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Domestic Dynamics: Unraveling Reform through Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) Biography

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Abstract:

This article provides a comprehensive exploration of the sanctity of the home within Islam, drawing upon revered texts such as the Qur'an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. It delves into the multifaceted role of the home as a spiritual sanctuary, facilitating personal growth, moral development, and the cultivation of familial bonds. Additionally, it examines how the home serves as a cornerstone for societal harmony, promoting values of compassion, kindness, and unity within the broader community. By illuminating these dimensions, the article aims to highlight the enduring significance of the home as a vital institution in Islamic tradition, offering both spiritual solace and ethical guidance to believers. Through its insightful analysis, it seeks to underscore the timeless importance of nurturing a sacred and harmonious home environment as a pathway to individual fulfillment and collective well-being within Islamic societies.

Keywords Islah –al-Bayut, Societal harmony, Prophet's Biography. Familial bonds, Sanctity

Introduction

The literal meaning of Al-Bayt: house, abode, Kaaba, Bayt Ullah: masjid. (Kiranwi, 2001) house, mansion, its plural is bayut. (Ferozuddin, 2010)

The term "Bayt" (Arabic: بيت), commonly used for a dwelling, including tents for nomads, and is also used for the permanent structures (made of stone, wood, or bricks) for the residents. Sometimes it employs sacred sites or shrines as well. Subsequently, in Arabic, with the addition of "Alif Lam" (البيت), it is also applied to the Kaaba in Mecca, known as the Bayt Allah (Sacred House), or Al-Sabīṭ al-'Atīq (Ancient and Sacred House), used as a mark of reverence. The Arabic lexicographers have defined this term specifically for a household that serves as a residence for a family of moderate means. The concept of "family" in this term is clear in all Semitic languages. (The term "Bayt" is not used for tribes. The plural of "Bayt" is "Buyūt" and the plural of plural is "Buyūtāt," especially used for esteemed households.) (Punjab, 2004)

The home is the birthplace of man and the center of his comfort and tranquility, and it is a high place for spending time with his family and a place of his privacy. (Siddiq, 2013) Allah says,

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى (Al-Quran 33:33)

“And settle in your homes; and do not display your beauty, as in the former days of ignorance.”

The ruler of the household is the woman; she is the axis of the family. The most important role of a woman, beyond all her other tasks, is to establish an environment of peace and tranquility through her role as a mother and wife. (<https://urdu.khamenei.ir/news/5597>, n.d.) The term "household" in Islamic contexts refers to the cohabitation of two people under one roof, the optimal blending of two temperaments, the creation of a perfect and spiritually nourishing atmosphere, the role of companionship and affection between two people, and the place where one person can assist the other in achieving perfection and spiritual growth. It is a place where one experiences spiritual serenity and purity. Such is the perspective of

Islam regarding a prosperous household, and it is for this reason that Islam assigns such significance to this center, the household. (<https://www.erfan.ir/urdu/83521.html>, n.d.)

Methodology

This article employs a comprehensive approach, analyzing primary religious texts, scholarly interpretations, and contemporary studies to explore the sanctity of the home in Islam. Through synthesizing diverse sources, it aims to provide a nuanced understanding of its spiritual, moral, and societal significance.

The need of home in human life:

Whether a person lives in a hut, or in a temporary tent, or in a luxurious bungalow, a home is essential for every human being because it is an integral part of his life. It is the responsibility of the husband to build a house with halal sustenance. A shack of halal sustenance is better than a bungalow of haram earnings. It is a fact that a house is a temporary place for a person and a grave would be his abode. Good deeds are required to make the next world a worthy place to live. In Paradise there will be houses made of gold and silver bricks with a permanent allotment. No one will have any fear in paradise. In a forthcoming abode, both its outer and inner spaces will seamlessly meld. Envisage gatherings adorned with cushions, attended by diligent servants catering to every need. There will be pure and beautiful wives who will be embodiment of love, affection, and beautification. They will please their husbands and never disobey them. All the needs of humans will be fulfilled there. Allah Almighty gives glad tidings in Surah Fussilat in the following words.

وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهُنَّ أَنْفُسُكُمْ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَدْعُونَ ﴿٣١﴾ نَزَّلْنَا مِنْ غَفُورٍ رَحِيمٍ

“And you will have therein whatever your souls desire, and you will have therein whatever you request [or wish]. As accommodation from a [Lord who is] Forgiving and Merciful. (Al-Quran 41:31-32)

The blessed person would be the one who has his dwelling in paradise, and he will not be afraid to depart it, as according to the hadith, whoever enters in paradise will never be expelled from it.

It is the possession of Allah Almighty. A person has to spend his whole life achieving the pleasure of Allah. He will announce that you are the permanent possessors of those homes. You will not face death there. I am pleased with you. (Muhammad Ruhollah)

Causes and Inspirations for Household Reformation

In Islam, the home stands as the cornerstone of society, a sacred space imbued with significance. Its pivotal role prompts Islam to underscore the paramount importance of fostering stability within families and households. Within these familial domains lie the essence of comfort, tranquility, and peace, serving as arenas for nurturing, faith cultivation, and spiritual enlightenment. Moreover, they serve as havens for addressing and resolving spiritual and psychological tribulations.

Embedded within the fabric of the family are the rich threads of culture, beliefs, familial customs, and social etiquettes, intricately woven and passed down through generations. It is within these walls that the resurgence of lost vigor occurs, where aspirations are fortified, and the journey toward happiness and spiritual fulfillment unfolds.

Central to Islamic teachings is the cultivation of an environment within the home characterized by cheerfulness, joy, spirituality, and love. Yet, a society bereft of well-structured households finds itself adrift in turmoil, insecurity, and instability. In such precarious environments, the transmission of cultural, intellectual, and ideological legacies to succeeding generations becomes fraught with difficulty.

Consequently, the noble aims of human upbringing falter, and the foundations of society begin to crumble. Even amidst the presence of reputable educational institutions and nurturing centers, the absence of healthy and robust households undermines the collective efforts toward proper upbringing.

Thus, the imperative emerges to revitalize the home, to embark on a journey of reformation fueled by the recognition of its pivotal role in shaping not only individual destinies but the trajectory of society itself. (<http://www.hajj.com/ur/ethnic-and-morality>, 2024)

Several key factors and motivations contribute to the consideration and implementation of household reformation. Among them the prominent are:

1. Safeguarding Oneself and Family from Hellfire:

Guided by the words of Allah, believers are urged to protect themselves and their families from the raging fires of Hell. This entails adherence to divine commands and directives, ensuring a righteous path for oneself and loved ones. It is said in Holy Quran,

“O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, over which are [appointed] angels, harsh and severe; they do not disobey Allah in what He commands them but do what they are commanded.” (Al-Quran 66:6)

2. The Significance of Responsibilities of head of Household:

The importance of the responsibilities of the head of the Household will be clarified on the day of judgment. It is highlighted by the prophet (PBUH),

“Ibn 'Umar (May Allah be pleased with them) reported. I heard Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) saying, "All of you are guardians and are responsible for your wards. The ruler is a guardian and responsible for his subjects; the man is a guardian and responsible for his family; the woman is a guardian and is responsible for her husband's house and his offspring; and so, all of you are guardians and are responsible for your wards." (Riyad as-Salihin, The Book of Miscellany - كتاب المقدمات » Hadith 652)

This underscores the importance of household leaders in nurturing and guiding their families.

3. Performing Domestic Duties with Good Intentions and a Sense of Responsibility:

The actions of household members, when performed with sincerity and an awareness of accountability, hold immense spiritual rewards. Inquiring about the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) actions at home, his wife Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, mentioned,

“He engaged in household chores and, when it was time for prayer, he went to the mosque.” (Al-Bukhari, 1422 AH)

4. Institution of the household is the foundation of Muslim society.

These homes collectively form neighborhoods, and neighborhoods constitute societies. If the bricks of these households are sound and upright, society becomes fortified by the decree and grace of Allah, becoming resilient against the adversaries of God and fostering the promotion of good. Evil finds no foothold where righteousness prevails. (Shafiq Ahmad Khan, 1424 AH)

Guiding Principles for Household Reformation in the Light of the Prophet's Biography

The Creator of the universe has sent the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the perfect and complete example for humanity, illuminating the path of righteousness as it is mentioned in Holy Quran, “There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often.” (Al-Quran, 33:21)

Undoubtedly, the life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) presents an exemplary model for all of mankind. His ways have been ordained as a natural way of life. The humane virtues displayed by the Prophet (peace be upon him) illuminate and guide humanity until the Day of Judgment. It is for this reason that every aspect of the Prophet's biography shines brightly. Allah has bestowed upon humanity the system of Islam to lead their lives in this transient world and has sent Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the epitome of life.

Principles for Social and Urban Planning:

The guidance provided in verse 149 of Surah Al-Baqarah states,

"And from wherever you go out [for prayer], turn your face toward al-Masjid al-Haram. And wherever you [believers] may be, turn your face toward it [in prayer]. Indeed, those who have been given the Scripture well know that it is the truth from their Lord. And Allah is not unaware of what they do." (Al-Quran, 2:149)

This blessed verse emphasizes the directive to orient oneself towards the Kaaba (al-Masjid al-Haram) in Mecca wherever one may be. This entails that mosques, homes, cemeteries, cities, and all societal and urban planning should prioritize the direction of the Kaaba as the central element. Even in daily activities such as rising, sitting, and sleeping, it is recommended to keep the direction of the Qiblah in mind. It is preferable that even the hosts of gatherings sit facing the Qiblah.

By integrating these principles into social and urban planning, communities can align themselves with divine guidance. Through the grace and mercy of Allah, adherence to these guidelines will cultivate a spiritual connection within individuals. This alignment will invite blessings from above, nurturing a sense of unity among community members and safeguarding against hypocrisy within their ranks. (Mahmood, 2004)

Keeping Homes Free from Vices:

To foster a positive home environment, it's imperative to root out specific vices from our households. These negative traits act as breeding grounds for discord, corruption, and societal conflict. Distrust, the erosion of affection, greed, and self-centeredness are all symptoms of ethical decay. Envy, gossip, and slander are moral ailments that undermine the fabric of society, trapping devout worshippers in a cycle of destruction. These vices are akin to poison, corroding the very foundations of our communities.

It is incumbent upon every Muslim to unite in the fight against these evils through collaborative efforts. Scholars, educators, religious leaders, and every member of the household must work diligently to eradicate these vices at their core. By doing so, we pave the way for peace and harmony within society, inviting the blessings of Allah into every home. May Allah shield every Muslim from the perils of such vile, destructive diseases. Amen! (Muhammad Abbas Siddiq)

A Glimpse into the Prophet's meal

There is a narration from Anas (R.Allah) that he served the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with bread and tainted fat (as a sauce). At that time, the Prophet (PBUH) had taken a loan from a Jew for the well-being of his household. Anas (R.Allah) reported hearing the Prophet (PBUH) saying,

"There never was an evening that came upon the family of Muhammad (PBUH) when they had both wheat bread and barley simultaneously, even though there were nine members in his household." (Bukhari)

Principles and Preferences for Handcrafted Meals:

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) once remarked, "No person has ever eaten a meal better than that which he has earned through the work of his own hands. Indeed, the Prophet of Allah, David (peace be upon him), used to eat from the work of his own hands." (Bukhari, Sahih Bukhari, 2072)

The Prohibition of Hanging Pictures in Homes

In Islam, there is a particular emphasis on the environment within our homes, including the decorations we choose. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) once advised, "Angels do not enter a house where there is a dog or a picture." (Sahih Bukhari, 3225) This guidance highlights the importance of maintaining a certain ambiance conducive to spiritual well-being.

So, what's the reasoning behind this guideline? It's about fostering a space that encourages a connection with the divine and cultivates inner peace. By refraining from displaying images, particularly those of animate beings, Muslims aim to preserve the sanctity and tranquility of their homes.

The Significance and Admonition of Offering Prayers in at Home for Men:

In the teachings of Islam, the importance of congregational prayers, especially within masjid, is emphasized for men. Narrated by Hazrat Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him), the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "The prayer of one of you in congregation is greater in reward than his prayer alone by twenty-five degrees. That is because when one of you performs ablution and does it well, and then goes out to the mosque solely for the purpose of performing the prayer, he does not take a step without being raised a degree for it or having a sin removed from him. The angels continue to pray for him as long as he is in the place where he has prayed, saying, 'O Allah, send blessings upon him; O Allah, have mercy upon him.' And one of you is in the prayer so long as the prayer detains him." This divine blessing extends until the person breaks their ablution, ensuring that the angels continue to supplicate for them as long as they remain within the area of their prayer. Hence, any delay caused by prayer is still counted within the domain of prayer. (Sahih Bukhari, 2119) Furthermore, Hazrat Usama bin Zaid (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Men would cease to perform congregational prayers, or I would burn down their houses." (al-Qazwini) This statement underscores the importance of maintaining the practice of congregational prayers and the seriousness with which it is regarded in Islam.

Ruling on Seeking Permission Before Entering Homes:

In Islamic tradition, seeking permission before entering someone's home is not merely a formality but a deeply ingrained etiquette. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized this practice as a sign of respect for people's privacy and property.

According to a narration by Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him), the Prophet (PBUH) stated that if someone peeks into a house without permission, it is permissible for the residents to take action to protect their privacy, even to the extent of putting out the intruder's eye. (al-Qushayri) This illustrates the seriousness with which Islam regards the privacy and sanctity of individuals' homes.

Moreover, the Prophet (PBUH) outlined the etiquette of seeking permission by advising that it should be sought three times. If permission is granted, one may enter, but if not, it is essential to respect the decision and refrain from entering. (at-Tirmidhi, 1975) This guidance underscores the importance of consent and courtesy in interpersonal interactions.

In essence, seeking permission before entering someone's home serves as a reminder of the value Islam places on mutual respect, privacy, and dignity. It reflects the Prophet's teachings on maintaining harmonious relationships and upholding the rights of others, thereby fostering a society based on mutual understanding and consideration.

Consultation with family members in domestic matters:

A crucial aspect of managing family affairs is regularly engaging in open discussions. Regardless of age, when someone offers advice, it's vital to listen carefully and show respect. If someone expresses dissatisfaction, their concerns should be patiently addressed. Criticism, when necessary, provides valuable opportunities for nurturing children, instilling good manners, and boosting self-esteem.

In decision-making, it's essential to consider the feelings of all family members. Thus, it's beneficial to organize gatherings where everyone can collectively discuss household reforms or issues. Encouraging all family members to share their perspectives ensures that decisions are well-rounded and considerate. Striving for consensus promotes love and unity among family members, making even the most challenging tasks achievable through cooperation. Mutual consultation isn't just a practice; it's a fundamental trait of believers that strengthens family bonds and fosters harmony. It is mentioned in Holy Quran, "And consult them in the matter." (Al-Quran 3:159)

Hence, whether it involves setting up the home, moving to a new place, arranging a wedding for a child, handling household finances, or attending family gatherings, it's crucial to seek consensus through mutual consultation and agreement. Imposing decisions forcefully only sours the family environment. Seeking the input and advice of children in all matters boosts their morale and self-assurance. (Mohammad Rohullah Naqshbandi Ghafouri)

Entering the House: Sunnah Etiquette and Supplication

When entering a house, it's recommended and in accordance with the Sunnah not to enter abruptly without informing those insides. Instead, it's advised to alert the occupants beforehand, whether by the sound of footsteps, knocking, or other means. Upon entering the house, it's commanded to greet the residents with the following salutation, as directed by Allah, "When you enter houses, give greetings of peace upon yourselves - a greeting from Allah, blessed and good. Thus, does Allah make clear to you the verses [of ordinance] that you may understand." (al-Quran 24:61)

The greeting ordained by Allah for His believing servants is indeed praiseworthy and blessed. It's considered pure and serves as a means to attain Allah's mercy and blessings. Allah has deemed it good and pure because it's one of the most virtuous and pleasing expressions in His sight. Therefore, it's perfectly acceptable to offer this greeting when entering any household, whether it's a public or private space. This gesture promotes love, compassion, and kindness among individuals, just as one would wish for oneself. As the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) advised Anas (May Allah be pleased with him), "O son, when you enter upon your family, greet them, for it will be a blessing for you and for your family." (Abu Isa Muhammad bin Isa Tirmidhi)

Recommended Prayers When Leaving Home:

When someone steps out of their home, they face various risks like encountering enemies, dangerous animals, or even accidents in today's busy world. Interactions with different people can also lead to conflicts, unjust behavior, or falling prey to ignorance and foolishness. Most concerning is the influence of Satan, who can manipulate and deceive.

However, if someone leaves their home after seeking Allah's protection and guidance, they can feel confident that they'll be shielded from harm and wrongdoing. Allah's support helps them navigate through dangers and temptations, keeping them safe from harm. (<https://www.islamidawah.com/quesanswer>, n.d.)

The narration from Anas bin Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) states, "When the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to leave his house, he would recite this supplication: "I begin with the name of Allah, I trust in Allah. O Allah, I seek refuge in You from going astray or being led astray, from wrongdoing or being wronged, from behaving foolishly or having foolishness done to me." (Sunan al-Tirmidhi, 3426)

The guidance in this Hadith directs individuals to recite certain phrases when leaving their homes. When someone says "Bismillah" (in the name of Allah) upon leaving, they initiate their departure under Allah's name and seek His protection. Then, they say "Tawakkaltu 'ala Allah" (I rely upon Allah), placing their trust in Allah for all their affairs. Afterward, they say "La hawla wa la quwwata illa billah" (There is no power and no strength except with Allah), expressing their faith that they cannot accomplish any good deed or protect themselves from harm except through Allah's absolute power and generosity. By reciting this supplication, when a person leaves their home, they receive the blessing of being guided by the blessed name of Allah, which prevents them from going astray. They find sufficiency and reliance on Allah for their most difficult and crucial matters, and by saying "La hawla wa la quwwata illa billah," they become safeguarded from all apparent and hidden calamities. This supplication grants them protection from various trials and tribulations. When a person recites this supplication, they receive a gift from the unseen world or through the angels, informing them that they have received complete guidance. Allah's sufficiency and protection make the Shaytan, who is man's real enemy, despair. The Shaytan distances himself and warns others not to lead astray someone who has been granted the opportunity by Allah to recite this supplication and has entered under Allah's sufficiency and protection. (<https://www.islamidawah.com/quesanswer>, n.d.)

Method to Protect the House from Satan:

It is narrated by Jabar bin Abdullah (May Allah be pleased with him), the prophet (Peace be upon him) says, "When a person enters his house and mentions Allah's name upon entering and upon eating, the devil says to his gathering, "You have no place to spend the night and no evening meal." And when he enters without mentioning Allah's name upon entering, the devil says, "You have found a place to spend the night." And if he does not mention Allah's name upon eating, the devil says, "You have found a place to spend the night and have your evening meal." (Al-Sunan Ibn Majah, 3887)

Conclusion

In short, the home is a vital blessing bestowed upon humanity by Allah, providing a sanctuary for mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. A harmonious and spiritually uplifting household plays a pivotal role in achieving success across societal, economic, and social aspects of life. The journey of human reform begins from birth and continues until death, combating worldly superstitions, ego, and satanic influences. Guidance for household reform is found in the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), emphasizing universal principles aligned with the laws of nature. Key practices include individual responsibility, seeking divine guidance, and fostering mutual consultation within families. Homes should be sanctuaries of moderation, humility, determination, and patience, cultivating a sense of responsibility and fear of Allah. Certain practices, such as seeking permission before entering, adhering to congregational prayers, and avoiding miserliness, are emphasized for maintaining household harmony and spiritual well-being. Ultimately, the aim is to create homes where Allah's protection and sufficiency prevail, counteracting the influence of evil and promoting mutual cooperation and goodness.

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