

# Virtue of Taking Care of Orphans and Widows in Islam and Its Forms from Qur'an and Hadith

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Date of Submission: 18-05-2024

Date of Acceptance: 28-05-2024

## ABSTRACT

Muslims are encouraged to help those in need around them in several Qur'anic verses especially orphans and widows. It stated the significance of assisting these category of people in the society; while other verses condemned their mistreatment or misappropriating their property unjustly. In the contemporary society, the number of widows and orphans are increasing on daily basis due to the rate of death and killings of innocent people, and they were not being care appropriately. Based on the highlighted issues, this paper discussed on the virtue of taking care of orphans and widows in Islam and its forms from Qur'an and Sunnah. Data was obtained from Qur'an, Hadith and oral interview and other secondary sources were used. The findings of the study revealed that widows and orphans are faced with so many challenges in the contemporary society. The paper submits that taking care of orphans and widows is a collective responsibility involving individuals, organizations and government. The paper recommends that government and the general public should join hands together in empowering these category of people and assist them in any way possible to be safe-reliance.

**Keywords:** Orphans, Widows, Challenges, Assistance, Development, Islam.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Islam was strongly encouraged Muslims to care about widows and orphans along with other less privileges in the society irrespective of tribal differences or religious affiliation. Taking care of orphan, a child who lost his father before the age of puberty is one of the concern areas of Muslim charitable donations. Similarly, widow who is a woman who lost her husband is equally considered, (Ishaq 139-57). In the history of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was an orphan himself, his father died before he was born and his mother died when

he was only six years old. Thereafter, he is taken by the family of his paternal uncle. If one speaks of orphan pious Muslim, he or she may likely to make a gesture of crossing two fingers which alludes to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) saying:

"I and whoever looks after an orphan are like this in Paradise, raising his two fingers" (Bukhari Hadith 34. vol. 8: 73).

In the contemporary society, the number of widows and orphans are increasing on daily basis due to the rate of killings of innocent people everywhere (Ishaq 143). After any war or killings of innocent people, those who pay the price the most are women who lost their husbands and children who lost their parents. Hence, taking care of orphans and widows is among the major obligations of Muslim affirmed in the Qur'an and Sunnah. In fact, the reward of those who stands in the sponsorship of widows and orphans is Jannatul Firdaus as stated in the aforementioned Hadith of prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). In Islam, taking care of widows and orphans is considered a very high form of charity (Ishaq 139-57). In the Qur'an, widows and orphans are often grouped into one family for their sponsorship, and Qur'an commands about the taking care of them in several verses. For example, Allah says:

"Serve Allah and ascribe no partner to Him. Do well to your parents, to near of kin, to orphans, and to the needy, and to the neighbor who is of kin and to the neighbor who is a stranger, and to the companion by your side, and to the wayfarer, and to those whom your right hands possess. Allah does not love the arrogant and the boastful" (Qur'an; 4:36).

According to prophetic Hadith recorded in Sahih al-Bukhari book 73, number 36, Prophet (ﷺ) once said:

"The one who looks after and works for a widow and for a poor person is like a warrior

fighting for Allah's cause" (al-Bukhari, Hadith 36. Vol. 8: 73).

From the aforementioned Hadith, the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) stated that a person who takes over the responsibility of widow or a poor person is like a warrior who fights for the sake of Allah. Thus, the prophet unveils the rewards for those who care for the poor to the extent that he compared their reward with the warriors fighting for the sake of Allah. Islam encourages Muslims to give and share what they have with other people around them in the community to maintain social equity and poverty elevation and minimization (Shu'aibu and Mustapha 74).

### Taking Care of Orphans in the Qur'an and Hadith

#### (a) Qur'an

In the Qur'an, verses stated the significance of taking care of orphans. It is confirmed that righteousness does not mean turning faces to the east or west; rather, it is about sincerely believing in Allah and the last Day. It also involves giving out one's property in love of it to the relatives and orphans. Allah says:

"Righteousness does not consist in turning your faces towards the east or towards the west; true righteousness consists in believing in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book and the Prophets, and in giving away one's property in love of Him to one's kinsmen, the orphans, the poor and the wayfarer, and to those who ask for help, and in freeing the necks of slaves, and in establishing Prayer and dispensing the Zakah. True righteousness is attained by those who are faithful to their promise once they have made it and by those who remain steadfast in adversity and affliction and at the time of battle (between Truth and falsehood). Such are the truthful ones; such are the God-fearing". (Qur'an; 2:177).

Islam strongly forbids mistreatment of orphans and encourages Muslims to intermix orphans with their children because there is no harm for that they are also your brothers. Allah says:

"Both in this world and the Next, they question you concerning orphans. Say: To deal with them in the way which is to their good, that is best. And if you intermix (your expenses and living) with them, (there is no harm for) they are your brothers. Allah knows the mischievous from the righteous, and had Allah willed, He would indeed have imposed on you exacting conditions; but He is All-Powerful, Most Wise" (Qur'an; 2:220).

It is forbidden in Islam to exchange the bad of your property to the good to that of the orphans, and do not mix your property with their own inappropriately. Mixing one's property with orphans unjustly is a mighty sin that can lead to hellfire. In regards to the property of orphans, Allah instructed Muslims to give back orphans their wealth and property when they have reached the stage of puberty. Thus, Allah says:

"Give orphans their property, and do not exchange the bad for the good, and do not eat up their property by mixing it with your own. This surely is a mighty sin" (Qur'an; 4:2).

From the above verse, Allah call upon Muslims to take care of orphan's property until they reach the age of puberty, and when they have reached the age of puberty and find them mature then handover to them their property. Allah disallowed the rich guardians to use orphans property, but allow the poor guardians to use that of orphans wealth and property in a fair measure. For the custody of the orphan's properties when they are young how to handle their properties and how to handover the property to them when they reached the age of puberty, Allah says:

"Test the orphans until they reach the age of marriage, and then if you find them mature of mind hand over to them their property, and do not eat it up by either spending extravagantly or in haste, fearing that they would grow up (and claim it). If the guardian of the orphan is rich let him abstain entirely (from his ward's property); and if he is poor, let him partake of it in a fair measure. When you hand over their property to them let there be witnesses on their behalf. Allah is sufficient to take account of your deeds" (Qur'an; 4:6).

The Almighty Allah warned against consuming the property of orphans unjustly in the above verse. He stated that the only punishment for those who consumes orphans property of orphans unjustly is fire and will be burn in the blazing flames. In regards to those who are consuming the property of orphans unjustly. Allah says:

"Verily, those who consume the property of orphans unjustly are actually swallowing fire into their own bellies: they will burn in blazing Flames" (Qur'an; 4:10).

Allah ascribe that none worthy of worship accept Him and do not associate a partner with Him. He commands Muslims to do good to their parents, relatives and orphans. Allah says:

"Serve Allah and ascribe no partner to Him. Do well to your parents, to near of kin, to orphans, and to the needy, and to the neighbor who

is of kin and to the neighbor who is a stranger, and to the companion by your side, and to the wayfarer, and to those whom your right hands possess. Allah does not love the arrogant and the boastful” (Qur’an; 4:36).

#### (b) Hadith

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) taught Muslims a code of conduct towards orphans in His traditions. This code of conducts include feeding and softening the heart of people, rewards for those who embrace orphans and widows and takes their responsibility. The following traditions explain the principles on how to deal with orphans and widows in Islam.

The Prophet (ﷺ) warned against seven mortal sins. Abu Huraira (Radiyal-La'huAnhu) reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

“Stay away from seven mortal sins. They said: O Messenger of Allah, what are they? The Prophet replied: Idolatry with Allah, occult magic, killing a soul that Allah has sanctified except for a just cause, consuming usury, usurping the property of an orphan, fleeing the battlefield, and accusing chaste but unwary believing women”, (al-Bukhari 6465, Muslim 89).

The Prophet (ﷺ) commands Muslims to bring orphans close to them, pat their head and feed them with the same food they eat. Thus, Abu Darda'i (Radiyal-La'huAnhu) reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

“Bring the orphan close to you, pat his head, and feed him with the same food you eat. It will soften your heart and fulfill your need”, (Makarimul-Akhlaq 661, Albani 250).

Paradise will be certainly for those who embrace orphans and takeover their responsibility. This was mentioned in the following Hadith of Malik Ibn al-Harith (Radiyal-La'huAnhu) who reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

“Whoever embraces an orphan of two Muslim parents by feeding him and giving him drink until he is independent of him, Paradise will certainly be necessary for him. Whoever emancipates a Muslim man, he will be his freedom from the Hellfire; he will be rewarded for every limb of his in equal measure”. (Musnad Ahmad 19855, Albani 2543).

The Prophet (ﷺ) warned against the right of orphans and women. Thus, the below Hadith disseminated the seeds of kindness, love and mercy towards orphans and women in Islam. Abu Huraira (Radiyal-La'huAnhu) reported that, the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

“O Allah, I have issued a warning in regards to the rights of two vulnerable groups: orphans and women”, (Ibn Majah 3678, as-Suyuti 2636).

#### Rules Governing Widows in the Qur'an and Hadith

##### (a) Qur'an

The Qur'an explains the rules governing women after the death of their husband, and provides a timeline for them before remarried. Allah confirmed that no harm to those who hint a marriage proposal to a woman whose husband died or keeps it hidden in their hearts. This does not permit a man to ask for her marriage in her Iddah (waiting period) or having a secret engagement with her till after she fully completed her Iddah. Also, the Qur'an speaks on the significance of bequest to whom it may concern after death. The following verses explained more about Iddah, hint of marriage proposal and bequest. Thus, Allah says:

“As for those who die among you and leave behind widows, (let) the widows (know that they) should wait for four months and ten days before remarrying. When they have completed this set time, you will not be blamed for anything they may reasonably choose to do with themselves. Allah is fully aware of what you do” (Qur'an; 2:234).

For the significance of bequest, Allah says: “Those of you who die leaving behind your wives should make testament of one year's provision without expulsion in favor of your wives; and if they themselves depart, there shall be no blame upon you for what they may do with themselves in a good manner. Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise” (Qur'an; 2:240).

##### (b) Hadith

In one of traditions, Abu Huraira (Radiyal-La'huAnhu) reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “One who lends effort to the widows and the poor is like one waging jihad in the way of Allah, or one who regularly prays at night and fasts during the day” (al-Bukhari 5353, and Muslim 2982).

Also according to the Hadith of prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) reported by Abdullah Ibn Amr that, the Messenger of Allah said:

“Whoever would love to be delivered from Hellfire and admitted into Paradise, let him meet his end with faith in Allah and the Last Day, and let him treat people as he would love to be treated” (Muslim 1844).

### Condition of Orphans and Widows in the Contemporary Society

In the contemporary society, both widows and orphans are suffering from challenges physically and psychosocially. These challenges include but not limited with the following:

**Poverty:** Economic stability is the backbone of every development in the society. Without economic stability, life would be difficult to people. Poverty is a risk for lack of food as well as emotional and behavioral distress for orphans and widows in today's society. As a result, some widows and orphans female are offering themselves for illegal sexuality. The research realized that orphans who are food insecure and are at risk of developing emotional distress. They use to sleep without eating, go to school without breakfast, and come back home with no food to eat. Hunger causes some orphans to leave school before completing the targeted period. Widows are worry more about food for themselves and their own children not for their education. According to Bashir, the National Ameer, Muslim Forum for Orphans Empowerment (MFOE) a non-governmental organization he said during 2020 Annual Report Presentation: "The great job of assisting orphans and widows has been neglected by the majority Muslims in the contemporary society. Today, orphans and widows are given less or no concern, we provide our families with all they want, but never care to know the conditions of orphans, as a result of that many of them engaged in various criminal activities and many were converted to another Religions due to our total failure to take care of them" (Nuhu 2).

Imagine an orphan who came back from school and find that there is no food to eat in the house how could he/she concentrate in his/her study? Some of these orphans are very brilliant learners, but they used to go to school hungry without even a cup of tea, and did not get anything at home to eat after school. As a result, they are not concentrating in their studies. When a teacher is in the classroom, their major concern is about food to eat after school not the teacher. In an interview with one of the widows she said: "My husband died and left behind three children with me, and I don't want these children to be staying at home without going to school. But I don't know what to do because I don't have anything to continue sponsoring these children to continue their education. I thank God, my brother helped me and carried one of them. Thereafter, I went to

Alhaji Hamisu and beg him to help me to sponsor one of these children to school, he agreed but some time he paid the school fee and some time he do not, and I am not happy the way my children are always sending back home. Then I start looking for something to do to sponsor my children which I later found myself in selling Akra. Honestly, it is not my choice seeing my children going around selling on the street, but I have no option since I want them to be educated. And from my husband's family nobody is helping me or my children, so from that business I am sponsoring my children to school out of difficulty" (Hauwa Kulu Yusuf, a sixty years old widow).

**Lack of Educational Opportunity:** Poor educational opportunity is one of the major challenges affecting orphans and widows in the society. Educating orphans and giving them good orientation is a guide and direction to good things and a protection for them against any illicit act and bad behavior. The conventional and religious education of orphans is a matter that need special attention from general public. It is hoped that if they are educated they will not become the destructive element or the root of criminal activities in the society by transmitting the seeds of immorality in association with other criminals. But many orphans were not having that opportunity to attend school due to the lost of their parents. Numbers of Orphans are facing this problem in our today's society. And taking care of these orphans and widows is a collective responsibility which everybody needs to engage in Bashir (Nuhu 1).

In an interview with Zainab Yusuf, a sixteen years old orphan, she said: "I didn't know my father, because he died when I was small. And when our neighbor see that I am not going to school he helped my mother by enrolling me to a lesson place, and later he took me to primary school, by then he and my mother joint hands in sponsoring me. But after I completed my primary school I wanted to continue my education with my friends but my mother do not have money to pay my school fees, and that our neighbor did not continue because he also has his own children that he is sponsoring too. Therefore, I sit at home without going to school for almost two years. After that my mother get a small business which is selling of Akra from that business she continues sponsoring my education up to today. Honestly we need help from the general public, because some time even food and clothes we suffered before we get food to eat or cloth to wear. I don't actually want to be going around selling Akra on the street

as a female child because anything can happen to me, but I don't have any option then to do. And even my mother don't want me to be going around selling something but she also do not have other alternative".

#### **Lack of Skills Acquisition and Empowerment:**

In the contemporary society, widows and orphans are lacking the opportunity for skills acquisition program and empowerment. Sometimes, they may have the opportunity to learn a skill but have not capital to establish a small business with the little experience acquired. This is because of total failure of people to show their concern and care about orphans, widows and the less privilege in the society. Nowadays, only few people have such intention and zeal to help those who are in need of assistance. In an interview with one of the widows she said: "My name is ZulaiHussaini, and I have four children. My husband died when they are young and I have nothing to do and take care of my children. As a result, they stopped going to school and stayed at home doing nothing. I use to go round looking for assistance to feed my children, even though I don't want to beg anyone but because of the condition we found ourselves I have no option then to beg people. Nevertheless, we are getting some food items from one organization called "Muslim Forum for Orphans Empowerment" but that is not enough for us. If I may have capital to start doing a business it could be better for us then depending on anybody, because we are still facing so many challenges. The general public needs to support people like us in the society" (ZulaiHussaini, sixty-two years old widow).

**Unequal Treatment:** Mistreatment or unequal treatment is another major challenge in the life of orphans and widows. Some orphans and widows are facing this challenge in living with other families. Some of these families even though they are related but treats them differently from their own children such as making a hurtful remarks to them and harshness. This attitude led some of these orphans and widows engaged in criminal and other unlawful activities in the society. Sometimes, people bought something like shoes and other items for their children and forget about the orphans under them. They have to go around within the community to ask for help so that they may also buy shoes for themselves. Sometimes, when they complain about that to the people living with them and asked them something they reply go and ask your father/mother, and if they tell them they have died they would even say go to the cemetery and ask them for that. Therefore, Muslims must follow

Allah's instructions and always treats His servant equally and in fairways. Allah commands Muslims to stand for orphans with justice in the noble Qur'an:

"And they seek your ruling concerning the women. Say, Allah gives you the ruling about them and what is recited to you in the Book concerning orphans the girls to whom you do not give them what is ordained for them and you desire to marry them, and the ones who are weak of the children and to stand for orphans with justice. And whatever you do for good then indeed, Allah is about it All-Knowing", (Qur'an 4:127).

In an interview with a widow she said: "I can not express how difficult we are living. Me and my children are facing different challenges in life, since after the death of my husband" (Rakiya Adamu, forty-five years old Widow).

#### **Virtue of taking care of Orphans and Widows in the Qur'an and Hadith**

Islam encourages Muslims to help those who are in need around them in the Qur'an and Hadith, especially orphans and widows. The virtues and rewards of assisting these category of people was mentioned in the final revelation of Allah (Qur'an), and other verses of the Qur'an condemned any form of mistreatment to them or misappropriating their property illegally.

##### **(a) Qur'anic Verses:**

Feeding the needy and orphan from what you love; Allah says: "Those who for the love, feed the needy, the orphan and the captive", (Qur'an 76:8).

The above verse explained that it is important to assist people who are in need of assistance, and whoever thrived on this matter would be rewarded for that by the Almighty Allah. Most of the commentators hold the view that the pronoun "hubbi-hi" (in love of it) mentioned in the verse refers to food. Accordingly, they interpret the sentence to mean: In spite of the food's being agreeable and tasty and that they need it, they give it away to others. Ibn Abbas and Mujahid say: They do so because of their fondness for feeding the poor from what they love; and Fudail bin Iyad and Abu Suleman ad-Darani say: They do so out of love for Allah. In their opinion the sentence in the next Ayat We feed you only for the sake of Allah support the last meaning. Imam As-Sa'adi said: the meaning of the word Hubbi refers to food and wealth, that means they are giving food and wealth

not because they don't want them or love them but they love Allah most (As-Sa'adi 855)

In another verse Allah says: "People ask you what they should spend. Say: Whatever wealth you spend let it be for your parents and kinsmen, the orphans, the needy and the wayfarer; Allah is aware of whatever good you do", (Qur'an 2:215).

#### (b) Ahadith:

The following traditions describe the significance and the reward for those who cares for orphan and widow:

The Prophet and the caretaker for an orphan are together in Paradise. Sahal Ibn Sa'ad (Radiyah-La'huAnhu) reported that, the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "I and the caretaker of an orphan will be in Paradise like this, and he held his two fingers together", (al-Bukhari 5659).

Helping orphans and widows, helps Soften Hearts and Allah will also answer your Prayers. Abu Darda'i (Radiyah-La'huAnhu) reported that, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "Bring the orphan close to you, pat his head, and feed him with the same food you eat. It softens your heart and fulfills your need", (Makarimul-Akhlaq 661, Albani 250).

Removal of the grief on the Day of Judgement. Abu Hurairah (Radiyah-La'huAnhu) reported that, the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Whoever removes a worldly grief from a believer, Allah will remove from him one of the grievances of the Day of Judgment. Whoever alleviates the needs of a needy person, Allah will alleviate his needs in this world and the next. Whoever conceals the faults of a Muslim, Allah will conceal his faults in this world and the next. Allah will aid a servant (of His) so long as the servant aids his brother. Whoever follows a path to seek knowledge therein, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise. No people gather together in one of the houses of Allah, reciting the Book of Allah and studying it among themselves, except tranquility descends upon them, mercy envelopes them, the angels surround them, and Allah makes mention of them amongst those who are with Him. Whoever is slowed down by his actions will not be hastened forward by his lineage". (An-Nawawi, Hadith 36: 107) related by (Muslim) in these words.

The best house among Muslims. Abu Hurayra (Radiyah-La'huAnhu) reported that the Messenger of Allah, (ﷺ) said: "The best house among the Muslims is the house in which orphans are well treated. The worst house among the Muslims is the house in which orphans are ill treated. I and the guardian of the orphan will be in

the garden like that, indicating his two fingers", (Ibn Majah, Hadith 137. vol. 5: 7).

#### Islamic Means of Assisting Orphans and Widows:

In Islam, there so many means or ways in which orphans and widows can be assisted through them. These means include the following:

**Zakah:** Zakah is one of the five pillars of Islam, is a donation that Muslims regard as a mandatory act of worship upon everyone who the nisab (minimum amount of Zakah). Muslims who have at least a minimum amount of wealth are required to give out 2.5% of their liquid assets out to charity each year. This money of Zakah are collected from the rich people and giving to the poor people. The purpose of Zakah is to assist the needy and eradicate poverty in the society. Zakah contributions can be made at any time in every year but are most typically given during the time of the Hajj pilgrimage and during the month of Ramadan.

**Waqaf:** Waqaf refers to assets like endowments and investments that are donated, bequeathed, or purchased to be held in perpetual trust to provide ongoing charity. So these assets can be used in assisting orphans, widows and the less privileged in the society.

**Sadaqah:** In addition to Zakah giving and Waqaf, there is also a category of voluntary giving within Islam to assist orphans, widows and less privileged; this category of voluntary giving is known as Sadaqah. Sadaqah aid is given at any time of the year to help those in need of assistance. This type of Sadaqah can be Sadaqatut-Jariya (ongoing charity) which the reward can be continued receiving after death.

## II. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study discussed the virtues of taking care of orphans and widows from Islamic perspective. It identified the major challenges affecting the life of these category of people in the society such as poverty, lack of educational opportunity, skills among others. The findings of the study revealed that widows and orphans are faced with so many challenges in the contemporary society. The results indicate that in the contemporary society, orphans and widows are been neglected; only few people are impacting in the life of orphans and widows. The paper submits that taking care orphans and widows is a collective

responsibility involving individuals, organizations and government. The paper recommends that government and the general public should join hands together in empowering these category of people and assist them in any way possible to be safe-reliance. It also recommends that Government should make education accessible and free for orphans in order to become responsible adults and good ambassadors in their respective communities.

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