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This text discusses various aspects of social relations in Islam, such as family, marriage, children, education, employment, business, and politics. The author uses Qur'anic verses, and Ahadith from the Holy Prophet (S) and the Ahl ul-Bayt ('a) traditions to provide a clear understanding of the Islamic perspective on social relations. The book offers practical guidance for implementing these principles in daily life.

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Social Relations In Islam

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

“Oh you who believe! be patient and excel in patience and remain steadfast, and be careful of your duty to Allah, that you may be successful.” (3:200).

The Prophet of Islam (S) said:

مَنْ أَصْبَحَ وَلَمْ يَهْتَمَّ بِأُمُورِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ فَلَيْسَ بِمُسْلِمٍ

“One who begins his day without endeavoring for the amelioration of the Muslims’ affair, is no Muslim.”¹

The Prophet of Islam (S) said:

المسلم من سلم المسلمون من لسانه ويده

“A Muslim is one from whose hand and tongue the Muslims remain secure.”²

The Prophet of Islam (S) said:

خير الناس وأحبهم إلى الله أنفعهم للناس

“The person most loved by God is he who brings the greatest benefit to people.”³

There is no doubt in the fact that man is a social being and he must lead his life collectively in a society, since human needs the co-operation of fellow human beings in order to meet those needs. Each individual should perform a task, and each group solve a problem so that life becomes pleasant and happy for all.

Nor is there any doubt in the fact that living together in groups can lead to joy and happiness only when each individual knows his own duty and respects the rights of others, and also when these relations are combined with fine emotions and attitudes.

If in the relations of the members of a society, there do not exist proper fellowship, attention to inferiors, indulgence, benevolence, charity, service to fellowmen, co-operation and similar qualities, such a society can never be considered to enjoy prosperity.

Islam, as a heavenly faith, gives much importance to social relations, and it has issued perfect and comprehensive injunctions to strengthen the bonds of the brotherhood and solidarity of individuals with each another. To state this matter properly, we should say all that has desirable effects in the amelioration of social relations and in strengthening the bonds, has been commanded by Islam which has also cautioned the people against anything which may inflict even a slight blow upon these relations and cause their severance or weakening.

For those who are sufficiently familiar with Islamic issues, there is no need for any reasoning to prove the above claim. Other people, too, can. With a brief glance at the overall injunctions of the legislator of Islam for the maintenance, improvement and strengthening of social relations, understand this undeniable truth.

It is interesting to note that in its social programs, Islam has paid attention to matters which are not heeded by people and to which they do not attach much value, whereas it is these delicate details which

produce great results. For example, the simplest relations of people with each other are chance meetings in the street, on the bus, in mosques and schools, and other such places. These contacts seem very unimportant to some people, whereas in Islam, these same contacts should take place under such conditions that may produce kindness, attachment and friendship. Islam suggests that these simple contacts should be made with cheerfulness, greetings and, if possible, with handshakes.

The Prophet of Islam (S) said:

أولى الناس بالله وبرسوله من بدأ بالسلام

“The worthiest person with God and the prophet is one who salutes first.” [4](#)

The fifth Imam, Imam al-Baqir (‘a), said:

إن الله عزوجل يحب إفشاء السلام

“God Almighty loves that His servants salute one another clearly and openly.” [5](#)

Imam Ali (‘a) said:

لا تغضبوا ولا تغضبوا افشوا السلام واطيبوا الكلام وصلوا بالليل والناس نيام تدخلوا الجنة بسلام ثم تلا

“Do not get angry and do not make others angry. Salute one another openly; perform your nightly prayer to attain heaven and eternal happiness.” [6](#)

The Holy Prophet (S) said:

والذي نفسي بيده لا تدخلوا الجنة حتى تؤمنوا ولا تؤمنوا حتى تحابوا أولا أدلكم على شيء إن فعلتموه تحاببتم؟ افشوا السلام بينكم

“I swear to God in whose hand my life is, that you cannot attain heaven and eternal happiness unless you have faith, and you cannot have faith unless you love each other. Should I not guide you towards some take as a result of the performance of which love and friendship are produced among you? They answered: ‘Yes, O prophet of God.’ He added: ‘So, salute each other openly.” [7](#)

The matter of salutation, however simple and trifling it might seem, has an effect that produces indescribable love and friendship among individuals.

Dale Carnegie describes a well-known personality who was extremely popular and said that one of the

reasons for his extraordinary popularity was that he saluted everyone.[8](#)

Every person may have experienced in his life that many a precious friendship has started with salutation or its repetition, and many an enmity has gradually disappeared through offering greetings.

In addition to recommending and emphasizing the issue of salutation and in order to prevent the abandonment of this admirable custom among people, Islam has advised that if a person begins to speak prior to offering salutation, he should not be answered.

The Prophet of Islam (S) has said:

من بدأ بالكلام قبل السلام فلا تجيبوه

“If someone begins to speak without saluting you, do not answer him.”[9](#)

Moreover, the great leader of Islam has called those who ignore salutation as the meanest of individuals. He (S) said:

إن أبخل الناس من بخل بالسلام

“The meanest among people is he who shows meanness in salutation.”[10](#)

A cheerful face and smiling lips are another matter which the Muslims should remember in mutual contacts. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a), the fifth Imam, has said:

تبسم الرجل في وجه أخيه حسنة

“Smiling at a Muslim brother is regarded as a good deed.”[11](#)

Imam Ar-Ridha’ (‘a), the eighth Imam, said:

من تبسم في وجه أخيه المؤمن كتب الله له حسنة

“He who smiles at his devout brethren on meeting them, will be rewarded well by God.”[12](#)

Contemporary psychologists have considered this counsel of Islam to be a secret of success in life. Elbert Hubbard said: “Whenever you go out-of-doors, draw the chin in, carry the crown of the head high, and fill the lungs to the utmost; drink in the sunshine; greet your friends with a smile, and put soul into every handclasp.”[13](#)

Dale Carnegie said: “Actions speak louder than words, and a smile says: “I like you. You make me happy. I am glad to meet you.”[14](#)

A Chinese proverb says: “A man who has no smile on the face, should not open a shop.”

Another important matter which has been emphasized in personal encounters by the leaders of Islam relates to warm handshakes.

The Holy Prophet (S) said:

إذا لقي أحدكم أخاه فليسلم عليه وليصافحه

“When one of you meet your Muslim brother, you should greet him and shake his hand.” [15](#)

Elsewhere he (S) said:

إن من تمام التحية للمقيم المصافحة وتمام التسليم على المسافر المعانقة

“In your meeting and encounter, your salutation and greeting will be complete when you offer to shake hands and to greet the traveler by embracing” [16](#)

The first step in the establishment of good relations in a Muslim society is to meet each other in a friendly manner in normal encounters, and set up this contact on the basis of sincerity and affection.

After this stage, we come across other Islamic injunctions recommended to Muslims, namely having a heart-felt love for one’s co-religionist brethren.

A love for others is a special characteristic of human beings, and their outstanding inclinations. It is this spiritual tendency that turns one’s attention to others, makes them kindly towards one another, creates a balance, and allows them to share each other’s joys and sorrows.

The inclination towards a love for others, like other exalted human desires, is not so strong and brilliant, and it cannot be reinforced without care and education. If parents and teachers look after children in their early years, and perform their duties adequately, they can gradually infuse this human quality in them and bring them up as human and benevolent individuals.

If self-love is reinforced, it becomes intense, exceeds the limit of expediency, and consequently turns into egoism and selfishness, eventually producing great evils, polluting a human being with many vices and violation of the rights of others and leading him to anti-human deeds.

If love for others is reinforced, it conquers animal tendencies, weakens the instinct of destruction and aggression, and suppresses savagery and brutality, thus adorning a human being with the most sublime human qualities.

It should be pointed out that what is meant by the love for others is kindness and affection to human beings from the view point of moral nobility and human respect, and not a means of satisfying carnal desires and material whims.

A sick person usually feels attachment to his own physician and nurse, but the root of this psychological affection is not a love of others or a noble human inclination but is rather due to self-love and love of life. He is attached to the doctor and nurse because they treat him and restore his health, thus satisfying his instinct of self-love. Such an affection is also found in animals and is not confined to man.

A true lover of other human beings is a person who loves them as human beings with a pure human motive free from the pollution of selfishness and material interests. Such a love speaks of the loftiness of spirit, and is a sign of the purity of the mind, and one of the peculiarities of human beings. This kind of affection separates human life from that of animals, and interlinks human societies. It binds together the people's hearts with human kindness and revives the spirit of brotherhood and co-operation. Such a love removes the habit of animalism and savagery from the people, gives assurance and security to them, creates an environment of peace and joy, and makes life attractive and pleasant.

In the holy faith of Islam, the issue of love for others has received full attention, and religious leaders have considered this fine quality as a factor of human happiness, and a means of winning divine favors.

Imam Musa Ibn Ja'far al-Kadhim ('a) has said:

إن أهل الأرض لمرحومون ما تحابوا وأدوا الأمانة، وعملوا بالحق

“The people of the earth can live in blessing and kindness so long as they love each other, show trustworthiness, and behave according to truth and fairness.” [17](#)

Imam Ali ('a) has said:

أبلغ ما تستدبر به الرحمة أن تُضمِرَ لِجَمِيعِ النَّاسِ الرَّحْمَةَ

“The noblest thing by which you can win divine favor, is to be whole-heartedly kind and affectionate to all people.” [18](#)

He ('a) has also said:

إن الله سبحانه يحب أن تكون نية الإنسان للناس جميلة

“God wishes people to think well of and be benevolent to each other.” [19](#)

Love of mankind and benevolence to all people are among the outstanding qualities of divine prophets and spiritual leaders. They had a love for people’s happiness and suffered at their ignorance and perversion.[20](#)

Another point to mention here is that Islam, in its emphasis upon and recommendation for benevolence and charity towards mankind, including people of any race or country, believes that for the establishment of an everlasting and unbreakable bond, there is required a strong and stable foundation unshakable in nature and joining all human beings together.

Islam does not consider authentic and reliable such matters as unity of race and language and being fellow-countrymen, since although these factors may, to some extent, produce relationship among people, whenever stronger factors such as material conflicts and frictions emerge on the scene, these relationships are shattered and replaced by rancor and enmity.

Islam holds the belief that if human beings embrace the same faith and religion, even though they belong to different races and lands, and speak different languages, the spirit of brotherhood will find its way among them and make their conduct towards each other friendly and sincere. In such a case, no factor can disrupt their relations and make them hostile towards each other.

A glance at the history of early Islam proves the correctness of this view. On the day the Holy Prophet (S) was chosen to propagate the lofty teachings of Islam, the Arabian Peninsula, despite being inhabited by the same race having the same language and homeland, was burning in the fire of conflict and hostility, and the region was devoid of security, tranquility and good relationship.

The Noble Prophet of Islam (S) embarked on guiding people, and it did not take long before the same people who had been irreconcilable enemies of each other for many centuries, and were habitual to crime and bloodshed, acted in such a brotherly manner with each other under the blessings of Islamic injunctions that there remained no sign of bloodshed, rancor, aggression and malevolence, and these vices were replaced by virtue, purity, benevolence and other noble human qualities.

The Holy Qur’an speaks of this relationship as the covenant of God or a divine bond, and says:

وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

“And hold fast by the covenant of Allah all together and be not disunited, and remember the favor of Allah on you when you were enemies, then He untied your hearts so by His favor you became brethren; and you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He saved you from it.” (3: 103).

The religious bond and unity are so strong and deep-rooted that no Muslim of any race and from any part of the world considers himself to be separated from his co-religionist brethren and he shares their joys and sorrows.

The Holy Prophet (S) has, in one of his discourses, emphasized this point where he said:

مثل المؤمنين في توادهم وتراحمهم وتعاطفهم مثل الجسد، إذا اشتكى منه عضو تداعى له سائر الجسد بالسهر والحمى

“Believers are like a body in their affection and feelings towards one another, so that when one member is uneasy, the other members sympathize with him with their fever and sleeplessness.” [21](#)

The poet Sa’di expresses the same idea in his famous poem as follows:

“Human beings are members of one body who belong to one essence in creation; when the world inflicts pain on one member, no tranquility is left for the other members.”

The Holy Qur’an considers this genuine and unbreakable bond as a bond of brotherhood and says:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ

“The believers are but brethren, therefore make peace between your brethren.” (49: 10).

Following this bond and relationship, there comes up the questions of mutual affection, and believers are duty-bound to love each other for the sake of God.

It is narrated by Imam As-Sadiq (‘a) that the Prophet of Islam (S) has said:

إن لله خلقا عن يمين العرش بين يدي الله وعن يمين الله، وجوههم أبيض من الثلج، وأضوء من الشمس الضاحية، يسأل السائل ما هؤلاء؟ فيقال: هؤلاء الذين تحابوا في جلال الله

“God has some creatures on the right side of the throne and on His right, their faces are very white and bright like the sun. Someone asked, what/who are these creatures? He answered: they are those who love each other for the sake of God, and have been kind to each other.” [22](#)

To prevent the loosening of this bond of brotherhood, Islam has lauded the factors which strengthen that bond and recommended it with such acts as salutation, visits to relatives, friends and sick people, feasts and invitations, and efforts to meet the needs of others.

It has derided the loosening of the ties of brotherhood and has warned the Muslims against committing

such acts as self-conceit, indifference, slander, fault-finding, molestation of others, telling tales, inquisitiveness in the affairs of others, reproach, scorn, absence of co-operation, making fun of people and their likes.

Here we will very briefly describe some of the acts recommended and forbidden in Islam which are deeply effective in social relations, as well as some counsels of the exalted leaders of Islam.

To Gladden Others

The Prophet of Islam (S) said:

مَنْ سَرَّ مُؤْمِنًا فَقَدْ سَرَّنِي

“He who gladdens a believer, will gladden me.” [23](#)

من أحب الأعمال إلى الله عز وجل إدخال السرور على المؤمن

“The best act with God is to gladden the hearts of believers. Endeavour to meet people’s needs.” [24](#)

The Holy Prophet (S) said about this matter:

مَنْ قَضَى لَأَخِيهِ الْمُؤْمِنِ حَاجَةً فَكَأَنَّمَا عَبَدَ اللَّهَ دَهْرَهُ

“He who meets the need of a brother-in-faith, will be rewarded like a person who has spent his life in devotion to God.” [25](#)

Imam Musa Ibn Ja’far al-Kadhim (‘a) has said:

إن لله عبادا في الأرض يسعون في حوائج الناس، هم الآمنون يوم القيامة

“God has some servants on the earth who endeavor to meet people’s needs, and such servants will remain secure from hardships on the Day of Resurrection.” [26](#)

Undoubtedly, acting for the sake of meeting the needs of others has a deep and undeniable effect in the creation of affection and in strengthening personal relations. Sometimes such acts happen to produce deep-rooted friendships.

Forbidding Backbiting

A significant act which deals a severe blow on social relations and with which Islam combats violently, is the evil of backbiting, or talking about the faults of others.

وَلَا يَغْتَابَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا

“Nor let some of you backbite others.” (49: 12)

The Holy Prophet (S) said in one of his sermons, blaming backbiters:

يا معشر من آمن بلسانه، ولم يؤمن بقلبه، لا تغتابوا المسلمين، ولا تتبعوا عوراتهم فإنه من يتبع عورة أخيه يتبع الله عورته، ومن يتبع الله عورته، يفضحه وهو في جوف بيته

“O you, who believe with your tongue but not with your heart, do not engage in backbiting the Muslims, and do not find their faults, since he who tries to discover the faults of his brother-in faith, will be exposed by God, his vice revealed and be disgraced.”²⁷

The Prophet (S) has also said:

ما عمر مجلس بالغيبة إلا خرب بالدين، فنزهوا أسماءكم من استماع الغيبة، فإن القائل والمستمع لها شريكان في الإثم

“A gathering which finds brightness and flourishes by means of backbiting and slander, will end in ruin from a religious viewpoint. You, O Muslim! Keep your ears away from the talk of backbiters, since a backbiter and listener to him both share sin”²⁸

A psychologist said: A person who speaks ill of others, will finally be exposed one day and be confronted with trouble; that is, his words will eventually reach the party concerned, with the result that he will lose a friend. A person who listens to his words, will get bored with his slander and criticism. Backbiting may become a habit so that in every gathering and circle, the addict may involuntarily begin to speak slanderously about others. Speaking ill of others, in fact means that the slanderer is envious of others. A slanderer tries to show himself superior to other people and consider them inferior to himself moreover when a person is not sure of himself and has doubts about his own worth and position, he resorts to backbiting and slander about others.²⁹

Forbidding Malicious Treatment of Others

Vexing people is one of the things that threaten good relations among human beings and remove their sincere affection. It creates obsession and leads people towards enmity and retardation.

In Islamic injunctions, Muslims are strictly forbidden from maliciousness towards others. The Holy Prophet said:

المسلم من سلم المسلمون من لسانه ويده

*“A Muslim is he from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are secure.”*³⁰

In another statement he (S) said:

لا يحل للمسلم أن يشير إلى أخيه بنظرة تؤذي

*“A Muslim has no right to look at his Muslim brother in such a way as to hurt him.”*³¹

This means that looks showing anger, scorn, ridicule or their likes are not allowed.

In another narration, he (S) said:

من حقر مؤمنا مسكينا أو غير مسكين لم يزل الله عز وجل حاقرا له ماقتا حتى يرجع عن محقرته إياه

*“He who humiliates a believer, will receive God’s wrath until he makes amends for his evil deed.”*³²

Forbidding Fault-Finding

In some people’s nature there is a mean tendency to be inquisitive about other’s private life and spying on their secrets. This tendency produces evil results from which the inquisitive ones themselves suffer in the first place and meet an unpleasant end.

The factor which leads one to find fault with others is a feeling of inferiority to compensate which, one tries to find faults with other people in order to ease his own pains forgetting that such a behavior rouses people’s dislike of him. Thus, he loses his friends, and his relations with others are shaken and broken. If such individuals, who waste their curiosity and energy in finding faults with others, devote this energy to finding their own faults and try to remove those defects, they will acquire fine results.

In order to maintain social relations, Islam has forbidden fault-finding which causes separation and

dispersion, and warns the Muslims against committing it.

Imam Al-Baqir (‘a), fifth Imam, has said:

وكفى بالمرء عيباً أن يبصر من الناس ما يعمى عنه من نفسه أو يعير الناس بما لا يستطيع تركه أو يؤذي جليسه بما لا يعنيه

“To prove the defect of a human being, it would be enough to find it in others – without noticing the same defect in oneself, or blame others for an act which one cannot get rid of in oneself, or vex one’s friend with matters which are not related to him.” [33](#)

Imam Ali (‘a) said:

من بحث عن عيوب الناس فليبدأ بنفسه

“A person who engages in curiosity about the faults of others, should begin with himself (as one of them).” [34](#)

Imam Ali (‘a) does not consider fault-finders worthy of friendship and social association, and warns people against mixing up with them. He said:

إياك ومعاشرة متتبعي عيوب الناس، فإنه لم يسلم مصاحبهم منهم

“Abstain from association with fault finders, since their friend, too, will not be immune from their harm.” [35](#)

Forbidding Derision Of Others

To make fun of a fault is to criticize something which is not voluntary or removable, such as the derision of an indigent by a rich fellow, or that of an ugly person by a handsome one, or a weak by a strong one.

This ugly act of making fun of others sows the seeds of hostility in the hearts, since the victim is humiliated in the presence of people and is sorely offended.

The Holy Qur’an says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ

“O you who believe! let not one people laugh at another people, perchance they may be better

than them.” (49: 11).

In Islam distinction and superiority do not lie in wealth, strength, beauty and their likes, but the real criterion is honor and respect at God’s threshold, and nothing else. Islam which desires honor and respect for all Muslims, does not allow any one’s prestige and honor to be encroached upon and stained by anyone.

Islam which considers Muslims as brethren and is interested in their good relationship, combats this undesirable conduct, and warns its followers against such acts.

Laughing at people is usually resorted to by two groups: firstly, those who are envious, haughty and selfish. They intend to show themselves great and respectable to people, and demean and belittle others; Secondly, those who engage in derision with the object of amusing people and making them laugh. Such individuals are the worst scoundrels in society.

Imam As-Sajjad (‘a), fourth Imam, has called clowns and clowning as improper individuals and acts. One day one of these clowns pulled away the Imam's cloak from his shoulders and ran away. The imam said nothing, but his companions chased the man and took back the cloak. The Imam asked: " Who was he?" The said: " He is a clown that makes people laugh." He said: "Tell him."

إن لله يوماً يخسر فيه المبطلون

“God has fixed a day for seeing to the account of the people’s good and bad deeds. It is called Resurrection Day, when dealers in nonsense will suffer loss.” [36](#)

Those who pay attention to the conduct of clowns and deriders and laugh at their victims, should remember that they are accomplices in this ugly deed, since with their laughter they are making a brisk market for the clowns to annoy people.

What has been mentioned in this booklet is a very brief account of some Islamic injunctions, whose performance will lead to good relations among individuals, and make their lives pleasant and happy, with the result that their society will assume a humane color.

The point to be mentioned in conclusion is that Islam calls upon people to adorn themselves with good qualities for the sake of God, avoid all vices and evil acts, and for the sake of humanity, be honest, benevolent and polite, not for the purpose of gaining material profits and enjoying worldly desires. Consequently those who have been brought up in the school of Islam, never deviate, under any conditions, from their way which conforms with the teachings of Islam, and they are not motivated at all towards a change by the ups and downs of life, whereas those who have been trained by other schools , change their ways with the oscillations which take place in their lives, since such morality and education , which have no reliable backing and no guarantee of execution , cannot prove to be lasting.

Those who are interested in the happiness of society must try to familiarize all individuals with the duties which are prescribed for them, by Islam so that with God's favor, the Muslim society may turn out to be the best community in every possible way. Those who believe are most supreme.

- [1.](#) Bihar Al-Anwar, Allama Al-Majlisi, Vol. 71, page 337.
- [2.](#) Mizan Al-Hikmah, Vol. 2, page 1340.
- [3.](#) Jami'a Ahadith ash-Shi'a, Vol. 16, page 175.
- [4.](#) Sharh Usul al-Kafi, Mawla Muhammad Salih Al-Mazindrani, Vol. 11, page 108.
- [5.](#) Sharh Usul al-Kafi, Mawla Muhammad Salih Al-Mazindrani, Vol. 11, page 109.
- [6.](#) Sharh Usul al-Kafi, Mawla Muhammad Salih Al-Mazindrani, Vol. 11, page 110.
- [7.](#) Mawsueat 'Ahadith 'Ahl Al-Bayt, Sheikh Hadi al-Najafi, Vol. 5, page 163.
- [8.](#) Dale Carnegie, How to Win Friends and Influence People.
- [9.](#) Mizan Al-Hikmah, Vol. 2, page 1348.
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