

Legal and Moral Rights and Responsibilities of Family Members in Islam : An Analysis

ইসলামে পরিবারের সদস্যদের আইনগত এবং নৈতিক অধিকার এবং কর্তব্য : একটি পর্যালোচনা

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ABSTRACT

Islam lays utmost emphasis on family life which starts with a sacred bond of marriage. Family is the first institution for children where he or she learns about life. Therefore, for building a good nation children should be raised properly with the values and teachings of Islam. Islam ensures the rights and responsibilities of each member of a family which should be given priority for building a peaceful world. There has been used analytical method where the collected data have been critically reviewed to explore rights and responsibilities of family in Islam.

Keywords: *islam; Rights; Morality; Responsibilities.*

সারসংক্ষেপ

ইসলাম পারিবারিক জীবনের উপর সর্বাধিক গুরুত্বারোপ করে থাকে। পারিবারিক জীবন পবিত্র বিবাহ বন্ধনের মাধ্যমে শুরু হয়। একটি শিশুর জীবনে পরিবার হল প্রথম প্রতিষ্ঠান যেখানে সে জীবন সম্পর্কে শিক্ষা গ্রহণ করে থাকে। সুতরাং একটি ভাল জাতি গঠনের জন্য শিশুকে যথাযথভাবে ইসলামী মূল্যবোধ এবং আদর্শে দীক্ষিত করে লালন-পালন করতে হবে। ইসলাম পরিবারের সকল সদস্যের অধিকার ও কর্তব্য নির্ধারণ করেছে। যা বাস্তবায়নের মাধ্যমে শান্তিপূর্ণ পৃথিবী নিশ্চিত করা সম্ভব। এ প্রবন্ধে বিশ্লেষণমূলক পদ্ধতি ব্যবহার করা হয়েছে যেখানে

Introduction

Family is the basic institution of human society. The foundation of a family is laid through marriage, which is one of the classical human social institutions. It is considered in Islam to be a sacred social contract which legalizes the conjugal relationship between a husband and a wife that is based on a covenant of *nikah*. Islam puts emphasis on entering into the bond of *nikah* and urges that every Muslim not to evade it and not to disdain it if there is not a practical obstacle for it. It will save them from all immoral sexual and sensual activities. Islam also clearly stated that it is not a loose covenant between a man and a woman, which is just for sexual pleasures. Rather, it is a solemn covenant, subject to the strict rules of mutual relations, from which the mutual rights and obligations are defined and the responsibilities are determined in family life. Therefore, the family life has been highly recommended and encouraged in Islam, which is considered to begin with the creation of the first couple: Adam and Eve. Since then, all the Prophets were sent as the ideal for their communities to uphold the institution of marriage and thus the family. This paper is a humble endeavor to focus on legal and moral rights and responsibilities of family members from Islamic perspective.

1. Legal and Moral Rights and Responsibilities of Family Members in Islam

In Islam, family is the basis of the social organization, which is not an irregular or unprompted organization of people, but is a divinely decreed institution. Family and wedding are viewed as noble and sacred. It is a social agreement that confers mutual rights and obligations on the couple. The progress or welfare of society or its breakdown can be drawn to the strength and unity or to the weakness to the family. The weakness is reflected by the problems like young delinquency, drug abuse, alcoholism, immoral

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pregnancies, and divorce (Shamim, 2009, p. 240). In this respect, Islam is more straightforward than other religions. It has laid emphasis on family values and enjoins its followers not to be refrained from family life in any situation whatsoever. In any society, marriage is the first step to form a family. Islam also insists upon marriage as the threshold of family life. As marriage has both divine and social significances, it has some necessary conditions need to be fulfilled as part of divine contract. The core conditions of an Islamic marriage are: mutual consensus and satisfaction of spouses who are adults, the public pronouncement of marriage, the dower to the wife, and that the information in the covenant is correct. Islam even offers guidance for mate selection. The Prophet (may peace be upon him) advises that some people choose to marry for beauty, some for rank, some for treasure and some for piety; but you should marry a good and moral person (Ullah, 2005, p. 18). Marriage is, in fact, a gift from Allah *swt* to build a family. Almighty Allah *swt* has created every living being in pairs, male and female. So that, they can be united with the bond of altruistic love and sacrifice. Allah *swt* has stated in the Holy Qur'an: "O mankind! Be respectful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him He created his wife (Eve), and from them both He created many men and women and fear Allah through Whom you demand your rights, and (do not cut relations of) the wombs (kinship). ... Your Lord created you of a single soul and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them scattered abroad many men and women" (al-Qur'an, 4:1).

In Islam, marriage is both a civil contract and a fulfillment of divine commandment because it is first witnessed by Allah *swt* then by the society. The Prophet (may peace be upon him) encourages family life and declares marriage as *Sunnah*, and those who do not obey it are not consider to be followers (Ullah, 2005, p.18). For it is through marriage that husband and wife legally fulfill their carnal desires, their natural instincts for love, companionship, intimacy and so on. Allah *swt*, the almighty, explains the objectives of the marriage in the Holy Qur'an which

says: "And among His Signs is this, that He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find response in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy" (al-Qur'an, 30:21). It is quite evident from the verse that Islam encourages marriage in its every way. The Prophet (may peace be upon him) did not approve celibacy. He also discourages renunciation of the world (Gaer, 1956, p.233). There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an which encourage the family life. It commands that if one has no means to marry and then lead a pious life until Allah *swt* gives the necessary means. Again, it prescribes punishment for fornication, rape and adultery. Those who can economically afford for *nikah* are commanded not to renounce it for any reason, neither for the purpose of devoting more time for worship nor for the reason of abstaining from worldly pleasures. Significance of marriage and family life has been repeatedly stressed in Islam. The Holy Qur'an asks mankind to maintain a good relationship between a husband and wife and requires each to have due consideration for the needs and desires of the other. It also directs that they should behave affectionately towards each other. It has been stated in the Qur'an that couples have been created from a single soul so that they may find comfort (al-Qur'an, 7:189). From the above verse, it is clear that purpose of *nikah* is to bring peace and comfort to the life. Nothing can give a person that peace of mind which is obtained by marriage. Islam treats marriage as an equal partnership, by which they can please Allah *swt* through mutual cooperation, trust, honour, respect and faithfulness. The Quran sums up their relationship as a garment for each other (al-Qur'an, 2:187). Thus, just like clothing, a husband and wife should protect each other, cover up each other's faults and beautify each other, instead of criticizing every little weakness. Therefore, the tone of marriage in Islam is thus one of mutual respect, kindness, love, companionship and harmonious interaction (Haneef, 1999, pp. 153-154). The success of a marriage depends on the strength of the allegiance of husband and wife to the requirements of marriage and on their obedience of the Islamic rules that govern mutual rights and obligations of husbands and wives. The most crucial requirement

for the success of a husband and wife's life is honesty and sincerity to each other. To promote further harmony in the partnership, Allah *swt* defines the role of each partner and assigns responsibilities to each spouse concerning the other. The Holy Qur'an says that the father is the shepherd over his family. He has to protect them and provide for them as head of the household. In return, the mother is the shepherd over the house. She should be obedient, guard her husband's secrets and be his support for a happy and healthy family life (al-Qur'an, 4:34). She is primarily responsible for the children's guidance and education. These guidelines help to avoid conflict between spouses.

Islam promotes diffidence and chastity as important virtues and does not permit free and unrestrained mixing of the sexes. The Muslim practice of isolation of the sexes after the age of puberty saves Muslim society from many of the ills found in Western society, such as extramarital affairs, immoral pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and broken homes. Therefore, Islam prohibits premarital sex and considers it to be a grave sin. Sex is an important area of marital life. In Islam, all sexual relations are reserved exclusively for the confines of marriage. A sexual relationship alone is not enough for a stable conjugal life. True love is essential between husband and wife, and true love demands compassion and sacrifice. Since the purpose of marriage is to be a mutual source of comfort, peace and enjoyment for each other, like a garment that protects and covers, the sexual aspect of marriage is an extension of this (al-Qur'an, 2:187). The husband is asked to be gentle, considerate and loving with his wife, and to try to satisfy her needs. Wife must reserve herself exclusively for husband, and make efforts to be attractive, as well as making herself available to him whenever he is in need of her. This latter obligation also applies to the husband.

Parents play a vital role in the family. As a father and mother, they are charged with the duty of raising children and of supervising

their deeds and attitudes. The character and personality of the children are shaped by the nature of relations between parents because it has deep effects on the life of the children. It is, in fact, a crucial role of the parents to build children's moral personality and they have to inculcate the fear of God within children from an early age. Otherwise, they cannot expect righteous attitude from them. If parents do strive to raise their children upon righteousness, then a righteous child would pray for them. On the other hand, children are required to show kindness, reverence and respect to parents without considering how their parents raise them. It is, as if, they are showing respect to Allah *swt* (al-Qur'an, 2:83).

Thus, the institution of family, according to the Qur'an, is based on higher values of life. The family is an important institution in building civilization. Simply to gratify one's desire can never lead to higher civilization and stability in life. Stability, compassion and love are the very basis of human civilization. A family, as far as possible, should not be broken up. That is why, according to a *hadith*, divorce is the most disliked among permissible things (Ullah, 2005, p. 19). In order to avoid this unpleasant situation the Holy Qur'an makes it clear that family life should be based not only on the husband's authority but on love and compassion between spouses, and reciprocal partnership and participation in the decision making process. If these values are properly practiced, the husband and wife would have mutual respect. If they consult each other before taking any crucial decisions, a woman's education and earning can make a family much more stable and prosperous. Islam treats all people as members of the same family created by the same Creator. And that it is our duty to treat each other with love, kindness and respect.

Therefore, every Muslim believes that Allah *swt* is watching everything in his or her life. And that we have to answer to Him for every action including how we are treating our family members and relatives. So, everyone must treat everyone in good manner.

Finally, we can say that if everyone follows the teachings of Islam concerning the treatment of family members, a society based on equality, love and righteousness will be established. The social, moral and spiritual principles prescribed by Islam ensure strong and lasting relationships among all family members and give consideration to the rights and privileges of others. These beautiful doctrines of Islam are not confined to Muslims alone, but are universal and applicable to the present and future of all mankind.

1.1 Parents' Rights versus Children's Duty:

Parents are held at the highest position in the family. They are the only personality in the family who deserve love and loyalty by their children. In several places of the Holy Qur'an, parents are considered next to Allah *swt* (al-Qur'an, 4:36, 6:151, 17:23). Islam also emphasizes on parental responsibility and the child's reciprocal dutifulness to its parents. Children are required to maintain an attitude of love and reverence, respect and kindness to their parents. The Holy Qur'an contains a very comprehensive verse on this topic, which firstly tells us: "And your Lord has commanded that you worship none but Him, and that you will be dutiful to your parents." Then, when the behavior of one or both of the parents becomes extreme and sometimes offensive in old age, the verse continues: "If one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honour. Then it says: "Lower unto them the wing of submission and humility through mercy. In other words, we must never forget what we owe to them for bringing us into this world and taking care of us. Finally, we are told to pray for them: "And say, 'My Lord! Bestow on them Your mercy as they did bring me up when I was young." (al-Qur'an, 17:23-24). The verse clearly prohibits saying anything that may contain the slightest hint of irritation. (The word 'uff' in the verse, translated as 'a word of disrespect') comes from the root 'aff', which is similar to the word 'taff'; both words refer to the dirt that collects

under fingernails, and (in Arabic) when one is annoyed and fed up with something, one says 'uff!' to it. Dr. Abdul Aziz Kamel finds in this verse several dimensions for treating parents when they became old:

- i) To be correctly addressed by their children
'Say not "Fie" unto them.'
'Speak to them graciously.'
- ii) To have their viewpoints respected
'Nor repulse them'
- iii) To be treated with kindness and submission
'And bestow kindness, humility
And submission unto them.'
- iv) To pray for them in recognition of their earlier favours.
'And say "My Lord, have mercy on them
as they did care for me when I was little" (Omran, 1992,
pp. 28-29)

The verse clearly manifests that every child is bound to treat parents well. They are required to show kindness and reverence to parents. Children are also required to avoid things that will provoke them and make them angry, even if they are in our interests. The Holy Qur'an repeatedly admonishes Muslims to be good to their parents and is exceptional in its appreciation of the role of mother: "And We have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship" (al-Qur'an, 31:14). The verse was reinforced by Muhammad (may peace be upon him) when he declared that: "Paradise lies under the feet of mothers." (Ajijola, 2002, p. 249) Though it is a small sentence, it elevates the status of mother to an unprecedented height. It also gives mothers the vital responsibility of making their homes into a 'heaven on earth' by creating a loving, warm and nurturing atmosphere in the family. While the child is obliged to show obedience to both

parents, Islam singles out the mother as being the one deserving the lion's share of loving gratitude and kindness. In this connection, the following renowned *hadith* can be mentioned: "A man asked: O Prophet of Allah, who deserved to be treated well by me, most of all? The Prophet said: 'your mother'. He asked: who then? The Prophet said 'your mother'. He asked: who then? The Prophet said: 'your mother'. He asked: who then? The Prophet said: 'your father'." (Wilson, 1991, p.171)

So, mother is entitled to three-fourth of son's love and kindness while only one-fourth is left for the father.

The rights of parents have been ensured in Islam in the following manners:

A. Parents are next to Allah Swt

In Islam, Children are required to show kindness, reverence and respect to parents without considering how their parents raise them. It is, as if, they are showing respect to Allah *swt*. In this regard, it is reported in the Holy Qur'an that "...be dutiful and good to parents..." (Al Qur'an, 2:83).

B. Paradise is for Those Who Honour Parents

Paradise or *jannah* is the ultimate goal of life. One can enter paradise by obeying and honouring his or her parents. It is reported by Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (may peace be upon him) said "He is condemned, he is condemned, he is condemned." One of his disciples said, "Who, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "The person whose parents, one or both of them, reach old age during his lifetime but he does not enter Paradise" (Sahih Muslim, *hadith* no: 4627).

C. Service to Parents and Jihad are Alike

There is no doubt that Islam puts great emphasis on jihad but when parents need service from children, children are required to provide them proper service. In this regard, a renowned *hadith* is worth mentioning which runs as follows: "A man came to the Prophet (may peace be upon him) and asked him for authorization to participate in

jihad. The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said to him, 'Are your parents alive?' He said, 'Yes.' He said, 'Then your jihad is to serve them' (Sahih al-Bukhari, *hadith* no. 2842).

D. Vows Made by Parents are to be Fulfilled by Children

In Islam, it is the duty or *Sunnah* for the children to fulfill vows made by parents. Even, children can perform *Hajj* and *Umrah* on behalf of them. In this regard, a renowned *hadith* is noteworthy which is reported by Ibn Abbas that a woman from Juhaynah came to the Prophet (may peace be upon him) and said: "My mother wanted to go for *Hajj*, but she died before she did so. Can I perform *Hajj* on behalf of the mother?" He said, "Yes, perform *Hajj* on your mother's behalf. Do you not think that if your mother owed a debt that you would pay it off for her? Fulfill her debt to Allah *swt*, for Allah is more deserving that what is owed to Him should be paid" (Sahih al-Bukhari, *hadith* no. 1754).

E. Children should Maintain a Good Relation with Those Who were in Touch with Parents

After the death of parents, it is also *Sunnah* to respect them who were in touch with parents such as their relatives and friends. It is reported by Abd-Allah ibn Umar that the Prophet (may peace be upon him) said: "The best of righteous deeds is for a man to keep in touch with his father's friends after he dies" (Sahih Muslim, *hadith* no. 2552).

F. Repulsion of Parents is Considered a Grave Sin

Islam considered repulsion of parents one of the grave sins. The Prophet (may peace be upon him) said: "Let me tell you which the greatest of sins are: ascribing to Allah *swt* partners and repulsion of parents." Again, He said: "Allah *swt* has forbidden for you repulsion of mothers" (Omran, 1992, p. 30). The above two *hadith* clearly indicate that repulsion of parents is fully forbidden in Islam. On the other hand, they must be treated with respect and kindness. So, it is incumbent upon children to maintain a good relation with parents' friends.

1.2 Children's Rights versus Parents' Duty

The birth of a child is an event of great joy and thanksgiving which is shared by relatives and friends. It is *Sunnah* to slaughter an animal when a baby is born and to feed friends and the poor with its meat as a token of thankfulness to Allah *swt* for the new family member (Haneef, 1999, p. 157). In this way, Allah has blessed humanity to continue one's descent but it insists at the same time that children should be good and righteous which requires an intensive effort to raise them correctly. The ability to raise children correctly is an inherent requirement of marriage in Islam (Omran, 1992, p. 30). There is no doubt that Islam provides parents much honour and respect next to Allah *swt*. Parents as the head of the family deserve much honour and respect. They have also much responsibility to watch when their children go out and when they come in. They also have to acknowledge children's status, and respect them and offer them good companionship. The Qur'an commands parents to treat their children with love and understanding and to raise them in such a way that they grow up with feelings of dignity and self-respect. Therefore, the Prophet (may peace be upon him) asked mankind to be kind with their children (Ahmad, 1992, p. 95). The Holy Qur'an also warns that, "Slay not your children for fear of poverty – it is We who provide for you and for them..." (al-Qur'an, 6:152). The Qur'an not only prohibits killing of children but also assigns parents the most important task of supervising the acts of their children. As a father and mother, they are charged with the duties of raising children. Then, they are also charged with the responsibility of supervising the deeds and the common attitudes of their children. The nature of relations between father and mother leaves deep impressions on characters and personalities of the children because it deeply affects the life of the children in the family. It is, in fact, a crucial role of the parents to build children's moral personality and they have to inculcate the fear of God within children from an early age.

Otherwise, they cannot expect righteous attitude from them. Hence, God's severe warning in His Book: "O you who believe! Ward off yourselves and your families against a Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who disobey not, (from executing) the commands they receive from Allah, but do that which they are commanded" (al-Qur'an, 66:6). If parents do indeed strive to raise their children upon righteousness, then a righteous child would pray for them. On the other hand, children are required to show kindness, reverence and respect to parents without considering how their parents raise them. It is, as if, they are showing respect to Allah *swt* (al-Qur'an, 2:83). Abdel Rahim Omran, a renowned Islamic scholar, has summarized the rights of children or obligations of parents into ten rights or obligations, as follows:

A. The Right to Generic Purity

Muslim children have the right to be born with no actual or potential genetic disorders. The prophet (may peace be upon him) says: "Choose where you deposit your sperm, for the line of descent is conducive" (Omran, 1992, p. 33). They have also to be protected from repeated consanguinity especially in families with a tendency to genetic aberration. Furthermore, children should not be exposed during pregnancy or birth to diseases transmissible from parents. In case of such diseases, contraception becomes mandatory (Omran, 1992, p. 33).

B. The Right to Life

Islam prohibits killing a child for any reason whether it is poverty, threat of poverty or exaggerated zeal about honour. In the pre-Islamic era, some young or baby girls were buried alive out of poverty or to protect the family from the risk of misbehavior and shame. The Holy Qur'an most strongly detested that, while says: "Kill not your children, on a plea of want, we provide sustenance for you and for them" (al-Qur'an, 6:151). Again, Allah *swt* says: "Kill not your children, on a plea of want, we provide sustenance for them and for you. Their killing is a great sin" (al-Qur'an,

17:31). Even an unborn fetus has the right to life especially after taking shape (Omran, 1992, p. 34).

C. The Right to Legitimacy and Good Name

Legitimacy is central to family formation in Islam. Every Muslim child has the right to legitimacy, i.e. to be called after a known father. The child belongs to the family in which he or she is born. The Prophet (may peace be upon him) give a general rule: “The child belongs to the marital bed” (Omran, 1992, p. 30). The child has also the right to a good name. The Prophet (may peace be upon him) said: “After the birth, parents have to name a good name” (Rahim, 1983, p. 342).

D. The Right to Breast-Feeding, Shelter, Maintenance and Health Care

While these are self explanatory, one issue that must be specified is the child’s right to breast feeding. The Qur’an says: “And mothers shall suckle their children two full years, for those who wish to complete breast-feeding” (al-Qur’an, 2:233).

E. The Right to Separate Sleeping Arrangements for Children

The child has the right to have an independent or separate sleeping arrangement. This comes from the Prophet’s saying: “Instruct your children in prayer at age seven, punish them if they fail to practice it at age ten; and let them sleep separately from one another” (Omran, 1992, p. 35). This is a quite restriction on continuous and unplanned procreation. The sleeping arrangement will be a separate room, a separate corner, a separate bed or a separate mat for each child especially during adolescence (Omran, 1992, p. 35).

F. The Right to Future Security

Islam has ensured the financial security of the child. They have the right to inherit their parents. And it is the duty of parents to provide some property to their children so that they can live smoothly. The Prophet (may peace be upon him) said: “To leave your heirs rich is better than leaving them dependent upon people’s charity” (Omran, 1992, p. 35).

G. The Right to Religious Training and Good Upbringing

Parents are responsible for instilling the teachings of Islam into their children. They are also to train them for prayer, fasting, honesty and avoidance of evil practices such as alcohol, drug abuse, and sexual promiscuity. They should make them aware of their history and heritage. The Qur’an relates the advice of Luqman to his son as follows: “O my son! Establish regular prayer, enjoin what is just and forbid what is wrong, and bear with patient constancy whatever betides you, Lo! That is of the steadfast heart of things.” (al-Qur’an, 31:17). As to good breeding and character, the Prophet says: “There is nothing better for a parent to his child (inheritance) than good breeding” (Omran, 1992, p. 36). In this regard, the Prophet again says: “No father can give his child anything better than good manners (Gaer, 1956, p. 236).

H. The Right to Education and Training in Sports and Self-Defense

Parents are responsible for the proper education of their children. They are made directly responsible for teaching their children how to read and write. The Prophet says: “The right due to the child from his parent is for the parent to teach him writing, swimming and archery, as well as to provide him nothing but what is wholesome” (Omran, 1992, p. 36). In this regard, the Prophet says: “Of all that a father can give to his children, the best is their good education and training.” (Ahmed, 1974, p. 22).

I. The Right to Equitable Treatment Regardless of Gender

Children in Islam have the right to equitable treatment regardless of sex, age or any other consideration. The Prophet says: “Be equitable in dealing with your children just as you would like them to be equitable in dealing with you” (Omran, 1992, p. 37). Preference of sons and suppression or negligence of daughters are denounced by Islam. Of course, the pre-Islamic burial of girls has been absolutely prohibited in Islam. Equitable treatment is illustrated by an example from the *Sunnah*. It is related by Anas Ibn Malik that a man was sitting with the Prophet (may peace be upon him), then his son came in, he kissed him and put him in his

lap. Thereafter his daughter came in, he let her sit in front of him. The Prophet said ‘Shouldn’t you have treated them equitably?’ (Omran, 1992, p. 37).

J. The Right that Their Support Comes Only from Legitimate Sources

The Prophet (may peace be upon him) said that all funds and resources used for child support should come from legitimate or wholesome sources (Omran, 1992, p. 37). This is a most pervasive right to protection against those who might resort to illegitimate means (accepting bribes, stealing, embezzlement, dishonesty, drug pushing, etc.) under the pressure of supporting too many children.

1.3 Brothers’ and Sisters’ Relationship

The Islamic concept regarding the relationship between brothers and sisters is important for creating a spiritually and physically healthy and stable family. In Islam, the family unit is based on marital relationship where males and females live together as husband and wife, as a ‘garment’ to one another. They follow a code of ethics which is divinely prescribed for them. Similar codes of ethics apply outside of family environment and extend to sisters and brothers at large. The relationship between brothers and sisters is described in Islam as a happy one. There are indications that brothers are allies, helpmates and reliable supporters of one another. So commonly, it seems, was the case that their solidarity, compassion, and natural fealty became proverbial or set apart as lofty ideals, whose implementation is both desired and desirable. The Holy Qur’an speaks of the believers as constituting one brotherhood and referring to the Muslim individuals as brothers, this must have meant a strong bond, an appealing sentiment, a familiar rallying cry, and above all, a special relationship (Ajijola, 2002, p. 114). In this connection, it is reported in the Holy Qur’an that “The believers are nothing else than brothers. So make reconciliation between your brothers, and fear Allah, that you may receive mercy.” (al-Qur’an, 49:10). Also it is narrated by Abdullah Ibn Umar that the Prophet (may peace be upon him) said, “A

Muslim is a brother of another Muslim, so he should not oppress him, nor should he hand him over to an oppressor. Whoever fulfilled the needs of his brother, Allah will fulfill his needs; whoever brought his (Muslim) brother out of a discomfort, Allah will bring him out of the discomforts of the Day of Resurrection, and whoever screened a Muslim, Allah will screen him on the Day of Resurrection” (Sahih al-Bukhari, *hadith* no. 622). Brothers and sisters are so divinely ordained that they must share their ‘gains’ and ‘looses’ collectively. When they inherit from a deceased relative e.g., a parent, they share the assets together. Likewise, when they are enjoined to support a needy deserving relative, the responsibility is shouldered by them together. With reference to the mutual obligations of brothers and sisters, there is a general agreement that this intra-generational relationship must be governed by kindness, love, equity, and all that is donated in the concept of *ihsan* (Ajijola, 2002, p.115).

The Prophet (may peace be upon him) spent his entire life attempting to bring all people together as brothers and sisters. He demonstrated beautifully the importance of brotherhood and sisterhood on his arrival into Madinah. He paired off each Muslim *muhaajir* (emigrant) from Makkah with an *ansar* (helper) from Madinah in brotherhood (*mu’aakhaah*). Each was to support the other with shelter, material help, education, companionship and advice. They came to form a vigorous and caring society which is the best example of brotherhood. Islam also gives multiple examples of relations between brothers such Haaroon & Moosa, Ismail & Is’haaq, Hamza & Abu Talib, Hasan & Hussain and Yusuf & his brothers. Of them Yusuf displayed an outstanding example of love and forgiveness (towards his brothers) for humanity to follow.

1.4 Husband and Wife Relationship

According to Islamic Law, a mature woman can choose her husband without being forced by anyone. A Muslim woman enjoys the same capacity and freedom as enjoyed by a man, she too can propose to a man for marriage orally or in writing. She can freely

choose her spouse and reject a suitor that she does not like. In the internal organization of the family, a man is in the position of the head and the overall supervisor. A man's major responsibilities lie outside the family. He has to support the family economically and materially, to look after the relations of the family with the rest of the society, its economy and policy, as well as he has to take care of the demands of internal discipline within the family. A woman's major responsibilities lie within the family. A spectrum of mutual rights and responsibly has been evolved in such a way that balanced relationships are developed between all (Ahmad, 1992, p. 34). A man as the head of the family has to treat his wife well. It is incumbent upon the husband to live with her on a footing of kindness and equity. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an says the following words, "Keep them in good fellowship and treat them kindly" (Ajjola, 2002, p. 80). Also, Allah *swt* reminds that, "If you dislike them, it may be that you dislike something wherein Allah *swt* has placed much good" (al-Qur'an, 4:20). The wife and the husband have to work jointly to accomplish the difficult task of upbringing the children. They are under a divine obligation to take care of the basic needs of their children till they stand on their own feet, educate them, teach them the principles of religion and constantly endeavour to make them righteous (Hameed, 1981, p. 60). The Holy Qur'an lays importance upon the relationship of husband and wife. It says "And among His Signs is this, that He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find response in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy. Verily, in that are indeed signs for a people who reflect" (al-Qur'an, 30:21). Prophet Muhammad (may peace be upon him) enjoined his followers to treat their wives best. In this regard, his sayings are as follows:

"The best among you is the one who is the best toward his wife" (Khan, 1967, p.38) "The perfect among the faithful is one whose moral character is the best, and the best among you are those who are kindest to their wives" (Ahmad, 1992, p. 93). "Your wife has rights over you" (Wilson, 1991, p. 178). "God enjoins you to treat

women well, for they are your mothers, daughters, and aunts" (Gaer, 1956, p. 246).

From the above *ahadith*, it is quite evident that Islam treats both husband and wife on the same footing. While husband is dealing with outside activities, the wife is engaged with inside chores. As Islam makes husband leader, they are charged with treating wife well. They are more responsible than wife. The Holy Qur'an asks mankind to maintain a good relationship between a husband and wife and requires each to have due consideration for the needs and desires of the other. It also directs that they should behave affectionately towards each other. The Qur'an says: "It is He Who created you from a single soul and made there from its mate, that he might find comfort in her" (al-Qur'an, 7:189). From the above verse, it is clear that purpose of *Nikah* is to bring peace and comfort to the life of men and women. Nothing can give a person that peace of mind that is obtained by marriage. Islam treats marriage as an equal partnership between two people, by which they please Allah *swt* through mutual cooperation, trust, respect and faithfulness. The Quran sums up their relationship with these words: "They are a garment for you and you are a garment for them" (al-Qur'an, 2:187). Thus, just like clothing, a husband and wife should protect each other, cover up each other's faults and beautify each other, instead of criticizing every little weakness. Therefore, the tone of marriage in Islam is thus one of mutual respect, kindness, love, companionship and harmonious interaction. In her husband, the wife has a friend and partner to share her life and concerns, to cherish and protect her, and to help her bear responsibilities which would be very difficult or impossible for her to handle alone, while a man in his wife, a companion and helper who can give him peace, comfort and response in his struggle with the rough-and-tumble of the world's life (Haneef, 1999, pp. 153-154).

Conclusion

The above discussion reveals that the family is the first and the fundamental institution of human society which starts with the sacred bond of marriage in Islam. A perfect society can only be

built if there is a perfect family and a perfect family is possible when a man and woman go through a sacred covenant of marriage. Marriage creates love, sacrifice, care, affection and cooperation between the husband and wife which also gives peace of mind. A family where there is no love, sacrifice, affection, cooperation, compromise or consideration, cannot be a true family. Islam lays utmost emphasis on parental responsibility and the child's reciprocal dutifulness to its parents. No doubts, parents play a vital role in the family. As a father and mother, they are charged with the duty of raising children and as such also with the responsibility of supervising the deeds of their children. The Character and personality of the children are shaped by the nature of relations between father and mother because it has deep effects on the life of the children. It is, in fact, a crucial role of the parents to build children's moral personality and they have to inculcate the fear of God within children from an early age. There is no doubt that Islam provides parents much honour and respect next to Allah *swt*. Parents as the head of the family deserve much honour and respect. Children are required to maintain an attitude of love and reverence, respect and kindness towards their parents. They have also much responsibility to look after their children when they go out and when they come in. Conversely, parents have to acknowledge children's status, and respect them and offer them good companionship. The Qur'an advises parents to treat their children with love and affection so that they can grow up with feelings of self-esteem and dignity. A healthy family environment is essential for the welfare of the society. Islam speaks of a society where people will live peacefully with keeping a sense of divinely ordained brotherhood. This is only possible when they are well taught in the family. Then this family would be able to launch an ideal society with a high level of moral awareness. That is why, Islam makes marriage and family life obligatory for Mankind because it helps to protect mankind from all immoral activities and it provides them social and economic security. Thus, it appears that Islam dreams of a society where people will live peacefully keeping family bondage.

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