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Dr. Muhammad Ali Al-Ha

The IDEAL MUSLIMAH
The True Islamic Personality of the Muslim Woman
as Defined in the Qur'an and Sunnah

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Preface to first edition

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Introduction

Undoubtedly children are a source of great joy and delight; they make life sweet, bring more rizq into a family's life and give hope. A father sees his children as a future source of help and support, as well as representing an increase in numbers and perpetuation of the family. A mother sees her children as a source of hope, consolation and joy in life, and as hope for the future. All of these hopes rest on the good upbringing of the children and giving them a sound preparation for life, so that they will become active and constructive elements in society, a source of goodness for their parents, community and society as a whole. Then they will be as (SWT) described them:  

Wealth and sons are allurements of the life of this world . . . (Qur'an 18:46)

If their education and upbringing are neglected, they will become bad characters, a burden on their family, community and society as a whole.

She understands the great responsibility that she has towards her children

The Muslim woman never forgets that the mother's responsibility in bringing up the children and forming their characters is greater than that of the father, because children tend to be closer to their mother and spend more time with her; she knows all about their behavioural, emotional and intellectual development during their childhood and the difficult years of adolescence.

Hence the woman who understands the teachings of Islam and her own educational role in life, knows her complete responsibility for the upbringing of her children, as is referred to in the Qur'an:  

O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones . . . (Qur'an 66:6)
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The Prophet (PBUH) also referred to this responsibility in his hadith: "Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock. The leader is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock; a man is the shepherd of his family and is responsible for his flock; a woman is the shepherd in the house of her husband and is responsible for her flock; a servant is the shepherd of his master's wealth and is responsible for it. Each of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock."1 Islam places responsibility on the shoulders of every individual; not one person is left out. Parents - especially mothers - are made responsible for providing their children with a solid upbringing and sound Islamic education, based on the noble characteristics that the Prophet (PBUH) declared that he had been sent to complete and spread among people: "I have only been sent to make righteous behaviour complete."2 Nothing is more indicative of the greatness of the parents' responsibility towards their children and their duty to give them a suitable Islamic upbringing than the verdict of the 'ulama' that every family should heed the words of the Prophet (PBUH): "Instruct your children to pray when they are seven and hit them if they do not do so when they are ten."3 Any parents who are aware of this hadith but do not teach their children to pray when they reach seven or hit them if they do not do so when they reach ten, are parents who are sinners and failing in their duty; they will be responsible before Allah (SWT) for their failure. The family home is a microcosm of society in which the children's mentality, intellect, attitudes and inclinations are formed when they are still very small and are ready to receive sound words of guidance. Hence the parents' important role in forming the minds of their sons and daughters and directing them towards truth and good deeds is quite clear. Muslim women have always understood their responsibility in raising their children, and they have a brilliant record in producing and influencing great men, and instilling noble values in their hearts. There is no greater proof of that than the fact that intelligent and brilliant women have produced more noble sons than have intelligent and brilliant men, so much so that you can hardly find any among the great men of our ummah who have controlled the course of events in history who is not indebted to his mother.
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Al-Zubayr ibn al-`Awwam was indebted for his greatness to his mother Safiyyah bint `Abd al-Muttalib, who instilled in him his good qualities and distinguished nature.

`Abdullah, al-Mundhir and `Urwah, the sons of al-Zubayr were the products of the values instilled in them by their mother, Asma' bint Abi Bakr, and each of them made his mark in history and attained a high status.

`Ali ibn Abi Talib (RAA) received wisdom, virtue and good character from his distinguished mother, Fatimah bint Asad.

`Abdullah ibn Ja`far, the master of Arab generosity and the most noble of their leaders, lost his father at an early age, but his mother Asma' bint `Umays took care of him and give him the virtues and noble characteristics by virtue of which she herself became one of the great women of Islam.

Mu`awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan inherited his strength of character and intelligence from his mother, Hind bint `Utbah, not from his father Abu Sufyan. When he was a baby, she noticed that he had intelligent and clever features. Someone said to her, "If he lives, he will become the leader of his people." She responded, "May he not live if he is to become the leader of his people alone!"

Mu`awiyah was unable to instil his cleverness, patience and skills in his own son and and heir, Yazid, because the boy's mother was a simple Bedouin woman, whom he had married for her beauty and because of the status of her tribe and family.

Mu`awiyah's brother Ziyad ibn Abi Sufyan, who was a prime example of intelligence, shrewdness and quick-wittedness, was similarly unable to pass these qualities on to his son `Ubayd-Allah (SWT), who grew up to be stupid, clumsy, impotent and ignorant. His mother was Marjanah, a Persian woman who possessed none of the qualities that might entitle her to be the mother of a great man.
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History records the names of two great men of Banu Umayyah, the first of whom was known for his strength of character, capability, intelligence, wisdom and decisiveness, and the second of whom took the path of justice, goodness, piety and righteousness.

The first was `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, whose mother was `A'ishah bint al-Mughirah ibn Abi’l-`As ibn Umayyah, who was well-known for her strength of character, resolution and intelligence. The second was `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz (RAA), the fifth of the *khulafa’ al-rashidun*, whose mother was Umm `Asim bint `Asim ibn `Umar ibn al-Khattab, who was the most noble in character of the women of her time. Her mother was the righteous worshipper of Allah (SWT) whom `Asim saw was honest and truthful, and clearly following the right path, when she refused to add water to the milk as her mother told her to, because she knew that Allah (SWT) could see her.

If we turn towards Andalusia, we find the brilliant, ambitious ruler `Abd al-Rahman al-Nasir who, having started life as an orphan, went on to establish an Islamic state in the West, to which the leaders and kings of Europe surrendered and to whose institutes of learning the scholars and philosophers of all nations came to seek knowledge. This state made a great contribution to worldwide Islamic culture. If we were to examine the secret of this man's greatness, we would find that it lay in the greatness of his mother who knew how to instil in him the dynamic spirit of ambition.

During the `Abbasid period there were two great women who planted the seeds of ambition, distinction and ascendancy in their sons. The first was the mother of Ja`far ibn Yahya, who was the *wazir* of the *khalifah* Harun al-Rashid. The second was the mother of Imam al-Shafi`i: he never saw his father who died whilst he was still a babe in arms; it was his mother who took care of his education.

There are many such examples of brilliant women in our history, women who instilled in their sons nobility of character and the seeds of greatness, and who stood behind them in everything they achieved of power and status.

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She uses the best methods in bringing them up

The intelligent Muslim woman understands the psychology of her children, and is aware of their differences in attitudes and inclination. She tries to penetrate their innocent world and plant the seeds of noble values and worthy characteristics, using the best and most effective methods of parenting.

The mother is naturally close to her children, and she endears herself to them so that they will be open with her and will share their thoughts and feelings with her. She hastens to correct them and refine their thoughts and feelings, taking into account each child's age and mental level. She plays and jokes with them sometimes, complimenting them and letting them hear words of love, affection, compassion and self-denial. Thus their love for her increases, and they will accept her words of guidance and correction eagerly. They will obey her out of love for her, for there is a great difference between sincere obedience that comes from the heart, which is based on love, respect and trust, and insincere obedience that is based on oppression, violence and force. The former is lasting obedience, strong and fruitful, whilst the latter is shallow and baseless, and will quickly vanish when the violence and cruelty reach extreme levels.

She demonstrates her love and affection for them

The Muslim woman is not ignorant of the fact that her children need her warm lap, deep love and sincere affection in order to develop soundly, with no psychological problems, crises or complexes. This sound upbringing will fill them with optimism, trust, hope and ambition. Thus the caring Muslim mother demonstrates her love and affection for her children on every occasion, flooding their lives with joy and happiness and filling their hearts with confidence and security.

The true Muslim woman is compassionate towards her children, for compassion is a basic Islamic characteristic, one that was encouraged by the Prophet (PBUH) in word and deed as Anas (RAA) tells us: "I never saw anyone who was more compassionate towards children than the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). His son Ibrahim was in the
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care of a wet-nurse in the hills around Madinah. He would go there, and we would go with him, and he would enter the house, pick up his son and kiss him, then come back."⁴

The Prophet's compassion and love towards Muslim children included little ones at play. He would flood them with his compassion and affection. Anas (RAA) reported that whenever the Prophet (PBUH) passed by a group of boys he would smile fondly and greet them.⁵

An example of the Prophet's enduring wisdom with regard to the upbringing of children is the hadith: "He is not one of us who does not show compassion to our little ones and recognize the rights of our elders."⁶

Abu Hurayrah (RAA) narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) kissed al-Hasan ibn `Ali. Al-Aqra` ibn Habis said, "I have ten children and I have never kissed any of them." The Prophet (PBUH) said: "He who does not show mercy will not be shown mercy."⁷

The Prophet (PBUH), this great educator, always sought to instil the quality of mercy and compassion in people's hearts, and to awaken their potential for love and affection, which are the most basic of human characteristics. One day a Bedouin came and asked the Prophet (PBUH), "Do you kiss your sons? We do not." The Prophet (PBUH) said, "What can I do for you if Allah (SWT) has removed mercy from your heart?"⁸

`A'ishah (May Allah be pleased with her) reported: "Whenever Fatimah came into the room, the Prophet (PBUH) would stand up, welcome her, kiss her and offer her his seat, and whenever he came into the room, she would stand up, take his hand, welcome him, kiss him and offer him her seat. When she came to see him during his final illness, he welcomed her and kissed her."⁹

The Prophet (PBUH) praised the women of Quraysh, because they were the most compassionate of women towards their children, the most concerned with raising them properly and making sacrifices for them, in addition to taking good care of their husbands. This may be seen in the words narrated by Bukhari from Abu Hurayrah (RAA), who said: "I heard the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) say: 'The women of Quraysh are the best women ever to ride camels. They are compassionate towards their children and the most careful with regard to their husbands' wealth."¹⁰
In the light of this guidance, the true Muslim woman cannot be stern towards her children and treat them in a rough or mean fashion, even if it is her nature to be grim and reserved, because this religion, with its enlightenment and guidance, softens hearts and awakens feelings of love and affection. So our children are a part of us, going forth into the world, as the poet Hittan ibn al-Mu`alla said:

"Our children are our hearts, walking among us on the face of the earth, if even a little breeze touches them, we cannot sleep for worrying about them."  

Parents should be filled with love, affection and care, willing to make sacrifices and do their best for their children. 

Undoubtedly the wealth of emotion that the Muslim mother feels for her children is one of the greatest causes of her happiness in life. This is something which has been lost by Western women, who are overwhelmed by materialism and exhausted by the daily grind of work, which has caused them to lose the warmth of family feelings. This was vividly expressed by Mrs. Salma al-Haffar, a member of the Syrian women's movement, after she had visited America:

"It is truly a shame that women lose the most precious thing that nature has given them, i.e. their femininity, and then their happiness, because the constant cycle of exhausting work has caused them to lose the small paradise which is the natural refuge of women and men alike, one that can only flourish under the care of a mother who stays at home. The happiness of individuals and society as a whole is to be found at home, in the lap of the family; the family is the source of inspiration, goodness and creativity."

She treats her sons and daughters equally

The wise Muslim woman treats all her children fairly and equally. She does not prefer one of them over another in any way, because she knows that Islam forbids such actions on the part of the parents, and because of the
negative psychological impact that this may have over the child whose sibling is preferred over him. The child who feels that he is not treated equally with his brothers and sisters will grow up with complexes and anxiety, eating his heart out with jealousy and hatred. In contrast, the child who grows up feeling that he and his siblings are treated equally will grow up healthy and free from jealousy and hatred; he will be content, cheerful, tolerant and willing to put others before himself. This is what Islam requires of parents and urges them to do.

Bukhari, Muslim and others report that the father of al-Nu`man ibn Bashir (RAA) brought him to the Prophet (PBUH) and said, "I have given this son of mine a slave I have." The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Have you given each of your children the same?" He said, "No." The Prophet (PBUH) told him, "Then take the slave back." According to another report: "The Prophet (PBUH) asked, `Have you done the same for all your children?' [My father] said, `No,' so the Prophet (PBUH) said, `Fear Allah (SWT) and treat all of your children equally.'"

According to a third report: "The Prophet (PBUH) asked, `O Bishr, do you have any other children?' He said, `Yes.' The Prophet (PBUH) asked, `Will you give a similar gift to each of them?' He said, `No.' So the Prophet (PBUH) said, `Do not ask me to witness this, because I do not want to witness unfairness.' Then he added, `Would you not like all your children to treat you with equal respect?' [Bishr] said, `Of course.' The Prophet (PBUH) told him, `So do not do it.'"14

So the Muslim woman who truly fears Allah (SWT) treats all her children with equal fairness, and does not favour one above the other in giving gifts, spending money on them, or in the way she treats them. Then all of them will love her, will pray for her and will treat her with kindness and respect.

**She does not discriminate between sons and daughters her affection and care**

The true Muslim woman does not discriminate between her sons and daughters in her affection and care, as do some women who are not free from the effects of a jahili mentality. She is fair to all her children, boys and girls alike, and cares for them all with compassion and love. She understands that children are a gift from Allah (SWT), and that Allah’s (SWT) gift, be it of sons or daughters, cannot be rejected or changed: He bestows [children] male
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or female according to His Will [and Plan], or He bestows both males and females, and He leaves barren Whom He will: for He is full of knowledge and power; (Qur'an 42:49-50)

The Muslim woman who is truly guided by her religion does not forget the great reward that Allah (SWT) has prepared for the one who brings up daughters and takes care of them properly, as is stated in numerous sahih hadith, for example the hadith narrated by Bukhari from ‘A’ishah (May Allah be pleased with her) in which she says: "A woman came to me with her two daughters and asked me (for charity). She found that I had nothing except for a single date, which I gave to her. She took it and divided it between her two daughters, and did not eat any of it herself, then she got up and left with her daughters. The Prophet (PBUH) came in and I told him what had happened.

The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Whoever is tested with daughters and treats them well, they will be for him a shield against the Fire of Hell."15

According to another report narrated by Muslim from ‘A’ishah (May Allah be pleased with her), she said: "A poor woman came to me carrying her two daughters. I gave her three dates to eat. She gave each child a date, and raised the third to her own mouth to eat it. Her daughters asked her to give it to them, so she split the date that she had wanted to eat between them. I was impressed by what she had done, and told the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) about it. He said, "Allah (SWT) has decreed Paradise for her because of it," or, "He has saved her from Hell because of it."16

Abu Hurayrah (RAA) reported that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Whoever has three daughters, and shelters them, bearing their joys and sorrows with patience, Allah (SWT) will admit him to Paradise by virtue of his compassion towards them." A man asked, "What if he has only two, O Messenger of Allah?" He said, "Even if they are only two." Another man asked, "What if he has only one, O Messenger of Allah?" He said, "Even if he has only one."17

Ibn `Abbas (RAA) said: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: `Whoever had a daughter born to him, and he did not bury her alive or humiliate her, and he did not prefer his son over her, Allah (SWT) will admit him to Paradise because of her."18
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The Prophet's compassion extended to females, and included sisters as well as daughters, as is seen in the hadith narrated by Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad* from Abu Sa`id al-Khudri, who said:

"The Prophet (PBUH) said: `There is no-one who has three daughters, or three sisters, and he treats them well, but Allah (SWT) will admit him to Paradise." 19

According to a report given by al-Tabarani, the Prophet (PBUH) said: "There is no one among my ummah who has three daughters, or three sisters, and he supports them until they are grown up, but he will be with me in Paradise like this -" and he held up his index and middle fingers together. 20

No wise mother complains about bringing up daughters, or prefers her sons over them, if she listens to the teachings of the Prophet (PBUH) which raise the status of daughters and promise Paradise as wide as heaven and earth and the company of the Prophet (PBUH) to the one who brings them up and treats them properly!

In the Muslim family, and in the true Islamic society, girls are protected, loved and respected. In the warm bosom of her parents -especially her mother - a girl will always find protection and care, no matter how long she stays in the home of her parents, brothers or other family members who should support her, whether she is married or not. Islam has guaranteed girls a life of protection, pride and support, and has spared them from a life of humiliation, need, want and having to earn a living, such as is the lot of women living in societies that have gone astray from the guidance of Allah (SWT). In those countries, a girl barely reaches the age of eighteen before she leaves the comfort of her parents' home to face the hardships of a life filled with difficulties and risks at the time when she is most in need of protection, compassion and care.

There is a huge difference between the laws of Allah (SWT), which came to bring happiness to mankind, and the imperfect man-made laws which cause nothing but misery.
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It comes as no surprise that in the West, as a result of these materialistic laws, we see armies of promiscuous young men and hordes of unfortunate, miserable, unmarried young mothers, the numbers of which are increasing exponentially day by day.

She does not pray against her children

The wise Muslim woman does not pray against her own children, heeding the words of the Prophet (PBUH) who forbade such prayers lest they be offered at a time when prayers are answered. This was stated in the lengthy hadith narrated by Jabir in which the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Do not pray against yourselves, or against your children, or against your wealth, in case you say such words at a time when Allah (SWT) will answer your prayer."  

Praying against one's own children is not a good habit. No mother does so at a time of anger, but she will regret it later on after she has calmed down. I do not think that a mother who has truly sought the guidance of Islam would lose her mind and her equilibrium to such an extent that she would pray against her own children, no matter what they did. Such a woman would not allow herself to indulge in something that is done only by foolish, hot-tempered women.

She is alert to everything that may have an influence on them

The smart Muslim mother keeps her eyes open as far as her children are concerned. She knows what they are reading and writing, the hobbies and activities they persue, the friends they have chosen, and the places they go to in their free time. She knows all of this without her children feeling that she is watching them. If she finds anything objectionable in their hobbies, reading-materials, etc., or if she sees them hanging around with undesirable friends, or going to unsuitable places, or taking up bad habits such as smoking, or wasting time and energy on haram games that teach them to get used to trivialities, she hastens to correct her children in a gentle and wise manner, and persuades them to return to the straight and narrow. The mother is more able to do this.
than the father, because she spends much more time with the children, and they are more likely to open up and share their thoughts and feelings with her than with their father. Hence it is quite clear that the mother has a great responsibility to bring up her children properly and form their characters in a sound fashion, in accordance with Islamic principles, values and traditions.

Every child is born in a state of fitrah (the natural, good, disposition of mankind), and it is the parents who make him into a Jew, a Christian or a Magian, as the Prophet (PBUH) said in the sahih hadith narrated by Bukhari.

There is no secret about the enormous impact the parents have on the personality and psychological development of their child from the earliest years until the child attains the age of reason.

The books that children read should open their minds and form their personalities well, giving them the highest examples to follow; they should not corrupt their minds and extinguish the light of goodness in their souls.

Hobbies should help to develop the positive aspects of a child's nature and reinforce good tastes, not encourage any negative tendencies.

Friends should be of the type that will lead one to Paradise, not to Hell; they should influence a child in a positive way and encourage him to do good, to strive to improve himself and to succeed, not drag him down into sin, disobedience and failure. How many people have been brought to the slippery slope of destruction and perdition by their friends, whilst their mothers and fathers were unaware of what was to their own children! How wise are the words of the poet 'Adiyy ibn Zayd al-'Ibadi concerning friends: "If you are among people, then make friends with the best of them. Do not make friends with the worst of them lest you become as bad as he is. Do not ask about the man, but ask about his friends, for every person is influenced by his friends."22

The true Muslim mother takes notice of her children's books, magazines, hobbies, school, teachers, clubs, media interests, and everything that may have an impact on their personalities, minds, souls and faith. She intervenes
when necessary, either to encourage or to put a stop to something, so that the children's upbringing will not be affected by corruption or sickness.

Successful upbringing of children depends on a mother who is alert and intelligent, and understands her responsibility towards her children, so that she does a good job and raises children who will be a boon to their parents and society in general. Families that fail to raise their children properly usually do so because the mother does not understand her responsibility towards her children, so she neglects them and they become a source of evil and a torment to their parents and others.

Children would not become a source of evil if their parents, especially the mother, knew their responsibility and took it seriously.

**She instils good behaviour and attitudes in them**

The Muslim woman tries hard to instil in her children's hearts the best qualities, such as loving others, upholding the ties of kinship, caring for the weak, respecting elders, showing compassion to little ones, deriving satisfaction from doing good, being sincere in word and deed, keeping promises, judging fairly, and all other good and praiseworthy characteristics.

The wise Muslim woman knows how to reach her children's hearts and instil these worthy qualities, using the best and most effective methods, such as setting a good example, coming down to their level, treating them well, encouraging them, advising and correcting them, and being compassionate, kind, tolerant, loving, and fair. She is gentle without being too lenient, and is strict without being harsh. Thus the children receive a proper upbringing, and grow up open-minded, mature, righteous, sincere, good, able to give and prepared to make a constructive contribution in all aspects of life. Not surprisingly, the Muslim mother's upbringing produces the best results, for she is the first school and the first teacher, as the poet said:
"The mother is a school: if you prepare her properly, you will prepare an entire people of good character. The mother is the first teacher, foremost among them, and the best of teachers."\textsuperscript{23}
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Footnotes:

1. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 10/61, Kitab al-imarah wa'l-qada', bab al-ra'i mas'ul 'an ri'atihi.
4. Sahih Muslim, 15/75, Kitab al-fada'il, bab rahmatihi (r) wa tawadu'ihi.
5. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 12/264, Kitab al-isti'dhan, bab al-taslim 'ala'l-subyan.
7. Reported by Ahmad, 2/185, and by Abu Dawud with a hasan isnad, 1/193, Kitab al-salat, bab mata yu'mar al-ghulam wa'l-salat.
12. In fact it is Allah Who gives these things, not nature. This expression is one of the effects of Westernization. [Author]
14. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 8/296, Kitab al-'ataya wa'l-hadaya, bab al-ruju' fi hibbah al-walad wa'l-taswiyyah bayna al-awlad fi'l-nahl.
15. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 6/187, Kitab al-zakah, bab fadl al-sadaqah 'ala'l-awlad wa'l-aqarib.
16. Sahih Muslim, 16/179, Kitab al-birr wa'l-silah, bab al-ihsan ila'l-banat.
17. Reported by Ahmad, 2/335 and al-Hakim, 4/176, Kitab al-birr wa'l-silah. He said: its isnad is sahih.
19. Reported by Bukhari in al-Adab al-Mufrad, 1/162, bab man 'ala thalatha ihkawat.
20. Reported by al-Tabarani in al-Awsat with two isnads; the narrators of the first isnad are rijaal al-sahih. See Majma' al-Zawa'id, 8/157.
21. Sahih Muslim, 18/139, Kitab al-zuhd, bab hadith Jabir al-tawil.

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Chapter 6: The Muslim Woman and Her Sons and Daughters-In-Law

A- Her daughter-in-law

Her attitude towards her daughter-in-law

The Muslim woman who understands the teachings of her religion and who is of a high character, regards her daughter-in-law as she regards her own daughters. Fate has made this woman the wife of her son, and she has joined the family and become one of its members. Similarly, when the young Muslim woman who has been brought up with Islamic values and attitudes leaves her parents' home and goes to live with her new husband, she regards her mother-in-law as she does her own mother.

She knows how to make a good choice in selecting a daughter-in-law

Thus before any marriage takes place, it is very important for both parties (both potential mothers-in-law and potential daughters-in-law) to be very careful in making the right choice. When seeking spouses for her sons and daughters, a mother must examine each candidate's religious commitment and character, and look for a sound upbringing and good reputation.

When the wise Muslim woman looks for a wife for her son, she always bears in mind the fact that this will be a new daughter joining her family, one who should enjoy the same respect and love as her own daughters, and who will share their duties within the framework of the greater family. She should want for her new daughter-in-law nothing but success, happiness and stability in marriage. So the wise mother will not be attracted by those girls who appear pretty and cheerful on the outside only; she will also require her future daughter-in-law first and foremost to be strong in her commitment to Islam, and to be of a good and balanced character. This is in accordance with the teaching of the Prophet (PBUH): "A woman may be married for four reasons: her wealth, her lineage, her beauty or her religion; choose the one who is religious, may your hands be rubbed with dust!"\(^1\)
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She knows her place

On the basis of this correct understanding of the daughter-in-law's position in marriage and her position in her new family, the mother-in-law treats her daughter-in-law properly and fairly in all circumstances and at all times.

It never crosses the mind of the Muslim mother-in-law who is filled with Islamic values, that this woman has stolen the son whom she spent long years bringing up only to be taken away, when he reached the age of manhood and became able to work and make sacrifices, by a wife who would lead him into a happy home where he would forget everything that his mother had ever done for him. Such evil thoughts never occur to the righteous Muslim woman, because she understands the laws of Allah (SWT) that apply in this life, and she knews that her son, to whom she taught Islamic values from early childhood, cannot be made to forget his mother by his beautiful wife, just as the daughter-in-law whom she chose for her son from among the good, believing young women, would never accept for her husband to forget his mother in this way, which is precisely that disobedience which has been forbidden by Islam.

If she feels any stirrings of jealousy at some moment of human weakness, she seeks refuge in her faith and fear of Allah (SWT), and so she sheds these hateful feelings and returns to a proper opinion of her daughter-in-law. This is the attitude of the righteous believers, men and women alike, when they are struck by some evil thought they turn to Allah (SWT): Those who fear Allah, when a thought of evil from Satan assaults them, bring Allah to remembrance, when lo! They see [aright]! (Qur'an 7:201)

Hence a balance is struck between the daughter-in-law, the mother-in-law and the husband, and matters may run their natural, peaceful course unaffected by misguided whims and desires and governed instead by religion, reason and wisdom.
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She gives advice but does not interfere in their private life

From the moment her daughter-in-law is brought as a bride to her son, the wise Muslim woman remembers that her daughter-in-law has the right to live her married life in all aspects - so long as it remains within the limits of Islamic teaching - and that no-one has the right to interfere in the private life of the spouses except in cases where it is essential to do so, as every Muslim is required to give sincere advice in accordance with the Prophet's words: "Religion is sincere advice (nasiyah) . . ."²

The Muslim mother-in-law's standard in her behaviour towards her daughter-in-law is her behaviour towards her own daughter: just as she wants her daughter to have a happy, successful and independent marriage, undisturbed by any interference in her private life, so she wishes the same for her daughter-in-law, with no exceptions.

She respects her and treats her well

The good Muslim mother-in-law respects her daughter-in-law and treats her well; she makes her feel that she is loved and appreciated; she listens to her thoughts and opinions, approving and encouraging those that are good, and gently correcting those that are mistaken. In all of this, the mother-in-law's aim is to be fair and just, so she judges her daughter-in-law exactly as she would judge her daughter if she were in her place giving her opinion to her mother, in accordance with the words of the Qur'an: O you who believe! Fear Allah, and [always] say a word directed to the Right, (Qur'an 33:70)

She does not omit to express the joy that she feels from time to time, when she sees that her son is happy with his wife, and this adds to the best feelings that her son and daughter-in-law feel. Similarly, she does not forget to include her daughter-in-law on various occasions, just as she thinks of her daughters, so she lets her accompany them, and makes her feel that she is one of them, and that she is a beloved member of the family since she is married to her beloved son.

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In this way the mother-in-law becomes dear to her daughter-in-law, because she shows that her daughter-in-law is dear to her. This is in direct contrast to the practice in those backward, *jahili* societies that have deviated from the guidance of Allah (SWT), where hatred and despicable plots between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law are the norm, to such an extent that this enmity has become a traditional, inevitable phenomenon, about which there are many folk sayings and popular songs. None of this could have happened if both mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law had really respected one another's rights as outlined by Islam, and had stayed within the limits prescribed by Allah (SWT). This is why the traditional enmity between the mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law disappeared in those societies that truly embraced Islam and adhered to its teachings and values.

**She is wise and fair in her judgement of her daughter-in-law**

A mother-in-law may find herself being tested by a daughter-in-law who is not of good character, one who does not treat others well. Here we see the need for the mother-in-law to exercise wisdom and sophistication by repelling evil with something better, as stated in the Qur'an: *Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel [Evil] with what is better: then will he between whom and you was hatred become as it were your friend and intimate!*And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint – none but persons of the greatest good fortune,* (Qur'an 41:34-35)

One way in which a mother-in-law may repel evil with something better is by concealing her daughter-in-law's negative qualities and mistakes from her son as much as possible, advising her daughter-in-law on her own and explaining how keen she is for the marriage to continue on the basis of love and good works. The mother-in-law should continue to advise her daughter-in-law until she rids herself of those negative qualities, or at least minimizes them. Thus the daughter-in-law will feel that she has a sincere, loving mother-in-law, not a fearsome enemy who is just waiting for her to stumble.

The wise Muslim mother-in-law remains fair and just when she judges between her daughter-in-law and her son, if she sees her son mistreating her daughter-in-law. Her awareness and fear of Allah (SWT) prevent her frowith
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her son at the expense of the truth, so she does not support him in oppressing his wife or in doing wrong. This is in accordance with the words of the Qur'an: *Whenever you speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is concerned*. (Qur'an 6:152)

**And when you judge between man and man, that you judge with justice.** (Qur'an 4:58)

The Muslim woman who is truly following this guidance will never commit the sin of oppression, and will never be content to give any judgement except that which is fair, even if this means judging in favour of her daughter-in-law and against her son.

**B - Her son-in-law**

**Her attitude towards her son-in-law**

The attitude of the truly-guided Muslim woman towards her sons-in-law is no different than her attitude towards her daughters-in-law. She treats her daughter-in-law as if she were one of her own daughters, and similarly she treats her son-in-law as if he were one of her own sons. Just as she wants her own son to be one of the best of people, so she also wants her son-in-law to be one of the best of people too.

**She knows how to make a good choice in selecting a son-in-law**

So she makes a good choice when selecting a son-in-law, accepting none but one who is religious, well-mannered and has a good reputation, as the Prophet (PBUH) encouraged Muslims to do in the hadith: "If there comes to you one with whose religious commitment and character you are pleased, then marry your daughter to him; if you do not do so, it will be a cause of *fitnah* and widespread mischief on earth."³

In seeking a spouse for her daughter, she is not attracted only by a smart appearance, high status or plentiful wealth, because she knows that by marrying her daughter to this man she is going to gain a son, to whom she will
entrust her daughter's honour, life and happiness, none of which may be protected or properly taken care of except by a man who is well-mannered, religious, noble, chivalrous and moral.

**She respects and honours him**

Not surprisingly, her son-in-law is on the receiving end of her honour, respect and appreciation. At every opportunity she makes him feel that he has become a member of the family by marrying her daughter, so she wishes him and her daughter happiness and success in their life together. She lets him know that he is the one to whom she has entrusted the precious honour of her daughter, and in whom she places her hopes for the achievement of her daughter's fondest wishes. She makes him feel that she is a second mother to him, so she does not withhold any advice, or spare any effort to do whatever will bring happiness to him, his wife and his children.

**She helps her daughter to be a good wife to her husband**

The wise Muslim woman never ceases to offer advice to her daughter in ways that will be of benefit to her in running her household and taking care of her husband and children. She always points out to her daughter anything that will please her husband and make him happy, and encourages her to undertake the duties of a wife and mother in the best way possible. If she notices any shortcoming, negligence or carelessness on the part of her daughter, she hastens to correct and advise her, and helps her to make up for the shortcoming, so that there will be no reason for her son-in-law to look down on her daughter. She does not neglect to mention her son-in-law's good characteristics from time to time, so that her daughter will become more fond of him, and more content with what Allah (SWT) has given her. In this way, a mother becomes the greatest help to her daughter in consolidating her marriage and making it happy.
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She is fair, and is never biased in favour of her daughter

The Muslim mother-in-law is always fair in her opinions and judgements if any misunderstanding arises between her daughter and son-in-law, or if she notices any failure on her daughter's part to be a good wife or to perform her domestic duties or to take care of her husband's legitimate desires. She does not stand by her daughter, rather she speaks words of fairness and truth, as commanded by Allah (SWT) in the Qur'an:

Whenever you speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is concerned . . . (Qur'an 6:152)

And when you judge between man and man, that you judge with justice . . . (Qur'an 4:58)

If she notices that her daughter tends to take a lot of money from her husband or spends extravagantly, and that her words of advice to her daughter are not heeded, then she speaks out, explaining to her daughter the error of her ways and pointing out how she has transgressed the limits laid down by Islam with regard to spending, as has been outlined in the Qur'anic description of the honoured, truly-guided servants of Allah (SWT): Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just [balance] between those [extremes], (Qur'an 25:67)

If what she notices on her daughter's part is excessive power and a tendency to undermine her husband's honour and qawwamah, she hastens to explain to her daughter in the clearest terms that men are qawwamun over women, as the Qur'an says; Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more [strength] than the other, and because they support them from their means . . . (Qur'an 4:34), and that men have been given this role of protecting and maintaining women for two essential reasons which women should never forget: the precedence given to men, and the wealth that they spend on women: but men have a degree [of advantage] over them, (Qur'an 2:228)

The mother-in-law who is adhering to Islam and who is wise and fair does not differentiate between her son and her son-in-law. Just as she wants her son to fulfil his role as qawwam over his wife and to conduct his marriage wisely, seriously and in a manly fashion, so she wants the same thing for her son-in-law too, even if that means
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that her daughter has to face some strictness, because justice demands that of every woman who believes in Allah (SWT) and the Last Day.

Just as the Muslim mother-in-law will criticize her daughter-in-law if necessary for any extravagance that she may notice, out of compassion towards her son, she will also criticize her own daughter if she oversteps the limits, in order to be fair and just, and in obedience to the words of the Qur'an: Whenever you speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is concerned . . ; (Qur'an 6:152)

She deals with problems wisely

A son-in-law may be of a certain mentality with which his wife and mother-in-law do not feel at ease, which may result in mutual dislike and arguments. In such cases, the duty of the mother-in-law who understands the teachings of Islam is to approach her son-in-law in a sensitive manner, taking into account his particular mentality and nature, to deal with him wisely, and never to despair of reaching her goal with a measure of patience and persistence.

She is always very careful never to exaggerate her son-in-law's negative points to her daughter; rather, so long as those negative aspects do not affect his religion or moral character and do not warrant the end of the marriage, she tries to make them look as small as possible, whilst striving to deal with them by legitimate means and wise methods.

Thus the mother-in-law who is truly guided by Islam becomes a blessing and a source of goodness for her daughter and her husband, offering solid support to their marriage and proving by her fairness and piety that she is indeed a second mother to the husband, not the traditional enemy of the couple, as she is often described in backward, jahili societies where comedians tell funny stories of that everlasting enmity which in fact is the result of the Muslims' failure to properly apply the laws and values of their religion.
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We may well imagine the great happiness felt by both families - her son's family and her daughter's family - towards this wise, sensitive, pious mother-in-law, when she is sincere and loved by both her son-in-law and her daughter-in-law, and this love is reflected in the happiness of both families.

By virtue of her *taqwa*, fairness and good to her son- and daughter-in-law, she increases the happiness of her daughter and son, and contributes to the comfort and tranquillity of their families.

How beautiful are the deeds of the intelligent, believing mother-in-law, and how great is the need of her sons' and daughters' families for her!
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Footnotes:

1. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 9/8, Kitab al-nikah, bab ikhtiyar dhat al-din.
2. Sahih Muslim, 2/37, Kitab al-iman, bab bayan an al-din al-nasihah.
Chapter 7: The Muslim Woman and Her Relatives

The Muslim woman who is guided by the teachings of her religion never forgets that her relatives have rights over her, and that she is required to uphold the ties of kinship and to treat them well. The relatives (in Arabic *arham*, which literally means "wombs") are those to whom a person is linked by ties of blood, whether they are his heirs or not.

**Islamic view of kinship ties**

Islam has recognized the ties of kinship in a way that is unparalleled in other religions or "isms"; it enjoins Muslims to uphold the ties of kinship andcondemns the one who breaks this tie.

There is no greater proof of the emphasis placed by Islam on the ties of kinship than the vivid picture painted by the Prophet (PBUH), who described kinship (*raхm*) as standing in the vast arena of creation and seeking refuge with Allah (SWT) from being cut off. Allah (SWT) answers its prayer, taking care of those who maintain the ties of kinship, and cutting off those who cut off these ties. This is seen in the *sahih* hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah who said: "The Prophet (PBUH) said: ‘Allah (SWT) created the universe, and when He had finished, kinship (*raхm*) stood up and said, 'This is the standing up of one who seeks Your protection from being cut off.' Allah (SWT) said, 'Yes, would it please you if I were to take care of those who take care of you and cut off those who cut you off?' It said, 'Of course.' Allah (SWT) said, 'Then your prayer is granted.'" Then the Prophet (PBUH) said, 'Recite, if you wish: (Then, is it to be expected of you, if you were put in authority, that you will do mischief, in the land, and break your ties of kith and kin? Such are the men whom Allah has cursed for He has made them deaf and blinded their sight.) (Qur'an 47:22-23)" 

Many *ayat* of the Qur'an reiterate and affirm the position of *arham* in Islam, encouraging people to uphold the ties of kinship and instilling a strong sense of the importance of recognizing kinship rights and avoiding neglect of
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those rights, and warning against abuse of them. One of these *ayat* is: Fear Allah, through Whom you demand your mutual [rights], and [reverence] the wombs [that bore you] . . .) (Qur'an 4:1)

This *ayah* commands man to fear Allah (SWT) first and foremost, then places respect for *arham* second to that *taqwa* in order to emphasize its importance.

For the true Muslim, the fact that *rahm* is often mentioned in conjunction with belief in Allah (SWT) and good treatment of parents, is enough to confirm its status and importance: (Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents . . .) (Qur'an 17:23)

(And render to the kindred their due rights, as [also] to those in want, and to the wayfarer: but squander not [your wealth] in the manner of a spendthrift.) (Qur'an 17:26)

(Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good - to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need. Neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the Companion by you side, the wayfarer [you meet] (Qur'an 4:36)

Hence kind treatment of relatives comes one degree below kind treatment of parents on the scale of human relationships as defined by the Qur'an; from there, kindness and respect extends to encompass all those needy members of the greater human family. This suits human nature, which is more inclined to start with kind treatment of those who are closer; it is also in harmony with the overall Islamic system of social organization and mutual responsibility which starts with the family then is readily extended first to relatives and then to society at large, in a spirit of mercy and friendship which makes life more pleasant and beautiful for mankind.

Upholding the ties of kinship is one of the major principles of Islam, one of the fundamentals that this religion has promoted from the first day the Prophet (PBUH) began to preach his message. It is one of the most characteristic features of Islamic law. When the emperor asked Abu Sufyan, "What does your Prophet order you to do?" he answered, "He tells us: 'Worship Allah (SWT) alone and do not associate anything with Him. Give up the religion of your forefathers.' He tells us to pray, to give charity, to be chaste and to uphold the ties of kinship."
Upholding the ties of kinship is counted as one of the major characteristics of this religion, along with pure monotheistic belief in Allah (SWT), establishing prayer, and adherence to truthfulness and chastity, which were being explained to those questioners for the very first time.

In the lengthy hadith of `Amr ibn `Anbasah (RAA), which includes many of the basic teachings of Islam, he said: "I entered upon the Prophet (PBUH) in Makkah (meaning at the beginning of his Prophethood), and asked him, `What are you?' He said, `A Prophet.' I asked, `What is a Prophet?' He said, `Allah (SWT) has sent me.' I asked, `With what has He sent you?' He said, `He has sent me to uphold the ties of kinship, to break the idols and to teach that Allah (SWT) is One and has no partner whatsoever . . ."³

In this summary of the most important principles of Islam, the Prophet (PBUH) clearly gave precedence to upholding the ties of kinship and mentioned this among the foremost features of the faith. This is indicative of its high status in the framework of this religion which Allah (SWT) has revealed as a mercy to the Worlds.

The sources of Islam go to great lengths to encourage upholding the ties of kinship, and warn against cutting them off. Abu Ayyub al-Ansari (RAA) said: "A man said, `O Messenger of Allah, tell me of a good deed that will grant me entrance to Paradise.' The Prophet (PBUH) said: `Worship Allah (SWT) and do not associate anything with Him, establish regular prayer, pay zakat, and uphold the ties of kinship.'"⁴

How great is the tie of kinship, and how heavily will it weigh in the balance of a person's deeds (on the Day of Judgement)! For it appears in the same context as worshipping Allah (SWT), believing in His absolute unity, establishing regular prayer and paying zakat. Hence it is one of the best of righteous deeds that will guarantee Paradise and save one from Hell.

Anas (RAA) said: "The Prophet (PBUH) said, `Whoever would like his rizq (provision) to be increased and his life to be extended, should uphold the ties of kinship.'"⁵
So it is a blessing for the one who upholds the ties of kinship, a blessing which affects both his rizq and his life: his wealth will increase and he will live a longer and more blessed life.

Ibn `Umar used to say: "Whoever fears his Lord and upholds the ties of kinship, his life will be extended, his wealth will increase and his family will love him more."6

The Muslim woman does not forget that upholding the ties of kinship is a duty required of women just as it is required of men, and that the words concerning it are addressed to every Muslim, whether man or woman, as is the case with all the general duties of Islam. So the Muslim woman upholds the ties of kinship sincerely and earnestly, and does not let her busy life of responsibilities distract her from doing so.

The Muslim woman who understands the teachings of her religion realizes that upholding the ties of kinship brings blessing in a woman's rizq and in her life, mercy from Allah (SWT) in this world and the next, and makes people love her and praise her. In contrast, breaking those ties will spell disaster and misery for her, earning her the dislike of Allah (SWT) and the people, and keeping her far from Paradise in the Hereafter. It is misery and deprivation enough for such a woman to hear the words of the Prophet (PBUH): "The person who breaks the ties of kinship will never enter Paradise."7

It is sufficient to know that the mercy of Allah (SWT) will be denied to the one who breaks the ties of kinship; moreover, it will be denied to others in a group among whom is a person who breaks the ties of kinship, as in the hadith reported by Bukhari in al-Adab al-Mufrad: "Mercy will not descend upon a people among whom is one who breaks the ties of kinship."

Hence the great Sahabi Abu Hurayrah (RAA) never liked to make supplication to Allah (SWT) in a gathering in which a person who had broken the ties of kinship was present, because that would prevent mercy from descending and the du`a’ from being answered. In one Thursday night gathering, he said: "I urge everyone who has broken the ties of kinship to get up and leave us." No-one got up until he had said this three times. Then a young man got up and went to see a (paternal) aunt of his whom he had forsaken for two years. When he entered, she said, "O son of my brother, what brings you here?" He said, "I heard Abu Hurayrah say such-and-
such." She told him, "Go back to him and ask him why he said that." (Abu Hurayrah) said: "I heard the Prophet (PBUH) say: `The deeds of the sons of Adam are shown to Allah (SWT) every Thursday evening before Jumu`ah, and the deeds of the one who breaks the ties of kinship are not accepted.'\(^9\)

The sensitive Muslim woman who is hoping to earn the pleasure of her Lord and attain salvation in the Hereafter will be deeply shaken by the news given in these texts, that breaking the ties of kinship will cause mercy to be withheld from her and her \(du`a`\) not to be answered. It will be a source of great misery to her to be in such a position, to do deeds which are of no avail, to seek the mercy of her Lord and not receive it. It is unimaginable that a true Muslim woman would ever break the ties of kinship.

Breaking the ties of kinship is a sin which the Muslim woman whose heart is filled with true guidance and the desire to obey Allah (SWT) and earn His pleasure would never commit, because it is one of the sins that Allah (SWT) has said will bring punishment; indeed, it is one of the foremost sins for which Allah (SWT) will punish the one who is guilty of them both in this world and the next, as is stated in the hadith: "There is no worse sin for which Allah (SWT) will hasten the punishment of one who commits it in this world - in addition to what awaits him in the Hereafter - than oppressing others and breaking the ties of kinship.'\(^10\)

The acts of oppressing others and breaking the ties of kinship are very much like one another, so the Prophet (PBUH) mentioned them together in this hadith. For breaking the ties of kinship is a kind of \(zulm\) (wrongdoing, oppression), and what \(zulm\) can be worse than breaking off relations with one's own kin and destroying the ties of love and affection?

The Prophet (PBUH) described the oppression that befalls the ties of kinship when they are cut off: "The tie of kinship (\(rahm\)) is a close-knit relationship that comes from Allah (SWT), the Most Merciful (\(al-Rahman\))\(^11\). It says: `O my Lord, I have been oppressed, O my Lord, I have been cut off.' He answers, `Will you not be content if I cut off the one who cuts you off and take care of the one who takes care of you?'\(^12\)
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Allah (SWT) raised the status of the tie of kinship and honoured it by deriving its name, rahm, from one of His own names, al-Rahman. For He said (in a hadith qudsi): "I am al-Rahman (the Most Merciful) and I have created rahm and derived its name from My name. Whoever takes care of it, I will take care of him, and whoever cuts it off, I will forsake him."¹³

These texts clearly confirm that the one who upholds the ties of kinship will be happy, loved and honoured and will enjoy the cool shade of his Lord's mercy; The one who breaks those ties will be denied that shade, and will be forsaken and abandoned, denied the the mercy, forgiveness and pleasure of his Lord.

The Muslim woman upholds the ties of kinship according to the teachings of Islam

The Muslim woman who is truly guided by the teachings of her religion does not neglect to uphold the ties of kinship, and never lets the responsibilities of motherhood or the burden of caring for her house and husband distract her from always upholding these ties. So organizes her time so that she may visit her relatives, following Islamic teaching, which regulates these relationships and ranks them in order of priority and degree of closeness, starting with the mother, then moving on to the father, then other relatives, from the most closely-related to others who are more distantly related.

A man came to the Prophet (PBUH) and asked, "O Messenger of Allah, who is most deserving of my good company?" He said, "Your mother, then your mother, then your mother, then your father, then those who are most closely related to you."¹⁴

The Muslim woman earns two rewards when she treats her relatives with kindness and respect: one reward for maintaining the relationship, and another reward for giving charity, if she is rich and can spend money on them. This gives her a greater incentive to give to her relatives, if they are in need. By doing so, she will earn two rewards from Allah (SWT), and will also win the affection of her relatives. This is what the Prophet (PBUH) encouraged Muslims to do, in the hadith narrated by Zaynab al-Thaqafiyyah, the wife of `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud (RAA), who said: "The Prophet (PBUH) said: 'O women, give in charity even if it is some of your jewellery.' She said, I went back to `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud and told him, 'You are a man of little wealth, and the Prophet (PBUH)
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has commanded us to give charity, so go and ask him whether it is permissible for me to give you charity. If it is, I will do so; if not, I will give charity to someone else.' `Abdullah said, 'No, you go and ask.' So I went, and I found a woman of the Ansar at the Prophet's door, who also had the same question. We felt too shy to go in, out of respect, so Bilal came out and we asked him, 'Go and tell the Messenger of Allah that there are two women at the door asking: Is it permissible for them to give sadaqah to their husbands and the orphans in their care? But do not tell him who we are.' So Bilal went in and conveyed this message to the Prophet (PBUH), who asked, 'Who are they?' Bilal said, 'One of the women of the Ansar, and Zaynab.' The Prophet (PBUH) asked, 'Which Zaynab is it?' Bilal said, 'The wife of `Abdullah.' The Prophet (PBUH) said, 'They will have two rewards, the reward for upholding the relationship, and the reward for giving charity.'

The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Charity given to a poor person is charity, and charity given to a relative earns two rewards: one for giving charity and one for upholding the ties of kinship."

The Prophet (PBUH) used to reaffirm the priority given to kind treatment of relatives at every opportunity. When the ayah (By no means shall you attain righteousness unless you give [freely] of that which you love . . .) (Qur'an 3:92) was revealed, Abu Talhah went to the Prophet (PBUH) and said: "O Messenger of Allah, Allah (SWT) says 'By no means shall you attain righteousness unless you give [freely] of that which you love . . .'. The most beloved of my properties is Bayraha' (a date orchard), which I now give up as sadaqah to Allah (SWT), hoping to store up reward with Him. O Messenger of Allah, dispose of it as you will." The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Bravo! You have got the best deal for your property. I have heard what you said, and I think that you should divide it among your relatives." Abu Talhah said, "I will do so, O Messenger of Allah." He divided it among his relatives and (paternal) cousins.

The Prophet (PBUH) looked far back into history and evoked ties of kinship going back centuries, when he enjoined good treatment of the people of Egypt, as is recorded in the hadith narrated by Muslim:

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"You will conquer Egypt, which is known as the land of al-qirat (i.e. where coins are minted) so when you conquer it, treat its people well, for they have protection (dhimmah) and the ties of kinship (rahm)." Or he said: "... protection and the relationship by marriage (sihr)."\(^{18}\)

The `ulama' explained that rahm here referred to Hajar, the mother of Isma`il, and sihr referred to Maryah, the mother of the Prophet's son Ibrahim - both of whom came from Egypt.

What a display of loyalty, faithfulness and good treatment, which extends to the kinsfolk and countrymen of those two noble women down throughout the ages! The Muslim woman who hears these wise teachings of the Prophet (PBUH) cannot but uphold her ties with her relatives, offering them her sincere love, keeping in constant contact with them and treating them with kindness and respect.

**She maintains the ties of kinship even if her relatives are not Muslim**

When the Muslim woman looks into the guidance of Islam, she sees that it reaches new heights of gentleness and humanity by enjoining its followers to uphold the ties of kinship even if one's relatives follow a religion other than Islam. `Abdullah ibn `Amr ibn al-`As (RAA) said: "I heard the Prophet (PBUH) openly saying: `The family of Abu So-and-so are not my friends, for my friends are Allah and the righteous believers. But they have ties of kinship with me, which I will recognize and uphold."\(^{19}\)

When the ayah (And admonish your nearest kinsmen) (Qur'an 26:214) was revealed, the Prophet (PBUH) summoned Quraysh. They gathered and he addressed them both in general and specific terms: "O Banu Ka`b ibn Lu'ayy, save yourselves from the Fire. O Banu Murrah ibn Ka`b, save yourselves from the Fire. O Banu `Abdu Shams, save yourselves from the Fire. O Banu `Abdu Manaf, save yourselves from the Fire. O Banu Hashim, save yourselves from the Fire. O Fatimah, save yourself from the Fire. I cannot do anything to protect you from the punishment of Allah, but there are ties of kinship between us that I will recognize and uphold."\(^{20}\)
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The Prophet's teachings reached the hearts of the first Muslim men and women, and had an effect upon them, so that they were kind to their non-Muslim relatives. Evidence of this may be seen in the report given by Ibn `Abd al-Barr in *al-Isti`ab* and by Ibn Hijr in *al-Isabah*, which describes how a female slave of *Umm al-Mu`minin* Safiyyah came to the *khalifah* `Umar ibn al-Khattab (RAA) and said, "O Amir al-Mu'minin, Safiyyah loves the Sabbath (Saturday) and treats the Jews well." `Umar sent for Safiyyah and questioned her about that. She replied: "As far as the Sabbath is concerned, I have not loved it since Allah replaced it with *Jumu`ah* (Friday) for me. As for the Jews, I have relatives among them with whom I uphold the ties of kinship." Then she turned to her slave and asked her what had made her tell such a lie. The slave woman answered, "Shaytan." Safiyyah's response was to tell her: "Go, you are free."21

`Umar (RAA) did not see anything wrong with giving a garment that the Prophet (PBUH) had sent him to his half-brother (through his mother), who was a *mushrik*.22

Hence the Muslim woman sees that the spring of human emotion does not dry up when a person utters the *Shahadah*, but rather his or her heart overflows with love and good treatment towards his or her relatives, even if they are not Muslim. The expression of the Prophet (PBUH), "but there are ties of kinship between us which I will recognize and uphold (literally `moisten')" is an example of Arabic eloquence, a metaphor in which the kinship tie (*rahm*) is likened to the earth, and is "irrigated" by upholding it, so that it bears fruits of love and purity; if it is cut off, it becomes barren and produces only hatred and animosity. The true Muslim is on good terms with everyone and is liked by everyone, as they see good characteristics embodied in him.

Islam encourages us to treat our parents with kindness and respect, even if they are *mushrikin*, and here we see how it encourages us to treat our relatives equally well, even if they are not Muslims either, based on the gentleness, humanity and mercy which this religion brings to the whole of mankind: *We sent you not, but as a Mercy for all creatures.*)(Qur'an 21:107)
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She fully understands the meaning of upholding the tie of kinship

For the Muslim woman, the tie of kinship is multi-faceted. Sometimes it may involve spending money to ward off poverty and relieve hardship; at other times it may mean making visits to strengthen the ties of love; or speaking and smiling kindly and offering a warm welcome; or giving advice, showing compassion or making a selfless gesture . . . i.e., acts of goodness which will awaken and increase human feelings of love, compassion and mutual support between those who are related to one another.

Hence the Prophet (PBUH) urged Muslims to uphold the ties of kinship even in the simplest of ways: "Maintain your ties of kinship even if it is merely with a greeting (i.e., saying al-salam `alaykum)."

She maintains the ties of kinship even if her relatives fail to do so

The Muslim woman whose soul is infused with the true teachings of this religion upholds the ties of kinship and does not break them. She does not treat like with like, upholding the tie if her relatives uphold it and breaking it if they break it. The Muslim woman is one who always upholds the ties of kinship, because by doing so she is seeking the pleasure and reward of Allah, not equal treatment in return. In this way she sets the highest example of that refined human behaviour which Islam is always keen to instil in the souls of Muslim men and women. It is, in fact, a most difficult level to achieve, except for those whom Allah has guided and who have devoted themselves to seeking His pleasure. The Muslim woman who is truly guided by the teachings of her religion is among this noble group of women who are eager to treat their relatives well in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet (PBUH):

"The one who maintains a relationship with his relatives only because they maintain a relationship with him is not truly upholding the ties of kinship. The one who truly upholds those ties is the one who does so even if they break off the relationship."
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This is the refined human attitude to which Islam wants all Muslim men and women to aspire in their dealings with their relatives. Hence the Prophet (PBUH) reinforced the attributes of kindness, patience and tolerance in the Muslims, especially in the case of the one who upholds the ties of kinship and receives nothing in return but harshness, mistreatment and cruelty. He (PBUH) stated that Allah is with the one who upholds the ties of kinship and does not receive similar treatment in return, and he drew a frightening picture of the punishment that awaits the hard-hearted person who harshly denies and breaks the ties of kinship. A man came to the Prophet (PBUH) and said, "O Messenger of Allah, I have relatives with whom I try to keep in touch, but they cut me off. I treat them well, but they abuse me; I am patient and kind towards them, but they insult me." The Prophet (PBUH) said: "If you are as you say, then it is as if you are putting hot dust in their mouths. Allah will continue to support you as long as you continue to do that." \(^{25}\)

How important is the tie of kinship, and how heavily will it weigh in the balance of the believer! How unfortunate are those who neglect it and cut off the ties of love and kinship! How great will be the reward of the woman who upholds the ties of kinship and bears her relatives' harshness with patience, so that Allah Himself will support her against them, filling her heart with patience when they treat her badly and helping her to persevere in her noble attitude. How great is the sin of those men and women who break the ties of kinship, so that the Prophet (PBUH) likened such a person to one who eats hot dust as a punishment for breaking the ties of kinship when others are seeking to maintain it.

The true Muslim woman is one who upholds the ties of kinship no matter what the circumstances; she does not cut them off even if they cut her off. Thus she seeks the pleasure of her Lord, rising above the petty issues that may arise between relatives from time to time, and avoiding the insignificant matters that occupy the minds of lesser people and fill their hearts with hatred. She believes that she is above going down to the level of insignificant, foolish issues that cancel out good deeds and affect the purity of the kinship tie. It never occurs to her to sink to such a level when she listens to the words of the Prophet (PBUH): "The tie of kinship (rahm) is suspended from the throne of Allah, and says, 'Whoever supports me, Allah will support him, and whoever cuts me off, Allah will cut him off.'" \(^{26}\)

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Footnotes:

1. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 13/20, Kitab al-birr wa'l-silah, bab thawab silah al-rahm wa ithm man qata'aha.
2. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Riyadh al-Salihin, 51, Bab al-sidq.
4. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Riyad al-Salihin, 195, bab birr l-walidayn wa silah al-arham.
5. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 13/19, Kitab al-birr wa'l-silah, bab thawab silah al-rahm.
6. Reported by Bukhari in al-Adab al-Mufrad, 1/140, Bab man wasala rahmahu ahabbahu Allah.
7. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 13/26, Kitab al-birr wa'l-silah, bab thawab silah al-rahm.
8. 1/144, bab la tanzil al-rahmah 'ala qawm fihim qati' rahm.
9. Reported by Bukhari in al-Adab al-Mufrad, 1/142, Bab birr al-aqra' fa'l-aqra'ib.
11. The connection is clearer in Arabic, as rahm and al-Rahman are derived from the same root. [Translator]
12. Reported by Bukhari in al-Adab al-Mufrad, 1/146, Bab ithm qati' al-rahm.
14. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Riyad al-Salihin, 189, Bab birr al-walidayn wa silah al-rahm.
15. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 6/187, Kitab al-zakah, Bab fadl al-sadaqah 'ala'l-awlad wa'l-aqarib.
16. Reported by al-Tirmidhi, 2/84, Abwab al-zakah, 26; he said it is a hasan hadith.
17. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 6/189, Kitab al-zakah, bab fadl al-sadaqah 'ala al-aqarib.
18. Sahih Muslim, 16/97, Kitab fada'il al-Sahabah, bab wasiyyah al-Nabi (r) bi ahl misr.
19. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 13/29, Kitab al-birr wa'l-silah, bab thawab silah al-rahm.
23. Reported by al-Bazzar from Ibn 'Abbas, as stated by al-Haythami in Kashf al-astar, 2/373; its isnads strengthen one another, as stated by al-Sakhawi in al-maqsad al-hasanah, 146.
24. Fath al-Bari, 10/423, Kitab al-adab, bab laysa al-wasil bi'l-mukafi'.
25. Sahih Muslim, 16/115, Kitab al-birr wa'l-silah wa'l-adab, bab tahrim al-tahasud wa'l-tabaghud.
26. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Riyadh al-Salihin, 191, Bab birr al-walidayn wa silah al-arham.

Dr. Muhammad Ali Al-Hashimi
The Muslim woman is kind and friendly towards her neighbours

One of the attributes of the Muslim woman who understands the teachings of her religion is that she treats her neighbours well and respects them.

She adheres to the Islamic teachings regarding good treatment of neighbours

The true Muslim woman understands the teachings of Islam which strongly urge good treatment of neighbours and gives the neighbour such a high status in the scale of human relationships, such as has never been equalled in any other religion or system before or since.

Allah (SWT) has clearly commanded the good treatment of neighbours in the Qur'an: Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good - to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the Companion by your side, the wayfarer [you meet], and what your right hands possess . . . (Qur'an 4:36)

The "neighbour who is near" is one with whom one shares ties of kinship or religion; the "neighbour who is a stranger" is one with whom one shares no such ties; and the "companion by your side" is a friend, colleague or travelling-companion.

Everyone whose home neighbours yours has the rights of a neighbour over you, even if you are not connected by kinship or religion. This honouring of the neighbour is an example of the tolerance promoted by Islam.

There are many Hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) which enjoin good treatment of neighbours in general, regardless of kinship or religious factors, and confirm the importance of the neighbourly relationship in Islam. For example:
"Jibril kept on enjoining the good treatment of neighbours to such an extent that I thought he would include neighbours as heirs."\(^1\)

Islam gives such a high status to neighbours that when Jibril reiterated the importance of treating them well, the Prophet (PBUH) thought that he would raise neighbours to the level of kinship and give them similar rights of inheritance.

The Prophet (PBUH) followed Jibril's urging, and encouraged Muslims to honour neighbours and treat them well. In his historical *khutbah* during the Farewell Pilgrimage, in which he summarized the most important points of his teachings, he did not omit to mention neighbours and emphasized their rights to such an extent that the eminent *Sahabi* Abu Umamah also thought that the Prophet (PBUH) would make neighbours heirs: "I heard the Prophet (PBUH), when he was seated on his she-camel during the Farewell Pilgrimage, saying, 'I enjoin you to treat your neighbours well,' and urging their good treatment so much that I thought, he is going to give them the rights of inheritance."\(^2\)

The Prophet (PBUH) sometimes used to stir up the emotions of the *Sahabah* when he encouraged them to do good deeds, so he would start by saying, "Whoever believes in Allah (SWT) and the Last Day, let him do such-and-such . . ." He would use this emotive phrase to command or encourage some good deed or desirable characteristic. Among the Hadith that use this method of conveying a message is: "Whoever believes in Allah (SWT) and the Last Day, let him treat his neighbour well; whoever believes in Allah (SWT) and the Last Day, let him honour his guest; whoever believes in Allah (SWT) and the Last Day, let him speak good or else remain silent."\(^3\)

According to a report given by Bukhari, he (PBUH) said: "Whoever believes in Allah (SWT) and the Last Day, let him not harm or annoy his neighbour . . ."\(^4\)

Good treatment of neighbours is enjoined at the beginning of the hadith, and is identified as one of the signs and most beneficial results of belief in Allah (SWT) and the Last Day.

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Dr. Muhammad Ali Al-Hashimi
The Ideal Muslimah

She likes for her neighbours what she likes for herself

The Muslim woman who is truly open to the teachings of her religion is soft-hearted, easy-going and tolerant. She is loving towards her neighbours, sensitive to everything that could disturb, annoy or offend them. She wishes them well, just as she wishes herself well, and she shares their joys and sorrows, in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet (PBUH): "None of you truly believes until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself."5

According to a report given by Muslim from Anas, the Prophet (PBUH) said: "By the One in Whose hand is my soul, no servant truly believes until he likes for his neighbour (or he said: his brother) what he likes for himself."6 The true Muslim woman does not fail to think of her neighbours who may be faced with difficulties from time to time, so she gives them gifts occasionally. She recognizes that they may be affected by the smell of cooking or barbecues emanating from her house, and she understands their desire for delicious food which they may not be able to afford, so she sends some of it to them, thereby fulfilling the spirit of social responsibility which the Prophet (PBUH) encouraged in his words to Abu Dharr: "O Abu Dharr, if you cook some broth, add extra water to it, and take care of your neighbour."7

According to another report, he (PBUH) said: "If you cook some broth, add extra water to it, then think of the families in your neighbourhood and send some of it to them."8

The Muslim woman's conscience will not let her ignore her neighbour's poverty and difficulty without making the effort to do good and offer some generous gifts of food and other things, especially if she is well-off and living a life of ease, enjoying the bounties that Allah (SWT) has bestowed upon her. How can she do otherwise, when the words of the Prophet (PBUH) are ringing in her ears?

"He does not believe in me, who eats his fill while his neighbour beside him is hungry, and he knows about it."9

"He is not a believer, who eats his fill while his neighbour is hungry."10

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She treats her neighbour in the best way that she can

The Muslim woman who truly understands the teachings of her religion never thinks that any favour is too small to be worth doing for her neighbour; she does whatever favours she can for her, no matter how insignificant they may appear. She does not let shyness or her desire to show off prevent her from doing the little that she can afford, or make her withhold it on the basis that that it is not good enough, so that she waits until she is able to offer more. Such an attitude deprives both her and her neighbour of much good, because by waiting for some hoped-for bounty that may never arrive, she wastes the opportunity to do good. The Prophet (PBUH) drew the attention of women in particular to the importance of even the smallest gifts and favours between neighbours:

"O Muslim women, do not think that any gift is too insignificant to give to a neighbour, even if it is only a sheep's foot."\(^{11}\)

A sheep's foot is a thing of little value, but it is better than nothing, and no woman should feel that any gift is not worth giving to a neighbour. Allah (SWT) says: "Then shall anyone who has done an atom's-weight of good, see it!" (Qur'an 99:7)

And the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Save yourself from the Fire even by giving half a date in charity, and if you do not find (half a date), then by saying a good word."\(^{12}\)

But this hadith, which is general in application, may also be taken to mean that the recipient should not look down on the gift. The meaning then is: No (female) neighbour should scorn the gift given to her by another (female) neighbour, even if it is just s sheep's foot. Rather, she should thank her for it, because gratitude engenders friendship among neighbours and encourages mutual support and help. This is in addition to the fact that thanking people for favours is a basic Islamic trait which the Prophet (PBUH) strongly encouraged:

"The one who does not give thanks to people does not give thanks to Allah (SWT)."\(^{13}\)
The Ideal Muslimah

Islam wants to spread mutual love and affection among neighbours. The ways in which people may achieve this are many, and include the exchange of gifts. Hence the Prophet (PBUH) forbade women, in particular, to look down on any gift that she may give to or receive from her neighbour, no matter how small, because women are very sensitive in such matters this may affect her feelings towards her neighbours. Thus he drew women's attention to the fact that what matters is the noble and worthy thought behind the gift, not the material value of the gift itself. The Muslim woman should not forget this and think any gift is too insignificant, because in Islam thoughts and intentions are more important than material values.

She treats her neighbours well even if they are not Muslim

The true Muslim woman does not restrict her good treatment only to neighbours who are related to her or who are Muslims, but she extends it to non-Muslim neighbours too, in accordance with the tolerant teachings of Islam which encourage kindness towards all people, regardless of their race of religion, so long as they do not commit any acts of hostility or aggression towards Muslims: "Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for [your] Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loves those who are just." (Qur'an 60:8)

On the basis of this, the great Sahabi `Abdullah ibn `Amr asked his slave, after slaughtering a sheep, "Did you give some to our Jewish neighbour? Did you give some to our Jewish neighbour? For I heard the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) say, `Jibril kept on enjoining the good treatment of neighbours to such an extent that I thought he would include neighbours as heirs.'"14

How great is the mercy of Islam towards all people, and how kind is its concern towards those who live under its shade! History bears witness to the fact that the People of the Book have lived alongside Muslims in many regions of the Islamic world, secure in the knowledge that they, their honour and their wealth were safe, enjoying a good neighbourly relationship, good treatment and freedom of worship, Their ancient churches still exist in...
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Muslim villages clinging to mountaintops, surrounded by thousands of Muslims who uphold the well-being of their Jewish and Christian neighbours.

She starts with the neighbour whose home is closest to her own

The true Muslim woman does not forget the precise system that Islam set out when it enjoined the good treatment of neighbours. Islam has told her to give priority to the one whose house is closest, then the one who is next closest, and so on. This takes into account the closeness of the neighbours whose homes are beside one another, the issues which may frequently arise between them, and the importance of maintaining friendship and harmony.

`A'ishah (May Allah be pleased with her) said: "O Messenger of Allah, I have two neighbours, so to which one should I send a gift?" He said, "To the one whose door is closest to yours."15

This system of priority in the good treatment of neighbours does not mean that the Muslim woman should ignore the neighbours who are further away from her home. Everyone around her home is considered to be a neighbour and thus enjoys the rights of a neighbour. This system is merely the matter of organization, by means of which the Prophet (PBUH) encouraged taking care of the closest neighbour because he or she is the one with whom there is usually ongoing contact and interaction.

The true Muslim woman is the best neighbour

It comes as no surprise that the Muslim woman who truly understands the teachings of her religion is the best of neighbours, because good treatment of neighbours is a basic Islamic attitude that is deeply engrained in the conscience of the Muslim woman who has been brought up with the teachings of Islam, which state that the one who is kindest to her neighbour is the best neighbour in the sight of Allah (SWT):
"The best of companions in the sight of Allah (SWT) is the one who is best to his companion, and the best of neighbours in the sight of Allah (SWT) is the one who is best to his neighbour."^{16}

The Prophet (PBUH) stated that a good neighbour is one of the joys of a Muslim's life, because he or she guarantees comfort, security and safety: "Among the things that bring happiness to a Muslim in this life are a righteous neighbour, a spacious house and a good steed."^{17}

The salaf appreciated the value of good neighbours so much that they considered having a good neighbour to be a precious blessing. One story which reflects this tells that the neighbour of Sa`id ibn al-`As wanted to sell his house for 100,000 dirhams, and told the would-be purchaser, "This is the price of the house, but what would you give for having Sa`id as a neighbour?" When Sa`id heard about this, he sent his neighbour the price of the house and told him to stay there.

This is the status of neighbours in Islam, and the attitude and behaviour of a good Muslim neighbour. But what about bad neighbours?

**Bad neighbours**

Having a bad neighbour is something which is so appalling that the sensitive Muslim woman cannot think of it without shuddering and being filled with a sense of fear, loathing and dread.

**The bad neighbour is a person who is deprived of the blessing of faith**

It is sufficient misery for a bad neighbour to know that she is deprived of the blessing of faith, which is the greatest blessing in a person's life. The Prophet (PBUH) confirmed the fact that this blessing is stripped away from every person who persists in mistreating his or her neighbour to the extent that he or she is counted as a bad neighbour, and stated in no uncertain terms when he swore by Allah (SWT) three times that such a person would be stripped of the blessing of faith:
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"By Allah (SWT), he does not believe. By Allah (SWT), he does not believe. By Allah (SWT), he does not believe." He was asked, "Who, O Messenger of Allah?" He said, "The one from whose evils (or troubles) his neighbour does not feel safe."\textsuperscript{18}

According to a report given by Muslim: "He will not enter Paradise whose neighbour is not safe from his evil (or trouble)."\textsuperscript{19}

How great must be the crime of the bad neighbour, if his mistreatment of his neighbour is depriving him of the blessings of faith and denying him entrance to Paradise!

The true Muslim woman who is pure of heart contemplates the meaning of these texts and the deep impression they leave in her mind concerning bad neighbours. It never occurs to her to mistreat her neighbour, no matter what the circumstances, because mistreating neighbours or becoming involved in disputes and conspiracies is not a thing to be taken lightly: it is a major sin which destroys faith and places one's ultimate fate in jeopardy. This would be the greatest loss, and the mere thought of it makes the true Muslim woman tremble.

**The bad neighbour is a person whose good deeds are not accepted**

The bad neighbour is a person who has lost her faith, as stated in the hadith quoted above; she is also a person whose good deeds are all cancelled, so that from now on no act of obedience or righteousness will be of any benefit to her, so long as she persists in her mistreatment of her neighbour. Good deeds are essentially based on faith in Allah (SWT), and faith in Allah (SWT) is not the matter of mere words: what counts is the practical implementation of that which Allah (SWT) requires of His servants. If a bad neighbour has lost her faith by persisting in her mistreatment of her neighbour, then there is no hope that Allah (SWT) will accept her good deeds, no matter how great or how many they may be. They will be utterly wiped out, even if she spends her nights and days performing good deeds.
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The Prophet (PBUH) was asked: "O Messenger of Allah, such-and-such a woman spends her nights in prayer, fasts during the day, and so on, and she gives in charity, but she offends her neighbours with her sharp tongue." The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Her good deeds will be of no avail: she is among the people of Hell." They said, "And so-and-so prays only the obligatory prayers, gives charity in the form of left-over curds, but does not offend anyone." The Prophet (PBUH) said: "She is among the people of Paradise."20

The Prophet (PBUH) described the bad neighbour as being one of the worst types of people:

"There are three worst types of people: a ruler who, if you do well, does not appreciate it, and if do wrong, he does not forgive you for it; a bad neighbour who, if he sees something good, he conceals it, and if he sees something bad he broadcasts it; and a wife who, when you are present she annoys you and if you go away, she betrays you."21

The Hadith paint such an ugly picture of the bad neighbour that the true Muslim woman would be so shaken that she will avoid committing the sin of mistreating a neighbour and it will be most unlikely that she will let any dispute or hostility arise between her and her neighbour, or become involved in schemes and plots. The Prophet's warning against harming or arguing with neighbours is always echoing in her ears, and she never forgets it any time she feels the stirrings of anger or hostility towards a neighbour:

"The first two disputing parties to appear before Allah (SWT) on the Day of Judgement will be two neighbours."22

Her good treatment of her neighbour is not lacking

Not only does the Muslim woman refrain from harming or disturbing her neighbour, she also does not spare any effort to help her neighbour, opening wide the doors of care, friendship and generosity. She is careful not to fall short in her duties whenever she is called upon to take care of her neighbours, and to honour them and treat them well, lest the words of the Prophet (PBUH) concerning the miserly, unhelpful neighbour become applicable
to her: "How many people will be hanging on to their neighbours on the Day of Judgement, saying: `O my Lord! He shut his door in my face and denied me his kind treatment and help!'"23

What a miserable position the miserly, uncaring neighbour will be in on the Day of Judgement!

According to Islam, the Muslim men and women are like a high wall, whose bricks are the people of this ummah. Each brick must be sound, and strongly bonded with the others, to make this wall sturdy and durable, otherwise it will become weak and prone to collapse. Thus Islam surrounds this wall with strong spiritual ties, to preserve its integrity and strength, so that it will not be shaken no matter what events befall it.

The Prophet (PBUH) gave a marvellous metaphor of the solidarity and mutual support among Muslim men and women: "Believers are like a structure, parts of which support other parts."24

"The believers, in their mutual friendship, mercy and affection, are like one body: if any part of it complains, the rest of the body will also stay awake in pain."25

If a religion places such an amazing emphasis on the solidarity of its followers, it is natural that it should strengthen neighbourly ties and base them on a solid foundation of friendship, kindness, mutual support and good treatment.

**She puts up with her neighbour's mistakes and bad treatment**

The Muslim woman who is guided by her religion is patient with her neighbour and does not get angry or bear a grudge if she makes a mistake or has some shortcomings. She is tolerant and forgiving towards her, thus hoping to earn reward from Allah (SWT) and to attain His love and pleasure. This is proven by the hadith of Abu Dharr: when Mutarrif ibn `Abdullah met him, he said, "O Abu Dharr, I heard about what you said and wanted to meet you." Abu Dharr said, "Your father was a great man! Now you have met me." Mutarrif said: "I heard that you have said that the Prophet (PBUH) said: `Allah (SWT) loves three and hates three.'" Abu Dharr said, "I do not think that..."
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I would tell lies about the Messenger of Allah." Mutarrif said, "Then who are the three whom Allah (SWT) loves?"
Abu Dharr (quoting the Prophet (PBUH)) said: "`A man who fights for the sake of Allah (SWT), with perseverance and hoping for reward from Him, and fights until he is killed, and you find this in the Book of Allah (SWT).' Then he recited: "Truly Allah loves those who fight in His cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure." [al-Saff 61:4] Mutarrif asked, "Then who?" He said, "`A man who has a bad neighbour who annoys and disturbs him, but he bears it with patience and forbearance until Allah (SWT) ends the matter either during his lifetime or upon the death of either of them."26

One of the characteristics of the Muslim woman whose soul has truly been cleansed and moulded by Islam is that she patiently bears the annoyances caused by her neighbours, as much as she is able. She repels their bad treatment with something that is better, and by being patient and behaving properly she sets the highest example of good treatment of one's neighbours and removes the roots of evil and hatred from their souls. Even more importantly, she is acting in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet (PBUH): "Whoever believes in Allah (SWT) and the Last Day, let him not harm or annoy his neighbour . . ."27

Let them hear this, those women who lose their minds when their child fights with the neighbours' children so that they turn a blind eye to their own child's faults and insult their neighbours with bad language and hurtful accusations, thus destroying the ties of neighbourliness and friendship in a moment of anger. Let them know that they are going against all the Islamic teachings regarding the good treatment of neighbours and that they are showing themselves to be content to be bad neighbours.

Let those women rejoice who are wise, polite and forbearing neighbours, who respond in kind to their neighbours' good treatment, because they are among the righteous neighbours with whose wise and rightly-guided conduct Allah (SWT) is pleased.
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Footnotes:

2. Reported by al-Tabarani with a jayyid isnad. See Majma' al-Zawa'id, 8/165.
3. Bukhari and Muslim. See Riyad al-Salihin, 185, Bab fi haqq al-jar wa'l-wasiyyah bihi.
6. Sahih Muslim, 2/188, Kitab al-iman, bab min khidal al-iman an tuhibb li akhika ma tuhibbu li nafsika.
7. Sahih Muslim, 2/188, Kitab al-adab, bab al-wasiyah bi'l-jar wa'l-ihsan ilayhi.
8. Sahih Muslim, 2/188, Kitab al-adab, bab al-wasiyah bi'l-jar wa'l-ihsan ilayhi.
10. Reported by al-Tabarani and Abu Ya'la; its narrators are thiqat. See Majma' al-Zawa'id, 8/167.
15. Reported by Bukhari in al-Adab al-Mufrad, 1/198, Bab tahdi ila aqrabihim baban.
18. Bukhari and Muslim. See Riyad al-Salihin, 185, Bab fi haq al-jar wa'l-wasiyah bihi.
19. Sahih Muslim, 2/18, Kitab al-iman, bab bayan tahrim idha' al-jar
20. Reported by Bukhari in al-Adab al-Mufrad, 1/210, Bab la yu'dhi jarahu.
21. Reported by al-Tabarani in al-Kabir, 18/267; its narrators are thiqat.
22. Reported with a hasan isnad by Ahmad and al-Tabarani. See Majma' al-Zawa'id, 8/170.
23. Reported by Bukhari in al-Adab al-Mufrad, 1/200, Bab man aghlaqa al-bab 'ala'l-jar.
25. Ibid.
26. Reported with a sahih isnad by Ahmad and al-Tabarani. See Majma' al-Zawa'id, 8/171.
27. Fath al-Bari, 10/445, Kitab al-adab, bab man kana yu'min bi-Allah wa'l-yawm al-akhir fala yu'dhi jarahu.