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FAMILY IN ISLAM

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Discussant response to A.M.Khattab

Dr. Abd Al-Mun'im Khattab has analysed the concept of the family according to the religion of Islam eloquently and very adequately. He also examined the knit of relationship uniting the members of the family and the mutual rights and obligations arising from them quite satisfactorily.

Dr. Khattab rightly made it clear that these are relationships and those mutual rights and obligations are not regarded as merely social manifestations of the family structure but that they are also domestic features promoted and sanctioned by the religion of Islam.

So, awareness of these relationship and discharging the obligations arising from them are - fundamentally - religious duties incumbent upon the members of the family.

Therefore, a spouse who observes the obligations due to the other party is promised abundant rewards from Allah, Almighty God, in Paradise although undertaking of such obligations might also very well bring pleasure to the person involved. So, even putting a morsel in the mouth of one's wife is regarded a good religious deed. So also obedience to the wishes of the husband is very meritorious. Likewise, is taking good care of one's children.

The Islamic religion is quite concerned to promote cordial and happy relations within the social order, particularly within the family, the pillar of society, as Dr. Abd Al-Mun'im Khattab has aptly described it.

The individual, according to Islam, has to maintain cordial relationships with the world around him; the entire humanity. The more the group of which he is a member is smaller, the stronger the ties that connect him with its members, till we get to the group of his neighbourhood. Here Islam emphasises the neighbourly obligations to the degree that one is not allowed to raise his wall so as to deprive his neighbour his neighbour of the sun light or the fresh air. He is even required not to let the smell of cooking reach his neighbour unless he sends him some.

Emphasis reaches its zenith when we come to the relationships within the family. Parents are obliged by religion to bring up the young in the best way they can and to spent over them until they can manage on their own, or until the daughter gets married and becomes under the care of a husbands. And in case parents become needy, the children have to take care of their needs. Even siblings in need have a right to claim assistance from their able brothers. Not only that. The blood tie entitles a person to claim help from his distant relatives. A person will be brought up before Allah to give account as to how he treated his relatives!

An interesting point is the absence of the term "family", in Arabic, the mode of Islamic expression. There are terms denoting the wider blood grouping "the lineage", "the clan" and "the tribe". The individual has to be conscious of the duties and expectitions due the members of these groups - no mater how distant they might be. Yet, as implied earlier, the smaller the

group, the more the intensity and the quantity of the mutual obligations.

I hope, in this way, I have succeeded in unfolding some of the important implications of the excellent paper of Dr. Abdul Mun'im Khattab on the family in Islam.

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