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**ON THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN ISLAM AND
THE PROHIBITION OF ABUSING CHILDREN¹**

Children include both sons and daughters and the rights of children are many, of the most important are education: developing the *deen* and good characteristics within their souls so that they have a major aspect of that instilled in them. Allaah says,

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“O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones...”

{*at-Tabreem* (66): 6}

The Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wassallam*) said: “Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock. A man is responsible for his family and his flock.”²

¹ From: http://www.ibnothaymeen.com/all/books/article_17001.shtml

Translator’s note: This topic has somewhat been neglected by many Muslims and unfortunately has even been neglected by those who claim adherence to Ahl us-Sunnah. The negligence of this area has even in some cases led to tragedy, death and child abuse and has resulted in Muslims gaining even worse reputations. As what can be more contradictory than one who openly manifests the Sunnah yet behind closed doors is oppressive to her/his own children? Indeed, in some cases it appears that even some of those who attach themselves to blessed *Salafiyyah* are more concerned with continuing petty personal vendettas against others from Ahl us-Sunnah rather than caring for what happens to children within their communities and this is a clear case of getting priorities mixed up.

For further reading on the topic of children’s rights in Islam refer to this transcribed lecture by Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Umar Bazmool (translated by Ismaa’eel Alarcon), *Your Flesh and Blood: A Lecture the Rights of Children:* http://www.al-ibaana.com/cms/pdf_files/82.pdf

² Reported by al-Bukhaaree, *Kitaab ul-Jumu’ah* [Book of the Friday Prayer], *Baab: al-Jumu’ah fi’l-Quraa wa’l-Mudun* [Chapter: Praying Juma’h in Vilages and Cities] (893); Muslim, *Kitaab ul-Imaarah* [Book of Leadership],

Children are a trust on the necks of the parents and the parents will both be held responsible for their children on the Day of Judgement and are responsible for their education and religious cultivation and etiquettes. The parents are to rectify their children so that they become the solace of their parents eyes in this life and the next. Allaah says,

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَاتَّبَعَتْهُمْ ذُرِّيَّتُهُمْ بِإِيمَانٍ أَلْحَقْنَا بِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَمَا أَلَتْنَاهُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ مِّنْ أَعْمَالِهِمْ كُلُّ

أَمْرٍ إِذٍ بِمَا كَسَبَ رَهْتَهُ

“And those who believed and whose descendants followed them in faith – We will join with them their descendants, and We will not deprive them of anything of their deeds. Every person, for what he earned, is retained.”

{at-Toor (52): 21}

The Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wassallam*) said: *“When the son of Adam dies all of his actions end except three: some charity that he gave and from which people still benefit from; some knowledge that he left behind and the people still benefit from or a righteous child who supplicates for him.”*³

These are the fruits of cultivating children when they are given a righteous upbringing to the extent that they benefit their parents even after death. Many parents neglect this right of their children and forget them as if they as parents have no responsibility over them. They do not ask where their children have been, they do not know when they will come back in, they do not know who their friends are, they neither encourage them to do good nor forbid them from evil. What is also strange is that such parents are enthusiastic to maintain their wealth and money yet as for their children then they have no share in being maintained even though they are a priority and more beneficial to maintain in this life and the next.

In the same way it is obligatory for the parent to provide food, drink and clothing to sustain the body of their child and to dress the children also.⁴ Likewise it is obligatory to feed

Baab Fadliyyat Imaam ul-'Aadil wa 'Uqoobat ul-Jaa'ir [Chapter: The Virtue of a Just Imam ad the Punishment of the Unjust One], (1827).

³ Reported by Muslim, *Kitaab ul-Wasiyyah, Baab Ma yalahaq al-insaan min ath-Thawaab ba'd wafaatihi* (1631).

⁴ The child has a right to life. Neither the father nor the mother have the right to take the life of the child, whether a boy or a girl, by killing it or burying it alive, as was done by some Arabs of *jahiliyyah*. Allaah says,

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ إِمْلَاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ إِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ كَانَ خِطْئًا كَبِيرًا

“And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you. Indeed, their killing is ever a great sin.”

{al-Israa (17):31}

Ibn Katheer says about this verse,

This Ayah indicates that Allah is more compassionate towards His servants than a father to his child, because He forbids killing children just as He enjoins parents to take care of their children in matters of inheritance. The people of Jahiliyyah would not allow their daughters to inherit from them, and some would even kill their daughters lest they make them more poor.

In the Two Saheehs it is mentioned that 'Abdullaah ibn Mas'ood said 'O Messenger of Allaah, what is the worst sin?' The Messenger of Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wassallam*) responded **“To ascribe divinity to someone other than Allah, when He is the One Who created you.”** 'What next?' he was asked. **“To kill your child out of fear that it will share your food”**, he replied.

Allaah also says,

وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ - بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ

“...When the female child who was buried alive is asked for what crime she was killed.”

{at-Takweer (81): 8-9}

Ibn Katheer states in his *tafseer*:

Al-Maw'udah is the female infant that the people of the pre-Islamic time of ignorance would bury in the dirt due to their hatred of girls. Therefore, on the Day of Judgement, the female infant will be asked what sin she committed that caused here to be murdered. This will be a means of frightening her murderer. For verily, if the one who was wronged is questioned, what does the wrongdoer (the one who is guilty of the oppression) think then 'Ali bin Abi Talhah reported that Ibn 'Abbaas said,

وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ - بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ

“...When the female child who was buried alive is asked for what crime she was killed.”

{at-Takweer (81): 8-9}

“This means that she will ask.” Abu'd-Duha made a similar statement when he said, “She will ask, meaning she will demand restitution for her blood.”

Whatever the motive for this crime may be, whether economical, such as fear of poverty and lack of provision, or fear of disgrace in the case of a daughter, Islam absolutely prohibits such a savage act which is nothing but premeditated murder and the oppression of a feeble, helpless human being.

The Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wassallam*) took an oath of allegiance from both men and women at the time of their accepting Islam. This oath of allegiance included the condition that they would not kill their children and would consider it an absolutely prohibited crime:

the heart with knowledge, *eemaan* and adorn the child's soul with the clothing of *taqwa* as that is good. Also from the rights of the children is to spend out on them in that which is good with neither waste nor neglect because this is obligatory for the parent to do for the children. Whoever is thankful to Allaah for the blessing on him in terms of wealth how can one prevent that wealth in his life and be stingy and miserly to his children so that after his death they hold him as being transgressive? to the extent therefore that (it is allowed) if the parent is stingy to the children in terms of what he gives them then they have the right to take what wealth will suffice them in goodness, just as how the Messenger of Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wassallam*) ruled in regards to Hind bint 'Utbah.

From the rights of children also is that the parents to not prefer one of their children over the other in terms of spending on them. So the parents are not to give some of the children something and then neglect giving to the other children as this is transgression and oppression and Allaah does not love the oppressors. Such favoritism leads to alienating the ones who are disadvantaged and instills enmity among the children and the ones who are favoured, indeed the enmity can even be among the disadvantaged children and their parents. Some people select one of their children who is good but this is not goodness to specify one for being good, as it is not permissible to give one of the children something instead of the others for the reward of being good is from Allaah. Also specifying a child who is good by giving him things will make him be proud of himself and being good as he will see that he has some sort of virtue, this will make the other children continue in their recalcitrant behavior. Furthermore, we do not know if the one who is good may change and become evil while the recalcitrant one may change and become good, because the hearts are within the Hand of Allaah and he turns them how He wills.

In the Two Saheehs from an-Nu'maan bin Basheer (*radi Allaahu 'anhu*) that his father Basheer bin Sa'd took him to Allaah's Messenger (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wassallam*) and said, "I have given this son of mine a slave." The Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wassallam*) asked, "Have you given all your sons the same?"

وَلَا يَسْرِقْنَ وَلَا يَزْنِينَ وَلَا يَقْتُلْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ

"...That they will not steal nor commit zina nor kill their children..."

{*al-Mumtahinah (60):12*}

Basheer replied in the negative. The Prophet said, “*Take back your gift then.*”⁵ And in another narration (is the addition): “*Fear Allaah and be just between your children!*”⁶ In another wording of the hadeeth (is the addition): “*...Seek the testimony of another person, other than me. I will not testify to an act of injustice.*”

So the Messenger of Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wassallam*) named favouring some children over others as being injustice and injustice is oppression and *haraam*. However, if a parent gives one of his children something that he needs which the second child does not need, like if one of the children needs some stationary equipment or medicine or to get married then there is no problem in specifying that for a particular child or children if they are in need of that because this specification is due to the need and is like maintenance of them.

Whenever a parent establishes that which is obligatory on him for the child in terms of education and maintenance the child has to also show goodness to his parent and safeguards their rights. Whenever the parent neglects what is obligatory on him/her then that is worthy of being punished with a child who has his rights disregarded and then is tested with bad behavior as a reward towards his parents. As you treat others you will be treated.

⁵ Reported by al-Bukhaaree, *Kitaab ul-Hibbah* [The Book of Giving Gifts], *Baab ul-Hibbat li'l-Walad* [Chapter: Giving Gifts to Children] (2587); Muslim, *Kitaab ul-Hibaat* [The Book of Gifts], *Baab Karaahiyyat Tafdeel Ba'dh il-Awlaad fi'l-Hibbah* [Chapter: The Dislike of Favouring Some Children Over Others When Giving Gifts], vol.9, p.1623.

⁶ Reported by al-Bukhaaree, *Kitaab ul-Hibbah* [The Book of Gifts], *Baab ul-Ishaad fi'l-Hibbah* [Chapter: Testifying When Giving Gifts] (2587); Muslim, *Kitaab ul-Hibaat* [The Book of Gifts], *Baab Karaahiyyat Tafdeel Ba'dh il-Awlaad fi'l-Hibbah* [Chapter: The Dislike of Favouring Some Children Over Others When Giving Gifts], vol.14, p.1623.

⁷ Reported by al-Bukhaaree, *Kitaab ush-Shahaadaat* [The Book of Witnesses], *Baab la yashad 'ala Shahaadat Jawr idha Ashad* [Chapter: There is no Testifying for an Oppressive Witnesses When They request Witnesses] (2650); Muslim, vol.14, p.1623.