20064 - Rights of Children in Islam

the question

What are the rights of the wife and children on the man?

Summary of answer

Some of the rights of children in Islam include: Choosing a righteous wife to be a righteous mother, giving the child a good name, shaving the child's head on the seventh day, giving 'aqiqah, etc.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Rights of wife

These rights have been discussed in detail in the answer to question no. 10680

Rights of children

Allah has given children rights over their parents just as the parents have rights over their children.

Ibn 'Umar said: "Allah has called them abrar (righteous) because they honoured (barru) their fathers and children. Just as your father has rights over you, so too your child has rights over you." (Al-Adab al-Mufrad, 94)

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, according to a hadith (prophetic narration) narrated by 'Abd-Allah ibn 'Umar, "… and your child has rights over you." (Muslim, 1159)

Rights of children before birth

The child's rights over their parents include some that come even before the child is born, for example:

· Choosing a righteous wife to be a righteous mother.

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "A woman may be married for four reasons: her wealth, her lineage, her beauty and her religious commitment. Marry the one who is religiously committed, may your hands be rubbed with dust (i.e., may you prosper)." (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 4802; Muslim, 1466)

Shaykh 'Abd al-Ghani al-Dahlawi said: "Choose from among women those who are religiously committed and righteous, and who are of good descent, for if a woman is of illegitimate descent, this bad characteristic may be passed to her children. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"The adulterer — fornicator marries not but an adulteress — fornicatress or a Mushrikah; and the adulteress –fornicatress, none marries her except an adulterer — fornicator or a Mushrik." [al-Nur 24:3]

Rather Islam recommends compatibility for the purpose of harmony and to avoid a person being shamed if he marries into a family that is not compatible." (Sharh Sunan Ibn Majah, 1/141)

Rights of children after birth

· It is Sunnah (recommended) to do tahnik for the child when he is born:

Anas ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The son of Abu Talhah was sick. Abu Talhah went out and the child died, and when Abu Talhah returned he said, "What happened to my son?" Umm Sulaym (his wife) said, 'He is quieter than he was." Then she brought him his dinner and he ate, then he had marital relations with her, and when he finished she said, "They buried the child." The following morning, Abu Talhah went to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and told him what had happened. He said, "Did you have marital relations last night?"

He said, “Yes.” He said, “O Allah, bless them.” She later gave birth to a boy. Abu Talhah said to me, “Keep him until I bring him to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).” He brought him to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and I sent some dates with him. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) took him and said, “Is there anything with him?” They said, “Yes, some dates.” The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) took some and chewed it, then he took some from his mouth and put it in the child’s mouth (tahnik), and named him ‘Abd-Allah.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 5153; Muslim, 2144)

Al-Nawawi said:

“The scholars are agreed that it is mustahabb (preferred) to do tahnik with dates for the child when he is born; if that is not possible then to use some similar kind of sweet. The dates should be chewed until they become soft enough to be swallowed, then the child’s mouth should be opened and a little of the dates put in his mouth.” (Sharh al-Nawawi ‘ala Muslim, 14/122-123)

· The child should be given a good name , such as ‘Abd-Allah or ‘Abd al-Rahman.

Nafi’ narrated that Ibn ‘Umar said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “The most beloved of your names to Allah are ‘Abd-Allah and ‘Abd al-Rahman.” (Narrated by Muslim, 2132)

It is mustahabb to give the child a Prophet’s name:

Anas ibn Malik said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “A child was born to me last night and I called him by the name of my father Ibrahim.” (Narrated by Muslim, 2315)

It is mustahabb to name the child on the seventh day, but there is nothing wrong with naming him on the day of his birth, because of the hadith quoted above.

Samurah ibn Jundub narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Every child is in pledge for (a sacrificial animal) which should be slaughtered for him on the seventh day, his head should be shaved and he should be named.” (Narrated by Abu Dawud,

2838; classed as sahih by Shaykh al-Albani in Sahih al-Jami', 4541)

Ibn al-Qayyim said:

"The purpose of naming is to define the thing named, because if there is something whose name is unknown it is difficult to refer to it. So it is permissible to name him (the child) on the day he is born, and it is permissible to delay the naming until the third day, or until the day of the 'aqiqah, or before or after that. The matter is broad in scope." (Tuhfat al-Mawlud, p. 111)

· It is Sunnah to shave the child's head on the seventh day and to give the weight of the hair in silver in charity.

'Ali ibn Abi Talib said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) slaughtered a sheep as the 'aqiqah for al-Hasan, and he said, "O Fatimah, shave his head and give the weight of his hair in silver in charity." So she weighed it and its weight was a dirham or part of a dirham. (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 1519; classed as hasan by Shaykh al-Albani in Sahih al-Tirmidhi, 1226.)

· It is mustahabb for the father to do the 'aqiqah , as stated in the hadith quoted above, "Every child is in pledge for his 'aqiqah."

Two sheep should be sacrificed for a boy and one for a girl.

'Aishah narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) commanded them (to sacrifice) two similar sheep for a boy and one for a girl. (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 1513; Sahih al-Tirmidhi, 1221; Abu Dawud, 2834; al-Nasai, 4212; Ibn Majah, 3163)

· Circumcision

Abu Hurayrah said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The fitrah (natural state) is five things, or five things are part of the fitrah: circumcision , shaving the pubic hairs, plucking the armpit hairs, clipping the nails and trimming the moustache." (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 5550; Muslim, 257)

· The child’s rights with regard to education and upbringing

‘Abd-Allah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Each of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock. The ruler who is in charge of people is a shepherd and is responsible for them. The man is the shepherd of his household and is responsible for them. The woman is the shepherd of her husband’s house and child and is responsible for them. The slave is the shepherd of his master’s wealth and is responsible for it. Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 2416; Muslim, 1829)

So parents must take care of teaching their children the duties of Islam and other virtues that are recommended in shari’ah, and worldly matters that they need in order to live a decent life in this world.

The man should start by teaching them the most important things, then the next most important. So he starts by teaching them correct ‘aqidah (creed), free from shirk (polytheism) and bid’ah (innovation). Then he teaches them the acts of worship, especially prayer. Then he teaches them and trains them in good manners and characteristics, and everything that is good.

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And (remember) when Luqman said to his son when he was advising him: “O my son! Join not in worship others with Allah. Verily, joining others in worship with Allah is a great Zulm (wrong) indeed.” [Luqman 31:13]

‘Abd al-Malik ibn al-Rabi’ ibn Sabrah narrated from his father that his grandfather said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Teach the child to pray when he is seven years old, and smack him (lightly) if he does not pray when he is ten.” (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 407; Abu Dawud, 494. Classed as sahih by Shaykh al-Albani in Sahih al-Jami’, 4025)

Al-Rubayyi’ bint Mu’awwidh said: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) sent word on the morning of Ashura to the areas where the Ansar lived (on the outskirts of Madinah),

saying: Whoever did not fast this morning, let him not eat for the rest of the day, and whoever started fasting this morning, let him complete his fast. She said: We used to observe this fast after that, and we used to make our children fast and make them toys of wool; if one of them cried for food we would give him that toy until it was time to break the fast. (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 1859; Muslim, 1136)

Al-Saib ibn Yazid said: “I was taken for Hajj with the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when I was seven years old.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 1759)

· Training in good manners and characteristics

Every father and mother should train their children in praiseworthy characteristics and good manners, whether towards Allah, His Prophet the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), towards the Quran and their ummah (global community of believers), and with everyone whom they know and who has rights over them. They should not behave badly with those whom they mix with, their neighbours or their friends.

Al-Nawawi said:

“The father must discipline his child and teach him what he needs to know about religious duties. This teaching is obligatory upon the father and all those in charge of children before the child reaches the age of adolescence. This was stated by al-Shafi’i and his companions. Al-Shafi’i and his companions said: This teaching is also obligatory upon the mother, if there is no father, because it is part of the child’s upbringing and they have a share of that and the wages for this teaching may be taken from the child’s own wealth. If the child has no wealth then the one who is obliged to spend on him may spend on his education, because it is one of the things that he needs. And Allah knows best.” (Sharh al-Nawawi ‘ala Sahih Muslim, 8/44)

The father should bring them up with good manners in all things, eating, drinking, dressing, sleeping, going out of the house, entering the house, riding in vehicles, etc, and in all their affairs. He should instill in them the attributes of a good man, such as love of sacrifice, putting others first, helping others, chivalry and generosity. He should keep them away from evil characteristics such

as cowardice, stinginess, lack of chivalry, lack of ambition, etc.

Al-Manawi said:

“Just as your parents have rights over you, so too your child has rights over you, rather many rights, such as teaching them the individual obligations, teaching them Islamic manners, giving them gifts equally, whether that is a gift, a waqf (endowment), or other gift. If preference is shown with no reason, that is regarded as invalid by some of the scholars and as makruh (disliked) by others.” (Fayd al-Qadir, 2/574)

He must also protect his sons and daughters from everything that may bring them close to the Fire. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“O you who believe! Ward off yourselves and your families against a Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who disobey not, (from executing) the Commands they receive from Allah, but do that which they are commanded.” [al-Tahrim 66:6]

al-Qurtubi said:

“Al-Hasan commented on this verse by saying: Command them and forbid them. One of the scholars said: (The phrase) Ward off (or protect) yourselves includes children, because the child is part of him, as it says in the verse (interpretation of the meaning): “…nor on yourselves, if you eat from your houses…” [al-Nur 24:61], where the various relatives are not mentioned individually. So he should teach him what is halal (lawful) and what is haram (unlawful), and make him avoid sin, and teach him other rulings.” (Tafsir al-Qurtubi, 18/194-195)

· Spending

Spending is one of the father’s obligations towards his children; it is not permissible for him to fall short in that or to neglect this matter, rather he is obliged to do this duty in the fullest sense.

‘Abd-Allah ibn ‘Amr (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and

blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “It is sufficient sin for a man if he neglects those on whom he is obliged to spend.” (Narrated by Abu Dawud, 1692; classed as hasan by Shaykh al-Albani in Sahih al-Jami’, 4481)

· Another of the greatest rights is to give the child a good upbringing and take good care of him or her – especially in the case of girls. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) encouraged this righteous deed.

‘Aishah, the wife of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), said: A woman came to me with two daughters and asked me for food, and I could not find anything except one date which I gave to her. She shared it between her two daughters, then she got up and went out. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came in and I told him what had happened. He said: “Whoever is in charge of any of these girls and treats them well, they will be a shield for him against the Fire.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 5649; Muslim, 2629)

· Another important matter which is one of the rights of children to which attention must be paid, is treating children fairly. This right was referred to by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in the sahih hadith (authentic narration): “Fear Allah and treat your children fairly.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 2447; Muslim, 1623). It is not permissible to show preference to females over males, just as it is not permissible to show preference to males over females. If the father makes this mistake and shows preference to some of his children over others, and does not treat them fairly, this will lead to many evils, such as:

The harm that befalls the father himself, for the children whom he denies or deprives will grow up to hate him. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) referred to this in the hadith narrated by Muslim (1623) when he said to the father of al-Nu’man, “Would you like them to honour you equally?” He said, “Yes.” In other words, if you want them all to honour you equally, then be fair in giving gifts to them.

Another evil consequence is the children hating one another, and stoking the flames of hatred and enmity between them.

And Allah knows best.