It is however not obligatory for a person to help his poor relative if he himself is not in a sound position to do so and fears that his finances will be constrained or that he himself may become a destitute. Also, Silet ar-Rahm is not obligatory, if by doing so he will violate the laws of Islam. For example one need not pay a visit to a relative, if by doing so one would be in the midst of Na-mahram or may be compelled to hear music.

Sometimes we may be in doubt whether a particular action could be considered as Silet ar-Rahm or Qat'a ar-Rahm. In this case the reference point is to see how the people in general view it. The criteria for deciding that a particular behaviour is Silet ar-Rahm or Qat'a ar-Rahm therefore depends on the general feeling for it. If a small lapse like not saluting or non-compliance with a small request is Qat'a ar-Rahm according to those around us, then it is so. By the same token if observing small niceties are considered as Silet ar-Rahm, then it is so.

Silet ar-Rahm With Certain Relatives is Mustahab if Not Wajib

At times some obligations towards distant relatives are not considered Silet ar-Rahm and accordingly are not Wajib (obligatory) for us. But these obligations are bound to be Mustahab. In any event, it is best to conduct ourselves in a manner that we totally eliminate the risk of committing a Greater Sin.

Breaking Ties Even With Those Who Wish to Break Up Ties With us is Harām

Although one would not be at fault from a worldly point of view, according to Shari'a, breaking ties even with those who want to do so is Harām.

It is natural for a person who, finding that his relative does not acknowledge him nor fulfills his rights, reacts by remaining aloof and allowing the bonds of kinship to be broken.

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

“Do not break ties with your relatives even if they break them with you.”

The Order of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) Regarding Qat'a ar-Rahm

Abdullah Ibn Sinan says that I pleaded to Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.), “I have a cousin, I do Silet ar-Rahm (kindness) towards him and do not wish to break ties with him. But he wants to break ties with me. (Master!) I want to maintain relations but he wishes to sever them. Due to this behaviour of his I am also inclined to cut off ties with him. Can you permit me to do so?”

Imam (a.s.) replied:

“(Remember) If you behave kindly with this relative of yours inspite of his Qat’a ar-Rahm (then it is possible that one day this will affect him and he too will begin to fulfill his obligations). In this way the Mercy of Allah shall be upon both of you. But if you break ties with this cousin of yours then neither of you shall be eligible for the Mercy of Allah.”²²

Goodness in Return of Ill-Treatment

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

“If any one betrays trust with you, do not betray trust with him or you will also become like him. Similarly, do not break ties with your relatives even if they do so.”²³

It means that if we reciprocate the malice of a relative we shall also be like him (i.e. sinful). In the same way the Holy Prophet (S) has invited us to perform kindness in lieu of misdemeanor. He remarks, “Do you wish me to tell you (about those qualities) which shall benefit you in this world as well as Hereafter?”

The people said, “O Prophet of Allah! Please do so.”

The Prophet (S) said,

“The Three such qualities are, firstly, to do Silet ar-Rahm with one who does Qat’a ar-Rahm with you. Secondly, fulfill the needs of one who has deprived you. Thirdly, forgive those who have oppressed you.”²⁴

Breaking of Ties With the Muslim and the Kafir Relatives

The traditions of the Ma’sūmīn (a.s.) leave no doubt whatsoever that the fulfilling of the rights of one’s relatives is obligatory. Whether the relatives are Shia or Sunni, pious and religious or sinful and transgressors or whether they are Muslims or Kafirs. It is compulsory to perform Silet ar-Rahm with them. Even if a Muslim relative apostisises and becomes a kafir, his rights are not invalidated.

Inb al-Hamid enquired from Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.): “My relatives are not of my religion. Are any of their rights upon me?” Imam (a.s.) gave the following reply:

“Why not? The rights of the relatives do not become invalid for any reason (even if the relatives are unbelievers) but if the relatives are Muslim then their rights are twice as much. One is due to their being relatives and second because of their being Muslim.”²⁵

Dawūd Raqqi the Companion of the Sixth Imam (a.s.)

Dawūd Raqqi says: “I was sitting in the company of Imam (a.s.) when Imam (a.s.) himself started speaking and said:

“Dawūd, on Thursday the report of your deeds was presented to me and I saw among your deeds the Silet ar-Rahm which you have performed with your cousin (brother), I was very pleased. However, I know that this Silet ar-Rahm of yours will (because of his Qat’a ar-Rahm towards you) be the cause of his early death.”²⁶

Dawūd, the companion of Imam Sadiq (a.s.) says: “My cousin used to bear enmity towards me. He was an evil person. When I came to know about his destitution, I went to Makkah and gave him some money so that he could manage himself for some time. It was this action of mine about which Imam (a.s.) was informed and he told of it on my return to Madinah.”

The Behaviour of Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) Towards His Inimical Relatives

Certain relatives of the Holy Imam (a.s.) not only failed to acknowledge his rights but even bore enmity against him in their hearts. Although the enmity against Imam (a.s.) makes him a disbeliever. Yet Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) willed that seventy Dinars be given to Hasan Aftas. Hasan Aftas was an evil person and had such deep malice against Imam (a.s.) that he had once tried to attack Imam (a.s.) with a sword. The goodly behaviour of Imam (a.s.) towards his enemy was due entirely to his relationship.

Conversation of Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) With Abdullah Hasani

Once Abdullah Hasani, a relative of Imam Sadiq (a.s.) met him on the streets of Madinah. He had a meaningless argument with Imam (a.s.) and spoke ill of him. Imam (a.s.) replied to this misbehavior in the best way. He went to the house of this person the very next day and said, “Yesterday I recited the following Ayat of the Qur’an,

“And those who joined that which Allah has bidden to be joined and have awe of their Lord and fear the evil reckoning. (Surah ar-Rūd 13:21)

I became very fearful because of it.” Abdullah understood that Imam (a.s.) was intending to correct him. He began to weep and said, “I have willfully forgotten this verse. After this, Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) and Abdullah embraced each other.”²⁷

The Grief of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) on the Oppression upon the Descendants of Imam Hasan (a.s.)

When Mansūr Dawaniqi arrested and imprisoned Abdullah Mahej and other Hasani Sadīqs, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) was grief-stricken. Although the Hasanis were opposed to Imam (a.s.), the Imam's (a.s.) distress was such that he was confined to bed for twenty days. He wrote a lengthy letter to them to express his sorrow and to offer comfort and consolation. He sent this letter to the prison of Kufa and was in regular contact with them to know their well-being. Often he wept on their imprisonment.

It Does Not Matter if We Are Kind to Certain Relatives Who Are Not Muslim

It is simply clear by now that for Sileh-Rahem and Qat'a ar-Rahm, the Shari'a does not distinguish between a Muslim and a Kafir or between a pious and a sinful person. At the same time we also know that Islam exhorts us to shun infidels and to dissociate with them. These contradicting views will cause some confusion in our minds and a word of explanation is in order.

Undoubtedly Islam orders us to detest kafirs, hence it is improper to behave well with them. Good behaviour towards a Kafir is an outward act and at a social level. While hating him for being an Kafir is how you feel and think about him at a spiritual level. Since Sileh-Rahem is obligatory, we must behave well with our Kafir relatives, but at no stage should we be oblivious of the fact that they are non-believers and deserve to be hated for being Kafirs.

Silet ar-Rahm to Kafir Relatives Should Not Encourage Them in Their Disbelief

If Silet ar-Rahm towards a Kafir relative, in some way, strengthens his conviction towards his own religious views; or if Sileh-Rahem towards a sinful relative provides him with opportunity and encouragement in his unlawful ways, then this kind of Silet ar-Rahm is forbidden. In fact, if Qat'a ar-Rahm induces a disbeliever to introspect and reconsider his disbelief, then, Qat'a ar-Rahm is obligatory on us. In the same way Qat'a ar-Rahm is obligatory if it discourages or dissuades a relative in his sinful ways.

Dissociating With the Enemies of Islam

There is another situation where Qat'a ar-Rahm is Wajib (obligatory). That is when the kafir or sinful relative harbors malice towards the religion of Islam. Allah (S.w.T.) says in Surah al-Mujādala:

“You shall not find people who believe in Allah and the latter day befriending those who act in

opposition to Allah and His apostle, even though they were their (own) fathers, or their sons or their brothers or their kinsfolk...” (Surah al-Mujadala 58:22)

This verse clearly indicates that one must abstain from Silet ar-Rahm towards even the closest of relatives if they are inimical towards Allah (S.w.T.) or the Holy Prophet (S) or the Islamic faith.

Silet ar-Rahm is Wajib if the Relative is not Overtly Inimical

A Qur’anic verse from the chapter Mumtahana says:

“Allah does not forbid you from respecting 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. Allah only forbids you from respecting those who made war upon you on account of (your) religion, and drove you forth from your homes and backed up others in your expulsion, that you make friendship with them and whoever makes friends with them, these are the unjust.” (Surah Mumtahana 60:8-9)

Thus it could be concluded from the above two verses that if a relative does not openly oppress us or exhibit enmity, then Silet ar-Rahm is Wajib towards him.

Silet ar-Rahm is Wajib Even if One Has to Travel Far to Perform it

It is highly recommended to fulfill the duty of Silet ar-Rahm even if one has to travel a long distance to do so. The Holy Prophet (S) told ‘Ali (a.s.):

“O ‘Ali! Even if you have to travel for two years to do good to your parents, do it, even if you have to travel for one year to perform Silet ar-Rahm to your kinsfolk, do so. Even if you have to journey a mile to see a sick person, do it. Even if you have to walk two miles to attend a funeral, do it. Even if you have to travel four miles to meet a believing brother, do it.”²⁸

Traditions have stated, as mentioned earlier, that for every step a person takes to visit his relatives, he gets forty thousand rewards, forty thousand of his sins are forgiven and his status is raised by forty thousand grades.

Maintain Cordial Relations But Do Not Reside Close to Each Other

Amir ul-Mu’minin (a.s.) writes a letter to one of his officers,

“Order the relatives to visit each other but ask them not to reside in the same neighborhood.”

The late Scholar, Naraqī, explains in his book, 'Miraj us Sadqat': "Staying next to each other breeds malice and jealousy and results in Qat'a ar-Rahm."

It is much easier for relatives to maintain harmony and goodwill by staying apart from each other. Proximity often results in friction and enmity.

There is a Persian proverb that says that distance and friendship are proportionate to each other.

Silet ar-Rahm With the Spiritual Father

We are indeed indebted to our parents for our physical, mental and spiritual development. But mankind could not have been guided right, without a spiritual father. The essence of spiritual guidance which consists of rules of conduct as approved by Allah (S.w.T.) have come to us only through the Holy Prophet (S) and it was the sustained and unsparing effort of the Holy Prophet (S) which guided mankind to the path of salvation and eternal happiness. The Holy Prophet (S) was the spiritual father of the Muslims in his time and later 'Ali (a.s.) took his place. It is only through love and obedience to them that one can hope to achieve spiritual eminence.

This is corroborated by the statement of Allah (S.w.T.) to the effect that whoever enters the 'fort' (protection) of these exalted personalities, his spiritualism becomes evident in his behaviour. The doors of knowledge and awareness are open. The fountain of sagacity flows in his heart and the reality becomes manifest for him.

The Advent of the Holy Prophet (S) – A Fabulous Blessing

It is not possible for a man to achieve spiritual excellence without the love and obedience of a spiritual father.

“Certainly Allah conferred a benefit upon the believers when he raised among them an apostle from among themselves, reciting to them His communications and purifying them, and teaching them the book and the wisdom, although before that they were surely in manifest error.” (Surah Ali- 'Imran 3: 164)

This verse signifies the importance of the advent of the Holy Prophet (S) by Allah (S.w.T.) for the guidance of mankind. We must acknowledge it as the greatest blessing of Allah (S.w.T.) and a favour that He bestowed upon His creatures.

The Wilayat of Ahl ul-Bayt (a.s.) and the Worldly Comforts and

Blessings

Yunus Ibn Abdul Rahmān told Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.):

“The love and Wilāyat of Ahl ul-Bayt (a.s.) has been prescribed as your right upon us by Allah. I consider this blessing to be much superior to the worldly blessings.”

Imam (a.s.) was distraught and he replied:

“You have made an inappropriate comparison. What are the worldly blessings? What is it more than eating, drinking and dressing? And you compare all these transient things with our love which is an everlasting reality?”

We have seen in the discussion on the rights of parents, that we can be ‘aq’ of our spiritual fathers if we fail to fulfill their rights. Not all of us may be capable of fulfilling this duty to the fullest extent. But we should sincerely try our utmost to obey their commands. At the same time we should be fully aware of our deficiencies and failings and continually implore our infallible guides to pardon us.

Who Are the Spiritual Fathers?

Silet ar-Rahm is Wajib and Qat'a ar-Rahm is Harām towards our spiritual relatives also. Our Holy Prophet (S) and our Imams (a.s.) are our spiritual fathers. So, the descendants of our Holy Prophet (S) and the Imams (a.s.), that is the Sadat, are our spiritual relatives. Also, since the Holy Prophet (S) and the Imams (a.s.) are the spiritual fathers of all believers and Shias, we all are related to each other, and are like brothers of each other.

“Certainly the Believers Are Brothers of Each Other.” (Surah al-Hujurat 49: 10)

The verse clearly indicates that everyone is somehow related to a common spiritual father.

Rights of Sadat

Allama Hilli in his book ‘Qawaidul Ahkam’ counsels his son Fakhrul Muhaqqiqain in the following words:

“You should practise Silet ar-Rahm with the pure descendants of the Sadat also. The Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) has emphasized upon this duty so much that he has made the love of relatives of the Holy Prophet (S) as a compensation of the prophetic mission.”

“...Say: I do not ask of you any reward for it but love for my near relatives....” (Surah ash-Shura 42:23)

The Holy Prophet (S) said:

“I shall intercede for four types of people even if they carry the sins of all humanity.”

A person who has helped my descendants and progeny.

A person who has spent his wealth upon my descendants when they were in need.

A person who has loved my Progeny with his tongue and his heart.

A person who has considered the wants of my descendants when they were surrounded by enemies and were homeless.”

Does Anyone Have a Right Upon the Holy Prophet (S)?

Hazrat Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

“On the day of Qiyāma a caller will announce, ‘O people, keep silent, because Muhammad (S) is to say something to you.’ Then the Messenger will arise and say, ‘O people! If anyone of you has any right or favour upon me, or if there is any obligation upon my neck then he should stand up. I will see that he is compensated.’ The people will reply, ‘May our parents be sacrificed upon you. What right? What favour? And what obligation? Rather the rights and favours are of Allah and His Prophet upon all the creatures.’

Goodness to Sadīq and Paradise

Then the Holy Prophet (S) shall say:

“No, they do have a right. Whoever has provided shelter and help to anyone from my Ahlul-Bayt (a.s.) or did good to them or gave them clothes in their need or fed them when they were in need, should stand up so that I can recompense him.”

Some people who had performed such deeds will arise. Then the voice of the Almighty shall be heard. “O Muhammad, my loved one! With due regards to your position I have fixed the reward for their deeds. They shall be given whatever position you intend for them in Paradise.” Then Allah (S.w.T.) shall give them a place near the Holy Prophet (S) and his Ahlul-Bayt (a.s.) and there would be nothing to obstruct their view.”

Rights of the Brothers in Faith

There are numerous traditions in connection with the rights of the believers and brothers-in-faith. A few of such traditions are quoted below:

Mualla Bin-Khanṣā asked Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.): “What are the rights of the believing brother?”

Imam (a.s.) replied,

“Seven rights of the believers are Wajib – If one fails to fulfill even one of these rights, he is excommunicated from Allah’s obedience. He shall not receive any reward from the Almighty.”

“What are those seven rights?”, enquired Mualla.

Imam (a.s.) said,

“ I fear that you may fail to act upon them.”

Mualla said, “La Quwwata Illa Billah.” There is no power except of Allah. (He meant, It wouldn’t be so).

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) said,

“The foremost right is that you wish for the believing brothers whatever you wish for yourself.”

Imam (a.s.) then related the other six rights,

“The second right is that you must refrain from angering him and try to seek his pleasure and obey him. The third right is that you help him with you life, your wealth, your tongue, and your hands. The fourth right is that you guide him and teach him that which is beneficial for him. The fifth, is that do not eat till satiation when your believing brother is hungry, and do not drink to satiation if he is thirsty, and do not dress nicely if he is deprived of good clothes. The sixth right is that if you have a servant you should send him to do his work. The seventh right is that if the believing brother says something on oath you should believe him, if he invites, you accept his invitation, if he is sick, visit him, if he dies, accompany his bier, if you come to know any of his needs, fulfill them it before he asks.”²⁹

Silet ar-Rahm with the Imam (a.s.)

Imam Riḍā (a.s.) has informed,

“Those who cannot come for our Ziarat must visit our virtuous followers. They shall get the reward of performing our Ziarat. And those who wish to do Silet ar-Rahm towards us but are unable to do so must do Silet ar-Rahm towards our pious devotees. They shall be given the reward of our Silet ar-Rahm.”

Respect and honour for the believing brother is the same as respect and honour for the spiritual father (Imam [a.s.]). In the same way, insult and disrespect of the believing brother is equivalent to insult and disrespect to the spiritual father, (the infallible Imam [a.s.]). It is for very reason that insulting a believer brings the wrath of Allah (S.w.T.) upon us and makes us deserving of severe punishment.

We shall conclude with the prayer that Allah (S.w.T.) may give Tawfīq to all of us for doing Silet ar-Rahm and fulfilling the rights of others.

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1. al-Kāfi, Chapter of Qat'a ar-Rahm
 2. al-Kāfi
 3. al-Kāfi
 4. al-Kāfi
 5. Bihār al-Anwār
 6. Mustadrak
 7. Bihār al-Anwār
 8. Bihār al-Anwār
 9. al-Kāfi
 10. Bihār al-Anwār
 11. Bihār al-Anwār
 12. Safinat'ul-Bihār
 13. Safinat'ul-Bihār
 14. Bihār al-Anwār
 15. Bihār al-Anwār
 16. Bihār al-Anwār
 17. Bihār al-Anwār
 18. al-Kāfi
 19. al-Kāfi
 20. Wasa'il ul-Shia
 21. Al-Shahīd Al-Thani Zain Al-Din Al-Jubli Al-Ameli.
 22. al-Kāfi
 23. Bihār al-Anwār
 24. al-Kāfi
 25. al-Kāfi
 26. Bihār al-Anwār
 27. al-Kāfi
 28. Bihār al-Anwār
 29. al-Kāfi

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