



Enmity

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 5

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand that people have different ways of doing things
- Know that we cannot hate people for personal reasons
- Understand that we are only allowed to be enemies with people if they are enemies of Allah (SWT) or Islam
- Understand that not getting along with someone is no reason to be rude to them
- Understand the principles of dealing with people we do not like

Each and every person has a different way of doing things, speaking and reacting to things, and each person may even prioritize their daily activities in a different way. For example, some people might like to read a book whereas others might prefer listening to the audio book. In school or university, some people may be shy and associate less with others, whereas others might be more sociable. Some people might be able to tolerate stressful situations whereas others might not be able to.

It is important to understand that these differences are a natural part of life, and we should not be agitated or build hatred and enmity against another person simply because they have a different way of doing things. For example, if I do not like spending time reading, I should not hate someone who enjoys reading and ridicule them. If a person is shy and doesn't approach us, rather than isolating them, we should try to approach them and make them feel comfortable. If we are not able to make another person feel better or we are not in the position to make friends with them, we should at least avoid making enemies with them or building hatred for them within our hearts, in accordance to the teachings of our religion.

PEOPLE THINK DIFFERENTLY

It is also important to understand that each and every person has their own opinions and ways of thinking. Each person forms their own judgments and opinions based on their information that they have gained from their environment. We cannot hate people due to their opinion, and must be able to tolerate and respect them. This also relates to differences in religions or sects, and Allah (SWT) instructs us to:

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Every human being is different, and we sometimes may not necessarily like the differences we see in another person. In this lesson, we will discuss the reasons why hatred arises and review the principles in relation to knowing and dealing with our enemies.

PEOPLE BEHAVE DIFFERENTLY

The diversity of the human race is one of the most amazing things in the world. No two people are the same, and the challenges that we go through in dealing with those around us can build our character and train our souls.

“Invite to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful exhortation; and reason with them in ways that are best and most gracious, surely your Lord knows best those who go astray from His path, and He knows best those who follow the right way.”

Holy Quran 16:125

OUR ONLY ENEMIES

In Islam, our only real enemies are those who are the enemies of Allah (SWT), the Prophets (as) and the Ahlul Bayt (as). The rest are simply people we dislike, perhaps due to our own personal tastes. So, unless the people we hate fall into the category of our ‘real enemies’ as defined by Islam, we must take steps to avoid, reduce and resolve hatred.

PRINCIPLES FOR DEALING WITH PEOPLE WE DO NOT LIKE

1. Avoid actions which make people hate you.

We should never do those things that make people hate us. Examples of this include teasing and bullying.

Imam ‘Ali (as) said: “Everything has a seed, and the seed of enmity is mockery.”ⁱ

2. Do not express your enmity openly.

We should not announce our hatred and enmity since this will intensify the feeling both in ourselves and in the other person, adding fuel to the fire.

Imam al-‘Askari (as) said: “The enemy with the weakest strategy is he who openly displays his enmity.”ⁱⁱ

3. Convert enemies to friends through kindness.

By acting kindly towards them and tolerating their mistakes, and desensitising ourselves to whatever wrong they do to us, we can even convert our ‘enemies’ to friends. This is prescribed directly from Allah (SWT) in the Holy Quran:

“The good deed and the evil deed are not alike. Repel the evil deed with one which is better, then lo! he, between whom and you there was enmity (will become) as though he was a warm friend.”

(41:34)

4. Always self-reflect to see whether the problem is within ourselves.

Often in times of conflict with another person, we are the culprits. However, because we love ourselves so

much we tend to blame it on the other person. We must always first point the finger towards ourselves and look deeply within our own souls.

The Holy Prophet (saw): “Your worst enemy is your lowest Self (Evil Nafs) which is between your sides”ⁱⁱⁱ

5. Always be fair to your enemy.

When Imam Ḥusayn (as) was blocked and held waiting by Ḥurr and his army, he gave water not only to the enemy’s army, but even to their horses. Imam ‘Ali (as) acted similarly in the battle of Ṣiffīn, in which the cursed Mu‘āwiyah’s army had blocked access to the river. Imam ‘Ali (as) launched an attack under Malik al-Ashtar and secured the river, but then allowed the enemy access to the water, showing us that we must treat fairly even the worst of enemies.

Review Questions

Q1. From an Islamic point of view, who is considered my enemy?

- a. One who has harmed my family and property
- b. One who is an enemy of Allah (SWT), the prophets (as) and the Ahlul Bayt (as)
- c. Both a and b

Q2. How should we deal with our enemies?

- a. Punish them with violence so they fear us
- b. Treat them fairly
- c. Publicly announce that he/she is your enemy

ⁱ[Ghurar al-Hikam, 7316]

ⁱⁱ[A‘alam al-Din, no. 313]

ⁱⁱⁱ[Tanbih al-Khawatir, v. 1, no. 259]