

THE CARE FOR ORPHANS IN ISLAM: BAB-ES-SALAM CHARITY HOME AS A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

After the pre-Islamic period, the care for orphans holds significant importance in Islam as it is regarded a virtuous act and a way to earn the pleasure of Allah. Given this, organisations, and individuals play a crucial role in providing for the needs of orphans in the society. One of such organisations is Bab-es-Salam Charity Home, a case study that exemplifies how Islamic principles are applied in caring for orphans. Bab-es-Salam Charity Home offers more than just financial support, it strives to provide emotional and psychological care such as food, shelter, clothing, education, love and dignity ensuring orphans grow up in an environment where they feel valued. This study adopted a descriptive method and employs interviews, participatory observations, prints and online materials as research instruments. The findings revealed that Bab-es-Salam has a unique way of caring for orphans in their care which includes, allowing the children to have friends who come over to the home on visits as it is obtainable in a family setting among others. This study therefore recommended that budgetary allocation from the government to support orphans, orphanages and other vulnerable individuals.

Keywords: Orphans; Management; Bab- es-Salam; Islam.

Introduction

Before the Islamic period, orphans were one of the major victims of brutality, cruelty and malevolence, they had no rights and lacked caring persons in their lives. The Arabian society viewed orphans as vulnerable individuals without social status or protection. The tribal society in pre-Islamic Arabia placed great importance on lineage and family ties, so orphaned children were sometimes neglected, left without proper care, and often became subject to exploitation. Hence, orphans were seen as a burden and were not always cared for in a compassionate way.

However, with the arrival of Islam, the treatment of orphans underwent a profound transformation. The Qur'an and teachings of the prophet (S.A.W) emphasized the importance of protecting and caring for orphans, making it a moral obligation for the Muslim community. Allah says:

On this world and hereafter. And they ask you concerning the orphans say: To set right for them (their affairs) is good, and if you become co-partners with them, they are your brethren, and Allah knows the mischief-maker and the peacemaker, and if Allah had pleased, he would certainly have caused you to fall into a difficulty, surely Allah is mighty, wise (Q2:220).

Allah also says:

They ask you to what they should spend say: Whatever wealth you spend, it is for the parent and the near of kin and the orphans and needy and the wayfarer and whatever good you do, Allah surely knows it. (Q2: 215).

The Prophet (S.A.W) said:

The best house among the Muslims is the house in which orphans are well treated. The worst house among the Muslim is the house in which orphans are ill-treated. I and the guardian of the orphan will be in the garden like these two, indicating his two fingers. (Al-Bukhari 6006)

Thus, caring for orphans has been an issue of concern among the Muslims due to the huge reward attached to it. In the early Islamic period orphan care was largely managed within families or through the extended family system. However, as cities grew and the needs of orphans became more pronounced, institutions began to emerge. The concept of institutions specifically dedicated to orphans developed during the Abbasid caliphate in the 8th and 9th centuries. During this time, the construction of *Dar Al Yatim* (orphans home) became common in cities such as Baghdad, where they not only provided shelter but also education, food and moral guidance to orphans. The ottomans also establish a network of orphanages, known as Yatim Hane, starting in the 15th century. These institutions were often part of larger complex that included schools, mosques, and hospitals. (Khatib 200)

The early stage of Islam can be best described as a golden period for orphans in history. It is a result of such care and devotion that gave rise to the likes of Imam shafii, Imam Ahamd bn Hambali, Imam Bukhari, Imam Suyuti, Ibn Hajar Asqalani among others. All of whom were orphans and well taken care of by a loving and generous community. (Abdulganiy and Mika'il 129) In view of the above assertion, must Islamic welfare and humanitarian organisations include orphans among their beneficiaries and emotive appeals on their behalf are disseminated to the public such as *haramain*, Muslim aid, Islamic relief worldwide UNICEF, save the children among others. Therefore, managing orphans has become a global issue of concern among Muslims. Nigeria is equally part of this global concern due to the increase of orphans in our society.

For this reason, Bab-es-Salam charity home was established with the purpose of caring for the welfare of orphans in the society, which was triggered by the founder experience in Turkey while on a business trip. Hence, this study intends to showcase the tremendous role of Bab-es-salam charity home to the welfare of orphans in our society. Therefore, the study will discuss the care for orphan in Islam, methods of managing orphans in Islam, and modes of operation of Bab-es-salam charity home among others.

Care for Orphan in Islam

The Arabic word *yatim* means something singular and alone. When used for human being, it refers to a minor who has lost his or her father, or a foundling or abandoned child. In Islam, orphans is defined as a child who has lost his or her father before reaching the age of puberty. (Faruqui 76) In Islam, the care for orphans holds a significant place, as Islam strongly encourages their welfare and protection. Orphans are considered one of the most vulnerable groups requiring special attention and care. The care for orphans in Islam involves providing financial and emotional support such as feeding, clothing, education and shelter among others. Hence, sponsoring an orphan in considered one of the greatest deeds that brings a person closer to Allah and reinforces the spirit of social solidarity that Islam advocates. Islam gives orphan a special and high status, honouring them, commanding kindness towards them and Allah promises great reward in this life and the hereafter for their caretakers. This is affirmed in the words of the prophet (S.A.W), who promised those who sponsor an orphan with numerous virtues and a high status, including proximity with him in paradise in addition to great rewards in this life, such as purifying and sanctifying wealth and increased provision. (Memon 87).

Qur'an mentioned orphan 23 times in 22 different places highlighting the significance of one of the most marginalized members of the society. Sponsoring an orphan is among the qualities of the righteous and God-fearing persons. Allah says:

Righteousness is not turning your face towards the east or the west. Righteousness are those who believe in Allah, the last day, the angels, the book and the prophets and give their wealth in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy _____
Q2:177.

Moreover, Islam has great care in the interest of orphans, in terms of nurturing, care and treatment to ensure a decent living for them and to be a useful member in the Muslim community. Allah says: therefore, treat not the orphan with harshness Q89:17. Allah also says: “Have you seen the one who denies the recompense? For that is the one who drives away the orphan” (Q107: 1-2). It is established in the above verses that care and compassion must be given to orphans, so as not to feel inferior to other members of the community. Also, protecting and guarding the wealth of orphans after giving them their expected rights, is held with values by *Shari'ah* while its violation is seriously frowned at. Allah says: “As for those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly, surely, they only swallow fire into their bellies and they shall enter burning fire” (Q4: 10).

The Prophet (S.A.W) as stated earlier, pointed to the benefits and rewards that are attached to the care for orphans. Likewise, he said Allah's wrath will be on whosoever that deprives orphans their rights and subjects them to turmoil as well as eating up their wealth unlawfully. The prophet (S.A.W) considered eating up an orphan's wealth to be among the seven destructive sins as reported by Abu Hurayrah. He said:

The messenger of Allah peace and blessings of Allah be upon him said: O Allah, I have issued a warning in regards to the rights of two vulnerable groups: orphans and women. (Ibn Majah 3678).

In another Hadith reported by Al-Sa'ib ibn Abdullahi, the messenger of Allah, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said to him, o sa'ib, look at the character of you deeds in the time of ignorance and continue with them in Islam: honour the guest, be generous to the orphan, and be good to your neighbour. (Al- Bukhari 2766)

Management of Orphans in Islam

As discussed above, in Islam orphans are considered to be under special protection and care. The religion provides clear guidance on how orphan should be treated emphasizing compassion, kindness and justice. Some other sets of guidance include the following:

Kafalah (Guardianship)

Kafalah serves as an alternate method of family support for children without parental care, commonly observed among Muslims globally. It involves an individual or family willingly assuming the responsibility for a child's daily needs, education, safety and protection, mirroring the care a parent provides for their biological child. The term *kafalah* originates from the concept of nurturing, sponsoring and representing someone. This practice evolved from a specific Islamic emphasis on the well-being of orphans and abandoned children in Islamic teachings. (Assim and Sloth-Nielsen 322).

Through *Kafalah* a family takes in an orphaned or abandoned child or a child who cannot remain with their birth parents or who is otherwise deprived of family environment. The essence of *kafalah* lies in taking on the responsibility of someone in need, reflecting the Islamic values of compassion, social welfare and community support.

Al-Hadanah (Custody of Orphans)

Al-Hadanah refers to the care and upbringing of an orphan child, a child who has lost both parents in an Islamic context. The general concept of hadanah applies to any child in need of care, when it comes to orphans. It refers to the care, custody, and upbringing of orphans with the primary aim of ensuring the child's safety, well-being and proper development either by relatives such as grandparents, uncles or in the absence of relatives, through a legal guardian. (Al-Sallabi 76).

Islamic Orphanage Home

Islam primarily promotes family-based care, orphanages or institutions that care for orphans can still be part of the framework for managing orphans, especially in cases where there is no extended family members to care for them or where the family is unable to provide proper care. However, such institutions should adhere to Islamic principles such as, providing a nurturing environment where orphans are treated with kindness and dignity not as a last resort or a means of separation from society. They should also focus on not only the physical needs such as food, shelter, clothing but also the emotional and spiritual well-being of the children. They must maintain the children's Islamic identity and teach them their rights and responsibilities. (Al – Sallabi 77).

Thus, in Islam the concept of institutions specifically dedicated to orphans developed during the Abbasid caliphate (750-1258 CE). During this time *dar al yatim* (orphans home) was established in order to provide shelter, education food and moral guidance to orphans. In other words, institutions caring for orphans aligns with the broader principles of compassion, charity and social responsibility. Islam emphasizes the importance of caring for vulnerable members of the society which includes orphans, the elderly and those in need which orphanages stand for. (Khatib 200).

Extended Family

In Islamic teachings, the well-being and care of orphans are highly emphasized as previously discussed. Extended family members are encouraged to step in when a child loses their parents. This responsibility is rooted in the Qur'an and the Hadith of the prophet (S.A.W). If the father died or both parents extended family members such grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins are encouraged to take care of orphans. Islam stresses the Importance of family ties and encourages relatives to support orphaned children emotionally, financially and socially. This system helps ensure that orphans are not left without care and have a stable family environment. The Qur'an uses Muslim to protect orphans from harm and mistreatment. The extended family is seen as a natural support network for orphaned children and members of the family are responsible for providing care, attention and basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, education among others. (Testa 27) Allah says:

And (as for) those believed afterwards and fled and struggled hard along with you, they are of you and possessors of relationship are nearer to each other in the ordinance of Allah, surely Allah knows all things. Q8:75.

Inheritance Rights

Managing orphans includes providing financial support to cover necessities and ensuring their rightful share of inheritance as stated in Qur'an 4 verse 10 stressing fairness and protection of orphaned children's rights. Allah says: "As for those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly, surely they only swallow fire into their bellies and they shall enter Burning fire". (4: 10)

Hence, inheritance laws are mainly based on the Qur'anic verses (Q4: 11 and 176). These divine instructions are elaborated upon in the Hadith and further detailed by Islamic scholars. The Qur'anic laws generally offer favourable provisions for orphans and widows, ensuring their self-identity is protected. Islamic law recognizes orphans and widows as legitimate heirs regardless of their social or economic status as a way of managing them in Islam.

To determine the legal heirs, inheritance claims are based on four types of relationship: blood (consanguinity), material, client (*al-wala'*), and religious fraternity. Thus, any Muslim woman or children related to the deceased through these categories is considered a legitimate heir. The law grants inheritance rights to both male and female heirs in the cases of blood and marital relations, recognizing a total of twelve heirs, including eight women such as the wife, daughter, mother, sister (full, half, uterine), son, son's daughter and grandmother. The client (*al wala'*) relationship pertains to freed slaves and former master or the client if the master is deceased. Religious fraternity involves inheritance by surviving Muslims through the *baytul mal* (public treasury) where there are no heirs from blood, marriage or client relationships. (Arikewuyo 129).

As quoted earlier, the Qur'an specifies exact shares for certain primary heirs, such as the wife, son daughter, mother and sister known as *Ashabul-fara'id*, (prescribed shares) while the shares for secondary heirs like the son's daughter and grandmother are determined through *Ijtihad* (interpretative reasoning). The Qur'anic shares are $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{8}$, $\frac{2}{3}$, $\frac{1}{3}$, and $\frac{1}{6}$ which are allocated to primary heirs under specific conditions. Factors influencing these shares included the presence or absence of children, the existence of male heirs, and the number heirs of the same status. For example, a wife inherits $\frac{1}{4}$ of the estate if there are no children, but only $\frac{1}{8}$ if the deceased had children. A daughter receives $\frac{1}{2}$ if she is the only child, but this share is reduced if a son is present, with two or more daughters together inheriting $\frac{2}{3}$. A mother gets $\frac{1}{3}$ if the deceased had no children but only $\frac{1}{6}$ if there are children or multiple collateral heirs. No primary heir loses their share of inheritance except under legal conditions such as impediments or exclusions. (Arikewuyo 130).

Bab_es-Salam Charity Home

Bab-es-Salam charity home was established by Chief Abdulwahab Folawiyo on the 6th of December 1990, in Lagos Nigeria, as the first Islamic orphanage home in south western Nigeria. (Fanimokun et al. 228) Bab-es-Salam which means door of peace is one of the unique philanthropic acts of the founder by opening the door of peace to children against whom such door is shut by factors beyond their control. These children are orphans who lost their father before reaching the age of puberty, also helpless babies who depend on maternal care to survive, and modern society's parentless babies who because of their parental social or economic challenges, are thrown away outright. The founder's philanthropy in this sphere manifests his deep concern for society and religious obligations to assist those in need.

Bab-es-Salam charity home serves as a sanctuary for vulnerable children who would otherwise face homelessness and despair. In countries plagued by economic instability, the likelihood of orphaned infants surviving is slim, particularly among impoverished families. Economic hardships often lead to a rise in parentless and abandoned infants, a phenomenon exacerbated by societal pressures. Additionally, the growing occurrence of pregnancies outside of wedlock contributes to the abandonment of children as young mothers ashamed of their situation may choose to conceal their pregnancies and if they survive childbirth, abandon their babies.

The inspiration behind establishing Bab-es-Salam charity home stems from Folawiyo's personal history of losing his father at the age of five, which is typically when formal schooling begins. Despite this early loss, Folawiyo's educational opportunities were not compromised, thanks to the support and nurturing environment provided by his mother and grandmother. However, the absence of a father figure during his formative years undoubtedly left an emotional void, as he observed his peer's sharing stories of their father's achievements. (Fanimokun et al. 230).

This background was bound to generate great sympathy from Folawiyo who had those trapped by fate in the same cauldron. The sympathy was energized by an experience in Turkey while on a business cum religious trip. Mainly, orphanages in Nigeria had been and still are associated with some Christian dominations. Folawiyo was touched by the fact some Islamic institutions in Turkey were taking care of the less privileged Turkish children. This probably convinced him that orphanages are not strange in Islam, on his return to Nigeria, he related his experience to Tunde Fanimokun and expressed a desire to do something similar in Lagos. This was how the Bab-es-Salam charity home was conceived. (Idrees, Interview).

Moreover, the transformation of a concept into reality presents its unique challenges. To create an orphanage Folawiyo identified the need for a suitable building location. He opted to utilize his prime primary property at Ogunnaike Street in the government reservation area (G.R.A), Ikeja for this

purpose. Another hurdle was finding qualified staff to operate the home. Operating an orphanage requires a certain level of expertise and genuine affection for children. Fortunately, providence bought Mrs. Sheeren Kamaldeen, a compassionate human of Guyana descent, who proved to be an ideal candidate to manage the Bab-es-Salam charity home. Her innate maternal instincts drove her to address the plight of disadvantaged children in the society. The home initially began as a pilot project and upon receiving full accreditation, it officially opened in 1990 with ten children and now housing 50 excluding graduates and those who have moved on. (Fanimokun et al. 231). Folawiyo's motivation for establishing the home stemmed from his recognition of the challenges faced by children deprived of parental care, as articulated in his speech during the home's opening ceremony.

Normally, given the circumstances of their birth and or loss of parents, irrespective of individual talents, natural endowments and capabilities, such children tend to be handicapped early in life. That is, all odds will seem to be against them in the race for survival. Whereas poverty is not a crime, poverty is reversible and it should not therefore be regarded as hereditary. Indeed, the abundance of Allah is inexhaustible. Certainly, among the less privileged today are potential leaders of tomorrow. Hence, their talents should not allowed to waste. (Fanimokun et al. 231).

The former deputy governor of Lagos state, Alhaja Lateefat Okunnu performed the Bab-es-Salam charity home opening ceremony in 1990 at the home in Ikeja G.R.A. It was a grand event with about 200 people in attendance. (Fanimokun et al. 231). Methods of managing the orphans at Bab-es-Salam are different from the conventional pattern. The administrative pattern that has been put in place since the inception of the home is very smooth and well-coordinated. A major uniqueness of the home is that it realizes its privacy and does not seek public exposure like some other orphanages, other than an Islamic Inscription on the home gate hardly would anyone know that the place is a charity home. No signboard is erected to depict the home as an orphanage. The management prefers it that way because it replaces the aura of an institution with a homely feeling. Children are normally very uncomfortable with strangers and could become isolated in an orphanage. Bab-es-Salam solves that problem by allowing children to have friends who come over to the home on visits, as it is obtainable in a family setting. This makes the children comfortable and reduces the aura of an institution from the home, making it more like any normal home. (Idrees, Interview).

The home's operations are overseen by a board of trustees comprising a chairman and two members. Formerly led by chief Folawiyo until his demise, he played a vital role as the sole financial supporter and patron. Presently, chief Fanimokun serves as the director with Mrs Kamaldeen supervising staff as a board member. Mallam Hassan Idris Tahir heads the department, assisted by Mallam Sha'ban from Egypt. Directly reporting to them are the matron, nurse and caterer who act as foster mother, nurturing and attending to the children's needs. The matron ensures the cleanliness of clothing and bedding, the nurse manager's dietary needs and medication schedules and three other staff members assist with homework and assignment. Accommodation is provided on-site for the department head, assistant, matron, nurse and caterer while other personnel such as drivers, security, laundering staff, cleaners, and gardeners handle other tasks within the home. (Idrees, Interview).

In view of this, at the start of each day the staff are brought together as instructed by the head of the department or his assistant in their responsibilities, to manage the children's affairs well. Discipline amongst the members of staff is very high and it helps in the home's smooth running. In turn, the children imbibe discipline from the staff's good conduct. The children wake up by 5am brush their teeth and proceed to the mosque for *subhi* prayer. After prayer, they take their baths and start to prepare for school. They have their breakfast by 7am except on weekends when it is taken by 8am, they leave for school on the home bus at 7: 20am. When the children return from school by 3pm, they take their baths, have lunch and go for *Asr* prayer by 4pm. Thereafter, they have lessons until 6pm. The saying all work and no plays makes jack a dull boy is recognized in the home. (Idrees, Interview).

The children have an hour to mingle, play and relax until they go for *Magrib* prayer at 7pm which is immediately followed by Qur'anic and Arabic classes until 8pm when they will observe their *ishai* prayer. After prayer, some would rush to dinner, and thereafter watch television, the females will help in the kitchen and interact and mingle before they go to bed by 10pm. The last thing the children do before they go to bed is to brush their teeth, under the supervision of the nurses and matron. On Thursday and Friday evening classes, the children are taught computer lessons where they learn computer operations. (Idrees, Interview).

Bab-es-Salam has contributed tremendously to the welfare of orphans and vulnerable children in the society. They admit children from age 0-18 years of age and sponsor their education up to tertiary level, some of them schooled at African International University, Sudan, Kwara state University Malete, University of Ilorin, Kwara State Polytechnic Ilorin, Bayero University Kano, Lagos State university, among others. The home also helps orphans who are not living with them with school fees, medical bills among other helps. The home generates funds through public donations after the demise of the founder who was the sole financial and though an endowment fund known as *waqf* in Islam. (Fanimokun et al.231).

Conclusion

The care for orphans in Islam as seen through the example of Bab-es-Salam charity home, is a reflection of Islam, emphasis on compassion social responsibility and the sanctity of human dignity. Islamic teachings provide a strong foundation for orphan care, ensuring that they are not only physically provided for but also given the emotional and psychological support they need to thrive. By ensuring that orphans receive a proper education, care, a loving environment and community support. Organisations like Bab-es-Salam charity home are living examples of how Islamic values can be practically applied to help vulnerable individuals in the society. However, the death of the founder has left a huge vacuum in the affairs of the home who was the sole financier but thanks to organisations such as lebanese women society, the American ladies club, *waqf* initiative, as well as some private individuals.

Based on the above fact and analysis this study recommended the followings:

- Government at all levels should be more sensitive to the plight of orphans and other vulnerable people in the society. Budgetary allocation to support orphans, orphanages is hereby suggested.
- Religious leaders should encourage wealthy individuals to spend on the care of orphans because caring for orphans contributes to a healthy society free from social vices and immoral behaviours.
- Islamic scholars should warn the public and relatives of orphans against unjust spending of orphan's wealth.
- Other orphanages are advice to study the management styles, modes of operations of Bab-es-Salam charity home in caring for the orphans in their care.
- Islamic cooperatives societies and Islamic organisations should be assisting orphans based on their capability.
- Islamic orphanages are advice to make judicious use of Islamic social finance in surmounting the financial challenges they are battling with.

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