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Prophetic Compassion and the Rights of Children in Islam: A Comparative Analysis of Divine Mercy and Modern Crises

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Abstract

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was divinely titled “Raḥmatan li’l-‘Ālamīn” (a mercy to all the worlds), a reality that was manifested not only in his compassion toward all creation but particularly in his affectionate treatment of children. His ﷺ words, actions, and prayers offer a living model for moral, emotional, spiritual, and legal support to the youngest members of society. The Qur’an and Sunnah emphasize children as blessings (ni‘mah), trials (fitnah), and adornments (zīnah) of this worldly life. The Prophet ﷺ openly condemned ancient Arabian and other pre-Islamic practices such as female infanticide, child neglect, or treating children as parental property. In stark contrast, he laid down clear injunctions for love, mercy, naming rights, suckling (riḍā‘ah), education, emotional well-being, and legal protection. This article explores the multidimensional approach of Islam to children's rights—spiritual, ethical, emotional, and legal—through the example of the Prophet ﷺ. It also examines pre-modern and contemporary violations of children's rights in Western civilization, from ancient sacrificial rituals to modern structural failures—such as child labor, broken family systems, and institutional neglect. The paper contextualizes children’s rights as part of ḥuqū

Keywords: Child Protection, Human Rights, Moral Education (Tarbiyah), Ḥuqūq al-‘Ibād, Western vs Islamic Ethics, Parenting in Islam.

Introduction

Just as the rain of mercy showers uniformly over fields, meadows, hills, and mountains quenching the thirst of parched earth, so too does the love, affection, and compassion of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) surge like a boundless ocean for all: men and women, the elderly and youth, and children alike. Each individual claimed that they received the most loving attention from the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) how noble and fortunate were those blessed souls who were gifted, moment by moment and step by step, with the abundant love and compassion of Rasūlullāh (ﷺ)

This love and affection possess so many dimensions and manifestations that they are beyond enumeration. Its radiance is not limited to humankind alone it extends to animals, plants, inanimate objects, and even beyond, dazzling the eyes with its glow. That is why he was honored with the title:

رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

“A mercy to all the worlds.”

Children are the future of parents, families, nations, and the Ummah. Yet this future is increasingly under threat due to the rapidly changing conditions of the present age and the overwhelming influence of Western ideologies.

The Significance of Children in Islam

Children in the Qur’ān and Sunnah

The Qur’ān emphasizes the sacred status of children in various ways. It swears an oath by them:

وَوَالِدٍ وَمَا وَلَدٌ¹

By the parent and what he begot

Walid (parent) and ma walad (what he begot) highlight the sanctity of offspring.

The birth of children is described as a cause for rejoicing:

فَبَشِّرْنَاهُمَا بِغُلَامٍ عَلِيمٍ

So We gave them good tidings of a knowledgeable boy.²

Conversely, the grief at the birth of daughters is condemned:

وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُم بِالْأُنثَىٰ ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾ يَتَوَارَىٰ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِن سُوءِ مَا بُشِّرَبِهِ

“And when one of them is informed of [the birth of] a female, his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief. He hides himself from the people because of the ill of which he has been informed...”³

Children are described as “comfort for the eyes” (qurrata ‘yun):

وَجَعَلْنَا لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا⁴

“...and make us leaders of the righteous.

And also as the adornment of this world:

أَمْالُؤْاَ لِّلْبَنِيْنَ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا⁵

“Wealth and children are [but] adornment of the worldly life.”

Children are metaphorically referred to as the butterflies of Paradise, and the Prophet (ṣallāAllāhu‘alayhiwasallam) taught:

مَنْ لَا يَرْحَمُ لَا يُرْحَمُ⁶

“He who does not show mercy will not be shown mercy.”

In another narration, he said:

لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يَرْحَمِ صَغِيرَنَا⁷

“He is not of us who does not show mercy to our young.”

The Prophet (ṣallāAllāhu‘alayhiwasallam) would often pray for children:

اللَّهُمَّ ارْحَمْهُمَا فَإِنِّي أَرْحَمُهُمَا⁸

“O Allah, have mercy on them, for I show mercy to them.”

Even the Prophets themselves longed for righteous offspring. Prophet Zakariyyā (‘alayhi al-salām) supplicated:

رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً إِنَّكَ سَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ⁹

“My Lord, grant me from Yourself a good offspring. Indeed, You are the Hearer of supplication.”

Allah not only answered him with a prophet-son, but also encouraged all believers to make this beautiful du‘ā’:

رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا

“Our Lord, grant us from among our spouses and offspring comfort to our eyes and make us leaders of the righteous.”¹⁰

1.2 Wealth and Children: A Divine Blessing or a Trial

Children and wealth are described not only as blessings but also as potential trials (fitnah). Allah says:

زَيْنٌ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ... مِنَ الْبَنِينَ... ذَلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا¹¹

“Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire of women and children... That is the enjoyment of worldly life.”

And warns:

إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ¹²

“Indeed, your wealth and your children are (but) a trial.”

But when children are raised with righteous education and tarbiyah (moral training), they become a source of eternal success. Allah commands:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا¹³

“O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire...”

A Comparative Look at the Rights of Children

The Prophet (ṣallāAllāhu‘alayhiwasallam) emphasized:

كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ¹⁴

“Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for his flock.”

This includes children under one's care. Unlike pre-Islamic customs and many ancient cultures where parents claimed ownership over their children's lives sometimes going so far as to marry daughters or kill offspring for ritual, poverty, or gender Islam abolished such practices.

Pharaoh ordered the killing of sons and sparing of daughters¹⁵. Islam proclaimed that life is sacred, and only Allah is the true Razzāq (Provider):

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ إِمْلَاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ¹⁶

“Do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you.”

Even the unknown child or foundling has the right to life, kinship, breastfeeding (riḍā‘ah), and protection. If society fails in this duty, no worldly power can save it from destruction.

2. The Western Crisis

Modern Western models such as “fewer children, better life,” same-sex unions, childless cohabitation, lack of parental responsibility, and absolute personal freedom eventually exposed their flaws. As the social fabric began to break, the West had to return to enacting children's rights through law, a belated recognition of the vacuum created by unnatural lifestyles.

In the West, children were historically treated with cruelty and disregard. They were terrified with stories of wolves, ghosts, dark figures, and graphic scenes of execution. Illegitimate, weak, and disabled children were often killed. Some were sacrificed to deities both biological and purchased children. In ancient architecture, children's flesh and blood were mixed into the foundations to strengthen the structure. Even today, certain Christian temples built with human skulls can be seen on social media.

Children were used as collateral and hostages, and it was not until 374 CE that a law was introduced prohibiting the killing of children¹⁷.

Even today, Western society remains one of the worst environments for children. According to Dr. Schwarz (1988), over 80,000 illegitimate children are born in the UK each year. According to Sorokin (pp. 13–14), in the USA in 1927, 28 out of every 1,000 children were born out of wedlock. These statistics do not include abortion cases.

Due to the widespread phenomenon of divorce, children are being raised like poultry in Child Care Centers, devoid of parental warmth. The same crisis is found in France¹⁸.

To address this alarming situation, the first international conference on children's rights was held on 20 November 1989, followed by another in September 1990 under the auspices of the United Nations in New York, where formal legal frameworks for child protection were drafted¹⁹.

Definition of a Child:

The Qur'ān outlines four distinct stages in the development of a child before birth. Firstly, the human being is created from dust (ṭīn):

“He created him from dust.”

خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ²⁰

Then, life begins through the drop of sperm (nuṭfah):

ثُمَّ جَعَلَ نَسْلَهُ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِّنْ مَّاءٍ مَّهِينٍ²¹

“Then He made his offspring from an extract of a humble fluid.”

This nuṭfah develops into a clinging clot (‘alaqah), then into a lump of flesh (muḍghah), as mentioned:

ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً²²

“Then We made the sperm-drop into a clinging clot, and We made the clot into a lump [of flesh]...”

After this, the child is born. While in the mother’s womb, the fetus is referred to as a janīn (جنين)²³

The Qur’ān uses the word ṭifl (طفل) for a young child:

وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِّنْ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا²⁴

“...And Allah brought you out from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing...”

And the term ṣabiyy (صَبِيٍّ) is also used:

فَأَذَلِّيْ دُلُوْهُ قَالِ يَا بُشْرَىٰ هَذَا غُلَامٌ²⁵

“...He let down his bucket. He said, ‘Oh good news! Here is a boy’”

In Islamic legal discourse, ṣabiyy is categorized into two stages:

1. GhayrMumayyiz (غَيْرُ مُمَيِّزٍ): A child under the age of seven who cannot distinguish between right and wrong.
2. Mumayyiz (مُمَيِّزٍ): A child above seven years who can differentiate to some extent.²⁶

Some classical scholars further classify childhood into three phases:

1. GhayrMumayyiz (Pre-discerning stage)
2. Mumayyiz (Discerning stage)
3. Bāligh (Puberty stage)²⁷

Puberty (bulūgh) is established either by the appearance of physical signs such as nocturnal emission (iḥtilām), menstruation (ḥayḍ), or pregnancy, or by age: the minimum age of puberty is nine years for girls and twelve years for boys²⁸

The maximum age of puberty is traditionally considered to be seventeen for girls and eighteen for boys.

3. Types of Rights

Some rights are purely moral in nature—for example, the respect due to elders (ḥaqq al-adab), kindness toward the young (ḥaqq al-shafaqah), support of the needy (ḥaqq al-‘awn), and hospitality toward guests (ḥaqq al-ḍiyāfah). Others, however, are protected by law, such

as the right of ownership (ḥaqq al-milkiyyah), the right to wages (ḥaqq al-ujrah), the right to dowry (ḥaqq al-mahr), and the right to compensation (ḥaqq al-‘iwaḍ). These are rights connected to tangible interests (maṣlaḥah), and state legislation recognizes them and renders them enforceable through judicial mechanisms. Such rights are known as legal rights, or positive rights.

Another category of individual rights concerns a person’s relationship with the state. In this sphere, where the individual stands against an all-powerful and resource-rich state, the rights guaranteed are termed fundamental rights. These include what are also known as basic human rights or the birthrights of man. The rights that Islam grants to humans especially to children are unmatched by any ancient or modern religion or civilization.

Yet it is deeply regrettable that Islam itself has been most slandered regarding children’s rights. This propaganda has been so persistent and intense that even some Muslims have become influenced by it.

There are differing scholarly opinions regarding how many fundamental categories of rights exist. One opinion, supported by Muḥammad Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (p. 173), holds that all rights in essence are ḥuqūq Allāh (the rights of Allah). Another view posits that rights are essentially divided into two primary categories:

1. Ḥuqūq Allāh (Rights of Allah)
2. Ḥuqūq al-‘Ibād (Rights of the Servants)

Mawlānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānvī (رحمه الله) writes:

- “Al-ḥuqūq (rights) are of two kinds: manhiyyāt (prohibitions) and ma’ mūrāt (obligations).”²⁹

He then supports the first opinion, writing:

- “Even the rights of people (ḥuqūq al-‘ibād) are essentially the rights of Allah.”³⁰

He further divides ḥuqūq al-‘ibād into three types:

1. Badaniyyah – related to physical harm
2. Mālīyyah – related to financial rights
3. ‘Irdiyyah – related to honor and dignity

According to Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), rights can be classified into four categories:

1. Ḥuqūq Allāh (Pure Rights of God)
2. Ḥuqūq al-‘Ibād (Pure Rights of People)
3. Al-Jam‘ bayn al-Ḥaqqayn ma‘ Ghalabat al-Awwal (Combination of both, with predominance of the first)
4. Al-Jam‘ bayn al-Ḥaqqayn ma‘ Ghalabat al-Thānī (Combination of both, with predominance of the second)

(Minhāj al-Ṭālibīn, p. 113)

These four categories have also been identified by Dr. ‘Abd al-Nāṣir Mūsá (Abū al-Baṣal, p. 239). In a more modern fiqh thesis, 49 categories of rights have been discussed.

However, the more accurate and accepted view is that rights fall into three essential categories, as articulated by Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī:

- Ḥuqūq Allāh, Ḥuqūq al-‘Ibād, and Ḥuqūq Mushtarakah (shared or joint rights³¹)

5. Introduction to Ḥuqūq (Rights)

The Arabic word ḥaqq (is pluralized as ḥuqūq (It denotes something that is established, undeniable, and indisputable³²).

In English, ḥaqq may be translated as truth, justice, or right.³³

The word ḥaqq is also used in meanings close to ḥaqīqah (reality) and ṣidq (truthfulness), though with subtle differences³⁴.

The word ḥaqq appears in the Qur’ān 227 times.³⁵

Its Qur’ānic usage reflects three principal meanings:

1. To establish something as valid or true
2. To express truthfulness
3. To affirm justice³⁶

The word al-Ḥaqq is also one of the Divine Names (asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā) of Allah:

“That is because Allah is the Truth.”

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ³⁷

Gaius Ezzyjofor defines fundamental rights in these terms:

“Human or fundamental rights are a modern designation for what were traditionally called natural rights. These can be defined as moral entitlements that every human being possesses universally and perpetually on account of their rationality and moral agency, distinguishing them from all other creatures. No one may be denied these rights without gross injustice.”³⁸

‘Allāmah Shāmī (d. 1252 AH) defines a right (ḥaqq) as:

الحق ما يستحقه الرجل³⁹

“A ḥaqq is that which a person is entitled to.”

Shaykh Shalabī elaborates further:

فالحق في الشريعة لا يكون حقاً إلا إذا أقره الشرع وحكم بوجوده واعترف له بالحماية، ولذلك فإن مصادر الحقوق في الشريعة هي الشريعة نفسها، ولا يوجد حق شرعي إلا لها.

“In Islamic law, nothing is considered a right unless it is acknowledged and protected by the Shari‘ah. Hence, the sole source of legitimate rights in Islam is the Shari‘ah itself.”⁴⁰

In legal theory, when the term ḥaqq is used in a technical sense, it generally corresponds to a duty or obligation on the part of another.

Islam, being a comprehensive and universal religion, addresses both rights and responsibilities. While it clearly outlines the rights of children, it also emphasizes their duties, to ensure a balanced society. Promoting Islam’s moderate and just teachings is key to both individual and communal success.

Regarding children's rights, Islam divides them into two categories:

1. Rights before birth
2. Rights after birth

In contrast, Western frameworks tend to recognize only postnatal rights, whereas Islam affirms and safeguards the rights of the child even before birth.

6. Pre-Natal Rights (*Huqūqqabla al-Wilādah*)

The phase "before birth" refers to the period when a man and a woman unite through nikāh (marriage) and become capable of contributing to the continuation of human generation. At this stage, they are encouraged to pray for righteous offspring, as the prayers of parents are accepted in favor of their children. Thus, these prayers are also considered part of the child's pre-natal rights.

1. Praying for Righteous Children

The first right of a child is that the parents supplicate to Allah (subhānahu wa ta'ālā) for pious and virtuous offspring. The Qur'ān mentions this as a quality of the believers:

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا⁴¹

"And those who say: Our Lord, grant us from our spouses and our descendants coolness of the eyes, and make us leaders for the righteous."

Children are a tremendous ni'mah (blessing) from Allah, especially when they are righteous. It is the duty of parents to continuously pray for their moral and spiritual wellbeing. The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said:

ثَلَاثُ دَعَوَاتٍ يُسْتَجَابُ لَهُنَّ لَا شَكَّ فِيهِنَّ: دَعْوَةُ الْمَظْلُومِ، وَدَعْوَةُ الْمُسَافِرِ، وَدَعْوَةُ الْوَالِدِ عَلَى وَلَدِهِ⁴²

"Three supplications are accepted without doubt: the prayer of the oppressed, the prayer of the traveler, and the prayer of a parent for their child."

Historical Example: Birth of 'Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr

Sīrah historians narrate a remarkable event. When the Muslims migrated from Makkah to Madīnah, for a long time no child was born in the households of the Muhājirūn (migrants). The Jews, known for their hostility towards Islam, spread a rumor that they had bewitched the Muslims and that their generation would now perish without offspring.

a year after the migration, Asma' bint Abī Bakr (the sister of Umm al-Mu'minīn 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها) gave birth to a son. Her husband, al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām, named him 'Abdullāh. This was the first child born to the Muhājirūn in Madīnah, and the Muslims rejoiced immensely. They exclaimed "Allāhu Akbar!" loudly and publicly to humiliate the Jews, whose fabricated rumor had been completely debunked.

The Prophet ﷺ had a son named Ibrāhīm, whose mother was Māriyah al-Qibṭiyyah (may Allah be pleased with her). According to Arab tradition, he entrusted the child's nursing and upbringing to Umm Sayf who lived in 'Awālī, a locality three or four miles outside Madīnah.

The Prophet ﷺ would frequently visit his son at Umm Sayf's home. He would carry Ibrāhīm ﷺ in his arms, kiss him affectionately, hold him for extended periods, and return

to Madīnah. Though her husband was a blacksmith and their home often filled with smoke, the Prophet ﷺ never let that discomfort deter him from spending time with his beloved son.

The beloved son of the Prophet ﷺ, Ibrāhīm, fell ill while staying at the house of Umm Sayf (رضي الله عنها). When the Prophet ﷺ received news of his deteriorating health, he immediately went to visit him. The child was breathing his final breaths.

The Prophet ﷺ took him into his arms. Looking at his son's innocent face

, tears began to flow from the blessed eyes of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. One of his noble Companions, 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn 'Awf (رضي الله عنه), who was present, was surprised to see the tears in the Prophet's eyes. He respectfully asked:

"Yā Rasūl Allāh! Do you also weep?"

Hearing this, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ responded with words that have since become a timeless expression

of human emotion balanced by divine submission:

"تَدْمَعُ الْعَيْنُ، وَيَحْزَنُ الْقَلْبُ، وَلَا نَقُولُ إِلَّا مَا يُرْضِي رَبَّنَا، وَإِنَّا بِفِرَاقِكَ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَمَحْزُونُونَ"

"The eyes shed tears and the heart grieves, but we do not say anything except that which pleases our Lord. O Ibrāhīm! We are deeply saddened by your departure."⁴³

This powerful moment not only illustrates the compassion and humanity of the Prophet ﷺ, but also exemplifies the perfect balance between natural emotion and acceptance of Allah's decree (qīdā' wa qadar).

Despite being the final Messenger, the Prophet ﷺ showed us through this incident that shedding tears does not contradict faith. His grief was an expression of his paternal love (ḥubb al-wālid li-waladihi) and a reminder of the human side of his prophetic character (shakhṣiyyah nabawiyyah).

2. The Child's Right to Be Born Through a Lawful Union (Nikāh)

The second right of a child is that they be born from a ḥalāl (lawful) union meaning, their conception should occur through nikāh (marriage), not zinā (fornication or adultery). The child must have a clear nasab (lineage), with recognized paternity, social identity, and inclusion in a tribe or family through which they gain dignity in society. For this reason, Islam has made nikāh obligatory and praiseworthy.

Allah Almighty says in the Qur'ān:

⁴⁴فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مَثْنَى وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبْعَ

"So marry those that please you of women, two or three or four."

This verse establishes the principle that reproduction (tawallud wa tanāsul) must occur within the sacred bond of marriage. Fornication is so heinous in Islam that its punishment is rajm (stoning to death), particularly for a married offender.

It is universally acknowledged that a child born out of wedlock is blameless, yet due to the shame of the parents' sin, such children are often abandoned or even killed. Islam, however, prohibits such injustice. The focus should be on preventing the sin through lawful means — not on punishing the innocent.

3. The Right to Be Nourished with Ḥalāl Sustenance (Rizq Ḥalāl)

The third right of a child is to be nourished with ḥalāl (lawful) sustenance. This begins even before birth from the time the mother becomes pregnant. There are two aspects to the lawfulness of provision:

1. Ḥalāl food itself: Parents must consume lawful food so that the fetus is formed from pure nourishment.

2. Ḥalāl sources of income: Even if the food itself is permissible, if it is acquired through ḥarām means (such as bribery, theft, usurpation, or corruption), its consumption has a negative impact on the child's moral and spiritual wellbeing.

A child raised on such wealth is unlikely to become a source of khayr (goodness) or barakah (blessing) either in dunyā (this world) or ākhirah (the hereafter).

The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said:

مَنْ نَبَتَ لَحْمُهُ مِنْ سُحْتٍ فَالنَّارُ أَوَّلَى بِهِ

“Whoever’s flesh grows from ḥarām (illicit) wealth, the Fire is more deserving of him.”

And in another narration:

الرَّجُلُ يُطِيلُ السَّفَرَ، أَشْعَثَ أَغْبَرَ، يَمْدُ يَدَيْهِ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ: يَا رَبِّ، يَا رَبِّ، وَمَطْعَمُهُ حَرَامٌ، وَمَشْرَبُهُ حَرَامٌ، وَمَلْبَسُهُ حَرَامٌ، وَغُذِيَ بِالْحَرَامِ، فَأَنَّى يُسْتَجَابَ لِدَعَاؤِهِ؟

“A man sets out on a long journey, his hair disheveled and dusty, stretching his hands toward the sky, saying: ‘O my Lord! O my Lord!’ but his food is ḥarām, his drink is ḥarām, his clothing is ḥarām, and he is nourished with ḥarām. So how can his supplication be answered⁴⁵?”

Hence, supplications made by someone whose body is nourished through ḥarām are not accepted for forty days, according to several traditions.

4. The Child’s Right to the Protection of Life (*Ḥaqq Ḥifẓ al-Ḥayāt*)

Life is a divine gift, and only Allah has the authority to take it back. That is why unjust killing even of one’s own child is considered one of the gravest sins in Islam.

Allah Almighty says:

قُلْ تَعَالَوْا أَتْلُ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ عَلَيْنَا أَلَّا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ مِنْ إِمْلَاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنٌ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ذَلِكُمْ وَصَّيْتُكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“Say, [O Prophet], ‘Come, let me recite what your Lord has prohibited to you: that you not associate anything with Him, and to parents, good treatment, and do not kill your children out of poverty. We provide for you and for them and do not approach immoralities, what is apparent of them and what is concealed, and do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden, except by right. This has He instructed you that you may use reason.’⁴⁶”

In another verse, the command is reiterated more directly

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ إِمْلَاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ إِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ كَانَ خِطَاً كَبِيراً

“Do not kill your children out of fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you. Indeed, killing them is a grave sin⁴⁷.”

These verses refute the three major reasons people historically committed infanticide:

1. Fear of financial burden (*khawf al-implāq*): That raising a daughter would be costly, only for her to later marry into another family.
2. Ignorant tribal pride (*ghayrah jāhiliyyah*): Refusing to accept a son-in-law as part of one’s honor.
3. False belief in ownership (*mulk al-wālidayn*): The belief that parents have absolute rights over their children, including taking their lives.

The Qur’ān categorically rejects all these justifications and upholds the child’s right to life (*ḥaqq al-ḥayāt*) even before birth. For this reason, Islamic law (*fiqh*) includes rulings such as: *Diyyat al-janīn* (blood compensation for the wrongful death of a fetus)

The prohibition of arbitrary abortion (*isqāṭ al-ḥaml*), except in dire necessity

The responsibility to ensure medical

care, immunizations, and protection from epidemics, congenital diseases, and hazardous environments

Thus, *ḥifẓ al-ḥayāt* (preservation of life) is one of the five *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* (higher objectives of Islamic law), which must be safeguarded by parents, society, and the state.

Prophetic Mercy and Affection for Children

Whenever the Prophet ﷺ would visit a home or find children around him, he would often take them into his arms and say endearing, playful words to bring joy to their hearts. On one occasion, while kissing a child, he ﷺ remarked:

“الْوَلَدُ رَيَاحِينُ اللَّهِ”⁴⁸

“Children are like the flowers of Allah’s garden.”

One day, the Prophet ﷺ noticed that Abū ‘Umayr looked sad. He inquired from Umm Sulaym (rA), “Why is Abū ‘Umayr so quiet today?” She replied, “O Messenger of Allah ﷺ, his little bird has died, and he is mourning its loss.”

The Prophet ﷺ called him gently, patted his head with love, and said:

"يَا أَبَا عُمَيْرٍ مَا فَعَلَ النُّعَيْرُ؟"

“O Abū ‘Umayr, what happened to your little bird?”

Hearing these kind and playful words, the boy smiled and overcame his sadness, returning to play.

Another child dear to the Prophet ﷺ was the daughter of Khālid ibn Sa‘īd (raḍiyallāhu ‘anhu), affectionately known as Umm Khālid (raḍiyallāhu ‘anhā). On one occasion, someone gifted the Prophet ﷺ a black cloak with beautiful embroidery. The Prophet ﷺ asked those around:

“Whom should I give this cloak to?”

The people remained silent, so he said:

“Call Umm Khālid.”

When she arrived, the Prophet ﷺ gave her the cloak and said:

"أَبْلِي وَأَخْلَقِي"⁴⁹

“Wear it out and then patch it.” (i.e., May you have a long life and use it well.)

He ﷺ placed his blessed hand on the embroidery and said:

"سَنَهُ، سَنَهُ"⁵⁰ (This means beautiful, beautiful in Ethiopian.)

Umm Khālid was overjoyed. On another occasion, she came to visit the Prophet ﷺ with her father, wearing a bright red shirt. The Prophet ﷺ looked at her with delight and said smiling:

“How beautiful! How beautiful!”

This sweet comment brought joy to the young girl’s heart.

The Prophet’s Affection and Upbringing of Anas ibn Mālik (رضي الله عنه)

(Raḥmat al-Nabī ﷺ wa Tarbiyatuhu li-Anas ibn Mālik r.a.)

When Anas ibn Mālik (raḍiyallāhu ‘anhu) was presented to the Prophet ﷺ by his mother, Umm Sulaym (raḍiyallāhu ‘anhā), she said, “O Messenger of Allah, this is my son Anas. Please accept him as your servant.” The Prophet ﷺ lovingly placed his hand on Anas’s head, prayed for blessings (barakah) for him, and accepted him into his service.

At that time, Anas’s father had already passed away when Anas was just eight years old. Later, his mother married Abū Ṭalḥah (raḍiyallāhu ‘anhu), a brave Companion of the Prophet ﷺ.

Anas ibn Mālik (rA) maintained a disciplined routine in serving the Prophet ﷺ. He would arrive slightly before Fajr prayer and remain in service until midday. He would return home for a short rest, and then come back

in the late afternoon, staying until ‘Aṣr prayer. Occasionally, he would remain into the evening.

Anas (rA) himself said:

"خدمتُ النبي ﷺ عشر سنين، فما قال لي: أفيّ قط، ولا قال لي لشيءٍ: لِمَ فعلتَ كذا، وهلا فعلتَ كذا"

“I served the Prophet ﷺ for ten years. He never once said ‘uff’ to me, nor did he ever say regarding anything I did: ‘Why did you do this?’ or ‘Why didn’t you do that’⁵¹?”

Even if Anas (rA) ever made a mistake or caused some loss, the Prophet ﷺ would not scold him. If any family member scolded Anas, the Prophet ﷺ would gently say:

“Leave him alone. If it wasn’t destined to happen, it wouldn’t have happened.”

An Incident Showing Trust and Secrecy

One day, Anas (rA) was on his way home and stopped

to watch some boys playing. Suddenly, the Prophet ﷺ appeared. The boys quickly

informed him, “The Prophet ﷺ is coming!” But Anas respectfully stood in his place. The Prophet ﷺ approached him, held his hand gently, and gave him a private task to complete. Anas obeyed at once. The Prophet ﷺ waited patiently for him in the shade of a nearby wall. When Anas returned after completing the task, the Prophet ﷺ allowed him to go home.

Upon his delayed return, his mother asked the reason. Anas replied:

“O Mother! The Prophet ﷺ gave me a task and instructed me not to tell anyone.”

His mother was overjoyed at his honesty and trustworthiness. She said, “Well done, my son! Never reveal that secret.” And Anas (rA) kept that secret for the rest of his life.

The Prophet’s Love and Du‘ā’ for Anas (رضي الله عنه)

The Prophet ﷺ had deep affection for Anas and would often call him affectionately:

“Yā Bunayya!” (O my little son!),

He would frequently pat his head with love. Once, the Prophet ﷺ said:

“O my dear child, try to spend your life in such a way that your heart holds no grudge against anyone neither day nor night⁵².”

Sometimes the Prophet ﷺ would lovingly joke with him. On one occasion, he said:

"إِنِّي يَا ذَا الْأُذُنَيْنِ"⁵³

“O you with two ears!”

(A playful and affectionate phrase)

The Blessed Hair of Anas (رضي الله عنه)

Because the Prophet ﷺ would often touch Anas’s head affectionately, Umm Sulaym (rA) said:

“My son, I shall never cut your hair nor allow anyone else to do so.”

Sometimes, out of love, the Prophet ﷺ would even pull his hair playfully.

A Beautiful Du‘ā’ for Anas ibn Mālīk

One day, while the Prophet ﷺ was at the house of Umm Sulaym (rA), she requested:

“Yā Rasūlallāh ﷺ, please make du‘ā’ for my son.”

The Prophet ﷺ raised his hands and prayed extensively for Anas (rA). Among his du‘ā’s was:

"اللَّهُمَّ أَكْثِرْ مَالَهُ وَوَلَدَهُ، وَبَارِكْ لَهُ فِيمَا أَعْطَيْتَهُ، وَأَدْخِلْهُ الْجَنَّةَ"⁵⁴

“O Allah! Increase his wealth and children, bless him in what You have granted him, and admit him to Paradise.”

Fulfillment of the Du‘ā’

This heartfelt du‘ā’ bore fruit. Anas (rA) lived a long life and became one of the wealthiest among his tribe. At the time of his death, he had over a hundred descendants — including sons, daughters, and grandchildren — testifying to the acceptance of the Prophet’s ﷺ prayer.

The Child’s Right to Be Trained in Ṣalāh (Prayer)

One of the rights of a child is that they be raised with the habit of offering ṣalāh (obligatory prayer). The Qur’ān highlights this concern through the du‘ā’ of Sayyidunā Ibrāhīm (‘alayhi al-salām), where he asks his Lord to make both himself and his offspring among those who establish prayer. He further supplicates for the acceptance of all his du‘ā’s, especially this one.

رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاءِ⁵⁵

“My Lord! Make me one who establishes prayer, and also from my descendants. Our Lord! Accept my supplication.”

The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ also emphasized this obligation in child-rearing. He said:

مُرُوا صِبْيَانَكُمْ بِالصَّلَاةِ إِذَا بَلَغُوا سَبْعًا، وَاضْرِبُوهُمْ عَلَيْهَا إِذَا بَلَغُوا عَشْرًا، وَفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَهُمْ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ⁵⁶

“Instruct your children to pray when they reach the age of seven, and discipline them for it when they reach the age of ten, and separate their beds.”

This *ḍarb* (discipline) refers not to physical violence, but to firm correction and admonition. The spirit is educational, not punitive. Teaching *ṣalāh* is the *sunnah* of the Prophets (*sunanu al-anbiyā'*).

Regarding 'Īsā ('alayhi al-salām), the Qur'ān mentions:

وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ وَكَانَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ مَرْضِيًّا

“He used to command his family to establish prayer and give *zakaḥ*, and he was pleasing to his Lord.”⁵⁷

Similarly, the Prophet ﷺ was directly instructed by Allah ﷻ to command his family regarding prayer:

وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا لَا نَسْأَلُكَ رِزْقًا نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكَ وَالْعِيقَابُ لِلتَّقْوَى⁵⁸

“Command your family to observe prayer and be steadfast in it. We do not ask you for provision; rather, We provide for you. And the [best] outcome is for those of *taqwā* (God-consciousness).”

Some scholars interpret this verse as a general instruction for the entire Ummah, meaning that all Muslims should encourage their families to perform *ṣalāh*. However, the Prophet ﷺ, as the first addressee of divine revelation, is foremost in fulfilling this command.

The Prophet's ﷺ Mercy Toward Orphans and the Helpless

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was extremely kind and compassionate toward orphans (*yatāmā*) and the weak. Whenever he encountered someone helpless or sorrowful, his heart would be filled with mercy.

On one such occasion, a young boy named Bashīr was grieving, and the Prophet ﷺ felt deep pity for him. Gently, he placed his blessed hand over the boy's head with love and compassion, and said:

يَا بُنَيَّ! أَلَا تَرْضَىٰ أَنْ تَكُونَ عَائِشَةُ أُمُّكَ، وَمُحَمَّدٌ أَبَاكَ؟

“O my son, would you not be pleased that 'Ā'ishah is your mother and Muḥammad ﷺ is your father?”

With these words, the Prophet ﷺ was offering consolation and love to young Bashīr, as if to say: “My dear son, do not worry or feel sorrowful. I am your father and my wife 'Ā'ishah (*raḍiy Allāhu 'anhā*) is your mother. We will give you the affection and care of parents. You are not alone anymore.”

This profound gesture of love and spiritual parenthood reflects the Prophet's ﷺ unparalleled empathy, particularly for the vulnerable and emotionally wounded children of the Ummah.

Supporting and Sponsoring Disabled Children is Their Right

إعانة الأطفال ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة وكفالتهم حق لهم

Whether the child or adult is disabled, it is sadly common in society to use hurtful or pitying language toward them. Such attitudes do not cultivate self-confidence in the disabled person but instead foster a sense of helplessness and inferiority. Islam strictly prohibits such discriminatory behavior and commands equal treatment, compassion, and consideration for such individuals. It also encourages *al-ta'āwun* (cooperation) and *al-kafālah* (sponsorship) with sympathy and empathy so that they may play a productive role in society. This is not a favor—it is their right (*ḥaqq*), and fulfilling it is the responsibility of every individual.

Children Should Not Be Forced into Labor or Hard Work

يجب عدم إجبار الأطفال على العمل الشاق أو الكسب

Islamic teachings clearly

indicate that children must not be made to do labor-intensive or exhausting work, especially that which constitutes full-time or part-time employment. This stage of life is for learning

(ta'allum) and play (la'ib) not for earning. If a child begins working for wages too early, their attention shifts to financial gain, making

it difficult for them to focus on education or personal development.

Instead, children should first dedicate their abilities to acquiring 'ulūm (sciences) and funūn (skills and crafts). Once their education is complete, they can become engineers, artisans, or skilled professionals and contribute meaningfully to the development of society. However, limited vocational training in the early years is permissible, so that the child may acquire practical skills (ṣanā'ah) in moderation.

Conclusion of the Discussion

Children are our future. We must think seriously and sincerely about their well-being. If our thinking is guided by divine revelation (wahy) and the Prophetic example (uswah ḥasanah), then surely the results will be positive.

Islam is a complete and balanced religion, and its teachings are free from extremism or neglect. The rights that Islam has granted to children are just, balanced, and beneficial. Therefore, they must be strictly enforced at the state level so that Pakistan becomes stronger and the future of our children is secured.

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¹ Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Balad 90:3

² Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Hijr 15:53

³ Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Naḥl 16:58–59

⁴ Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Furqān 25:74

⁵ (Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Kahf 18:46

⁶ (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 77:7)

⁷ (Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī 4:322; Sunan Abī Dāwūd 5:233)

⁸ (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 7:76)

⁹ (Qur'ān, Sūrat Āl 'Imrān 3:38)

¹⁰ (Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Furqān 25:74)

¹¹ (Qur'ān, Sūrat Āl 'Imrān 3:14)

¹² (Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Taghābun 64:15)

¹³ (Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Taḥrīm 66:6)

¹⁴ (Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ by al-Tabrīzī, 2:227) (Qur'ān 2:49, 7:141)

¹⁵ (Qur'ān 2:49, 7:141)

¹⁶ (Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Isrā' 17:31)

¹⁷ (Mubarak Ali, Tārīkhkā Siyāsī Shu'ūr, p. 325)

¹⁸ (Mubarak Ali, Tārīkhkā Siyāsī Shu'ūr, p. 325)

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- ²⁰ (Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Ḥajj 22:5)
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- ²³ (Ghāzī, 2010, p. 131).
- ²⁴ (Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Naḥl 16:78; see also al-Ḥajj 22:5; al-Mu'minūn 23:14; al-Ḥadīd 57:25)
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- ³⁴ (al-'Askarī, pp. 45, 59)
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- ³⁶ (SarwarḤusayn, pp. 325–326)
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- ⁵³ abid
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- ⁵⁷ (Qur'ān 19:55)
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