

RESPECT FOR PARENTS

“I fell asleep” said Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* “and dreamt that I was in Jannah. I then heard the voice of somebody reciting the Qur’aan. *Who is this* I enquired. *Haarithah, the son of Nu’maan* they¹ replied. This is (the reward for) respect. This is (the reward for) respect.” Aa-isha (ra) explains that Haarithah (ra) was extremely respectful to his mother. According to one narration, she said that *nobody was more respectful to his mother than Haarithah*.² Describing his respect for his mother, she said that he used to feed her with his hand and if she asked him to do something and he did not hear her clearly, he would never ask her to repeat herself. Instead, after leaving her room, he would enquire what she had said from somebody who was with her.

The respect that the *salaf* (our pious predecessors) had for their parents is phenomenal. Mentioned hereunder are a few more examples.

The Interpreter of Dreams

You must have heard or read of the famous interpreter of dreams, Muhammad bin Sireen (ra). Besides being an imaam in this field, he was also a prominent narrator of *hadith* and a faqeeh (jurist). A man once visited him while he was with his

¹ The angels

² Musnad Ahmad, Hadith 25376

mother. Intrigued by Ibn Sireen's conduct, he asked somebody, "Is Muhammad ill?" "No," replied the man, "this is his conduct whenever he is with his mother." Thus, Ibn Sireen's demeanor in his mother's presence has been compared to a man speaking to an oppressive ruler.

Feed the Chickens

Haywah bin Shurayh (ra) was another prominent narrator of *hadith*. While teaching his students, his mother would come out of the house and shout, "Shurayh, get up and throw the barley for the chickens." Without uttering a single word, he would immediately get up, feed the chickens and then return to his lesson. If it were one of us, would he not feel embarrassed? Would he not tell his mother later, 'Mum, don't embarrass me! Don't disturb me while I'm teaching'? Shurayh (ra) was different. Respecting and obeying his mother was more important to him.³

Abdullah bin 'Awn (ra) was an outstanding scholar of *hadith* who narrated from Ibn Sireen (ra) and many others. Among his students were Sufyaan Thawri (ra) and Abdullah bin Mubaarak (ra). His mother called him on one occasion and in response, he raised his voice louder than his mother's. He later freed two slaves as atonement for this error.⁴

Zain-ul-'Aabideen (ra), the great grandson of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* was asked, "You are most respectful to your mother, yet we never see you eating with her from the

³ Tartooshi, *Birr-ul-Waalidayn*, Pg.79

⁴ Dhahbai, *Siyar A'laam An-Nubalaa* V.6 Pg.364

same plate.” He replied, “I fear that my hand may enter the plate before hers and then I will be guilty of disrespect.”⁵

Have you heard of Muhammad bin Munkadir (ra)? He narrated *hadith* from Aa-isha, Abu Hurairah, Ibn Umar, Ibn Abbaas, Ibn Zubair, Jaabir and Anas bin Malik (ra). Imaams Abu Haneefah, Maalik, Sufyaan Thawri and others narrated *hadith* from him. Ibn Munkadir said, “My brother Umar spent the night performing salaah while I massaged my mother’s feet. Yet I would not exchange my night for his.”⁶

Abdullah bin Zubair (ra)’s son Aamir narrated that for one year after his father’s death, he asked Allah for nothing but forgiveness for his father.⁷

Due to respect for his mother, Talq bin Habeeb (ra), another narrator of *hadith* from Ibn Abbaas, Ibn Zubair, Jaabir and Anas (ra), would never walk on the roof of the house if his mother were inside.⁸

The Father of *Fiqh*

Who does not know The Father of Fiqh, Imaam Abu Haneefah (ra)? Despite being a widely acclaimed expert in all the different Islamic sciences, his mother would sometimes ask him to take her to Umar bin Dhar to enquire a *mas’alah*. Although the Imaam (ra) always knew the answer, he would never refuse

⁵ *Uyoon-ul-Akhbaar*, V.3 Pg.97

⁶ *Ibn-ul-Jawzi*, *At-Tabsirah*, V.1 Pg.188

⁷ *Uyoon-ul-Akhbaar*, V.3 Pg.98

⁸ *Tartooshi*, *Birr-ul-Waalidayn*, Pg.78

to obey her. On several occasions, she sent him alone to enquire *masaa-il* from Umar bin Dhar. Upon posing her questions, Umar would ask him, "Are you asking me?" The Imaam's answer was always, "My mother instructed me." Umar would then say, "Well then, tell me the answer so that I can repeat it to you." Imaam Abu Haneefah (ra) would thereafter return to his mother and say that *Umar said that the answer to your question is . . .*⁹ There is a similar incident involving Zur'ah, a preacher in a local *masjid*. The Imaam (ra)'s mother insisted that he take her to Zur'ah to enquire a *mas'alah*. "But you are more learned and a greater jurist. You tell her the answer," responded Zur'ah. "I told her that the answer is . . .," said the Imaam (ra). Zur'ah then told her that, "What Abu Haneefah said is correct." Thus, she was pleased and returned home.¹⁰

My Mother's Grief

Ibn Hubayrah, the governor of Kufah, imprisoned Imaam Abu Haneefah (ra) for his refusal to accept the post of *qadi* (judge). He also commanded that the Imaam (ra) be lashed daily. In total, the Imaam (ra) received one hundred and ten lashes over a period of eleven days. Upon his release, he said, "My mother's grief (for me) was more difficult to endure than the whipping."¹¹

The Motivation

What motivated these great men to respect their parents to this extent? The answer is undeniably the Qur'aan, the *sunnah*

⁹ 'Uqood-ul-Jummaan, Pg292

¹⁰ 'Uqood-ul-Jummaan, Pg294

¹¹ 'Uqood-ul-Jummaan, Pg313 and Al-Khayraat Al-Hisaan, Pg.119

of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* and sound human values.

Respect for parents and showing them kindness is referred to on more than one occasion in the Qur'aan. More significant though, is that it is always mentioned alongside *tawheed*, the command that only Allah be worshipped. The following *ayah* is similar:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَى وَهْنٍ وَفِصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ
أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ

“We commanded man concerning his parents – his mother carried him with weakness upon weakness and he was weaned in two years – *be grateful to me and your parents.*”¹² Ibn Abbaas (ra) concluded from this *ayah* that gratitude to Allah is dependent on gratitude to one’s parents. A person who is ungrateful to his parents can never be grateful to Allah. Even if he does thank Allah, it will not be accepted.¹³ Do you remember the *hadith*, “One who is ungrateful to people is ungrateful to Allah”?¹⁴ If this applies to all people – anybody who assisted you – how much more would it not apply to one’s parents?

I Waited Until Dawn

Have you heard of the *hadith* of *Ashaabu-ul-Ghaar* (The People of the Cave)? Trapped in a cave, they decided to petition Allah’s help through the *waseelah* (agency) of their pious actions. One of them prayed, “O Allah, my parents were old and I would give

¹² Surah Luqmaan, Ayah 14

¹³ Imaam Dhahabi, *Al-Kabaa-ir*, Pg.172-173

¹⁴ Sunan At-Tirmidhi, Hadith 1955

milk to neither my children nor my slaves before them. One day, I went very far looking for trees and could not return before they fell asleep. Having drawn their milk, I found them asleep. Now, while I disliked awakening them, I also disliked giving milk to the children and the slaves before them. Thus, with the glass in my hand, I waited until dawn for them to awake. They then woke up and drank their milk. O Allah, if I did this seeking your pleasure, remove us from our dilemma.” Thus, the boulder obstructing their way moved a little.¹⁵ Imaam Bukhaari (ra) deduced from this *hadith* that kindness to parents results in acceptance of *du’aa*. Hence, he entitled one of the chapters in which he cited this *hadith* ‘Chapter on Acceptance of the *Du’aa* of One Who is Kind to His Parents’. We also conclude from this *hadith* that kindness to parents results in easing of difficulty.

Other Benefits

Other benefits of kindness to parents include:

1. Allah’s Pleasure – Allah will only be pleased with you if your parents are pleased with you. Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said, “Allah’s pleasure is in the pleasure of your parents and His displeasure is in their displeasure.”¹⁶
2. Your Parent’s *Du’aa* – Kindness and obedience to your parents will earn you their *du’aa* and the *du’aa* that a parent makes for his child is never rejected.¹⁷

¹⁵ Saheeh Al-Bukhaari (Hadith 2208) and Muslim (Hadith 7125)

¹⁶ Baihaqi, *Shu’ab-ul-Imaan*, Hadith 7830

¹⁷ Sunan Abi Daud (Hadith 1538), Sunan At-Tirmidhi (Hadith 1905) and Sunan Ibn Majah (Hadith 3862)

3. A Longer Lifespan and Increased Sustenance – Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said that whoever desires an increase in his lifespan and sustenance should be kind to his parents and maintain family ties.¹⁸
4. More Important than *Jihaad* – A man came to Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* and said, “I pledge to migrate and make *jihaad* seeking reward from Allah”. “Are any of your parents alive?” Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* asked him. “Yes, in fact both of them are alive”, he replied. “And you are seeking reward from Allah?” Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* asked again. The man responded, “Yes” to which *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said, “Go back to your parents and be good to them.”¹⁹ Imaam Nawawi (ra) comments that this hadith indicates the great reward of kindness to parents and that it is more important than even *jihaad*.
5. Entry into Jannah – In this regard, we all know the *hadith* “Jannah lies under the feet of the mothers”.²⁰ Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* also said, “Your father is the best door to Jannah. If you wish, destroy that door or protect it.”²¹ Thus, Ibn Umar (ra) told a man, “If you speak politely to your mother and feed her you will enter Jannah, provided you refrain from the major sins.”²² Ibn Abbaas (ra) said that if both one’s parents are Muslim and he is kind to them, Allah would open for him two doors to Jannah. If he

¹⁸ Musnad Ahmaad, Hadith 13811

¹⁹ Saheeh Muslim, Hadith 6671

²⁰ *Kanz-ul-'Umaal*, Hadith 45439

²¹ Sunan At-Tirmidhi, Hadith 1900

²² Imaam Bukhaari, *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*, Hadith

has only one parent and he is dutiful to that parent, Allah would open for him one door to Jannah. However, if anyone of his parents is angry with him, Allah will not be happy with him until he pleases that parent.²³

Compensation Impossible

The extent of parental rights may be gauged from the fact that repaying them (especially our mothers) is impossible. A man said to Umar (ra) that due to his mother's old age he carries her on his back whenever she needs to answer the call of nature. "So, have I fulfilled her right?" Umar (ra) replied, "No, your mother did this for you hoping that you would stay alive whereas you do this for her hoping that she would leave you."

Likewise, Abdullah bin Umar (ra) observed a man from Yemen making *tawaaf* of the *Ka'bah* with his mother on his back. Approaching Abdullah Ibn Umar (ra), the man said:

إِنِّي لَهَا بَعِيرُهَا الْمَذَلَّلُ إِن ذَعَرَتْ رُكَاؤُهَا لَمْ أَذْعُرْ
أَحْمِلُهَا أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا حَمَلْتَنِي أَتُرَانِي جَزَيْتُهَا يَا ابْنَ عَمْرٍ؟

I am her subdued camel

If her (other) camels are frightened, I am not

I carry her more than she carried me

O son of Umar, do you think that I have repaid her?

"No" replied Ibn Umar, "You have not repaid her for even a single sigh!"²⁴

²³ Imaam Bukhaari, *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*, Hadith

²⁴ Imaam Bukhaari, *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*, Hadith

On a similar occasion, a man told Ibn Umar (ra) that he had carried his mother on his back all the way from Khurasaan to Makkah as well as between Makkah, Mina, Arafaat and Muzdalifah in order for her to fulfill the rites of Hajj. "Do you think I have repaid her?" he asked. Ibn Umar (ra) replied, "No, you have not repaid her for even one contraction (at the time of your birth)."²⁵

Question

What about the *hadith* "A son can never repay his father unless if he (i.e. the father) is a slave. Thus, he purchases him and sets him free"? Does this *hadith* not imply that compensating one's parents is not entirely impossible? There is one instance in which it is possible.

Answer

In view of another *hadith*, majority of the *fuqahaa* (jurists) including the four *imaams* concur that when a man gains ownership of his father, the latter becomes free automatically (without the son having to thereafter say *I free you*). Thus, emancipation of one's father is actually impossible. With regards the above *hadith*, description of the son as freeing his father is figurative, because purchasing his father resulted in his freedom. Some commentators explain that this *hadith* is a case of *ta'leeq bil muhaal*. The meaning of this is that in order to emphasis that something is not going to happen, the speaker makes its occurrence depend on something impossible. For example, Allah Ta'aala says in the Qur'aan that the unbelievers will not enter Jannah until "the camels enters the needle's

²⁵ Ibn-ul-Jawzi, *Birr-ul-Waalidayn*

eye”.²⁶ Entry of a camel in the eye of a needle is impossible. Thus, the message is that entry of the unbelievers into Jannah is impossible. The same applies to the *hadith* “A son can never repay his father unless if he (i.e. the father) is a slave. Thus, he purchases him and sets him free”. It means that just as emancipating one’s father is impossible, repaying him is also impossible.²⁷

If They Have Passed Away

Loyalty to parents is not restricted to their lifetime. Hence, there is no need to despair if they have already passed away. A man asked Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* if it was still possible to respect his parents and be kind to them after their death. Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* replied, “Yes, make *du’aa* and *istighfaar* (seek forgiveness) for them, fulfil their pledges, maintain the ties which are only maintained because of them and honour their friends.”²⁸ On another occasion, a man asked Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* whether his deceased mother would be rewarded if he gave charity on her behalf.²⁹ In a lengthy *hadith* recorded by Baihaqi, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said to Abu Kaahil (ra), “Allah will definitely please the person who respects his parents in their lifetime and after their death.” Abu Kaahil (ra) asked, “How can he respect them after their death?” Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* replied, “By making *du’aa* for their forgiveness and

²⁶ Surah Al-A’raaf, Aayah 40

²⁷ Teebi, *Sharh-ul-Mishkaat* V.7 Pg.12

²⁸ Sunan Abu Daud, Hadith 5144

²⁹ Saheeh Al-Bukhaari, Hadith 1322

not swearing anybody else's parents because then that person would swear his parents."³⁰

و صلى الله على نبينا محمد و على آله و أصحابه أجمعين
و الحمد لله رب العلمين

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14 Dhil-Qa'dah 1435 / 10 September 2014
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³⁰ *Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabeer*, Hadith 928