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Islamic Education- Rights- Muslim's rights upon other Muslims- Lesson (4-8): The right of visiting the sick

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of Creations, and Peace and blessings be upon our prophet Muhammad, the faithful and the honest.

Oh, Allah, we know nothing but what You teach us. You are the All- Knower, the Wise. Oh Allah, teach us what is good for us, and benefit us from what You taught us, and increase our knowledge. Show us the righteous things as righteous and help us to do them, and show us the bad things as bad and help us to keep away from them.

O Allah our Lord, lead us out from the depths of darkness and illusion, unto the lights of erudition and knowledge, and from the muddy shallows of lusts unto the heavens of Your Vicinity.

Some of Muslim's rights upon other Muslims:

Dear believing brothers, we are still dealing with the subject of Rights. After having talked about the rights of parents and children, and those of husbands and wives, we now move on to the rights a Muslim has with respect to another Muslim, among them the right to advice and the right to have one's invitation accepted. Today we are going to discuss the third right, which is that of the sick being visited.

There are people who attach no weight or importance to this right and who never appreciate the value of visiting the sick, except when they themselves are taken ill. Seeing that no one visits them they start wondering about their standing among brothers and believers.

Status of visiting a sick person in Islam:

A sick person is in extreme need of company and consolation; of someone to encourage him to be patient; of someone to offer spiritual comfort to help him tolerate pain. That is why the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, exhorts us to visit the sick.

First of all, the right of the sick to be visited is the right Muslims have with respect to other Muslims. From the juristic point of view visiting the sick is "the confirmed Sunna". As we all know the Deen contemplates obligation; we also have what is recommended, what is permissible, what is disapproved and what is prohibited. The confirmed Sunna implies that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, performed it repeatedly, and visiting the sick is this kind of Sunna according to the unanimous agreement of the scholars. As regards the above, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "My ummah never agree unanimously on something wrong."

Thus, the issue upon which the scholars unanimously agree is necessarily right. While the noble Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet are the main sources of legislation, the unanimous agreement of scholars is considered to be its third fount. Furthermore, there is qiyas (analogy), used by the scholars of fiqh to extract legal judgments from the Qur'an and the Sunna. Thus, we have the noble Qur'an, the Sunna of the Prophet, the unanimity of scholars and qiyas as the main sources of legislation. There are also secondary sources –among them istihsan (substitution of a new legal judgment, considered to be better, for an existing one; for example, there is a hadith sahih which says that Muhammad and his family are not to receive zakat; however, given the fact that the practice of their receiving a fifth of the fifth of the spoils was abandoned, the Prophet's family were receiving neither zakat nor part of the spoils; therefore, by istihsan the scholars abrogated the above judgment by another which establishes that the Prophet's family is entitled to zakat); masalah marsalah (doing something for the sake of public welfare –a legal judgment being emitted without any existing basis for it neither in the Qur'an nor the Sunna, as when Umar ibn Khatab proposed Abu Bakr to unite the Qur'an in one single book; saddal-dhari'ah –concerned with the prohibition of the lawful acts which may lead to unlawful results –for example, cultivation of poppy has been banned in many countries because in most cases it leads to production of opium and heroine); madhab of the companions, and others.

Evidence on the fact the visiting sick people is a confirmed sunna:

Allah Most High says:

{Say (O Muhammad): "This is my way; I invite unto Allah (i.e. to the Oneness of Allah - Islamic Monotheism) with sure knowledge, I and whosoever follows me (also must invite others to Allah i.e to the Oneness of Allah - Islamic Monotheism) with sure knowledge. And Glorified and Exalted be Allah (above all that they associate as partners with Him). And I am not of the Mushrikun (polytheists, pagans, idolaters and disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah; those who worship others along with Allah or set up rivals or partners to Allah)."} }

(Yusuf, 108)



Sure knowledge is based on evidence, and the evidence lies in the words of the Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, or the words of Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him. The words of Ibn Abbas stem out of the Sunna of the Prophet. It is so because the Sunna of the Prophet comprises the words and the actions of the Prophet, his attributes and acknowledgments as well as the statements of his companions and followers. Visiting the sick is the confirmed Sunna. Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

"Visiting the sick on the first day is Sunna, and after that it is voluntary."

The meaning of this hadith is that we should visit the sick on the first day (of their illness) because this is when comfort is most needed. It is on the first day of sickness that the patient man does what the ignorant one did on the third day of his, when after (much) cursing and insulting he said: "What can I do? It's the Will of Allah." Visiting the sick on the first day is far better than visiting them when they leave bed and go to work, when it is evidently too late for a visit. Imam al-Bukhari said that visiting the sick is an obligation in the form of fard kifayah. If performed by some (members of the community), it is sufficient or equivalent to all having performed it. Abu Musa al-Ashari narrated that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

"Feed the hungry, visit the sick and release the captive."

(Sahih Bukhari)

Al-Bukhari's opinion on visiting the sick:

How did Imam al-Bukhari know that visiting the sick is an obligation? From the words of the Prophet. That order was directed to all Muslims, to all believers, to the whole Muslim community, yet it is enough if some (of them) perform it, this being equivalent to all having performed it. Thus, he concluded that visiting the sick is fard kifayah.

Scholars conclusion from the hadiths:

Abu Huraira, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

"The rights of a Muslim upon another Muslim are five: to answer his as-salam (Muslim greeting); to visit the sick; to accept invitation; to attend a funeral; to say 'may Allah bless you' on hearing somebody sneeze."

In a hadith the Prophet said that visiting the sick is a duty and in another hadith he commanded us to visit the sick, hence the scholarly conclusion that he ordered his companions to visit one another. It is because of its importance that this act is so strongly recommended. Similarly, Allah Most High says:

{And marry those among you who are single (i.e. a man who has no wife and the woman who has no husband) and (also marry) the Salihun (pious, fit and capable ones) of your (male) slaves and maid-servants (female slaves). If they be poor, Allah will enrich them out of His Bounty. And Allah is All-Sufficient for His creatures' needs, All-Knowing (about the state of the people).}

(Al-Nur, 32)



It means that one should help to marry those (in the community) who are single. Is it, then, obligatory or recommended? It is recommended.

A detail on visiting the sick:

We should take note here of something particularly important. Visiting the sick can be in some cases an individual duty, such as that of offering prayers. Your parents need you; visiting your parents and your brothers and sisters is a (form of) religious duty.

What is meant by visiting the sick:

The Prophet said that we are to visit the sick, meaning anyone sick. Zaid bin Arkam narrated:

"The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, visited me when I was suffering from sore eyes."

(Abu Dawud)

The aim behind visiting the sick is not just paying a visit. The sick person should be taken care of; he needs your company; you should be gentle with him; he might need medication. Suppose his children are at school or his wife is unwell or else he might be in urgent need of a certain type of food, such as yogurt or lemon for example, or of a specific medicine; he might need to send a letter or to do something quite ordinary but be unable to do it because of his sickness. You should offer your help and take care of him, and such is the meaning of visiting the sick.

The believer is decent:

When the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, mentioned visiting the sick, he did not refer to any specific time but the believer, desiring to be decent and polite, chooses the most suitable time for his visit –neither late nor early, nor at the time one may be expected to be resting. Abu Huraira narrated that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, transmitted that on the Day of Judgment Allah Most High will say:

How do you understand this hadith?

"O Son of Adam! I got sick and you never visited Me. He will answer: My Lord! How could I have visited You, the Lord of the Worlds? Allah will say: A servant of Mine fell ill, yet you didn't visit him. Didn't you know that you would have found Me there if you had visited him?"

How are we to understand these words? Allah Most High ascribes here to illness the metaphoric meaning of favoring:

"Son of Adam! I asked you for food but you never fed Me. He will answer: My Lord! How could I have fed You, the Lord of the Worlds. He will say: A servant of Mine got hungry, yet you didn't feed him. Didn't you know that I would have rewarded you if you had fed him?"

You will find your reward there, you will find there rest and light, and Allah's Glory will appear there in your heart...

Son of Adam! I asked you for water but you never brought Me any. He will answer: My Lord! How could I have offered a drink to You, the Lord of the Worlds? He will say: A servant of mine felt thirsty, yet you didn't give him water. Didn't you know that I would have rewarded you if you had given him something to drink?"

(Muslim)

What does this hadith motivate us to do?

This hadith motivates us all to visit our sick brothers and relatives. Even if the person you are visiting does not really follow the Call of Allah, you will find him different. His soul becomes clear and pure and his spirit tender and gentle and he will be more responsive to a religious discourse. When a human being gets ill, he comes to feel his weakness. Man has been created weak and sickness is a Blessing of Allah. If man never got sick, he would keep marveling at how strong and vigorous he is. Sickness makes him realize his actual dimension and shows him his reality; it helps him to repent and makes him feel his servanthood. The disbeliever rebels against Truth out of pride and gets more and more arrogant until Allah destroys him. The believer is treated by Allah Most High in a different way. When he deviates from His Path, He helps him to return (to it). The believer is like a leaf moved by the wind –it swings and returns (to its position); the disbeliever is like a huge tree which gets uprooted by severe winds. Thus, when Allah Most High makes somebody unwell, it is a way of favoring and honouring him. Allah's Words "you will find Me beside him" mean that visiting a sick person brings about His favour and honour. Therefore, we should never forget or be negligent as regards calling on sick brothers, relatives or neighbors.

A story of a Jew who converted to Islam:

It has been transmitted to us that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, went to see his Jewish neighbor who was sick and who used to do harm and annoy him. After that visit the neighbor embraced Islam.

Story of a singer who repented:

Abu Hanifa, an outstanding and venerable religious scholar, had a noisy and troublesome drunkard neighbor, who used to sing at the top of his voice, disturbing the whole neighborhood. His most favorite song ran:

They have ruined me, and what a great man they have ruined!

To a day of mischief and hidden plague!

One night, however, silence reigned in the whole neighborhood so Abu Hanifa inquired about the unruly man and found out that for some reason or another he had been imprisoned by the governor. Being highly respected by the governor,

Abu Hanifa managed to help his neighbor, the young profligate singer, to get out of prison, although the governor was rather surprised at his coming and interceding for such a disrespectful man. However, Abu Hanifa took the young man by the hand and said: "O man! You say 'they have ruined you, and what a great man they have ruined!' Have we really ruined you?!" Such a noble and compassionate attitude on the part of Abu Hanifa towards his irreligious neighbor made him repent and reform.

About visiting the sick:

Thawban, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet said:

"A Muslim visiting his sick Muslim brother stays in al-Khurfah of the Paradise until he leaves him. They asked the Prophet what al-Khurfah was and he said it derived from the word "ghurfah" {room, habitation} and stands for the Fruits of Paradise."

(Sahih Muslim)

This means that the visitor not only is in Paradise but also eats from its Fruits. Ali, may Allah honor him, said that he heard the Prophet say;

"If a Muslim visits his sick brother in the morning, seventy thousand angels supplicate for him till the evening; and if he visits him in the evening, seventy thousand angels supplicate for him till the morning, and there will be kharif for him."

(Tirmidhi, hadith hasan)

Angels' supplication will make him feel happiness, and kharif denotes the Fruits harvested in Paradise.

Proper behavior while visiting a sick person:

1- The visiter should ask Allah to heal the sick person:



What, then, is the proper behaviour while seeing the sick? It is, firstly, to beseech Allah to heal the sick man and, on the other hand, to exhort the patient to forbear. Aisha bint Saad bin Abu Waqas narrated that her father said:

"The Prophet visited me when I was sick in Mekka, he put his hand on my forehead and rubbed my chest and abdomen. He then said: 'My Lord! Heal Saad and complete his emigration for him.' "

(Abu Dawud)

Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated from the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace:

"Allah Most High will heal the sick person visited by somebody who says seven times 'O Allah the Most Great, Lord of the Mighty Throne, cure him.' "

(Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi)

That is, when you supplicate Allah from the bottom of your heart, with love for a brother of yours, and ask Allah to cure him, Allah will show him what you have asked for him, and will restore him to health on account of this act of yours since the supplication for one's brother is never rejected.

Aisha narrated that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

"O Lord of mankind remove the ailment, heal him; you are the Healer; there is no remedy but Yours, which is a complete remedy."

(Bukhari and Muslim)

Abu Saad Abd-Allah Uthman bin Abu A's, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that he told the Prophet about the pain he was suffering from and the Prophet said:

"Put your right hand on it, then say seven times: 'In the Name of Allah, I seek refuge with the honor and the capacity of Allah from all evils'; and Allah healed me (after that)."

(Ibn Majah)

Classification of the ahadeeth:

The Prophet used to say when someone was sick:

"It is nothing (much). It is purification, insha-Allah."

(Sahih Bukhari)

Abu Ayyub al-Ansari narrated that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, visited one of his companions who was ill. He said to the Prophet: "I have not slept for seven days and no one has visited me. The Prophet said: Be patient brother so that you can get out of your sins as you got into them."

On another occasion the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, visited a companion on his sickbed, who said: "O Messenger of Allah! Ask Allah to have mercy upon me." The Prophet said: **"O Almighty Allah! Have mercy upon him." Allah Most High said: "How am I to have mercy upon him? It is through this affliction that I have mercy upon him. I swear by My Grace and Might that I do not send death upon My believing servant whom I wish to grant My Mercy until I afflict him with illness and hardship, and cause disaster happen to his properties, children or relatives –until all those afflictions outweigh the sins he has committed. If some still remain, I make his death hard, so that he can meet Me free of all transgression (as he was the day he was born)."**

Fatima, may Allah be pleased with her, said: "May Allah curse this fever," and the Messenger of Allah responded: "

Don't curse it for by Allah in Whose Hand Muhammad's life is it purifies the believer from all of his wrongdoing."

Stop here and think:

Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Messenger of Allah visited someone sick and said:

"It is nothing (much). It is purification, insha-Allah. The man said: No, it is the fever which afflicts an old man until it takes him to the grave. The Prophet said: It is a blessing then."

(Sahih Bukhari)

Where is the faith of the pessimistic person who gets assaulted by evil thoughts about Allah Most High when the doctor tells him that he is incurably ill? When you are ill it is He who cures you; Allah is capable of healing you.

2- The visitor should try to comfort the sick:

It is good to put your hand on the sick spot and say "In the Name of Allah," then ask Allah to heal the ill person; you should try to relieve his sorrow, comfort him and try to drive his worries away from him.

Abu Said al-Khudri narrated that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

"Visiting a sick person and trying to offer relief might not work in case of it being against the Will of Allah; nevertheless, it will be pleasing (to this person)."

(Ibn Majah)

This means that your words won't let him live longer but they will ease his discomfort and improve his condition.

A story:

I heard about a female teacher from Morocco who wrote a book entitled "Don't Forget Remembrance of Allah". She was afflicted with a chronic disease, a malignant breast tumor. She visited all the doctors in Paris but they said her case was hopeless as her days were counted. It was her desire to die near the noble House and so she circumambulated the Ka'aba many times for days on end. She invoked and supplicated Allah and prayed to Him, eating nothing, just drinking Zamzam water. Then she touched the affected spot and realized that the tumor had disappeared. Needless to say, she was beyond herself with surprise. She went back to France and told the doctor about what had happened. He was even more surprised. She had been given a medicine which made all of her hair fall out. She saw (in a dream) the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and told him about what had happened to her hair. He rubbed her head and her hair grew rapidly. She entirely turned to Allah. Allah Most High says:

{Say: "O 'Ibadi (My slaves) who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins)! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah, verily Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.}

(Az-Zumar, 53)

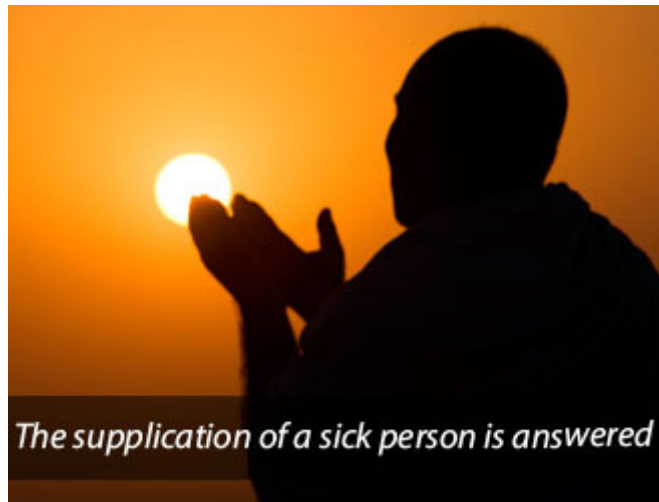
A poet said:

**It befell (you), but after its rings had been so tightly wrought;
it was so easily, though so unexpectedly, unwrought.**

**{And whosoever fears Allah and keeps his duty to Him, He will make a way
for him to get out (from every difficulty).}**

(Al-Talaq, 2)

3- The visitor should ask the sick person to supplicate for him:



Yet another thing as regards the correct behaviour while visiting the sick is that you should ask the sick person to supplicate for you. The prayer of the sick man is accepted and it will be answered. Anas ibn Malik narrated that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

"Visit the sick and ask them to supplicate Allah for you; their supplication is accepted and their sins are forgiven."

4- Visiting the sick should be short:

The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did specify the length of time for visiting the sick. He said "the time of milking a she-camel" –meaning that the visit should last approximately ten minutes, except if the sick person insists on your staying longer.

It seems that when Saad was injured at the Battle of al-Khandaq, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, set up a tent for him at the mosque to enable his friends to visit him, and he asked Saad to stay there.

5- The visitor should not eat or drink in his visit:

The Prophet said:

"If someone visits a sick person, he shouldn't eat or drink there, and if he did, he would lose his reward."

Here is (an example of) the wisdom of the Prophet since as we all know some diseases are highly infectious. Thus, it would be for the sake of prevention. It might also be the case of the patient having been forbidden certain foods and your eating (them) in front of him might be a temptation. It might also be to relieve the family who might be busy and have no time to offer you anything. However, if it is a father visiting a son –that is an exception.

About sick person's complaints:

There is also the issue of the sick person complaining (about his discomfort). It is permissible for him to say that he couldn't sleep the night before; that he felt an unbearable pain, or something similar, but he should praise Allah first, and then mention his ailments.

"If the praise is before the complaint, then he is not complaining."

The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said (at his son's death):

"The eye weeps, and the heart grieves, but we only say what pleases our Lord; and we sorrow, O Ibrahim, to part with you."

An important point:

One other thing is worth mentioning here. There is he who complains to Allah and there is he who complains about Allah. If you complain to a believer, then you complain to Allah; and if you complain to a disbeliever, then you complain about Allah.

Almighty Allah says:

{He said: "I only complain of my grief and sorrow to Allah, and I know from Allah that which you know not.}

(Yusuf, 86)

{Truly! We found him patient.}

(Saad, 44)

{And (remember) Ayyub (has seized me, and You are the Most Merciful of all those who show mercy.} Job), when he cried to his Lord: "Verily, distress has seized me, but You are the Most Merciful of those that are merciful.}

(Al-Anbiyaa, 83)

A poet said:

**If you are afflicted, have generous patience. He knows you best...
And if you complain to the son of Adam,
you are complaining about the Merciful to the one who has no mercy.**

Conclusion:

"When Allah wished good for someone, he afflicts him (with hardships)."

(Al-Bukhari)

It is so because sickness turns and directs you to Allah.

{So, when they forgot (the warning) with which they had been reminded, We opened to them the gates of every (pleasant) thing, until in the midst of their enjoyment in that which they were given, all of a sudden, We took them to punishment, and lo! They were plunged into destruction with deep regrets and sorrows.}

(Al An'am, 44)

Mahmud ibn Labid narrated that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

"If Allah loves people, He afflicts them; and whosoever stays patient will do so for his own good; and whosoever gets irritable will do so causing his own harm."

Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, narrated that the Prophet said:

"If any calamities afflict a Muslim, Almighty Allah will expiate his sins through them, even if it was (no more than) a thorn that has hurt him."

(Sahih Bukhari)

Abu Huraira narrated that the Prophet said:

"A Muslim afflicted (by Allah) with sickness or grief will expiate his sins (in this way)."

I hope these ahadith will suffice for Muslims to accept sickness, to be patient and to visit the sick. In our next lesson we will talk about medical treatment, insha-Allah.

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