

Clergy Forum: Staying awake, mom taught me to sleep

By **Dr. Hasnain Walji**

Posted: 04/28/2011 03:11:15 PM PDT

Dr. Hasnain Walji is a lay preacher at the **SIIJLA (Husaini Islamic Center)** in Pico Rivera and a board member of the **Interfaith Peace Ministry of Orange County**.



"Staying awake, she taught me even how to sleep," wrote the poet, Iraj Mirza about his mother. The mother is at the heart of all humanity.

Indeed motherhood is a universal value that binds all humanity. Etymologically, the mother is central to the Islamic community in a very special way. The Arabic word for mother, "umm," is the root word for ummah meaning the Muslim Community.

As Rumi says: "We can't help being thirsty, moving toward the voice of water. Milk drinkers draw close to the mother. Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, shamans, everyone hears the intelligent sound and moves with thirst to meet it."

Yet no one exemplifies The Quranic image of the pious son more than Jesus, who describes himself as "dutiful toward her who bore me and not arrogant, unblessed" (Surah Maryam, verse 32).

In recognition of the universal respect for the status of mothers, Islam has given the mother a status higher than the father, as to loving or treating her with love and kindness.

The very special place of mothers in Islam has been eloquently described by Prophet Muhammad: "A man asked the Prophet: 'Whom should I honor most?' The Prophet replied: "Your mother."

"And who comes next?" asked the man. The Prophet replied: "Your mother."

"And who comes next?" asked the man. The Prophet replied: "Your mother!"

"And who comes next?" asked the man. The Prophet replied: "Your father."

Once pointing to a woman cradling her child near a fire, the Prophet tells his companions: "Can any of you imagine this woman throwing her baby into this fire? Yet your Creator has more mercy and compassion for His creatures."

A man came to Imam as-Sadiq (great-great-great grandson of Prophet Muhammad) that he has embraced Islam while his mother did not, and asked him about what he should do. The Imam said: "See how you used to take care of her when you and her were embracing the same religion and multiply it."

When he did so, the mother noticed and asked him why. He told her: "I was ordered to do so by the leader of this religion."

Imam Ali bin Hussain, the great-grandson of the Prophet, said: "Coming to the rights of relatives, it is the right of your mother that you should appreciate that she carried you (in her womb) as nobody carries anybody, and fed you the fruits of her heart which nobody feeds anybody, and protected you (during pregnancy) with her ears, hands, legs, hair, limbs, (in short) with her whole being, gladly, cheerfully and carefully; suffering patiently all the worries, pains, difficulties and sorrows (of pregnancy), till the hand of God removed you from her and brought you into this world.

"And her womb was your abode, and her lap your refuge, and her breast your feeder, and her whole existence your protection; it was she, not you, who was braving the heat and cold of this world for your safety.

"Therefore, you must remain thankful to her accordingly, and you cannot do so except by the help and assistance from Allah." (The Charter of Right, p.18)

A man who was circumambulating Kaabah in pilgrimage carrying his mother on his back he met his teacher and asked: "Teacher! Have I repaid my debt to her?"

The teacher only replied: "I hope."

The annual Mother's Day celebration may not be as onerous as carrying ones mother on ones back, but a few hours of fun and festivities as families will gather to celebrate next week.

The good news is that once again this year, the congregation for Husaini Islamic Center - the mosque in Pico Rivera - will be joining with the **Interfaith Peace Ministry** for a special Interfaith Mother's Day celebration, with a free dinner, a week early at 4 p.m. this Sunday at the First Presbyterian Church, 191 North Orange Street, Orange, CA 92866.

The sponsors invite readers to join in the celebration.

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