



Editor's Note: Family in Islam

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The family has always been and is still regarded as being the primary social institution and the origin of cultures, civilizations and human history. So, Islam, as a school of thought that aims towards human development, pays the utmost attention to the significance of the family. It, therefore, considers this sacred institution to be the center of education. It also opines that the happiness and misery of human society are deeply connected to the well-being and corruption of this institution. Further, Islam considers the purpose of family formation to be crucial in the fulfillment of man's emotional and spiritual needs, one being the attainment of tranquility.

The Glorious Qur'an speaks about the subject of family in varying ways. Some verses mention the peace that spouses feel when they are together, while other verses speak about the reciprocal rights of spouses, children and so on. Hence, when all of these verses are combined together, they constitute a comprehensive framework for the establishment of an Islamic and Quranic family.

The word "*bayt*", which translates literally as "house", and its derivatives, such as its plural form "*buyut*", appear 71 times within the Glorious Qur'an. It appears twelve times referring to "*baytullah*" (The House of God), i.e., the Kaaba, two times in referring to "*Bayt 'Atiq*" and two times in referring to "*Bayt Ma'mur*". In the other instances, it refers to a house, i.e., the environment that is specific for family life.

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If several of these Quranic verses where the word “*Bayt*” appears were to be taken into consideration together, it will be seen that this enclosed covered space, which is the place of human dwelling, communal life and the first environment where growth and development occurs, has a special esteem and significance in the sight of God. Therefore, its functionality and position within human life hold great importance. What follows is a sample of some of these functions.

A Place of Peace and Tranquility

The first function of the home is to ensure the comfort of the body and tranquility of the soul of its occupants. This, naturally, owes to the all-encompassing security that this environment gives to its occupants. The private and safe space of the home is sacred. It is here that feelings can be expressed, secrets can be told, legitimate desires can be satisfied and the physical and mental needs of an individual can be met. In fact, God attributes this tranquility and security to Himself, as he says in the Glorious Qur’an:

“It is Allah who has made your homes as a place of rest for you” (16:80)

In Arabic, the term “*sa-ka-na*” indicates anything by which a person can attain comfort.¹ In addition to needing a home to reside in, a person also needs a place to relieve their mental pain, to be freed from certain social restrictions, to rest as they wish, to be alone and to have intimate conversations with their Lord and those who they hold dear. So, if these needs are not taken care of within the home, then such a place cannot be considered to be a “*maskan*”.

The Place for Remembering God and Reciting His Divine Book

“And remember what is recited in your homes of the signs of Allah and wisdom.” (33:34)

From the above verse, which was revealed in addressing the wives of the Noble Prophet, it can be claimed that the virtues a person can acquire from the home and family are very valuable and must be preserved and maintained so that they can be applied within other areas of life.

The family of the Noble Prophet is an example for all families. Therefore, they must pay more attention than others with regard to obeying the commands of God; because it is incumbent upon

1. Mufradāt Rāghib, the root of sa-ka-na

every person to protect their family's status, reputation and honor.

The calm and intimate environment of the home makes it a place to be respected and cared for. However, if it becomes a place where the worship and remembrance of God occurs, then God will elevate and honor it, for He says in the Glorious Qur'an:

“In houses, Allah has allowed to be raised and wherein His Name is celebrated; He is glorified therein, morning and evening,” (24:36)

True exaltation belongs solely to God. So, a home that becomes a place for the worshipping, glorifying and celebrating of God also becomes exalted. What can be understood from the above verse and the interpretation of it by Allamah Ṭabāṭabāī, is that if the home is kept clean of any filth and dirt i.e., sin and disobedience, and is adorned with the remembrance and worship of God, it will become exalted and will no longer be just a cold and soulless residence, and the more its godly and spiritual color increases, the loftier it will become. The perfect instance of this is the Ka'aba, the house of God.¹

The Place of Divine Connection:

“So, when you enter houses, greet yourselves with a salutation from Allah, blessed and good.” (24:61)

The meaning of greeting oneself in the above verse is to give salutations to the people of the house. The verse, by not explicitly saying “greet the people of the house”, aims to convey the oneness of all Muslims; as they are all humans who God created from a single man and woman i.e., Adam and Eve.

Moreover, all of them are believers and it is their faith which has brought them together, and there is no stronger cause for unity than this. Further, God says: greet the people of the house; since this greeting is an expression of salutation and peace from the Lord, it can be said that the best way to create a relationship between family members is through greeting one another with salutations and to remember God when together. If this sacred relationship is established within the home, it will most certainly flow into society as well. Hence, the reality of this greeting is in fact the expansion of security and well-being among people.

1. Tafsir al-Mizān, ‘Allamah Ṭabāṭabāī, (1363 HS), 15:178-179.

The Necessity of Protecting the Sanctity of the Home:

According to the Glorious Qur'an, the house has such a significant position, that everyone is advised to preserve its sanctity. God says in the Glorious Qur'an:

“O you who have faith! Do not enter houses other than your own until you have announced [your arrival] and greeted their occupants.” (24:27)

The restriction in the above-mentioned verse implies that God has forbidden the entering of someone else's home without permission and greeting. He decrees this sanctity as being sacred and also expresses the necessity of maintaining a correct and warm culture in the interactions with the members of the household. In addition, using this verse, He teaches that the members of the household must, in addition to observing all other forms of human dignity in their interactions, communicate this unity in their relationships with one another verbally, for it is the easiest and most common form used to do so. In this regard, *Salam* [“greetings”] is a word that portrays this message. Additionally, it also conveys the prayer of well-being and safety from the greeter to the greeted.

In this instance, it has been narrated by ‘Uday ibn Thābit that once a woman, who was from the *Ansār*¹, came to the Noble Prophet and said, “Sometimes, when I am at home, I am in a condition that I do not want anyone see me in. So, if my father, son or a man from my blood relatives enters, what should I do?” The above verse was revealed in response to her question.

“*Tasta'nisu*” means “*tasta'dhanu*” i.e., a request for proximity². Hence, it means that one should not enter any house that is not theirs until they are sure that someone is there and only then do so after seeking permission. It is reported by Ibn Abbas who said: “In this verse, there is precedence and succession; meaning that not until you greet and are given permission, i.e., once you say ‘peace be upon you’, can you enter a home.” Moreover, a greeting is a recommended action whereas asking for permission to enter is obligatory.³

1. A title for those people who resided in Medina at the time of the Noble Prophet's migration from Makkah [Ed.]

2. Mufradāt Rāghib, the root of aa-na-sa.

3. Tafsīr Maybudi, (1357), 6:509.

Furthermore, verse 28 of the 26th Chapter (The Light), reads, “But, if you do not find anyone there, do not enter until you are given permission.”

In addition to this general ruling and etiquette, there is a specific verse that forbids entrance into the home of the Noble Prophet without permission. Verse number 53 of chapter 33 reads, “O you who have faith! Do not enter the Prophet's houses unless permission is granted...”

Definition of Family in the view of the Glorious Qur’an

A family is a social unit whose purpose, according to the Glorious Qur’an, is to provide psychological well-being for three groups: spouses, parents and children. Similarly, one of its goals is to prepare the members for dealing with social phenomena.

In verse 74 of Chapter 25, we read: “And those who say, ‘Our Lord! Give us joy and comfort in our spouses and offspring, and make us imams of the God-wary.’” This verse refers to the importance of the family and its role as the precursor in the formation of a model human society, as it introduces healthy and strong family bonds as the ideal of the pious.

Within the social unit of the family, parents are important role models for their children, a role that begins from the point of conception. This signifies the important role that the family has in improving the human condition. According to the teachings of the Infallible Imams, the beliefs, way of life, habits, desires and objectives of the parents are among the most important factors that can influence children. Therefore, among the factors that create the core of a child’s social personality is the manner of their parent’s behavior in trying to harmonize their own wishes and desires on the one hand with those of the family and society on the other. The same can be said regarding the continuous efforts of their parents in trying to uplift and provide material and psychological well-being for the family. Another important factor in this regard is the way that the parents observe their religious and social duties and obligations.

The value of the family is primarily based on the love and friendship between its members. So, members who have been kept together by their observation of reciprocal rights may, if this trend continues based on friendship, understanding and

devoid of selfishness, attain the desired human perfection.

According to the Glorious Qur'an, family is a school of love and friendship. It is stated in verse 21 of Chapter 30:

“And of His signs is that He created for you mates from your own selves that you may take comfort in them, and He ordained affection and mercy between you. There are indeed signs in that for a people who reflect.” (30:21)

This verse mentions some important points regarding the family that deserve further attention:

1. The phrase “Mates from your own selves” indicates that the relationship between husband and wife is one of the central aspects of the family. As mentioned previously, humans are social beings whose growth, prosperity and perfection depend on their relationships with others and their attitude towards the difficulties and problems that are present on this path. Further, even though the path towards perfection is endless, at every stage during this journey of life and growth there exists a series of special inner needs that emerge from the interactions with others. These inner needs, are in fact, a reflection of the desires and ideals of a human being.

The bond between a husband and wife is one of unadulterated love. It is within the family that the strengths and weaknesses of a person's character are revealed; done so without any fear or further consideration. The family is an environment where it is possible to treat problems and issues naturally, because with the existence of tolerance, love, loyalty and mutual trust between husband and wife, they will be able to examine and recognize the negative points of the other's character and then, through self-improvement, aim to reform themselves. And there is no place better to do this than within the family environment.

Therefore, in the view of Islam, internal pollution is worse than external ugliness. Hence, the family, being the environment in which the showing of the negative character aspects is possible, without any fear of punishment, also can remove these weaknesses. Essentially, through the power of love and affection, the most difficult goals can be achieved.

2. “...that you may take comfort”. This expression of the Glorious Quran refers to the fact that peace is the state and position that a person must achieve in this world. From the perspective of the Glorious Quran, the family must prepare the grounds for the

achievement of this purpose, whether it be for the spouses or for those who continue their lineage; i.e., their children.

3. "...and He ordained between you affection..." The third important point regarding the family that can be derived from this verse, is about the love that exists between the husband and wife. Through affectionate interactions and cooperation, they can reach peace and bliss on the path towards God and knowing themselves. Therefore, it is towards this aim that the phrase "that you may take comfort in them" is mentioned in this noble verse.

4. "...mercy". The love between a husband and wife, and their cooperation within the framework of this love and affection on the path of perfection, brings about mercy and kindness for the family and others. Hence, it is a strong bond that guarantees the attainment of a suitable base for a responsible and lasting relationship. In this regard, it is imperative for those who are starting this journey to first find suitable role-models and examples, and then to also look at their future interactions with society as becoming a possible example for others.

The impact of the behavior of the parents on their children is more than their direct role in their relationship with them. Even the type of interactions that parents have with each other can form the cornerstone of a child's psychological personality, which, if healthy, can be a source of mercy. So, harmony between husband and wife is more about their effort towards mutual excellence and upliftment, rather than apparent agreement and understanding between them, despite their natural and inherent differences. Therefore, just as there are several physiological differences between men and women, they also have a series of important psychological differences; as the following noble verses imply: "by Him who created the male and the female your endeavors are indeed diverse." (92:3-4) However, as far as attitudes and personality traits are concerned, their differences are not like physiological differences, i.e., they have nothing to do with femininity or masculinity. It is social conditions, family and culture that are effective factors in the forming of a person's personality and the manner of how men and women behave and work. This is where the mission of the family is precisely determined, i.e., the building of mutual understanding and friendship in order to cope with and interact with the different

desires and tendencies that constitute the differing elements of an individual's personality.

This mission demands truth, confidence, humility, piety and avoiding self-centeredness. Children are then greatly encouraged to view the social relationships that their parents have with others in a manner that will lead them to believe that the differences within individuals, society and cultures, as well as those between their father and mother, are all important aspects towards perfection. It is this kind of interaction that will lead to understandings forming between nations and even people of different faiths. If this occurs, it will result in understanding, peace and tranquility on a global level. Parents are therefore responsible for raising their children in such a way, and, according to a prophetic tradition, children are trusted in the hands of their parents, i.e., they are responsible for taking care of them, but should not have a sense of ownership towards them. A child needs the affection and kindness of their parents in their growth and development. This affection and kindness have two main effects:

- One: It is the essential component for the development of basic confidence in the child's soul.
- Two: It becomes the foundation from which emerges the spirit of friendship and kindness that a child will display to others.

In addition, children also have a series of responsibilities towards their parents. From the viewpoint of the Glorious Qur'an, a child's behavior towards their parents must be combined with love and respect, as God says in the Glorious Qur'an: "do not say to them, (i.e., your parents) 'Uff!'" (17:23) It is also necessary for children to take care of their parents, as it is said in chapter 17 of the Glorious Qur'an: "Your Lord has decreed that you shall not worship anyone except Him, and [He has enjoined] kindness to parents. Should any of them or both reach old age at your side, do not say to them, 'Fie!' And do not chide them, but speak to them noble words. * Lower the wing of humility to them, mercifully, and say, 'My Lord! Have mercy on them, just as they reared me when I was [a] small [child]!'" (17:23-24)

Undoubtedly, this respect does not mean calling the child to imitate and follow the parents blindly and without thinking, because this act in itself is wrong according to the Glorious

Qur'an. According to the Glorious Qur'an, every human being must distinguish the right path from the wrong one, guidance from misguidance, as it is said in verse 21 of chapter 31: "When they are told, 'Follow what Allah has sent down,' they say, 'No, we will follow what we found our fathers following.' What! Even if Satan be calling them to the punishment of the Blaze?"

In addition, the constant emphasis on the main role of the family in the training of children, and in the development of their personalities, must not be interpreted and understood in a manner whereby a person, who has reached maturity, does not have the power for existential growth and perfection, because man is responsible for his own actions in all instances: "Every soul is hostage to what it has earned," (74:38) If, for some reason, an individual lags in this field, his parents are not responsible for them, while if he does a good deed, he himself will be rewarded for it. God has said in verse 21 of the 52nd chapter, "The faithful and their descendants who followed them in faith—We will make their descendants join them, and We will not stint anything from [the reward of] their deeds. Every person is hostage to what he has earned."

Unfortunately, despite the clear indications in the Glorious Qur'an for the equality of men and women, in some Islamic societies, women are still oppressed within the family or society. However, this does not mean that women in Europe have a better status or are treated more humanely, rather they are oppressed there too, but in a different way. One of the causes of the oppression of women is the mechanisms and common beliefs that are prevalent in society. Another point is that, throughout history, women have not directly gone to religious texts and tried to understand and interpret them in order to prove their rights, and in most cases, they have left it to men to do so.

Although men and women are different physiologically, they are both human beings spiritually, "Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most God-wary among you." (49:13)

From the viewpoint of Islam, a human being, as long as it has freed itself from the bonds and attachment of materialism, is moving towards perfection and spiritual growth. This movement towards perfection is present in both men and women. Therefore, relying on gender when dealing with the rights of the family, i.e., limiting the

value of the bond and unity to a physiological relationship, will result in women having less growth and development.

Considering this discrimination and inequality between men and women in some Muslim families, some bigoted critics from the West and the East have thought that women's rights in Islam are less than that of men. In response to them, it should be said that our study and understanding of Islam and the Glorious Quran is entirely different to theirs. We view the Glorious Quran as being a harmonious and coherent collection of teachings. It has stated that some of its verses are clear, while others are ambiguous, and that the understanding and interpretation of some verses can only be done using other verses. In order to accrue the rights of the family in a fair and just manner, the following method will be used:

- In the Glorious Quran, men and women are mentioned as being equal in creation. It is stated in the first verse of chapter 4: "O mankind! Be wary of your Lord who created you from a single soul, and created its mate from it, and from the two of them scattered numerous men and women."
- The opportunities to reach the levels of human growth and perfection are the same for men and women. In this regard, verse 13 of Chapter 49 reads: "O mankind! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female and made you nations and tribes so that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most God-wary among you."
- Men and women are also equal in receiving rewards. In this regard, verse 35 of chapter 33 is noteworthy. In order to justly realize these three issues that the Glorious Quran has mentioned many times, it is necessary to provide the conditions of progress and perfection for both men and women in a wholistic manner.

In most cases, the Glorious Quran invites people to consider, think and reflect on issues related to mankind and nature. It also encourages them to listen to and understand the divine verses, and to take lessons from them. Moreover, the Glorious Quran always equates and mentions faith together with good deeds. So, is it then possible to ignore the two elements of time and place in good deeds? Before the dawn of Islam, women did not have the smallest of rights; young girls were buried alive, and men had the

right to marry as many women as they wished. Hence, the teachings that Islam brought at that time to establish women's rights were a completely new and advanced phenomenon for them. Islam, as a religion, came to uplift and improve the state of human beings, and the best way for it to achieve this goal was to make gradual and small changes, for making drastic and large-scale changes to traditions and social habits would neither have been right nor beneficial. But today, according to the same Quranic principles that were mentioned previously, i.e., emphasizing the equality of the existential value of men and women and calling people to think and reflect on the clear verses of God and to take lessons and wisdom from them, it can be said that the rights of men and women are equal within the family, and the criteria for the management of both men and women in family affairs is piety and worthiness, not gender.

Here, another point should be taken into consideration, which is that if a man and a woman cannot reach the expected understanding and unity, and if the disagreements that are caused by their relationship and behavior towards each other create a rift between them, then, in this instance, Islam has suggested divorce as a solution, despite it being an act that is disliked and discouraged.

The Ideal Family according to the Glorious Quran

The basis by which a family is formed is itself indicative of the spiritual value and sanctity it holds. The Glorious Quran considers the family a sacred institution that is structured around several spiritual poles, such as peace and tranquility, love and companionship, kindness and compassion and cooperation built on affection.

Love, the Foundation of the Family

If we had to look and think carefully, it would become clear to us that love is not only a pillar of the family, but it also plays an unparalleled role in the continuation, endurance and balance of the other foundations within the family. Further, the impact is so great that it can be said that love is the soul of the family or that the family is truly the abode and nest of love. To prove this, scholars refer to the following verses, "He created for you mates from your own selves that you may take comfort in them, and He

ordained affection and mercy between you.” (30:21) and, “It is He who created you from a single soul, and made from it its mate, that he might find comfort with her.” (7:189)

Accordingly, they believe that the basis of social relations within the family, which is this very friendship, mutual understanding and cooperation, is connected and bound together through love. From this point of view, the reference to “a single soul” in the second noble verse is indicative of the fact that the institution of family is the platform for the growth of the soul and spirit, and the place where felicity and salvation of both men and women to its highest degree, i.e., human perfection, can be sought. This shows that neither a man is perfect alone nor a woman, and that perfection can only be achieved through uniting, living and being together under one roof, abiding by specific rules and regulations, i.e., in an institution called family; an institution whose very beginning is a journey towards perfection.

It is only when humanness is established on the grounds of spirituality that people can live together as God ordained. The purpose of life and the ultimate salvation or damnation of every human being is in the existence of “other humans”. It is human interactions and coexistence that give meaning to all prominent and significant issues of life. Goodness and badness, happiness and unhappiness, peace and bitterness, etc., only find meaning in the interactions and relationships of human beings with others; as human beings are social beings and have no other choice but to live within a society.

The first society that a person grows up in is the family. It is in this small society where they learn, as per the requirements of their natural disposition, how to live, interact and cooperate with others within a wider human society. So, if we were to liken the source of the emergence of human society to that of a physical body, we can consider the family as being its first generating cell.

According to this existential philosophy, scholars say that the family is a school capable of achieving both human growth and socialization. It is also a shelter and safe haven for people to endure the difficulties of living in a human society. Further, it is also a place where the necessary tools for socializing and communicating with other people are

taught and obtained from the other family members.

As the union is then built on ethics and observance of rights, the sense of duty becomes more important than sexual desire. It is with this intention that men and women can mix love with morality in order to provide a favorable environment for the spiritual, moral and physical growth and upliftment of their offspring.

The nature of the family is such that feelings and emotions take precedence within it. One expert says: “The nature of the family is not very compatible with laws and arbitrary orders,” and the law has little effect in creating order within the family. However, the doors of the family are always open to religious and moral values, rather its endurance and subsistence are dependent on it.

The great Islamic philosopher, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), in a treatise titled “*Tadbir al-Manzil or al-Siyasat al-Ahliyyah*” (which was also once published as “*Fi al-Siyasat al-Manziliyya*”) explained the position, importance and pillars of the family. Within it, he also clearly explained how interactions must be between husband and wife, and between parents and their children, for an ideal family to form in which the upbringing of righteous children can take place. This in turn will result in the formation of a righteous society, as the foundation of such a society are righteous individuals.

In explaining the goals of an ideal family, whose formation is structured around noble moral traits and religion-centered love, Ibn Sina has emphasized three motives, i.e., economic, social and emotional. In explaining the first motivation, it is narrated that he has said, “In order to protect himself and his possessions for a time when they are needed, man requires a dwelling. It is this wife of his that can partner him and be a suitable companion in this endeavor.” According to him, only a woman is worthy of partnering with a man, protecting his wealth, being his representative in the home and his trustee in raising his children.

Ibn Sina in his book, *Ilāhiyyāt al-Shifā*, describes marriage as “the firmest pillar of a society.” In explaining the social motive for the formation of a family, he said, “A child is needed in order to help their parents when they become old and frail, to continue their lineage and to keep their memory alive after their death.”

According to Ibn Sina, inner peace and tranquility are provided in the shadow of marriage and choice of spouse. This statement clearly shows the impact of the Glorious Qur'an on the thought of Ibn Sina.¹

So, considering the important position of the family in Islam, we have dedicated this issue of the al-Mustafa journal to this topic.

1. Adapted from the article "Khānuvadeh az Manẓar-e-Quran" written by Ezra Ṭabāṭabā'ī Hakim