

Islam is a blessing and mercy

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Islam is a religion of mercy, peace and blessing. The teachings of Islam emphasize kind heartedness, sympathy, forgiveness, sacrifice, love and care. The Qur'an, the Shari'ah, and the life of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (SAW) mirror these ideas, and each of these wisdoms should be reflected in our lives. Allah (SWT) blesses Muslims who are kind to others, and dislikes those who are hard-hearted, curt, and hypocritical.

Allah (SWT) most emphasizes his attributes of mercy, compassion and forgiveness. Anyone who truly believes in Him must also display these attributes, and especially that of mercy. The Holy Qur'an accentuates this attribute at numerous occasions. Ayah 22 in Surah Al-Hashr says: "He is the Lord of mercy, the Giver of mercy." Allah (SWT) admired this attribute of mercy in the Prophet (SAW) as He points out in Ayah 107 of Surah Ambia: "It was only a mercy that We sent you (Rasul-Allah) to all people." The Qur'an has been described as divine mercy in Ayah 57 of Surah Yunus: "People, a teaching from your Lord has come to you, a healing for what is in [your] heart, and guidance and mercy for the believers." The Qur'an also mentions Paradise as a form of divine mercy in Ayah 107 of Surah 'Al-e-Imran: "...but those with brightened faces will be in Allah's mercy (paradise), there to remain." In Ayah 29 of Surah Fat'ha, Allah (SWT) described Muslims thus: "Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; those who follow him are harsh towards the disbelievers and compassionate [merciful] towards each other." Every Muslim has been commanded to glorify Allah (SWT)'s attributes of mercy and compassion, before starting any work, by reciting Bismillah Ar-Rahman Ar-Rahim. Recitation of this attribute of Allah (SWT) is not only an indication but an assurance that a Muslim's heart is a reservoir for mercy, kindness and compassion for all creation.

Recall that historic moment, when the Prophet (SAW) entered Makkah as a conqueror. Standing before him were surrendered enemies, former oppressors, and the people who had deprived Muslims of their property, humiliated and intimidated him, attempted his murder, and tortured and killed his companions. But he displayed his usual magnanimity, generosity, and kind heartedness by forgiving all of them and declaring general amnesty.

The Prophet (SAW) has said: "Whoever is unkind to others, Allah (SWT) is not kind towards him" (Bukhari). In another tradition, the Prophet (SAW) has said: "Unfortunate is the person who is devoid of feelings of mercy and kindness." And, in yet another narration, the Prophet (SAW) has said: "Without doubt, one, who is hard-hearted, is far away from Allah's mercy" (Abu Dawood).

The infant son of Zainab, the Prophet's (SAW) daughter, was seriously sick, and breathed his last in the Prophet's (SAW) arms. Tears came to his eyes, and Sa'ad bin Ibadah, surprised, asked him: "Ya Rasul-Allah, you too?" The Prophet (SAW) replied: "Ya Sa'ad, these tears are divine mercy; whomever Allah likes, this mercy is given to his heart. And Allah (SWT) bestows mercy upon him, who is merciful to others" (Bukhari & Muslim).

Hazrat Sa'ad perhaps thought that the certainty of death and the accompanying passage to eternal life in the Hereafter should not have saddened the Prophet (SAW). He was, after all, a human being, had a family bond with the infant, and, above all, he was the very embodiment of love and compassion. He felt pain for others and was always generous in consoling and comforting others. Mercy, compassion and kindness should be directed towards all, especially the weak, the helpless, women, orphans, widows, children, the handicapped and the physically or mentally challenged. Allah (SWT) says in Ayah 9-10 of Surah Ad'duha: "So do not be harsh with the orphan and do not chide the one who asks for help."

Once the Prophet (SAW) joined his two fingers together and said: "The one who looks after an orphan, he and I will be like this in the Hereafter (Bukhari)." At another time he said: "The one who tries to help the widow and the poor is like a person making Jihad in the path of Allah" (Bukhari & Muslim). The Prophet (SAW) also advised to pay the laborer's wages "before his sweat dries."

The Qur'an clearly commands Muslims to treat their parents with kindness, particularly when they are old and weak in Ayah 23-24 of Bani Israel: "Your Lord has commanded that you should worship none but Him, and that be kind to your parents. If either or both of them reach old age with you, say no word that shows impatience with them, and do not be harsh with them, but speak to them respectfully, and lower your wing in humility towards them in kindness and say, 'Lord, have mercy on them, just as they cared for me when I was little.'"

Children also deserve love and kindness and they should be treated with utmost care and affection. Prophet (SAW) likened them to "flowers." He was so kind to them that he used to shorten his prayers if he heard a child crying. Once when he kissed his grandson Sayyidina Hasan (RA), Iqra bin Haabis Tamimi, who was present there, submitted: "Ya Rasul Allah, I have ten children, but I never kissed any one of them like you have kissed." The Prophet (SAW) replied: "One who is not kind to others doesn't deserve Allah's kindness." On another occasion Prophet (SAW) said: "One who doesn't love his younger and doesn't respect his elders, is not from us" (Tirmidhi). Upbringing well behaved children, teaching them proper manners and etiquettes, raising them as good Muslims, and making them good community members and citizens, are also important forms of love and affection.

Islam teaches us to treat even animals with love and kindness. Once the Prophet (SAW) narrated a story about a thirsty person, who, having quenched his thirst, saw a thirsty dog by the well. The man recalled his own condition, and taking pity on the dog, used his sock as a bucket to draw water for it. Allah (SWT) rewarded his act kindness by forgiving his sins (Muslim). In yet another story, a woman punished her cat that had licked her pot by tying it with a rope, and keeping it hungry and thirsty until it died. This warranted Allah's displeasure and the woman was sent to Hell (Bukhari).

These examples illustrate that Islam is a faith of love, kindness, compassion, and mercy for all humanity. Let us be kind, compassionate, useful, and helpful to others; let us be Allah's blessing to all humans. This is what Allah (SWT) commands us and this is what our beloved Prophet (SAW) has taught us. Let us tailor our life according to the dictates of our faith.