

# THE CHARTER OF RIGHTS

(Risālatu 'l-Huqúq)

a seventh century document on  
various legal and moral rights of human beings

BY:  
IMĀM ZAYNU 'L- 'ĀBIDĪN  
(the fourth shi'ite Imam)

Translated by:  
Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi

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## PREFACE



الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى

خَيْرِ خَلْقِهِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ الطَّاهِرِينَ.

*In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful*

Imām 'Alī ibn al-Husayn is the fourth of the twelve divinely-appointed successors of the Last Messenger of Allāh, Muhammad al-Mustafa (blessings and mercy of Allāh be on him and his progeny). He is the first among the Imāms whose writings have survived and are helping the followers in their spiritual journey, guiding them in every sphere of life. His piety and devotion to worship has earned him the titles of Zaynu 'l-'Ābidin (adornment of the worshippers) and Sayyidu 's-Sājidīn (leader of those who prostrate in prayers).

His Book of invocations, known as *as-Sahīfah al-Kāmilah* (or, *as-Sahīfah as Sajjādiyyah*) is a treasure of spiritual, theological and ethical knowledge. One of his most important but less-known works is his *Risālatu 'l-Huqûq* (*The Charter of Rights*), which is hereby presented to our English-knowing brethren, with the hope that they may use it as a guide in their dealings with the people.

Before Islam, no society had any idea of reciprocity of rights. The Roman law (from which the modern Western codes have originated) gave the head of a family the status of a deity. He was their absolute owner and could kill, with impunity, not only his slaves, but even his other dependents — wife, sons, etc. Thus one party had all the rights while others had been burdened with all the duties without any rights. The Greek system was not much different from the Roman code. In fact all ancient civilisations had created a privileged group which had all the rights, and another group which had no rights at all. Generally, women, children (especially the orphans), slaves, surfs and people of lower strata were oppressed and deprived of rights.

Islam, for the first time in the history of mankind, established and enforced the principle of reciprocity of rights, by saying: “*And the women have rights similar to those (which men have) upon them in a just manner.*”<sup>1</sup> Many Islamic axioms and proverbs reflect this idea; for example, *sayyidu 'l-qawm, khādimuhum* (the head of the community is its servant). Imām 'Alī bin Abī Tālib talked about the mutual rights of the ruler and his subjects in a lecture delivered at Siffin. He said, “By placing me over your affairs, Allāh, the Glorified, has created my right over you; and you too have a right over me like mine over you. ....A right does not accrue to any person unless it accrues against him also, and a right does not accrue against a person unless it also accrues in his favour... The greatest of these rights that Allāh, the Glorified, has made obligatory is the right of the ruler over the ruled and the right of the ruled over the ruler... If the ruled fulfil the rights of the ruler and the

1 The Qur'an 2:228

ruler fulfils their rights, then the Truth attains the position of honour among them, the ways of religion become established, signs of justice become fixed and the *sunnah* gains acceptance.”<sup>2</sup>

In order to create a balance between the mutual rights and duties of various groups, it was essential to delineate them in clear terms. And Islam has done it through the Qur’ān, the *sunnah* of the Prophet and the traditions of the Imams. This *Charter of Rights* is the centre-piece of that fine collection.

In *The Charter of Rights*, Imām Zaynu 'l-Ābidin (peace be on him) has clearly delineated the basic rights, mostly from legal point of view, although no paragraph is devoid of the flavour of morality and ethics. In this booklet, the Imam has divided the things and persons (with whom man comes into contact and with whom he deals) into fifty categories. Beginning with the rights of God on man, it covers a wide range of rights: human soul and body., family and relatives, superiors and dependents, neighbours and friends; in short, all those with whom a person interacts in his social life, not excluding the non-Muslims living in an Islamic society.

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More than six hundred years had passed since the establishment of the reciprocal rights in Islam, when the English landlords forced King John in 1235 C.E. to put his signature on the document known as Magna Carta, and which the Western world mistakenly describes as the "first" charter of rights. Then came the American Constitution with its Bill of Rights - which in fact had given no rights to the black population of the U.S.A., It was in 1960s that the Supreme Court began granting the black Americans civil and social rights, and then the Congress followed suit.

The Bible of today's politicians is the Universal Charter of Human Rights adopted by the U.N.O. in 1948. So often we hear one or the other super power accusing its rival of violating the human rights of its citizens. But it is an open secret that the same power looks the other way when its own lackeys trample on the human rights of their own citizens. This once more shows the ineffectiveness of man-made laws as compared to the divine laws.

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Here I should mention an important principle of Islamic ideology, and that is the inter-relation of Islamic laws and Islamic ethics. Islamic laws teach the minimum that a person is required to do, and transgression of which entails sin and is sometimes considered a crime. Islamic ethics takes a man from that starting point to the highest peak of spiritual perfection. If a man is sick and weak, he first needs treatment to cure him of the disease; after that he needs a special regimen of diet, exercise and tonic to restore his strength, to bring him to the peak of his health and vigour. The same principle applies in the spiritual field. Islamic laws keep man free from ills of sins and crimes, while Islamic ethics show him the way to noble spiritual perfection and strength. From Islam's point of view, it is not enough to merely ordain some basic laws to protect the believers from sins, and leave them at that. A weak patient, even when cured of a disease is an easy target of further attacks unless his strength is restored, Nor has Islam merely exhorted its followers to strive to reach high moral standards, without prescribing some rules to protect them from negative influences. Of what use will be tonics if body is riddled with debilitating diseases? Thus Islamic laws and Islamic ethics are interlinked; they are different stages of the same spiritual journey. Islam knows that spiritual level of all people is not the same. Therefore, it has chosen for us the highest ethical and spiritual ideals and exhorted us to strive hard to reach the summit; at the same time it has laid down minimum requirements which one

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2 Radi, Sayyid, Nahju 'l-Balāghah, ed. Dr. Subhi as-Sālih (Beirut: 1967) sermon 216, pp.332-3

cannot transgress except by exposing oneself to spiritual peril.

Many orientalists who are generally oblivious or even ignorant of this inter-relation of the Islamic laws and Islamic ethics, take upon themselves to pronounce judgement on Islam, unfavourably comparing its laws (i.e., the minimum requirements) with "the highest, ethical standpoints" of Christianity; and then pontificating that Islamic "moral teachings" have "short-comings"<sup>3</sup> To an informed person, such statements merely show the short-sightedness of the writers.

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This translation was done in 1969, and appeared in instalments in *The Light*<sup>4</sup> from April 1969 to December 1970. Then Peermohamed Ebrahim Trust of Karachi, Pakistan, published it in booklet form, in 1972, under the title, *Reciprocal Rights (Risalatul Huquq)*. Later on, the Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania published its Swahili translation from Dar-es-Salaam.

The English translation was done from the original Arabic as reported in *Tuhafu 'l-'Uqûl 'an Āli 'r-Rasûl* of Shaykh Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Shu'bah al-Harrāni, a contemporary of Shaykh as-Sadûq (4<sup>th</sup> century of hijrah). Shaykh al-Harrāni's book has been held in great esteem in every age.<sup>5</sup>

Now, I have revised the translation for this new edition which is being published with the help of my son, Hujjatul Islam Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi. While revising, I came across a new Arabic edition of *Risālatu 'l-Huqûq* published by Dar el Tawheed, Iran (1402 A.H / 1981 C.E). In that edition, the publishers have also described the variations in the version of the *Risālah* given by Shaykh as-Sadûq.<sup>6</sup> Most of the variations are minor and do not affect the meaning; but in some places, the changes make the meaning clearer or more complete. I have translated those clauses and placed, them in the footnotes.

In the end, it is necessary to reiterate that my translation, even after the revision, is very imperfect, because I could not find words to convey the shades of the meanings implied in the original phrases. My only hope is that this translation will open a window through which the readers may have a glimpse of the sublime Islamic ideals. This *Charter* is a gem of Islamic ethics, and it may be adopted and implemented even by non-Muslims - if one has the will to do so.

The original *Risalah* has no paragraphing, nor any heading or sub-heading. Also, like all ancient writings, it has no punctuation marks or numbers. I have put these things in the translation for the benefit of the modern readers who are used to such helps in reading.

*Wa ākhiru da 'wānā, anil hamdu lil lāhi rabbil 'ālamīn; Rabbanā taqabbal minnā innaka antas Samī 'ul 'Alīm*

Dar-es-Salaam  
Sha'bān 12, 1408  
March 27, 3 988

S.S.Akhtar Rizvi

3 See for example, G.Margoliouth's introduction to J.M.Rodwell's translation of *The Koran* (London; Everyman's Library, 1974) p.viii

4 The bi-monthly magazine published by, Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania, from Dar-es-Salaam.

5 A new edition of *Tuhafu 'l-Uqûl*, edited by 'Ali Akbar al-Ghifāri, has been published by Maktabatu s-Sadûq, Teheran. The present *Risālah* is on pages 253-272.

6 Shaykh as-Sadûq has narrated the *Risālah* in his *al-Khisāl*, *al-Āmāli* and *Man la Yahzuruhu 'l-Faqlh*. The first narrator of this *Risālah* is Abu Hamza ath-Thumālī, a very respected and trustworthy companion of Imām Zaynu 'l-Ābidīn. For those interested in the complete chain of narrators, see *al-Khisāl* of as-Sadûq and also Rijāl if an-Najjāshi under "Abu Hamza ath-Thumālī"



## INTRODUCTION

Know, may Allāh have mercy on you, that Allāh has created certain rights on you which cover you in your every movement and stillness, every place where you are, every limb which you move and every tool which you use. Some of these rights are greater than others.

The greatest of all is the right which Allāh Himself has upon you; that is the root of all rights, as all of them spring from it. Then He established rights which your different limbs have upon you, from head to foot. So, He gave rights to your eyes, ears, tongue, hands, feet, stomach and your private parts. These seven parts cover all your activities.

Then Almighty Allāh established rights of your actions upon you – of your prayers, fast, alms, sacrifices and other acts [of worship].

After that, come the rights which other persons have upon you, most important of which are the rights of your superiors, of your subordinates and of your relatives. And these [three kinds of] rights branch into various rights.

Thus the rights of your superiors are of three kinds: the rights of the ruler, of the teacher and of the master.

The rights of the subordinates are of three kinds: the rights of your subjects, of your pupils (for the ignorant is dependent on the man of knowledge) and of your wives and slaves.

And the rights of your relatives are very many, depending in importance on the closeness [or remoteness] of the relationship. Thus the most important of these is the right of your mother, then of your father, then of your children, then of your brother, then of other relatives according to the degree of relation – closer, then the remoter.

Then there are the rights of the ex-master who has bestowed favours on you, and of your emancipated slaves on whom you have bestowed favours;<sup>7</sup> then the right of your benefactor, of the *mu'adhdhin* who calls you to prayer and of the *imām* who leads you in prayers; of your companions, your neighbour, your friend and your partner.

Then there is the right which your wealth has upon you: the rights of your debtor, your creditor and your associate; and the right of a person who lodges a complainant against you and of a person against whom you lodge a complainant.

Then there is the right of the person who consults you, and of the person who advises you, and of him who seeks guidance from you and of him who guides you.

Then there is the right of the person whom you wronged by words or actions, and of the

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<sup>7</sup> The words given here in the original Arabic text are not so clear. This clause has been taken from the details which come later on in the *Risālah*

person on whose misfortune you expressed pleasure by words or action, intentionally or unintentionally.

Then there is the right of your fellow Muslims in general; and the right of those non-Muslims who are under the protection of Islam (*Ahlu 'dh-dhimma*); and the other rights which become obligatory in different situations and by various causes.

Therefore blessed is the person whom Allāh helps to fulfil all the rights which become obligatory upon him

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## **A) THE RIGHTS OF ALLĀH**

### **1. The Rights of Allāh**

It is the right of Almighty Allāh that you should worship Him without associating any partner to him. And if you fulfil this duty with sincerity, Allāh has undertaken to suffice you in the matter of this world and the hereafter, and to preserve for you whatever you like of it.

## **B) THE RIGHTS OF SELF & BODY**

It is the right of your self (*nafs*) upon you that you should use it fully in obedience to Allāh, by giving their rights to your tongue, ears, eyes, hands, feet, stomach and private parts, seeking the help of Allāh in this task.

### **2. The Rights of the Tongue**

It is the right of your tongue that you should consider it too respectable to utter obscene language; and you should accustom it to good [speech], and discipline it with good manners, and keep it silent except in time of necessity and for spiritual or material benefit, and keep it away from superfluous, reviling useless talk, which may cause much harm, with little benefit. It is considered a proof of intelligence and a guide to it; and its good discipline edifies a wise man in his wisdom.<sup>8</sup> And there is no power but with the High (and) Great Allāh.

### **3. The Rights of the Ears**

It is the right of your sense of hearing that you should not turn it into a way to your heart except for a noble talk which may create some good [feelings or ideas] in your heart, or which may earn for you a noble character; because it is the door which allows a talk to get to the heart, carrying to it different types of ideas, whether good or evil. And there is no power but with Allāh.<sup>9</sup>

### **4. The Rights of the Eyes**

It is the right of your eye-sight to cast it down from those things which you are not allowed to see; and not to use it except in a place which gives you a lesson by which you may increase your insight or may gain some knowledge, because the sight is the door of contemplation.

### **5. The Rights of the Feet**

It is the right of your feet that you should not use them to go to places forbidden to you; and you should not make them your mount to pass through a disreputable road; because your feet are your conveyance and are to take you on the path of religion and advancement. And there is no power but with Allāh.<sup>10</sup>

### **6. The Rights of the Hands**

It is the right of your hand that you should not extend it to what is forbidden to you; otherwise, you will earn punishment from Allāh in the life-hereafter, and condemnation from people in this life. And you should not hold it from (the actions) which Allāh has obliged you to do.

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8 **Sadûq's version:** And it is the right of the tongue that you should consider it too respectable to utter obscene; and should train it for good, and avoid superfluous talk which has no benefit; you should be kind to people and say good things about them.

9 **Sadûq's version:** And it is the right of the sense of hearing to keep it from listening to backbiting and from hearing what you are not allowed to hear.

10 **Sadûq's version:** And it is the right of your feet that you should not use them to go to the places forbidden to you; and (remember that) you will have to stand on the bridge over the hell (*sirât*), so make sure that they do not make you tumble therein, lest you perish in the fire

And you should enhance the honour of your hand by withholding it from unlawful things and by extending it for most of such [good] deeds which are not even obligatory for you, because if the actions of your hands are based on wisdom and nobility surely you will get a good reward in the life-hereafter.

#### **7. *The Rights of the Stomach***

It is the right of your stomach that you should not turn it into a receptacle of what is unlawful, whether it is a little or a lot; and that you should not overeat because that will turn eating into gluttony and shamelessness instead of giving you strength; and you should keep it under control when hungry or thirsty because overeating (which sometimes ends even in dysentery) causes laziness, hinders from work and cuts a man away from every goodness and nobility; and overdrinking (which ends some-times in intoxication) makes a man look idiotic, ignorant and disgraced.

#### **8. *The Rights of the Private Parts***

It is the right of your private parts to protect them from what is unlawful to you; and to help yourself in this task by casting your eyes down (and, indeed, this is the best helper) and by often remembering death and warning yourself of [the wrath of] Allāh and His punishment. And from Allāh is the protection and the help; and there is no power or strength but with Him.

### **C) THE RIGHTS OF THE RITUALS**

#### **9. *The Rights of Prayer***

It is the right of the prayer (salāṭṭ) that you must think of it as an audience with Allāh, and that during salāṭṭ you are standing before Allāh. Once you know this, you will be apt to stand in that audience as a humble servant of God, longing [for the grace of God], afraid [of His punishment], fearing [His displeasure], hoping [for His mercy], submissive, imploring [His kindness], respecting the One in whose presence you stand calmly and quietly,<sup>11</sup> showing reverence in the limbs, submitting the soul to him, nicely telling Him the secrets of your heart, asking Him to emancipate you from the sins which have enslaved you and the mistakes which have ruined you. And there is no power but with Allāh.

#### **10. *The Rights of Pilgrimage*<sup>12</sup>**

It is the right of the pilgrimage (hajj) that you should appreciate that it is a deputation to your Lord, and an escape to Him from your sins; and through it your repentance is accepted and your obligation (which, Allāh has placed upon you) is fulfilled.

#### **11. *The Rights of the Fast***

It is the right of the fast (sawm) that you should recognise it as a curtain which God has put on your tongue, ears, eyes, private parts and stomach to protect you from the fire (of Hell)<sup>13</sup>, and it has been mentioned in hadith (of the Prophet) that. "Fast is a shield against the fire". Therefore, if you keep your organs calm and quite inside this curtain, you may expect them to remain shielded; and if you allow them to remain disturbed behind the curtain trying to raise the corners of this cover, so they may perceive what is not lawful to them with a glance which causes a desire and a power which is beyond the limits of fear of God -then you

11 **Sadûq's version:** says after this clause: "and that you proceed to it with your heart (i.e. with full attention) and perform it with all its limits and rights"

12 The other version has not mentioned the Rights of Pilgrimage

13 **Sadûq's version** adds here: "so if you leave the fast, you have torn the curtain that Allāh has put on you."

cannot be sure that it will not tear the curtain and go out And there is no power but with Allāh.

### *12. The Rights of the Alms*

It is the right of alms (sadaqah) that you should treat it as your deposit with your Lord, and a trust which does not need any witness. When you come to know [the alms] as such, you will have more confidence in that saving which is deposited secretly rather than that which is given openly,<sup>14</sup> and it behoves you to keep secret with Allāh whatever you may otherwise desire to disclose; and the secret should always remain between you and Him; and you should not try to make witnesses see or hear about this trust (i.e., charity). Otherwise, it will be an indication that you have more confidence in the witness than in your Lord, concerning the return of this trust to you.

Moreover, you should not make anyone feel obliged to you [because you have given him alms] as this alms is for your own benefit. So if you make him feel obliged to you how can you be sure that you yourself will not be in his position [in the future]. Your behaviour will show that you have not deposited that alms for your own benefit, for if you had that intention, you would not have demanded obligation from others. And there is no power but with Allāh.

### *13. The Rights of the Sacrificial Animal*

It is the right of the sacrificial animal that it should be sacrificed with pure intention for your Lord, seeking (only) His mercy and acceptance, and not for the eyes of the onlookers. When you do according to this standard, you will not be a showy and exhibiting person, but will only be seeking [the pleasure of] Allāh.

You should know that Allāh is sought through what is convenient [to you], not through what is difficult; as He has intended making [His commands] easy for His creatures, and does not intend to put them in hardship. Also, humbleness is better than ostentatiousness for you; because pomposity and extravagance are the share of self-important person. And as for humbleness and modesty, there is no pretension and waste in them because they are natural, and are present in the [uncorrupted] human character, And there is no power but with Allāh<sup>15</sup>

## **D) THE RIGHTS OF THE SUPERIORS**

### *14. The Rights of the Ruler*

It is the right of your ruler that you should know that you are a test for him and he is on trial because of the power which he has upon you; you should be sincere to him and should not revolt against him because his hands are strongly upon you and [by revolting] you would be a cause of your own destruction as well as his destruction [because by suppressing or killing you he would be condemned by Allāh].

And beseech with humbleness and courtesy his pleasure as far as is useful in averting harm from you and does not interfere with your religion; and ask the help of Allāh, in this task.

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14 **Sadûq's version** says after it: and you should know that it averts from you calamities and sickness in this world, and wards off the fire from you in the hereafter."

15 **Sadûq's version:** And it is the right of the sacrificial animal that you should do it for Allāh, the Mighty, the Great, and not for (showing) to the people; your intention should be only to get the mercy of your Lord, and deliverance of your soul on the day you meet Him.

And do not indulge in opposition to or hatred of him, because if you do so, you will be ungrateful to him [because if, as a result of this hatred, he did injustice to you, he would be disgraced before Allāh] and ungrateful to yourself [because you made yourself a target for his tyranny] and thus you would be counted as his helper against yourself and his partner in whatever he would be doing against you. And there is no power but with Allāh.

#### *15. The Rights of the Teacher*

It is the right of your teacher to respect him and respect the dignity of his audience, and to listen to him intently facing towards him,<sup>16</sup> and to help him to teach you knowledge, which you cannot be without, by reserving for him your intellect, with presence of mind and purity of heart and clarity of vision, by abstaining from enjoyments and by having few desires.

And you should know that you are his messenger in whatever he teaches you to those people in ignorance who may come to you. So, it is necessary for you to deliver his message [to impart the knowledge] to them beautifully, and not to commit a breach of trust while conveying his message, and to fulfil your duty on his behalf when you have undertaken it. And there is no power or strength but with Allāh.

#### *16. The Rights of your Master*

The right of your master is like that of your ruler, except that the ruler has more power upon you than the master has. You should obey him in all big and small matters except when this obedience tends to go against obedience to Allāh and hinders you from fulfilling your duties towards Allāh and his creatures. [In that case you should not obey him but should perform the latter duties.] But after fulfilling those duties you should perform your duties towards your master and be busy with it. And there is no power but by Allāh.<sup>17</sup>

### **E) THE RIGHTS OF THE DEPENDENTS**

#### *17. The Rights of the Ruled*

It is the right of those you rule that you should remember that you have subjugated them as a result of your power, and they are your subjects because of their weakness and humility. So, how deserving of mercy, protection and forbearance is the person whose weakness and servility did work for you in making him your subject and enforcing your command upon him, so much so that he is now helpless and powerless against you and cannot find any helper [if you put him in trouble] except God. And how deserving are you to thank Allāh when you appreciate His grace in bestowing this power and strength upon you. And one who is thankful to Allāh, Allāh increases His bounties for him. And there is no power but with Allāh.<sup>18</sup>

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16 **Sadûq's version:** "You should not raise your voice over his; nor should you reply anyone who asks him about anything - so that it is he who replies him. Do not talk with anyone in his gathering, nor backbite anybody in his presence. You must defend him if someone speaks evil about him. You should hide his shortcomings and announce his virtues. Do not sit with an enemy of his nor show enmity to a friend of his. When you comply with this, the angels of Allāh will bear witness that you had gone to him and learned his knowledge purely for the sake of Allāh, not for the people."

17 **Sadûq's version:** It is the right of your master that you should obey him, and should not disobey him – except in that (order) which might displease Allāh, the Mighty, the Great, because there is no obedience for any creature in disobedience of the Creator.

18 **Sadûq's version:** And it is the right of those you rule that you should remember that they have come under your authority because they are weak and you are strong. Therefore, you are obligated to deal with them with justice. You should be like an affectionate father to them: forgive their follies: and do not be hasty in punishing them. Be thankful to Allāh, the Mighty, the Great, for the favour He has done you and the power He has given you over them.

### *18. The Rights of the Pupil*

It is the right of your dependants in knowledge that you should know that Allāh has made you their master by bestowing upon you knowledge and entrusting you with the treasure of wisdom. Therefore, if you are generous in this commission given you by Him, and if you act as a benevolent trustee who wishes his master well in looking after his servant, [and who is] patient and observant enough to bring out the wealth (of knowledge) of his hand whenever he sees a needy person, you will be a virtuous man and you will have hope and true faith. Otherwise you will be guilty of embezzlement [of the knowledge given to you by God], and of tyranny against his creatures, and will be liable to be deprived of this knowledge and honour by God.

### *19. The Rights of the Wife*

It is the right of your wife that you should know that Allāh has made her for you a tranquillity and comfort [in worry], and a friend and shield [against sins].

And likewise, it is incumbent upon both of you to thank Allāh for your partner and to know that (the spouse) is a grace of Allāh upon you. And it is obligatory to have good-fellowship with this grace of Allāh [i.e. wife], and to respect her and be kind to her, although your rights upon her are greater and her obedience to you is final in all your likes and dislikes so long as it is not a sin. So she has the right of love and fellowship, and a place of repose [i.e. house] so that natural desires may be fulfilled, and this in itself is a great duty. And there is no strength but by Allāh.<sup>19</sup>

### *20. The Rights of the Slave*

It is the right of your dependent by service to realise that he is the creature of your Lord, and that he is your own flesh and blood.

Although you are his master, but neither you have created him, made his ears or eyes nor have you given him his sustenance. It is Allāh who did all this for him and then made him your dependent and gave him as a trust to you,<sup>20</sup> so that you may keep a watch on the trust of God on His behalf and deal with him as God deals with His creatures [i.e. with love and care].

So you should feed him what you eat; and clothe him with what you wear, and not demand from him what he cannot do. And if you do not like him, then relieve yourself of the responsibility [put upon you by God] by changing him, but do not inflict punishment upon the creation of Allāh. And there is no power but with Allāh.

## **F) THE RIGHTS OF RELATIVES**

### *21. The Rights of the Mother*

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, eyes, hands, legs, hair, limbs, [in short] with her whole being, gladly, cheerfully and carefully; suffering patiently all the

<sup>19</sup> **Sadûq's version** ends with the following clause: "and if she commits any folly, you should forgive her"

<sup>20</sup> **Sadûq's version** goes from here as follows: "so that He may have in safe-keeping whatever good you do to him. Therefore, do good to him as Allāh has done good to you. If you dislike him, change him, but do not inflict punishment on Allāh's creation. And there is no power but with Allāh."

worries, pains, difficulties and sorrows [of pregnancy], till the hand of God removed you from her and brought you into this world. Then she was most happy feeding you forgetting her own hunger; clothing you, even if she herself had no clothes; giving you milk and water, not caring for her own thirst; keeping you in the shade, even if she had to suffer from the heat of the sun; giving you every comfort with her own hardships; lulling you to sleep while keeping herself awake.

And [remember that] 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 Allāh.

#### *22. The Rights of the Father*

It is the right of your father to realize that he is your root and you are his branch; and that without him you would have been non-existent. Therefore, whenever you find in yourself anything likeable remember that your father is the basic means of that gift [of Allāh] to you. And be thankful to Allāh and grateful to your father accordingly. And there is no power but with Allāh

#### *23. The Rights of a Child*

It is the right of your child to know that he is from you and, with all his virtue and vice, is connected to you in this world, and that you are responsible for instructing him in good manners, guiding him towards his Lord, helping him to follow His commands which concern you or him; and you will be rewarded or punished [according to your success or failure in this guidance].

Therefore, you should endeavour in his training like the person who is going to be adorned by his good influence [upon his child] in this world, [and who wants to be] vindicated in the presence of his Lord concerning his responsibility about the child by his good guardianship and by taking Allāh's dues from that child. And there is no power but with Allāh.

#### *24. The Rights of a Brother*

It is the right of your brother to appreciate that he is your hand which you extend, and your back [i.e. support] which you recline upon, and your strength which you rely on, and your power by which you attack [your enemies]. Therefore, make him not a tool to commit sin against Allāh nor a means to violate His rights; and do not shirk from assisting him against his own self [i.e. from warning him to desist from evils] and helping him against his enemy and shielding him from his Satans, and giving him sincere advice, and going forward to him for the sake of Allāh. Then if he obeys his Lord and properly answers His call [it is good for all]; otherwise, Allāh, rather than your brother, should be your choice and the object of your reverence. [That is, if your brother goes against the *sharī'ah* and does not listen to your exhortations and warnings, you should have no connections with him.]

#### *25. The Rights of the Emancipator*

It is the right of your ex-master who emancipated you to realize that he spent his wealth for you and then brought you out from the disrespect and desolation of



slavery to the respect and happiness of freedom; and emancipated you from the bondage of servitude, and removed from you the fetters of slavery, and made the perfume of honour available to you and took you out of the prison of tyranny and kept the hardships away from you, and opened his tongue of justice for your benefit, and opened the whole world for you; and he made you your own master, and unlocked your fetters, and gave you the chance to worship and obey your Lord exclusively [without any need to spend some of your time in the service of your master]; and by emancipating you he suffered a loss in his money.

Therefore, you should know that, after your relatives, he, more than anybody else, has rights upon you, in both your life and death; and he is the person most deserving of your help, assistance and aid for the sake of Allāh. Therefore, if he needs something from you then give him preference over your own self

#### *26. The Rights of the Emancipated*

It is the right of your ex-slave whom you emancipated to realize that Allāh had made you his protection, shield, help, and refuge; and made him a mediator between you and Himself.

Therefore, it is proper that He should protect you from the fire [i.e., by emancipating him, you secured a guarantee against the fire of the Hell].

So, this emancipation will bring a reward from Allāh in the life hereafter; and in this world, Allāh has given you his inheritance if he has no relatives at all. This relationship is in recognition of the wealth which you spent on him and in appreciation of your giving him his rights [of freedom] even by suffering material loss.

On the other hand, if you are not caring for him, it is feared that his inheritance will not prove agreeable to you. And there is no power but with Allāh.

### **G) THE RIGHTS BASED ON PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

#### *27. The Rights of your Benefactor*

It is the right of your benefactor that you should thank him and remember his benefaction and spread good words for him and sincerely pray for him between you and Allāh. Because if you do so you will have thanked him both secretly and openly. After that, if it is possible to repay him by your deeds do so, otherwise keep watching for such an opportunity setting your heart on it.

#### *28. The Rights of the Mu'adhdhin*

It is the right of the mu 'adhdhin (the man who calls adhan to inform people of the time of prayer) to remember that he reminds you of your Lord and calls you to get your share [in the grace of Allāh] and that he is your best helper in the performance of the duty laid down upon you by Allāh. So, you should thank him for it as you thank one who has been kind to you; and even if, in your home, you are suspicious of him, do not degrade him in his work [which he is doing] for Allāh;<sup>21</sup> and know that he, without any doubt, is a grace of Allāh for you. Therefore, you should deal with him kindly and with good manners, thanking Allāh for this grace in all situations. And there is no power but with Allāh

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<sup>21</sup> **Sadûq's version** goes on saying: "And you should realize that he is undoubtedly a favour of Allāh for you, so you should keep good company with Allāh's favour by thanking Allāh for it in all conditions; and there is no power but with Allāh."

### 29. *The Rights of the Imam*

It is the right of the leader of your [congregational] salāt that you should know that he has taken the responsibility of being your ambassador before Allāh and your delegate to your Lord; he spoke on your behalf but you did not speak on his behalf; he prayed for you but you did not pray for him; and he asked [from Allāh] for you but you did not ask for him; he relieved you of the anxiety of standing before Allāh and asking from Him for yourself but you did not relieve him of it. Then if there was any defect in any of the above actions, he and not you, would be held answerable for it; if he committed a mistake you are not going to share it with him (though you are not better than him). Thus, he protected your soul by his self and saved your prayer by his prayer; so you must be thankful to him for it. And there is no power or strength but with Allāh

### 30. *The Rights of a Companion*

It is the right of your companion to be gentle and agreeable to him and to do him justice in conversation and, while looking at him, not to take away your eyes from him suddenly; and while talking, your aim should be to make him understand.

And if you have gone to sit with him you are at liberty to take your leave; but if he has come to sit with you, then he has the option and [in this case] you should not stand, from that meeting without his permission And there is no power but with Allāh.<sup>22</sup>

### 31. *The Rights of the Neighbour*

It is the right of your neighbour to safeguard [his interest] in his absence, and respect him in his presence, and to help and assist him in both conditions. Do not look for his concealed defects and do not dig into his affairs to find out his disgrace. And if you come to know it inadvertently without looking for it, become an impregnable castle to [hide] what you have learned and a thick cover for it, so much so that if spears penetrated into your heart to detect it, they could not touch it. Do not eavesdrop on him when he is not on guard. Do not leave him in hardship and do not envy him in his comfort. Forgive his faults and forgo his slips. And if he behaves with you disgracefully you should not forget your forbearance, but deal with him peacefully. Be his shield against the tongue of abuse and protect him from the treachery of those who pose as sincere to him [but are not]. And live with him a graceful life And there is no power but with Allāh.<sup>23</sup>

### 32. *The Rights of a Friend*

It is the right of [your] friend to deal with him with grace as much as possible, and, if it is not possible, then at least with justice; and that you should respect him as he respects you, and protect him as he protects you; and strive hard that he does not go ahead of you in any good deed between you and him; and if he surpasses you, you should repay it [with grace]; and do not fall short in the love which he deserves. Make it a point to remain sincere to him, to protect him, to assist him in obedience to his Lord and to help him in his personal affairs which is not against his Lord. And, lastly; you should be a mercy for him and not a torment. And there is no power but with Allāh.

22 **Sadûq's version** adds "and you should forget his faults and remember his good deeds; you should not tell him except good things."

23 **Sadûq's version** says: "and assist him if he is oppressed. If you know any bad thing about him, you should hide it; and if you know that he will listen to your advice, then you should admonish him in secret."



## **H) THE RIGHTS BASED ON FINANCIAL, JUDICIAL & SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS**

### *33. The Rights of the Partner*

It is the right of your partner that you should take his burden upon yourself if he is absent, and work equally with him when he is present. And do not decide anything without his consent and do not enforce your view without consulting his; and save his wealth for him; and refrain from embezzling him, be it a large or a small [amount], because this [hadith] has reached us [from our ancestors]: "Verily, the hand of Allāh [i.e., His blessing] remains upon partners as long as they do not swindle each other." And there is no power but with Allāh

### *34. The Rights of Wealth*

It is the right of wealth that you do not obtain it except by lawful means, and do not spend it but in lawful ways. Do not misplace it [i.e. do not use it in unlawful expenditures]; and do not remove it away from truth [do not cheat and do not spend unlawfully]. And, when the wealth is from Allāh [as all wealth is], then do not use it but to reach [near] Allāh and to make it a way to Allāh.

Do not let its influence you by saving it for a person who, probably, will not even thank you for it. Rather he may not be a good successor to your inheritance and may not spend it in obedience to your Lord. Thus, you will be his helper in those [sins and transgressions]. And if, in spending the wealth which previously was yours, he looked after his own interest by obeying his Lord, then he will take all the [spiritual] benefits and you will carry the weight of sin, grief, and shame as well as its consequence [in the hereafter] because you hoarded it in contravention to the rules of the sharī'ah. And there is no power but with Allāh.

### *35. The Rights of your Creditor*

It is the right of your creditor who demands back the loan that, if you have sufficient money, you must fully repay him and give him his dues and make him independent of yourself; and do not make him run around and do not tarry [in repayment], because the Messenger of Allāh has said: "Tarrying of the rich is injustice."

And if you are facing hard times then you should please him by amiable talk and kindly request him to allow an extension of time so that he returns from you content; and do not make him suffer bad dealings in addition to the loss of money because that is meanness. And there is no power but with Allāh.

### *36. The Rights of an Associate*

You owe it to your associate not to cheat or deceive him; nor should you lie to him, make him neglectful, or defraud him. And do not behave, with the intention of breaking him down, like the enemy who gives no quarter. And, if he trusts you, try your utmost to justify his trust and know that breach of trust is usury. And there is no power but with Allāh.

### *37. The Rights of the Claimant*

It is the right of the claimant that if his claim against you is correct, then do not try to break his argument and do not labour to refute his claim. Instead, you should be your own adversary in his favour, and be the judge against yourself,

and be his witness for his claim without any need of other witnesses, because it is the duty imposed upon you by Allāh

And if his claim is wrong, deal with him gently and put the fear [of Allāh] in his heart and adjure him by his religion and dull his wrath against you by reminding him of Allāh; and avoid superfluous and immaterial talk, because such talk cannot remove the enmity of your adversary, you will have committed a sin [of using unsavoury language]; because of such talk, your adversary will sharpen the sword of his enmity against you, as evil words create evil, and good [words] cut off evil.<sup>24</sup> And there is no power but with Allāh.

### *38. The Rights of the Defendant*

It is the right of the person against whom you have lodged a claim that if your claim is right, talk with him benevolently in describing that claim, because the sound of a claim itself is harsh enough [so do not add to it the rudeness of your language too]; and explain your arguments gently; give him time, make your talk clear, and deal with him kindly.

And do not side-step from your proofs by quarrelling with unnecessary talk, as you may lose the track of your argument without gaining any advantage. And there is no power but with Allāh.<sup>25</sup>

### *39. The Rights of the One Who Seeks your Counsel*

It is the right of the person seeking advice from you that, if you have an advice for him, be sincere to him and give him such advice which, had you been in his place, you would have followed yourself; and that [advice] should be rendered gracefully and gently, because gentleness turns strangers into friends, and rudeness estranges friends.

And if you can think of no advice for him but know someone whose judgement you trust, and whom you will gladly consult if it comes to your affairs, you should lead and guide the advice-seeker to him. Thus you will not be keeping your kindness away from him, or hiding your sympathy from him. And there is no power or strength but with Allāh.

### *40. The Rights of the Advisor*

It is the right of your advisor that, if his advice is not in line with your own views, you should not suspect his sincerity, because it is a matter of opinion and people differ in it one from the other. Therefore, if you disagree with him, you are at liberty to follow your opinion; but it is not proper for you to put him under suspicion when previously you thought him worthy of consultation. And do not forget to thank him for his kindness in giving you his opinion and his best advice.

And if his advice conforms with your own opinion be thankful to Allāh and accept it from your brother with gratitude.

And if he should sometimes need your advice, advise him sincerely as he had

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<sup>24</sup> This paragraph appears as follows in another version: "If his claim is wrong, deal with him gently, and do not resort to anything other than gentleness; and do not displease your Lord in his affairs,"

<sup>25</sup> **Sadûq's version:** If you are right in your claim, you should talk with him benevolently, and should not deny his right. But if you are wrong in your claim, you must fear Allāh, the Mighty, the Great, and must repent to Him and withdraw your claim.

done to you. And there is no power but with Allāh.

*41. The Rights of the One being Preached to*

It is the right of the person who asks your guidance that you should preach to him according to his need and ability in a way that is agreeable to the hearing [i.e., in sweet language]. And talk with him according to his intellectual capacity, because every intellect recognises and accepts a speech which is on its own level, and your style should be merciful. And there is no power but with Allāh.

*42. The Rights of the Preacher*

It is the right of the person who guides you that you remain humble to him. and put your heart into his talk and open your ears to his call, so that you may understand his talk.

Then examine it carefully. If he is right, be thankful to Allāh, accept the preacher's advice, and respect him for it.. And if you could not discern the truth, have mercy on him and do not blame him. You should appreciate that he did not withhold his advice from you though his ideas were mistaken. Of course, if you know that he is not sincere to you, then the matter is different. But in that case, you should not listen to him at all. And there is no power but with Allāh.

*43. The Rights of an Elder*

It is the right of an elder that you must respect him because of his age, and honour him because of his Islam if he has any virtue from Islamic standard. [You do so] by always keeping him forward and not arguing with him in talk, and not overtaking him while walking, and not stepping ahead of him in the pathway; and do not be rude to him and bear with him if he is rude to you; and maintain his respect because his age is advanced in Islam (because the worth of age is according to the worth of Islam). And there is no power but with Allāh.

*44. The Rights of the Younger*

It is the right of a younger person to love him by bringing him up and educating him properly; and to forgive him and cover his faults. Be kind to him and help him and cover up the mistake committed because of his young age, as this [love and sympathy] is a means of his repentance; and forbear with him and do not quarrel with him; because it is nearer to his guidance.

**I) THE RIGHTS OF OTHER PEOPLE**

*45. The Rights of the Man Who Asks*

It is the right of the man who asks for help that, if you believe in his truth and have means to meet his needs, you should help him and pray that his hardships be over; and assist him as he has requested.

And if you doubt his truth and do not trust him because of previous dealings, but you are not sure that he is lying this time, then, be careful; perhaps this doubt of yours is a trap of Satan who wants to keep you away from your share [of reward] and likes to come between you and your honour before God. Still, if you decide not to help him, leave him alone [without putting him to shame] and turn him away gracefully.

And if you over-rule the doubts of your heart concerning him and give him

whatever you think is fit for him, then surely it is true constancy.

#### *46. The Rights of the Person Who was Asked*

It is the right of the person whom you asked for help that, if he gives, then you accept his gift with thanks appreciating his benevolence. And, if he does not give, then accept his excuses for not giving and have good faith in him.

And remember that if he withheld it, it was his property which he withheld and he cannot be blamed about his wealth. And if he withheld the wealth from you unjustly, then you know that, *“verily man is very unjust, very ungrateful.”*<sup>26</sup>

#### *47. The Rights of the Person Who made you Happy*

It is the right of the person through whom Allāh made you happy that, if he did so knowingly, you should first of all thank Allāh, then thank him for his favour; and try, when you get the chance, to recompense him for that favour, nay to do even more, as he had the grace of initiative. And look out for any chance to make him happy.

And if that person made you happy unintentionally and unknowingly, you should thank Allāh and be grateful to Him and know that this favour is from Allāh who had reserved it for you. Still you should love that person because he was the means of bringing the grace of Allāh to you, and pray for his happiness ever after, because a source of the blessing of Allāh is a grace in itself wherever it may be even if it was done unintentionally, And there is no power but with Allāh.

#### *48. The Rights of the Person Who was Unjust*

As for the person who was unjust to you in words or deeds, if he did so knowingly and intentionally [then forgiveness is more suitable for you, because it will weed out the enmity between you two. And further, there are many people like him in this world, and it is better to deal with them with good grace, And Allāh says:]<sup>27</sup>

*“And whosoever defends himself after his being oppressed, then there is no way to blame him. The way (to blame) is only against those who oppress men and transgress in the earth unjustly; these shall have a painful chastisement. And indeed whosoever remains patient and forgives then that most surely is (an act of) great resolution.”*<sup>28</sup>

And again He, the Mighty, the Great, says:

*“And if you punish, then punish as you were afflicted; and if you be patient, certainly it is best for the patient ones.”*<sup>29</sup>

All this concerns a person who did that injustice to you intentionally. But if it was not intentional, then you should not afflict him by taking your revenge purposely; otherwise, it will mean that you avenged an unintentional mistake with an intentional punishment. Be patient with him and turn him away [from his mistake] in the most graceful manner. And there is no power but with Allāh.

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26 The Qur'an 14:34

27 The clauses between the brackets appear as follows in **Sadûq's version**: “then you should forgive him. But if you know that forgiveness will be harmful then you may avenge yourself Allāh, the Blessed, the Sublime, says:...”

28 The Qur'an 42:41-43

29 The Qur'an 16:126

#### 49. *The Rights of Fellow Muslims*

It is the right of your fellow Muslims in general to have peaceful feelings towards them and to spread the wings of mercy for them, to be gentle towards the wrong-doers among them and to reform them by earning their love; to be grateful to those who are virtuous in their character or are generous towards you - because their virtuosity of character, without any apparent benefit to you, is in itself a generosity towards you, as they have thus saved you from harm and spared you the effort of protecting yourself from them, and kept their troubles away from you. Therefore, pray for all of them.

And keep your help ready for all of them and treat all Muslims according to their proper position: keep the elder in the position of your father, the younger in the place of your child, and the contemporaries in the position of your brother.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, treat any of them who comes to you with grace and mercy; and convey to your brother whatever is incumbent on a brother for his brother.

#### 50. *The Rights of the Non-Muslims (Ahlu'dh-Dhimah)*

It is the right of non-Muslims living in a Muslim country (*Ahlu dh-dhimmah*) that you should accept what Allāh has accepted from them and fulfil the responsibilities which Allāh has accorded them; and refer to [the sharī'ah of] Allāh about the responsibility for them; and if there is any matter between them and you, then decide according to the commandment of Allāh even if it is against your interest. And there must be a barrier keeping you from doing any injustice to them, from depriving them of the protection of Allāh, and from flaunting the commitments of Allāh and His Messenger concerning them. Because we have been told that the Holy Prophet said, "Whosoever does injustice to a protected non-Muslim, I will be his enemy (on day of judgement)." Therefore, have fear of Allāh [and treat them justly]. And there is no power or strength except with Allāh.

### **Conclusion**

So, these are the fifty rights surrounding you from which you can never escape in any condition; it is obligatory for you to abide by them and endeavour to discharge them and seek the help of Allāh - exalted is His praise! - in all of this. And there is no power and strength but with Allāh.

And all praise is for Allāh, the Nourisher of the Universe.

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<sup>30</sup> **Sadûq's version:** You should have mercy on them, and avert harms from them. You should like for them what you like for yourself, and dislike for them what you dislike for yourself. Their elders should be like your father, their youths like your brother, their ladies like your mother, and their young ones like your children.