



## Core Curriculum

### 6 Measuring Good and Bad in Islam

#### 6.11 **The Three Kinds of Rights in Islam**

##### INTRODUCTION

Bismillāhir Rahmānir Rahīm, As-salāmu ‘Alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh. Peace be upon you brothers and sisters.

Welcome back to the Muslim Converts Channel! The Arabic word for right in Islam is haqq. The word haqq has many derivative meanings. One meaning is truth. Allah, for example, is known as al-Haqq, meaning The Truth. In terms of rights based relationships, the word haqq does not only mean right, but it also means responsibility. In other words, every right in Islam is also a responsibility.

There are three kinds of rights in Islam. The rights of the self (haqq al-nafs), the rights of others (haqq al-nās) and the rights of God (haqq Allah). These rights are what make up the borders of sin and the borders of the salvation of our souls. They are at the core of a healthy Muslim community. In this lesson, we’re going to briefly outline what these rights are, along with examples.

##### BODY OF TEXT

#### **Rights of the Self**

Our fourth Imām, Imām Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (as) says the following about the rights of the self:

And the right of yourself incumbent upon you is that you employ it in

obeying God; then you deliver to your tongue its right, to your hearing its right, to your sight its right, to your hand its right, to your leg its right, to your stomach its right, to your private part its right, and you seek help from God in all that. (Risālat al-Huqūq)

If we were to write an entire book on the rights of the self in Islam, we still wouldn't exhaust the topic. The rights of the self includes respect for one's body. This means that we should eat and sleep properly, maintain proper hygiene and not endanger our health nonsensically, be it physical or mental.

The right of the self is also to dignify oneself as well as the hadith from our fourth Imam is suggesting. This means that we should not waste our short time on this earth doing frivolous things. We need to make sure that we lend our ears to what is worth while and what will benefit us, and lend our sights to what is right. For example, we shouldn't listen to nonsensical music, or waste our time aimlessly going on youtube watching random videos!

Another theme the Imam mentions is to respect how we conduct our intimacy with other peoples. This means that we should avoid zina and keep intimacy in marriage only. Remember that any relationship we engage with is essentially an exchange of spiritual energies. Having relationships with people who do not observe God's commands means that we will absorb their negative, and perhaps Satanic energies.

## **The Rights of Others**

There is no possible way we can cover all rights of people. For the sake of brevity, we'll just stick to one example from the fourth Imam in terms of the rights that others have on us. This example is that of a neighbor:

Our fourth Imām once said:

The right of your neighbor is that you guard him when he is absent, honor him when he is present, and aid him when he is wronged. You do not pursue anything of his that is shameful; if you know of any evil from

him, you conceal it. If you know that he will accept your counsel, you counsel him in that which is between him and you. You do not forsake him in difficulty, you release him from his stumble, you forgive his sin, and you associate with him generously. And there is no strength save in God.

The neighbor refers to people who are close to us. Our duty is to honor them in their absence, meaning that we should protect them and not betray them with things like gossiping. If they are oppressed or evil is committed against them, we should defend them. If they do something wrong, we are to conceal their bad deeds from people and if possible, even make excuses for them.

Remember that if we make excuses for people in order to protect them and their reputation, God will also do the same for us, in this world as well as the next.

We often dump our friends when they are in difficulty. The neighbor, who is also our friend, has the right that we help them in his or her times of difficulty, be it in sickness or in financial difficulty.

## **Rights of God**

Our fourth Imam once said:

The greatest right of God against you is that you worship Him without associating anything with Him. When you do that with sincerity (ikhlas), He has made it binding upon Himself to give you sufficiency in the affair of this world and the next.

We often think of worshiping others as an act of polytheism and idol worship. In other words, we think that shirk in Arabic simply means polytheism. This, however, is not correct. The word shirk means to associate others with God, especially in his powers. We often think that our jobs are really in the hands of our bosses, or that our longevity depends on our genes and how we treat our health.

Our actions do have consequences in this world, both in our financial lives as well as our health. However, according to Islam, Allah is the one who allows these consequences to take place. Without His permission, nothing can happen. If He wills something, no action from our part can stop it. Shirk means to associate the powers of others to that of God, thinking that somehow they can do things independently in this world.

This worldview is wrong and part of the rights of God is that we reject this erroneous belief. Part of the rights of God is also that we trust Him, that we know He wants what is good for us and that He will be there to help us, only if we have faith in Him.