

ALI 467 - Readings #1

The Family: A Divinely Inspired Institution

The formation of a family, initially consisting of a man and a woman, is one of the fundamental elements in Allah's design for human life. The human race is a product of this institution. The Qur'an says: -

"O Mankind, be conscious of your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single soul and created its mate of the same kind. And from the two created and spread many men and women. And be mindful of your duty to Allah in whose name you appeal to one another and to (the ties of) the womb. Verily Allah watches over you." (4:1)

At another place the creation of man and woman and the marriage relationship based on tranquility, love and mercy have been described as 'signs of God.' (30:21) The institutions of marriage and the family have been commended as the way of the Prophets. And Prophet Muhammad (s) has said: 'Marriage is my Sunnah, Whoever turns away from my Sunnah is not from me.

Importance of a Family Code

A sensible and well-balanced family system is the very foundation of a happy life. Indeed, it is the root of an advancing civilization. Religion comes to take human beings nearer to Allah. Therefore, it must create an atmosphere conducive to that ideal; otherwise, it cannot achieve its goal. No religion can be regarded as complete unless it has a well-defined code of family life which expressly shows the exact responsibility and role of each member of the family.

The institution of the family plays a very important part in Muslim society. It is a basic unit of that society and is organized in such a way that it operates as a society in miniature. Much of Ahkam (legal injunctions) relate to the family and its proper regulation. The network of rights and obligations that provides the basis of family life aims at producing those attitudes and behaviour patterns that Islam wants to foster in the individual and in society. A new balance has been established in the roles and relationships that exist between men and women, between young and old, between near-relatives and distant kin, between freedom and discipline, between individual discretion and social control.

The Muslim family is an extended family, different relations occupying different

positions. It is not a nuclear, atomistic family consisting of the parents and children only. A careful look at the Islamic law of inheritance shows that all these relations are an integral part of the basic family structure and not just peripheral to it.

Objectives of the Institution of Family

1) Preservation of the human race

The survival of the human race and culture, and continuity in the functioning of man's vicegerency depend on a structure for procreation and reproduction. The human being is in need of a permanent and lasting institution in order to fulfil this role. The family is the institution which can take care of the entire process, from the initial phases to its fruition.

2) Protection of Morals

Sex-urge is a natural and creative urge. Although common to all living beings, in the case of men and women there are some unique aspects. In other animals it is primarily for procreation and is regulated through instinct and the processes of nature. For humans there is the urge not just for procreation but also for intimacy. Control and regulation are essential for a healthy existence, even at a biological level. They become more important at the social and cultural levels. Neither total abstinence nor unceasing promiscuity can lead to a stable and healthy existence. Islam forbids non-Marital sex in all its forms. But it enjoins marriage to enable men and women to fulfil their natural urges, to enjoy this aspect of life in such a way that pleasure and responsibility go hand in hand.

3) Psycho-Emotional Stability, Love and Kindness

Another objective of marriage is to attain psychological, emotional and spiritual companionship. The relationship in the family, between all its members, and most important of all, between the husband and wife, is not merely a utilitarian relationship. It is a spiritual relationship and sustains and generates love, kindness, mercy, compassion, mutual confidence, self-sacrifice, solace and succour. The best in the human nature expresses itself in the flowering of these relationships. It is only in the context of the family that what is spiritually potential in men and women becomes real and sets the pace for the blossoming of goodness and virtue within the family and outside it.

This function of marriage and family is emphasized in the Quran in a number of ways. It says:

‘And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves, spouses that you

may find rest and tranquility in them and He placed between you love and mercy.' (30:21)

At another place the relationship between the spouses has been described as that between 'the body and the garment'. 'They are like a garment to you and you are like a garment to them' (2:187)

4) Socialization and Value-Orientation

The function of childbearing remains incomplete without its more crucial part of child rearing and upbringing - their education, orientation, character-building and gradual initiation into religion and culture. It is because of this aspect that family care becomes a full-time job. No other institution or even a number of institutions can take care of this function.

The Quran says;

'Our Lord! Grant us the comfort of our eyes from our wives and our offspring and make us the leaders of the righteous.' (25:74)

'My Lord! Make me a performer of the prayer and make my offspring prayer performing. Our Lord, accept my prayer' (14:40)

5) Social and Economic Security

The institution of the family is an important part of the Islamic system of socioeconomic security. The rights do not relate merely to moral, cultural and ideological aspects. They include the economic and social rights of the family members. The Prophet has said that w God endows you with prosperity, spend first on yourself and your family. Maintenance of the family is a legal duty of the husband even if the wife is rich. Spending on the 'relations of the womb' has been specifically enjoined. Poor relatives have a prior claim upon one's charity and other social contributions. The law of inheritance also reveals the nature of economic obligations within the family structure. This responsibility extends to a number of relations.

Extracted from:

http://shibircloud.com/pdf/family_life_in_islam.pdf

<https://www.al-islam.org/islamic-family-life-sayyid-akhtar-rizvi/family>