

Dear Brothers and Respected Sisters
As Salaamu Alaykum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh

How to Visit the Sick, With Care and Respect: Etiquette and Best Practices

Abi Abdillah Al-Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (as) informs:

Truly, there is no ache, misfortune, headache or malady but because of a misdeed (sin).

And according to a Hadith'e Qudsi:

"Whatever affliction may visit you is for what your hands have earned, and He pardons much. And what Allah pardons is more than what He punishes for."

Furthermore, Al-Imam al-Sajjad Ali ibn al-Husain (as) stated:

"What a perfect ailment fever is! It gives each organ its fair share of affliction, and there is no good in someone who is not afflicted."

Zurarah quoted either Al Imam al-Baqir (as) or Al-Imam al-Sadiq (as):

"Having a single sleepless night from an ailment is superior to and greater in reward than a year's 'ibadah."

In this context, Abi Jafar Al Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as) says:

"One night's fever equals two years of ibadat; two nights' fever equals two years of ibadah, and three nights' fever equals seventy years of ibadat".

Abi Abdillah Al-Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (as) says:

"If Allah favors a servant...He would present him with one of three things: Fever, eye-ache or headache."

The sick person has four peculiarities:

- i. His misdeeds are off the record*
- ii. Allah commands a Malak to record every act of kindness he did while healthy*
- iii. His illness goes after every organ in his body and removes sins from it*
- iv. He will end up being forgiven whether he dies (from the illness) or survives it.*

Eyadat (visiting the sick) is Sunnah and Rasulullah(S) said:

"The perfect Eyadat is that you place your hand on the sick (subject to medical advice), and ask patient how he/she is feeling. And the handshake is the perfect greeting."

The sick are usually dejected and in need of kindness and moral support because they feel useless since they are unable to carry on with their day to day affairs. It happens that in such circumstances, visits by family, friends and brothers-in-faith are a source of great encouragement for them and gives them comfort and mental satisfaction. In view of this, Islam strongly recommends that the sick should be visited and enquired about their health.

Moreover, a Hadith says:

"One who helps a sick person in meeting his needs is forgiven of his sins - whether he succeeds in this work or not."

When visiting the ailing, take a present for them, whether fruits or flowers. In case the patient is in need of money, help out financially even if it may be a seemingly small amount as Rasulullah(S) declared:

"Whoever will feed the sick, Allah will provide him with the fruit of Jannah."

Once when some Ash'ab of Al-Imam al-Sadiq (as) were going to visit an ill man, he met them on the way and asked them to stop, inquiring:

"Are you carrying with you fruits or some fragrance – Attar or a piece of Oud (aloes-wood)?"

They replied in the negative. After that the Imam (as) replied:

"Don't you know that such things give (joy) and peace of mind to the sick? A patient is pleased with anything that is presented to him"

The gateway to the Madinat al-'ilm, Ali ibn Abi Talib (as), educates us to visit the ill after three days; however, in case of a critical condition, one can visit the patient before the advised time limit. This doesn't mean that the doctor's or hospital's advice regarding visitation be disregarded. Moreover, Amir al-Mumineen Ali (as) directed that women were not required to visit males in spite of their sickness. He further taught that Rasulullah (S) prohibited the visitors from eating or drinking anything during "Ayadat (visit)" of the ill as such an act will wipe out the reward of the visit.

Ayadat is a Sunnah, but the visitor must not stay for long. Even if he is close to the patient, he must leave early. If, however, the patient requests the visitor to stay, he may be obliged. Furthermore, if the patient is unconscious or is unable to recognize the visitor, they shouldn't be forced to do so. Instead, the visitor should ask the patient to repeat with him "Kalimah al-Shahadah". Moreover, attendants should not deprive the ill contact with others on the pretext that doctors suggested avoiding meetings. However, visitors must bear in mind not to discuss issues that may disturb the peace of the patient; they must not start conversations on topics like property, trade, politics and governments. Visitors must discuss Allah and His Awliya which increases the source of Barakah and Rahmah. Moreover, visitors should enter the room and stay near the bed of the patient and recite the following for Shifa:

i). Surah al-Hamd

ii). Surah al-'ikhl'as

iii). Ayah al-Kursi

iv). Surah Yaseen

v). Dua, Zikr and Aam'al are the sources of Shifa.

The following Aam'al is recommended for the Shifa of a patient:

i). Family members should recite Surah al Hamd daily seven (7) times with the intention of Shifa

ii). If possible, sheep should be slaughtered as Sadaqah and meat should be distributed amongst the deserving.

iii). According to the financial status of the patient, the amount of Sadaqah should be equally distributed amongst the needy.

iv). Allah has granted divine power in the Turbah (Khak'e Shifa) dust of the grave of Al Imam al-Husain ibn Ali (as) hence it should be offered to the patient along with Zamzam.

v). Al Imam al-Sadiq (as) provided Talim:

Put wheat in a bag and place it near the patient. Afterwards, bring it near the patient who must place his hand on the wheat, and then provide it to the needy, asking for their Dua.

A person asked:

O, Imam! Should I not distribute Dirham or Dinars?

The Imam (as) instructed:

Do only what I say as it is transmitted to us (from our ancestors).

According to the Hadith Literature, there are five duties that the Muslim owes to his fellow Muslims, one of which is visiting the sick. It is the sick whose sickness is preventing them from seeing people. If somebody is under the weather but is still going out and seeing people, it is not obligatory to visit them. The sick person's morale should be boosted by conveying to them that illness leads to purification from sins and that In sha Allah they'll get better. Try to cheer and console them with supporting words of early recovery by the order of Allah, for that will comfort them. Also, one should try to avoid asking the details or the cause of the illness since it distresses the patient. May Allah grant us Shifa and the death of Saadat and Shafaat of His Rasul (S) and his 'itrat Tahirah (as), Aameen. They alone are authorized of the Shafaat "Be'iznehi" (by the authority of Allah), after death.

Best Regards

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