**Kith and kin**

BY A M I N V A L L I A N I | 10/4/2019

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| HUMANS feel a hunger for love and respect. Therefore, all societies across the globe have developed various traditions to satiate this type of hunger. Among them is the tradition of visiting kith and kin. It reduces tension, creates affinity, enhances attachment, and provides an opportunity for the meeting of minds and celebration of kinship.  Ithas been prevalentin allsocietiessince time immemorial. Visiting close relatives and friends and welcoming them at one`s residence is an attribute of humanity. It does not exist in any other creature except humans the crown of creation. Therefore, it can be described as an epitome of human civilisation. It provides a chance to the host and the guest to elevate their relationship to greater heights, thus paving the way for peace and stability in society.  There are numerous benefits of visiting each other. For example, it helps win the hearts of near and dear ones, bridges the communication gap and brings them closer to each other. It provides a platform to guests and hosts to sit together, share dayto-day experiences, strengthen their relations and solve their differences. It also provides an opportunity to clear any misunderstanding that might sour their relationship going forward. It builds trust and encourages parties to support each other in their hour of need. The rich and well-off relatives help their less fortunate ones to help them emerge from their problems. Therefore, promoting relations as a part of culture is an essential feature of our humanness.  We find references about hospitability in the holy books. In the Bible it says `Do not neglect to show hospitality to a stranger, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.` The Holy Quran mentions that Allah`s prophets have respected their guests; Hazrat Lut respected his guests and warned miscreants not to disgrace him in front of them (15:68). Similarly, Hazrat Ibrahim was very fond of having guests at his house and was particularly hospitable to travellers. He took them to his house, served them food and provided a bed to rest. The guests of Hazrat Ibrahim once brought glad tidings about the birth of an intelligent son (51:24).  Therefore, many considered guests a symbolic blessing from Allah. It is also reported that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) has said that those who believe in Allah and the Last Day should honour their guests (Sahih Al-Bukhari).  The history of Islam provides examples of hospitality. The Holy Prophet started his mission with the invitation of his close relatives. Similarly, when he migrated, the peo-ple of Madina wholeheartedly welcomed him and each one of them was willing to host him as their guest. Another such example relates to the 1(ing of Abyssinia Najashi (Negus) who welcomed and received the first Muslims as guests during the initial period of Islamic history.  Today, we are living in the 21st century and the situation is fast changing. Life is getting increasingly mechanised. With material progress and an urban lifestyle, people tend to let the pristine traditions of yore slide. Undue material pressure and hectic schedules have made our lives cumbersome. Though there is economic prosperity as compared to the past, our values are under pressure.  With mechanised living, unexpected and uninvited guests are not welcomed wholeheartedly because of time constraints. Even married brothers and sisters seldom visit each other except by invitation on special occasions. Consequently, their children lack a sense of closeness. The senior members of society such as grandparents are thebiggest sufferers.  The feel ignored at this stage of life as no one visits them.  Though the advancement of technology and diffusion of mobile phones has made it possible for everyone to stay in contact, personal visits to each other`shouses have become rare. This has created a gulf between relatives.  There was a time when guests were welcomed with open arms. If one heard the knock at the door and saw the face of some close relative or a guest walk in through the door, the entire family rushed to welcome him or her wholeheartedly. If the guest arrived at lunchtime or dinnertime, he or she would be urged to join their hosts for a meal. Guests visiting for a shorter duration were also served with tea, snacks or a soft drink. In the past, families used to wait for guests from far-flung areas. They used to 1(eep a separate room for their guests with all necessary items of their use.  It is necessary that all such traditions which make society peaceful and harmonious be salvaged, maintained and promoted.  Humans are hungry for love, respect and hospitability and maintaining the bonds of kinship provide satisfaction for such hunger.  The writer is an educationist with an interest in religion.  valianiamin@gmail.com |  |