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The Status of Neigbhourliness in the Quran and Sunnah

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Abstract

This study addresses the human dimension in Islam, which seeks to promote harmony and cooperation among people by encouraging mutual respect and working together for the common good. The significance of this topic lies in Islam's emphasis on fostering good conduct, preserving the rights of neighbours, and promoting social solidarity, recognising that the concept of neighbourhood extends beyond simple proximity. The study highlights the importance of neighbourly rights as outlined in the Qur'an and Sunnah, illustrating how respecting these rights contributes to achieving social peace. It also discusses the consequences of neglecting these rights, including social fragmentation, weakened faith, and social unrest. The study employs an analytical approach to understand the texts and their implications, focusing on Quranic verses, Prophetic traditions, and relevant Islamic sources concerning neighbourly rights. It also draws on the methodology of Hadith scholars to assess the authenticity of the narrations when necessary, acknowledging that some narrations may be weak but do not reach the level of fabricated Hadiths,

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as the study focuses on values rather than legal rulings. The study concludes that safeguarding neighbourly rights, as stipulated in the Qur'an and Sunnah, is an essential part of Islamic ethics, whether for Muslims or non-Muslims. It stresses that neglecting these rights leads to social discord and weakens community ties. The study also highlights Islam's vital role in encouraging ethical behaviour, cooperation, and coexistence among individuals and nations. The conclusion reiterates that reform must begin with self-improvement, followed by family, and then extend to the broader community—an individual who is both good and reformative is better than one who is simply good.

Keywords: Neighbourly rights; Quran and Sunnah; Social harmony; Ethical behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Human relationships need cohesion and cooperation to ensure societal stability and safety. In times of natural disasters or crises, solidarity helps communities support one another. Nations, too, need to form alliances and agreements to maintain their stability. This type of behaviour is supported by historical evidence, highlighting the need for respect between individuals, nations, and communities. It represents a crucial aspect of the virtues upon which societies should rely.

In daily life, individuals often find themselves living next to people who may or may not share the same faith. In such cases, there should be a set of values that facilitate peaceful coexistence between all parties. Islam has given special attention to establishing values aimed at building civilisation, not destroying it. This is where the importance of this topic lies, especially in a time when members of society tend to isolate themselves in buildings where social relations have diminished in many environments. Furthermore, social media can be misused to escalate conflicts, both between individuals and even between nations.

It is worth noting that France has implemented laws to reduce neighbourly disturbances, reflecting the growing awareness among nations of the lack of respect for neighbourly rights by certain individuals. Some countries have not respected neighbourly

rights, intervening in the internal affairs of neighbouring nations, leading to destructive wars. An example of this is the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia. The examples are numerous. There are also countries that have colonised their neighbouring nations to exploit their resources. This has prompted the international community to seek solutions to these global problems, resulting in the formation of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security. They also drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the question remains: To what extent is this security maintained? This is especially true given the clear desire to impose Western values on the Islamic world and to attempt to pass them off by altering their terminology, as is the case with the concept of tolerance (Klaina, 2024). The reality indicates that the aim is for the world to think in the same way as the West, which holds its own values and seeks to make them universal. Moreover, problems have arisen due to a disregard for the rights of others, with a minority imposing a foreign type of discourse on society, claiming that they are renewing religious discourse, while in reality; they are attempting to shift society away from religion to secularism (Klaina, 2023). The question remains: To what extent is this security being upheld?

The motivation behind studying this topic stems from the neglect of values that promote social relationships, which becomes even more concerning when such neglect occurs in communities with higher educational levels. Some may fail to grasp the full significance of neighbourliness, limiting it to living close to someone, while the concept of neighbourliness is far broader. It includes proximity in travel, work, or even the relationships between nations.

Given the above, there are several key questions to consider when studying this topic:

1. What is the meaning of the term “neighbourliness”?
2. What are the different levels of neighbourliness?
3. To what extent does the Qur'an and Sunnah emphasise neighbourliness?

This study demonstrates that the concept of neighbourliness is broad, necessitating a re-evaluation of relationships between individuals, communities, and nations. It also reveals that giving neighbours both their material and moral rights is part of perfect faith, while violating these rights indicates a deficiency in faith. These findings should be considered when interacting with others, whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims, as

religion forms a backdrop for Muslims' dealings, a backdrop that strives for the unity of God and the establishment of a civilised society.

METHODS

In this research, an analytical approach has been adopted to study and understand the Quranic verses and prophetic hadiths. This involves referring to sources of *tafsir* and books explaining the hadith. The aim is to extract the Islamic values related to tolerance, coexistence, and solidarity through a topic that addresses the importance of neighbourliness and calls for the preservation of neighbourly rights, while highlighting the consequences of doing so.

Additionally, the research seeks to warn against disregarding these rights and the negative implications that result from such actions. This requires a return to the authenticated texts found in the correct books of hadith. Some of the hadiths used in this research may not be of the highest level of authenticity and may contain some weaknesses. However, these weaknesses do not make them equivalent to fabricated hadiths.

Therefore, a critical study of these hadiths is necessary, following the methodology of hadith scholars, in order to avoid relying on fabricated narrations.

NEIGBHOURLINESS: THE LIMITS AND RANKS IN THE QURAN AND SUNNAH

1. The limits of neigbhourliness

The term "neighbour" refers to the person whose house is adjacent to yours, and it can extend to forty houses in each direction. Ibn Shihab narrated from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), saying:

> "Indeed, forty houses are considered neighbors." When asked about the number forty, Ibn Shihab clarified: "Forty to the right, forty to the left, forty behind, and forty in front." (Abū Dāwūd, Al-Marāsīl, 257, No. 350).

Al-Hasan al-Basri, when asked about the definition of a neighbor, said:

> "Forty houses in front of you, forty behind, forty to the right, and forty to the left." (Al-Bukhārī, 108, No. 197).

It is also narrated from Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) that anyone who hears the call to prayer is considered a neighbor. (‘Abd al-Razzaq, 1 :497, No. 1915, Ibn Abī Shaybah, 1 :303, No. 3469, Al-Bayhaqī, 3 :174, No. 5381).

It was also stated that anyone who prays with you the *Fajr* prayer at the mosque is considered a neighbor (Ibn Ḥazm, 9:100, Ibn Ḥajar, 10:447).

Allah Almighty has made the gathering of people in a city a form of neighborliness, as He says:

> “If the hypocrites, and those in whose hearts is a disease (evil desire for illegal sex), and those who spread false news among the people in Al-Madinah stop not, We shall certainly let you overpower them: then they will not be able to stay in it as your neighbours but a little while.” (*Sūrat Al-Aḥẓāb*: 33:60).

Many scholars have stated that the term "neighbor" includes Muslims, non-Muslims, the pious, the sinful, friends, enemies, foreigners, locals, those who are beneficial, and those who are harmful. Neighbors can be ranked in terms of the closeness of their relationship (Ibn Ḥajar, 10:441, Al-‘Aynī, 22:108).

The awareness of the broad meaning of "neighbor" makes individuals more conscious of their actions, promoting empathy, and creating an atmosphere of love and harmony between people, without discrimination based on color or religion. This is a prime example of religious tolerance in Islam, which honors people for their humanity, does not weaken the oppressed, and ensures that they are an integral part of society. This, in turn, guarantees security and stability. As Allah says:

> “O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allāh is that (believer) who has At-Taqwā [i.e. he is one of the Al-Muttaqūn (the pious)(1)]. Verily, Allāh is All-Knower, Well-Acquainted (with all things).” (*Sūrat Al-Ḥujurāt*: 49:13).

This section may be divided into subheadings. It should provide a concise and precise description of the experimental results, their interpretation, and the experimental conclusions that can be drawn.

2. The ranks of neigbhours

Neighbours are classified into three categories based on their rights (Al-Bazzār, 1:496. The hadith related to this issue is weak, as noted by Al-ʻAjlūnī (1:393, No. 1055). However, it is narrated through multiple chains, which also contain weaknesses, but they provide the hadith with strength, as mentioned by Al-Mundhirī, 3:243, No: 3870, 3871, 3872):

a. A neighbour with one right: This is the polytheist, who has the right of neighbourliness.

b. A neighbour with two rights: This is the Muslim neighbour, who has both the right of neighbourliness and the right of Islam.

c. A neighbour with three rights: This refers to a Muslim neighbour who is also a relative, and thus has the rights of neighbourliness, Islam, and kinship.

As for proximity, a neighbor can be either close or distant, adjacent or non-adjacent. These categories vary in terms of the number of rights and the degree of closeness. The closer neighbor takes precedence over the farther neighbor, as emphasized by Islamic scholars. Imam Al-Bukhārī (108), in his book *Al-Adab al-Mufrad*, titled a chapter "*The Nearest Neighbor Comes First*," which highlights the importance of the close neighbor in terms of good treatment, standing by them, and avoiding causing harm. This helps ensure peaceful coexistence and tranquility among people, reflecting the religious dimensions of interactions and the mercy that Islam advocates. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was known to call himself by names that reflected this mercy, as reported by Abu Musa al-Ash'ari:

> "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) used to name himself with several names, saying: 'I am Muhammad, Aḥmad, the Gatherer, the Prophet of repentance, and the Prophet of mercy.'" (Muslim, 4:1828, No. 2355).

HONOURING THE NEIGBHOUR IN THE QURAN AND SUNNAH

1. The command to treat neighbours with kindness

The command to treat neighbours with kindness is found in the words of Allah:

> "Worship Allāh and join none with Him (in worship); and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, Al-Masākīn (the needy), the neighbour who is near of kin, the neighbour who is a stranger, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (you meet), and those (slaves) whom your right hands possess. Verily, Allāh does not like such as are proud and boastful." (*Sūrat An-Nisā'*: 4:36).

The neighbour's rights are mentioned in this verse, and Allah has specified different ranks for them.

Many scholars have interpreted the "neighbour" who is a relative as someone from the family or close relatives who live nearby. This interpretation has been narrated by Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, 'Ikrimah, al-Dahhak (Al-Ṭabarī, 5:77-78), Maimoon bin Mahran, Zaid bin Aslam, and Muqatil bin Hayyan (Ibn Hayyan, 3:948, No. 5296), and is considered the most reliable interpretation on the matter.

The "neighbour who is a stranger" refers to a neighbour who is not related to you by kinship or distant by lineage. Ibn Abbas, Qatada, Al-Suddi, and Mujahid mentioned this interpretation Al-Ṭabarī, 5:79).

Al-Bukhārī followed this interpretation in his *Sahih*, as he titled a chapter in *THE BOOK OF MANUMISSION (OF SLAVES)*:

> "The Prophet's (PBUH) statement: 'The slaves are your brothers, so feed them what you eat,'". And the Statement of Allah: "Worship Allah and join none with Him (in worship), and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, Al-Masakin (the poor), the neighbour who is near of kin, the neighbour who is a stranger, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (you meet) and those (slaves) whom your right hands possess. Verily, Allah does not like such as are proud and boastful."
>
> Then he said: "The term '*dhil-qurba*' refers to relatives, and '*al-janb*' refers to the stranger. The 'neighbour who is a stranger' means a companion during travel" (Al-Bukhārī, 1997, 3:415).

Whether they are Muslim, polytheist, Jew, or Christian (Al-Ṭabarī, 5:77-82). Allah presents the highest example for the people in this, in noble manners and refined qualities, so that their hearts may lean towards the true faith when they see the Islamic

society guaranteeing their rights, not depriving them of them, even with religious differences.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized the importance of kindness to neighbors, saying:

> "Jibril (Gabriel) continued to recommend me about treating the neighbours kindly and politely, so much so that I thought he would order me to make them as my heirs." (Al-Bukhārī, 1997, 8:37, No. 6014, Muslim, 2007, 6:488, No. 2625).

A man from the Ansar who said narrates it:

> "I left my home intending to meet the Prophet (PBUH), and I found him standing with a man approaching him, so I thought they had a need. The Ansari said: 'By Allah, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) stood for so long that I began to pity him for standing so long. When he finished, I said, 'O Messenger of Allah, that man stood with you so long that I began to pity you because of the length of your standing!' He replied, 'Did you see him?' I said: 'Yes.' He asked, 'Do you know who he is?' I replied: 'No.' He said: 'That was Jibreel (Gabriel), peace be upon him. He kept advising me about the neighbor until I thought he would make him inherit from me. He then said: 'If you had greeted him, he would have returned your greeting.'" (Aḥmad, 5:32, No. 20365).

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) was sent to perfect moral character, and among the things, he commanded his companions was kindness toward the neighbour.

Ja'far ibn Abi Talib (RA) said to the Negus when he asked him about Islam:

> "O King, we were a people of ignorance: we worshipped idols, ate dead meat, committed immoralities, cut ties of kinship, and abused our neighbours. The strong among us would oppress the weak. We were like this until Allah sent us a messenger from amongst us, whose lineage, truthfulness, trustworthiness, and chastity we knew. He called us to worship Allah alone, to be sincere in speech, to maintain trust, to be kind to our relatives, to behave well toward our neighbours, to refrain from forbidden acts, to protect life, and to avoid lies, the consumption of orphan's wealth, and slandering the chaste. He commanded us to worship

> Allah alone and not to associate anything with Him, to establish prayer, pay zakat, and fast." Ja'far said: "We believed in him, followed him, and accepted his message." (Aḥmad, 1:200-201, No. 1740, 5:290-291, No. 22551, Ibn Khuzaimah, 4:13, No. 2260).

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) also said to Saeb ibn Abdullah on the Day of the conquest of Mecca after he embraced Islam:

> "Host the guest, honour the orphan, and be kind to your neighbour." (Aḥmad, 3:425, No. 15539).

What shows the importance of kindness to the neighbor is that the Prophet (PBUH) linked it to faith. Abu Huraira (RA) narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should not harm his neighbour. Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should talk what is good (sensible talk) or keep quiet: and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should not harm his neighbour; and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should entertain his guest generously." (Al-Bukhārī, 1997, 8:263, No. 6475, Muslim, 2007, 1:141-142, No. 47).

This hadith was narrated in two different ways: "Do not harm your neighbour" (Aḥmad, 2:267, No. 7615) and "Do not harm your neighbour at all." (Aḥmad, 2:433, No. 9593).

In the hadith of Aisha: "Do not harm your neighbour." (Aḥmad, 6:69, No. 24449).

In the hadith of Abu Shurayh: "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him treat his neighbour well," (Muslim, 2007, 1:143, No. 48) and in another version: "Honour your neighbour." (Aḥmad, 6:385, No. 27205, Ibn Hibban, 12:97, No. 5287).

In the hadith of Abdullah ibn ʻAmr: "Guard your neighbour." (Aḥmad, 2:174, No. 6621).

In these words, it is clear to us the Prophet's (PBUH) strong prohibition against harming the neighbour, and his command to treat the neighbour with kindness, respect, and to uphold their rights. It is well known among scholars that a command to do something implies a prohibition of its opposite. The general rule is that the command signifies obligation, unless there is evidence-suggesting permissibility, while the prohibition indicates what is forbidden unless evidence suggests otherwise. The phrasing of the

command in this hadith indicates that Muslims are encouraged to do well and act kindly towards their neighbours. This is the consensus of most scholars, who interpreted the prophetic teachings about kindness and respect using the terms 'kindness' and 'respect', as these are not employed in obligatory matters (Al-Nawawī, 2:18). Based on this, they developed their works around the topic of good manners. In this regard, Ibn Abi Dunya (26:36) reported from Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) who said:

> 'The principles of good manners are ten: truthful speech, steadfastness in obedience to Allah, giving to the needy, rewarding good deeds, maintaining family ties, fulfilling trust, honouring the neighbour, honouring the friend, offering hospitality to guests, and the most important of them is modesty.'

As for the prohibition mentioned in the hadith, it indicates that it is forbidden because there is no evidence to suggest otherwise. Furthermore, its association with faith further emphasises this meaning.

Complying with these commands and refraining from these prohibitions are signs of faith. In *Sahih* Muslim, as classified by Al-Nawawī in one of his chapters, it is stated: '*The chapter urging the honouring of neighbours and guests and the importance of silence, except when speaking good words, and that all of this is part of faith.*' In Ibn Hibban's *Sahih*, there is a chapter titled: '*The narration indicating that avoiding harm to one's neighbour is part of faith*,' and another chapter titled: *'The prohibition of harming neighbours, as avoiding it is an act of the believers*.' This is because faith drives its follower to good conduct and the avoidance of misdeeds, and this good behaviour is the fruit of faith; it is both an indicator and a reflection of it.

The Prophet (PBUH) linked entry into Paradise to kindness towards the neighbour and refraining from harming them. Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated from the Prophet (PBUH) who said:

> 'He will not enter Paradise, whose neighbour is not safe from his evil conduct.' (Muslim, 2007, 1:141, No. 46).

This is understood to mean that such a person will not enter Paradise with the first entrants until they are held to account, unless Allah extends His mercy upon them.

Ibn Abi Jamrah Al-Andalusi stated that:

> 'Honouring the neighbour is a sign of complete faith. This includes all forms of respect, such as wishing good for them, advising them kindly,

> praying for their guidance, and refraining from causing them harm in any form, whether physical or emotional, except in cases where harm is required by word or deed.' (Al-Zurqānī, 4:354).

As for the righteous neighbour, all the points mentioned above apply to him as well. As for the unrighteous neighbour, it involves gently preventing them from wrongdoing, in accordance with the principles of commanding good and forbidding evil. This includes advising the non-Muslim by introducing Islam to them, highlighting its virtues, and gently encouraging them. The disobedient should be advised based on their situation, and if they repent, they should be accepted; if not, they should be avoided with the aim of disciplining them, while informing them of the reasons.

Scholars have made valuable comments on this issue, particularly regarding the narration of the Prophet (PBUH) saying:

> 'There is no harm and no reciprocating harm.' (Mālik, 2:745, No. 1429, Al-Nawawī said about it that it is a «Hasan Hadith», Al-Zurqānī, 4:40).

Ibn ʻAbdul-Barr Al-Qurṭubī explained (Ibn ʻAbdul-Barr, 20:158, 8:154-155):

> 'As for His saying (PBUH) 'There is no harm and no reciprocating harm,' it is said that these two terms are essentially the same, used together for emphasis. Ibn Habib said: 'Harm, in Arabic, refers to something that brings benefit to oneself but causes harm to another; and 'reciprocating harm' refers to a situation where there is no benefit to oneself and harm is solely caused to another.' This is a valid interpretation in this hadith. And Allah knows best."

Abu al-Walid Al-Bājī (6:40), after quoting the words of Ibn Habib and al-Khushani, said:

> 'And the meaning of this – and Allah knows best – is that harm is when a person intends to benefit themselves but causes harm to others, while injury (known as "*dhirar*") is when one intentionally causes harm to another. Allah Almighty said: "And as for those who put up a mosque by way of harm and disbelief and to disunite the believers and as an outpost for those who warred against Allāh and His Messenger (Muḥammad PBUH) aforetime, they will indeed swear that their intention is nothing but good. Allāh bears witness that they are certainly liars." (*Sūrat At-Taubah*, 9:107) and I believe that the meaning of harm is when one neighbour harms the

> other, while injury is when both harm each other, as this term is often used in the context of mutual conflict such as fighting, brawling, swearing, beating, and crowding. The Prophet (PBUH) forbade one person or the other from causing harm to their neighbour and both being intentional in their harm.'"

Thus, Islam teaches us to practice pure behaviour with everyone so that we can be role models. A society that lacks this element cannot speak of reform, as this reform must stem from Islamic teachings and Islamic character, not from non-Islamic communities due to differences in religion and methodology. Only those who are unaware of the teachings of their religion do otherwise. Allah, the Almighty, says in His clear revelation:

> 'For him (each person), there are angels in succession, before and behind him. They guard him by the Command of Allāh. Verily, Allāh will not change the (good) condition of a people, as long as they do not change their state (of goodness) themselves (by committing sins and by being ungrateful and disobedient to Allāh). But, when Allāh wills a people's punishment, there can be no turning back of it, and they will find besides Him no protector.' (*Sūrat Ar-Ra'd*, 13:11).

This change is tied to the condition of the people. If it is good, it leads to good; if it is evil, it leads to evil. How can those who cling to the ways of non-Muslims and reject what the noble Prophet (PBUH) brought achieve good?

2. Care for the rights of non-muslim neighbours

Islamic Sharia has taken great care in ensuring the rights of non-Muslim neighbours living among Muslims. It provides an exemplary model of tolerance toward other religions, offering a means to attract non-believers to Islam through good treatment and noble ethics.

It is well known that those who receive such care are those who do not harm the Muslim community, do not plot against them, do not harbor hostility, and are under protection.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself set an example in treating his non-Muslim neighbors with kindness. Al-Bukhārī (1997, 2:252, No. 1356) narrated in his *Sahih* from Anas ibn Mālik (RA), saying:

> "A young Jewish boy used to serve the Prophet and he became sick. So, the Prophet went to visit him. He sat near his head and asked him to embrace Islam. The boy looked at his father, who was sitting there; the latter told him to obey Abul-Qasim, and the boy embraced Islam. The Prophet (PBUH) came out saying: "All the praises and thanks be to Allah Who saved the boy from the Hell-fire."

In the narration of ʻAbdul-Razzāq, it is mentioned that the Prophet (PBUH) had a Jewish neighbour who was well-mannered. The neighbour fell ill, so the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions visited him. The Prophet asked him: "Do you testify that there is no god but Allah and that I am the messenger of Allah?" The boy looked at his father, but his father remained silent, and the boy stayed silent too. This happened twice, and on the third occasion, the father told his son, "Say what he told you to say." So, the boy did, and he passed away. The Jews wanted to bury him, but the Prophet (PBUH) said, "We are more entitled to him than you." The Prophet (PBUH) washed him, shrouded him, and prayed for him (ʻAbdul-Razzāq, 6:34-35, No. 9919, 10:315-316, No. 19219).

It seems that this neighbour was the same young man who used to serve the Prophet (PBUH), as the context suggests.

In the interpretation of the verse: "the neighbour who is a stranger" (*Sūrat An-Nisā'*, 33:53), Al-Ṭabarī (5:79-80) narrated from Ibn ʻAbbas, who said:

> 'The one with whom you have no kinship.' This interpretation is similar to that of Qatadah, Al-Suddi, and Al-Dahhak. He also narrated from Abu Is-haq from Nawf Al-Shami, who said in his interpretation: 'The Jew and the Christian.' Ibn Jarir then commented on these views by saying, 'The more correct opinion is that "*al-Janab*" in this context refers to the distant foreigner, whether a Muslim or a polytheist, a Jew or a Christian. As we have explained before, a neighbor of kin is one who shares a familial bond, and it is required that the neighbor should be from the distant group, as this is a recommendation regarding all types of neighbors, both near and far.'

The companions of the Prophet (may Allah be pleased with them) felt the great status that Islam has granted to the neighbour, even if they were not of the same religion as Islam, and they did not neglect it.

> For instance, It was narrated from 'Abdullāh bin 'Amr that he slaughtered a sheep and said: "Have you given some to my Jewish neighbor? For I heard the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) say: '[Jibril] kept enjoining me with regard to neighbours until I thought he would make neighbours heirs." (Abū Dāwūd, 2008, 5:434, No. 5152, At-Tirmidhī, 2007, 4:53, No. 1943).

Disagreement in religion does not justify wronging people, and it is more crucial to maintain their rights, even with differences in belief, as long as they adhere to their duties. Showing kindness to them can soften their hearts. An example of this (Abū 'Ubayd, 45-46) is when Khalid ibn al-Walid recorded in his peace treaty with the people of *Hira* during the time of Abū Bakr al-Siddīq:

> '... and I made it so that any elderly person who became weak or was afflicted by a disability, or any rich person who became poor and was dependent on the charity of his people, his tax would be removed, and he would be supported from the Muslim treasury as long as he resided in the land of emigration and the land of Islam...' (Abū 'Ubayd, 1988: 57).

Similarly, 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb passed by a group of people and saw a Jewish beggar who was an elderly blind man. 'Umar asked him, 'What has led you to this?' The beggar replied, 'I am in need, and I have to pay the *jizyah*.' Umar took his hand, took him to his house, gave him something, and then sent him to the treasurer of the treasury, saying: 'Look after this man and others like him, for we have not been fair to him if we enjoyed his youth and now abandon him in his old age.' He then recited the verse:

> "Aṣ-Ṣadaqāt (here it means Zakāt) are only for the Fuqarā' (the poor), and Al-Masākīn (the needy), and those employed to collect (the funds); and to attract the hearts of those who have been inclined (towards Islām); and to free the captives; and for those in debt; and for Allāh's Cause (i.e. for Mujahidūn — those fighting in a holy battle), and for the wayfarer (a traveller who is cut off from everything); a duty imposed by Allāh. And Allāh is All-Knower, All-Wise." (*Sūrat At-Taubah*, 9:60). He said: 'The poor are the Muslims, and this man is one of the poor from the people of the book.' He abolished the *jizyah* for him and for those in a similar situation to his. (Abū Yūsuf, 1984: 146)

Similarly, ʻUmar ibn Abd al-Aziz wrote to his governor in Basra, 'Adi ibn Artaah,' instructing him in his letter:

> '... and look after the elderly from the people of the covenant who have weakened, their strength has gone, and they can no longer earn a living. Provide for them from the Muslim treasury what is necessary for them.' (Abū ʻUbayd, 1988: 57).

Thus, the treatment of neighbours with kindness has continued, and no disagreement exists in this regard. While general kindness towards them is important, it is even more essential when it comes to neighbors.

Through this, we observe Islam's care for the rights of those under its protection, ensuring they do not cause harm to Muslims. This is what led many nations throughout history to willingly embrace Islam. The mission of Muslims is to spread the Islamic faith to all people through their outlook and actions, in an inspiring manner, so that we may become the best followers of the best predecessors.

NEIGBHOURLINESS: RIGHTS AND THE CONCEQUENCES OF UPHOLDING THEM IN THE QURAN AND SUNNAH

1. The rights of the neighbour

In order to understand what is commanded regarding the rights of the neighbor in order to seek the pleasure of Allah, it is necessary to explain a number of noble behaviours that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized. Some of these rights were mentioned individually, while others were linked with other virtues.

a. Allowing the Neighbour to Plant in One's Wall:

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

> "No one should prevent his neighbour from fixing a wooden peg in his wall." Abu Huraira then said (to his companions): "Why do I find you averse to it? By Allah, I certainly will narrate it to you." (Al-Bukhārī, 1997, 3:371, No. 2463, Muslim, 2007, 4:334-335, No. 1609).

Scholars have differed in their interpretation of this, with some considering it obligatory, as is the case with Imam Aḥmad (Ibn Taymiyyah, 28:99, Marʿī: 127), Shafi'i (in

his earlier view), Abu Thawr, and the scholars of Hadith. Others have interpreted it as recommending, encouraged, and promoting kindness to the neighbor, forgiveness, and good treatment. Among those who held this view are Imam Mālik, Abu Hanifa and their followers, and Shafi'i (in his later view) (Ibn ʻAbdul-Barr, 8:156-159, 10:222, Al-Nawawī, 11:48, al-Sharbini, 2:187), who supported their position with the Prophet's (PBUH) saying:

> "The wealth of a Muslim is not lawful except with his consent." (Al-Baihaqi, 6:100, No. 11325, 8:182, No. 16533).

b. Providing for the Neighbour:

One should ensure that their neighbors, especially those who might smell the food being cooked, do not suffer while seeing the better living conditions of others. The Prophet (PBUH) instructed to share food with neighbors, especially when they are in need, to avoid harming their feelings, particularly in front of children, as they are more sensitive. Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> "O Abu Dharr, f you cook some soup, add extra water and send some to your neighbour" (Muslim, 2007, 6:488, No. 2625).

Aisha also narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> "The one who sleeps full while his neighbor is hungry is not a believer." (Al-Ḥākim, 2:15, No. 2166).

c. Responding to the Neighbour's Invitation:

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

> "If two neighbors invite you, respond to the one closer to you in proximity, but if one invites you before the other, respond to the first one." (Aḥmad, 5:408, No. 23513, Abū Dāwūd, 4:261-262, No. 3756).

However, if the invitation involves a sin, it should not be accepted.

d. Giving Gifts to the Neighbour:

To give the closest neighbour a gift, as evidenced by his (PBUH) saying to Aisha when she asked him:

> "O Allah's Messenger! I have two neighbours and would like to know to which of them I should give presents." He replied, "To the one whose door is nearer to you." (Al-Bukhārī, 1997, 3:252, No. 2259).

The wisdom behind this is that the closer neighbour will see the gift entering their home and will anticipate it, unlike the farther neighbour. Additionally, the closer neighbour is quicker to respond to any urgent matters for the neighbour, especially during moments of neglect (Ibn Ḥajar, 10:447). One should not belittle anything and refrain from gifting it, as it is not always possible to give much. Also, the recipient should not underestimate or look down upon the gift, even if it is small; it is better than nothing, and it fosters love, mercy, and removes grudges and resentment among people. For all these reasons, the Prophet (PBUH) said, as narrated by Abu Huraira:

> "O Muslim women! None of you should look down upon the gift sent by her she-neighbour even if it were the trotters of the sheep (fleshless part of legs)." (Al-Bukhārī, 1997, 3:428, No. 2566, Muslim, 2007, 3:76, No. 1030).

The foreleg refers to a bone with little meat, like the camel's hoof, which can also refer to a sheep. It is well-known that the foreleg of a sheep is of little value and not typically gifted, but this was said to encourage the women to offer what they can to their neighbours, even if it is something of little significance, in order to foster affection among people. This prohibition was specifically directed at women because they are the sources of both affection and animosity, and they are quicker to react to either emotion.

e. Providing Assistance and Lending Support:

Islam clearly defines a set of rights and duties that individuals owe to their neighbours, emphasising the importance of nurturing positive relationships and fulfilling these obligations. Among these responsibilities is offering assistance to a neighbour in need, lending money if requested, and supporting them should they fall into poverty. Islam also encourages visiting neighbours during illness, sharing in their moments of joy or success by offering congratulations, and extending condolences during times of grief.

Moreover, it is expected that one should follow a neighbour's funeral procession if they pass away, as a mark of respect. Islam also advises that no one should build structures that block the air or light from a neighbour's home without their consent. Similarly, one should not disturb them with unpleasant cooking smells, unless they are shared. If a person

buys fruit, they are encouraged to offer a portion to their neighbour; if unable to do so, it should be kept discreetly, avoiding any action that might provoke the neighbour's children.

These rights are derived from the teachings in the hadith, which stress the importance of cultivating strong and supportive bonds within society. Islamic scholars have dedicated entire sections of their works to discussing these rights, classifying them under the themes of ethics, piety, and kindness. Similarly, Islamic jurists have addressed these duties in their legal writings, underscoring their importance as part of a Muslim's moral conduct. Collectively, this reflects how deeply Islam values the rights of neighbours and its commitment to fostering a compassionate and harmonious community.

2. The results of upholding the rights of the neighbour

When a Muslim preserves these rights, which we have alluded to, and shows kindness towards his neighbors, he earns the reward in both this world and the Hereafter. This behavior leads to a series of beneficial outcomes that serve as the best provision for a Muslim, including:

a. It is a cause for the flourishing of homes

The peace of mind gained from living next to a kind neighbor is invaluable. As narrated by Aisha (RA), the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> "He who is granted his portion of gentleness has been granted his portion of good in this world and the Hereafter. Maintaining family ties, good character, and good treatment of neighbors flourish homes and extend lives." (Aḥmad, 6:159, No. 25298).

b. It is a cause of happiness for the person

The Prophet (PBUH) said, as narrated by Nafi' ibn ʻAbd al-Harith:

> "Among the happiness of a person is a righteous neighbor, a comfortable ride, and a spacious house." (Aḥmad, 3:407, No. 15409).

c. It raises one's status in this world

Kindness to neighbors and refraining from harming them are from noble morals considered a condition of manliness. As Al-Bayhaqī titled one of his chapters:

> "The Chapter on the Nobility of Character and Its High Status, which, if one is characterized by it, would be among the people of manliness, a condition for accepting testimony." (Al-Baihaqi, 10:191).

d. It raises one's status with Allah Almighty

The Prophet (PBUH) said, as narrated by Abdullah ibn ʻAmr:

> "The companions who is the best to Allah is the one who is best to his companion. And the neighbour that is the best to Allah is the one that is best to his neighbour." (Aḥmad, 2:167, No. 6566, At-Tirmidhī, 4:54, No. 1944, Ibn Khuzaimah, 4:140, No. 2539).

e. Allah accepts the testimony of one's neighbours in their favor, and forgives what they do not know

Anas (RA) narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> "No Muslim dies and is testified to by four of his neighbors, except that Allah says, 'I accept your knowledge of him and forgive what you do not know.'" (Aḥmad, 3:242).

WAYS TO PREVENT HARM TO THE NEIGBHOUR IN THE QURAN AND SUNNAH

1. The warning against harming the neighbour

In contrast to the good companions, we mentioned earlier, there are bad people who are relentless in causing harm. When they see well, they conceal it, and when they see evil, they spread it. Concerning such people, the Prophet (PBUH), as narrated by Fudalah ibn ʻUbaid, said:

> "Three are destructive: A leader who does not appreciate your goodness and does not forgive your mistakes; a neighbor who conceals your good and spreads your bad; and a wife who harms you when you are present and betrays you when you are absent." (Al-Tabarānī, 18:318, No. 824).

Given the importance of the neighbor in Islam, and the severe punishment for harming them, the Prophet (PBUH) warned, on the grounds of deterrence, about some sins that are magnified based on whom they are committed against. It is certainly more

severe to harm a neighbor than others, and the greater the harm, the greater the punishment. The Prophet (PBUH) said to his companions:

> "It is easier for a man to commit adultery with ten women than to commit adultery with his neighbor's wife." He also said, "What do you say about theft?" They replied, "It is prohibited by Allah and His Messenger." He said, "It is easier for a man to steal from ten houses than to steal from his neighbour." (Aḥmad, 6:8, No. 3853).

Scholars agree that it is prohibited to mention a Muslim in a manner they dislike in their absence. If the statement is true, it is considered backbiting, and if false, it is slander. However, there are six exceptions to this rule (Al-Ghazālī, 9:65-68, Al-Nawawī: 425-427):

a. Identification: When a person is known for a flaw, like being crippled, etc.

b. Mentioning someone's public immorality or innovation.

c. Warning fellow believers of a person's evil.

d. Seeking advice from someone regarding a person who has wronged them.

e. Seeking help to prevent a wrong or return a sinner to righteousness.

f. Complaining about harm, particularly from a neighbour, leading to people cursing the oppressive neighbour.

Grievance refers to a complaint about harm caused by someone, especially when it involves a neighbour. This can lead others to curse the unjust neighbour. In the hadith of Abu Huraira, a man came to the Prophet (PBUH) complaining about his neighbour two or three times. In the final instance, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> ""Go and be patient." He come to him two or three times, then he said: "Go and put your belongings out in the street." So, he put his belongings out in the street, and the people started asking him (what was going on), and he told them the story, so the people started cursing (the neighbour), saying; 'May Allah do such and such to him.' His neighbour came to him and said: "Come back, you will not see anything from me that you dislike." (Abū Dāwūd, 2008, 5:434, No. 5153, Ibn Hibban, 2:278, No. 520).

For this reason, the Prophet (PBUH) sought refuge from an evil neighbour in his place of residence and instructed us to do the same.

One who possesses such vile characteristics is bound to have deficient faith, if not none at all. In this regard, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> "By Allah, he does not believe! By Allah, he does not believe! By Allah, he does not believe!" It was said, "Who is that, O Allah's Messenger?" He said, "That person whose neighbour does not feel safe from his evil." (Al-Bukhārī, 1997, 8:37-38, No. 6016, Muslim, 2007, 1:141, No. 46).

This hadith affirms the neighbour's right with the Prophet's repeated oath, and it denies faith from those who harm their neighbour through words or actions, as the hadith implies. Many scholars have understood this as referring to a deficiency in the completeness of faith, as no one who disobeys Allah can have complete faith (Al-Qurṭubī, 5:184, Ibn Ḥajar, 10:444, Al-'Aynī, 22:109).

Since harming the neighbor leads to a deficiency or even loss of faith, the Prophet (PBUH) advised his Ummah with three matters for salvation: not harming the neighbor, honoring the guest, and speaking good or remaining silent. The hadith related to this advice is considered one of the comprehensive sayings, as every word is either good or evil, or leads to one of these. Good includes every desirable form of speech and is encouraged, while anything evil or leading to evil should be met with silence. The meaning of this hadith is that a person who holds faith is characterized by compassion for God's creatures, speaking good, refraining from evil, and doing what is beneficial or avoiding harm Ibn Ḥajar, 10:446). Its opposite implies that someone who acts contrary to this is not considered to possess true faith or its completeness.

2. The consequences of harming the neighbour

From the above, we conclude that the consequences of bad neighborly behavior are severe due to the following:

a. Lack of praise for one's behaviour in this world:

People complain about the bad actions of others, as in the hadith where someone complained about their neighbour's bad treatment. In Luqman's advice to his son, he said:

> "O my son, I have carried stones and iron, but I found nothing heavier than a bad neighbor, and I have tasted all bitterness, but I found nothing more bitter than poverty." (Ibn Abī Shaybah, 7:74, No. 34296, Al-Baihaqi, 4:231, No. 4891).

b. Decreased or loss of faith:

As mentioned in the previous hadith regarding the completeness or negation of faith.

c. Spread of bad neighbourly behaviour is a sign of the Hour:

Abdullah ibn ʻAmr ibn al-ʻAs narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> "Indeed, Allah despises indecency and immodesty. By the One in Whose hand is my soul, the Hour will not be established until the trustworthy will be betrayed, and the betrayer will be trusted, and indecency and immodesty will spread, and the bonds of kinship will be cut, and bad neighborly behavior will prevail..." (Abdul-Razzaq, 11:404-405, No. 20852, Aḥmad, 2:199, No. 6872).

d. The first adversaries on the Day of Judgment are neighbours:

Due to the enormity of the harm caused, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> "The first two litigants on the Day of Judgment will be neighbors." (Aḥmad, 4:151, No. 17410).

Ibn ʻUmar (RA) narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> "How many neighbours will hold on to their neighbor on the Day of Judgment saying: ʻO Lord, this person closed his door to me and denied me his kindness.'" (Al-Bukhārī: 52:111).

Therefore, the first people to be judged on the Day of Judgment will be neighbours.

e. Punishment in Hell unless Allah covers him with His mercy:

Abu Huraira narrated that someone told the Prophet (PBUH):

> "So-and-so prays at night, fasts during the day, gives charity, and does good deeds but harms her neighbors with her tongue!" The Prophet (PBUH) said, "There is no good in her; she is of the people of Hell." They then asked, "What about so-and-so who prays only the obligatory prayers, gives a little charity, but does not harm anyone?" The Prophet (PBUH) replied, "She is of the people of Paradise." (Al-Bukhārī: 54:119, Al-Ḥākim, 4:183, No. 7304, 4:184, No. 7305, Al-Baihaqi, 7:78, No. 9545).

All of the voluntary acts performed by this woman, who harmed her neighbours, were not enough to erase the sins she committed against them. Meanwhile, the woman who only performed the obligatory acts, without exceeding them or harming anyone, was one of the people of Paradise.

f. The threat of not entering Paradise for those who harm their neighbours:

Abu Huraira narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> "He who does not feel secure from the harm of his neighbor will not enter Paradise." (Muslim, 2007, 1:141, No. 46).

Imam Nawawi found this hadith problematic because, according to scholars, if a sinner dies while maintaining belief in monotheism but persists in major sins, they will enter Paradise and will not be excluded from it. He considered two possible interpretations based on all the hadiths that convey a similar meaning. The first interpretation is that it refers to someone who permits harm, knowing that it is prohibited; such a person is a disbeliever who will not enter Paradise at all. The second interpretation is that their punishment is the delay of their entry into Paradise, which will only occur when the gates are opened for the righteous. They will be delayed, and then either punished or forgiven and, if forgiven, will enter it first.

CONCLUSION

Through this study, the human dimension of Islam becomes clear. Islam seeks to foster a spirit of goodwill among Muslims through various means: by encouraging actions that earn the pleasure of Allah Almighty, and by warning against the consequences of defying the Creator and causing corruption on Earth, when one is commanded to cultivate it. This cultivation cannot be achieved in a society where there is estrangement between people, particularly between neighbours. Whether the neighbour is a Muslim or a person of the Book, preserving their rights is a religious duty due to the positive effects it has on creating cooperation and solidarity. Violating these rights, however, leads to estrangement among people, a decline in faith, and exposure to divine punishment.

Indeed, the mistreatment of neighbours has become widespread in our time. In his era, Al-Ḥākim al-Naysāburi considered raising this issue and narrating six hadiths about kindness to neighbours as a matter of public interest, due to the suffering people were

experiencing. If this was the case in his time, it has only worsened in our age, where even some countries have enacted laws against the mistreatment of neighbours. People often disregard their neighbours and sometimes others cause conflicts between them, on the level of individuals, groups, and even nations, akin to the way a lion deals with three bulls. We are in dire need of preserving good relationships among people in general, and between neighbours in particular. The same applies to Islamic countries, especially those that are geographically close to each other. The social traditions offer us valuable lessons, as they reveal the fate of nations when they separate and fail to follow the right path, as seen in the loss of kingdoms and the destruction of countries in Andalusia.

A quarter of the Qur'an addresses ethics and the cultivation of virtuous values in the hearts of people. Moving away from the Qur'an and the Sunnah leads to a disconnection from them. For social reform to occur, an individual must start by reforming themselves, then their family, and gradually extend the circle of reform. Reform begins with correcting the behaviour of the masses, and everyone needs this correction in a time when corruption is widespread. The situation is even more alarming when such behaviour is found among educated people, who may resort to harming others for personal gain. Some may even conspire against righteousness, only for their own interests, and eventually, they will turn on each other.

The topic of neighbours' rights represents an important aspect of social reform, especially when considering that, according to the broader definition of "neighbour," we are all neighbours to each other. Perhaps this research will have an impact on the reform of individuals, and through their reform, society will also improve. Moreover, the best way to conclude this topic is with the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH):

> “Both legal and illegal things are evident but in between them there are doubtful (unclear) things and most of the people have no knowledge about them. So whoever saves himself from these doubtful (unclear) things, he saves his religion and his honour. And whoever indulges in these doubtful (unclear) things is like a shepherd who grazes (his animals) near the Ḥimā (private pasture) of someone else, and at any moment he is liable to get in it. (0 people!) Beware! Every king has a Ḥimā and the Ḥimā of Allah on the earth is His illegal (forbidden) things. Beware! There is a piece of flesh in the body, if it becomes good (reformed), the whole body becomes good,

but if it gets spoilt, the whole body gets spoilt, and that is the heart." (Al-Bukhārī, 1997, 1:83, No. 56, Muslim, 2007, 4:320, No. 1599).

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