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## **ISLAM AND MARRIAGE**

### **By Shaykh Zulfikar Ahmad**

#### **The Status of Women in Different Societies**

A discussion on and an understanding of the status of women in pre-Islamic times is essential before any topic concerning Islam and married life can be discussed.

Historically a woman before Islam had no rights whatsoever. In France the woman was considered sub-human and the root cause of all of society's ills. In China she was considered an agent of the devil and hence enticed men towards wrong, whereas in Japan she was shunned and kept isolated because it was considered that she had been created impure.

Hinduism considered widows unfit for existence without their husbands, and hence were burnt alive together with their spouse. If not then she would be disgraced and shunned by society. Along the same lines Christianity considered women an obstacle to man's spiritual devotion to God, and hence they were encouraged to live out their lives as virgins while men lived as monks.

The woman's plight was perhaps the worst in the Arabian Peninsula, where girls were considered a curse and so buried alive by the parents. Her rights were so trampled

upon that just as inheritance is distributed to offspring after a man's death, the wife was also given to the eldest son in marriage as part of the inheritance. In another such case of the wife surviving the husband, the poor woman would be condemned to a hut outside Makkah for two years with only the bare necessities for existence. If still alive after these two years under such horrible circumstances, her face would be blackened and she would be paraded in the city for all to see before being permitted to again live with her family. Now this raises the question of why she was subjected to these horrors when she was not responsible for her husband's death. However the woman had been subjected to so much and stripped of all honor that she could not raise even a whimper in her defense.

It was in this society where woman's rights were under attack from all directions that Allah ﷻ sent His Messenger ﷺ with the gift of Islam. The Messenger ﷺ of Allah raised women's rights to their proper place by educating the masses that women were sisters, mothers and wives who were to be cherished and protected.

### **Status of Women in Islam**

Into a society whose hearts were so hardened that they could not even be moved by the desperate screams of innocent babes buried alive came the Messenger ﷺ of Allah. He taught that whosoever raised two girls and treated them well until they were married would be with him in Paradise, and he highlighted the closeness by joining his index and middle fingers.

### **The Value of Marriage**

On the road towards returning the rights that had been stripped from women, the Messenger ﷺ of Allah highlighted that within marriage the woman is a companion who plays an essential role in earning the pleasure and blessings of Allah ﷻ. Furthermore he clarified that isolation and monasticism had no place in Islam and Allah ﷻ could not be pleased that way. Instead he emphasized that fulfilling the rights of others by fully participating in social life were the essential means of earning Allah's ﷻ pleasure and blessing.

The Prophet ﷺ taught people to live together in the harmonious bond of marriage rather than alone as hermits. To further emphasize the importance of marriage he announced that marriage was his sunnah [way], and whosoever disapproved of his sunnah would not be from among his people. Hence we cannot have a more poignant and forceful sign for how important marriage is within Islam.

### **Sunnah of the Prophets**

The book of Imam Tirmidhi (May the mercy of Allah be upon him) has described four attributes as sunnah of the Prophets. The first is that all of them were extremely reserved and modest in all aspects of their lives. Secondly they all shared a love for applying fragrance. Thirdly all were devoted users of the *miswak* [tooth-stick] for their oral hygiene. The fourth sunnah common to all is that they lived with their female counterparts in the sacred bond of marriage.

Allah ﷻ states in the Holy Quran:

ولقد ارسلنا رسلا من قبلك وجعلنا لهم ازواجا و ذرية

*We did send apostles before thee and appointed for them wives and children [6:38]*

It goes without saying that the Prophets were engaged day and night in the service of Allah ﷻ, but even so the responsibilities of marriage did not hinder them in this service. Marriage served a vital role in both religious and social progress.

#### **Marriage: Half of Faith**

Hadith literature testifies that the sacred institution of marriage fulfills half of a person's faith, and consequently the most devout of worshippers cannot reach perfection of faith without fulfilling the rights of a spouse. The young man or woman who reaches a suitable age of marriage and remains unmarried has been referred to as a miser [*miskin*]. Such people are to be pitied because in remaining unmarried they are unable to benefit from the tremendous blessings associated with this special sunnah.

#### **A Sound Legacy**

Hadrat Ali رضي الله عنه used to say that the Messenger ﷺ of Allah advised haste in five areas.

- 1) Establishing prayers before death.
- 2) Seeking repentance before death.
- 3) Completing the funeral rites of the deceased.
- 4) Discharging any debts.

5) Marrying sons and daughters upon finding a suitable match.

### **The Fortunate Person**

Indeed anyone who finds a suitable life partner is very fortunate. Hadrat Ali رضي الله عنه used to say that anyone who acquires the following should consider him or herself very fortunate.

- *A grateful tongue* – Such a tongue is indeed a blessing from Allah سبحانه. Unfortunately our despicable state is that our teeth fall out by consuming the innumerable bounties of Allah سبحانه but we remain thankless and rebellious. Man should remain in constant gratitude to his Lord.
- *A remembering [zakir] heart* – Indeed a heart that is constantly engaged in praising and remembering Allah سبحانه is a great blessing.
- *A sound strong body* – A healthy body houses a healthy mind.
- *Homeland sustenance* – Finding work and livelihood in one's homeland is a far greater blessing than going abroad in search of it since the heart will always be at home in one's own land.
- *A pious wife* – Life's pleasures double with a sincere loving partner with whom one sees eye to eye.

The person who finds him or herself having all the above mentioned should consider that Allah سبحانه has showered all His blessings upon him or her.

### **Importance of Marriage**

Adultery and fornication will be rampant in every situation where there is no marriage. Consequently there is no shortage of brothels and other such evil places of illegal pleasure wherever people try to avoid marriage and thus shun their responsibilities. The *shariah* [sacred law] has therefore mandated marriage for people so that they may live pure and clean lives and thus save themselves from sin.

If the institution of marriage had not been mandated by the *shariah* then human beings would merely regard each other as playthings. There would be little if any regard for the woman and she would not be protected. Hence sacred law ruled that if men and women wanted to live together they would have to do so in marriage and likewise assume the responsibility that goes forthwith.

### **Importance of the Dower**

Marriage is a contract that the couple enters into under the protection of Allah ﷻ. Under this contract the *shariah* has allowed the woman to ask for certain stipulations before the marriage can be finalized. For example if she demands that her future house have certain features or that she be given a certain amount as monthly stipend then the *shariah* has allowed her such permissions. However, if such things are not arranged for in the contract beforehand then they cannot be negotiated after the fact.

These legal rules of marriage are very important and have depth in their reasoning but we are unfortunate not to be able to fathom their reality. At the time of finalizing the marriage contract the bride's family thinks it good to be

humble and thus ask for little. This is indeed a very serious matter since this then concerns the rest of the woman's life. On the other hand the bridegroom's family of course hopes for no dower request whatsoever since this points to increased responsibility. The following three sunnan of dower should be noted seriously, and the man should act according to one of these traditions keeping his financial position in reference. Adhering to any of the following would earn the reward of a sunnah.

- The dowry [*mehr*] of Fatima– the mehr that the Prophet ﷺ offered for Hadrat Fatima and Hadrat Aisha (May Allah be pleased with them) is sunnah and therefore legal to assume.
- *Compatible mehr* [*mehr mithal*] – this mehr is a justifiable amount in accordance with the living standard that a woman is accustomed to.
- An appropriate agreed upon amount that takes into account the woman's sincerity and lifestyle.

The dower can be immediate [*mu'ajjal*] or delayed [*mu'ajjal*]. Dower of the first category needs to be provided before the wedding night otherwise the groom will be guilty of sin. The second category of dower is such that it needs to be provided on demand, meaning whenever the wife requests it. The wife is indeed within her rights to either forgive or return all or part of the dower if she chooses, but the husband has no right whatsoever to pressure the wife into forgiving it.

### **Proclaiming the Dower**

The *shariah* has commanded that the dower be proclaimed and the sunnah calls for the marriage to take place on Friday either in the mosque or in front of another such gathering. Family and friends should be invited so that all may know that the couple involved is setting a foundation for their future together.

### **Increased Reward for the Married**

Allah ﷻ increases the reward for the one who takes a spouse in marriage. The scholars [*ulama*] have written that after marriage Allah ﷻ increases the reward of one prayer twenty-one times. The reasoning here is that when single the partners were solely fulfilling the rights [*huquq*] of Allah, but now have taken on the added responsibility of each other.

Before marriage talks are entered into, the bridegroom's family obviously admires some qualities in the prospective bride and vice versa. The following is a discussion of such qualities and characteristics.

### **Who is a Good Wife?**

Imam Bukhari (May the mercy of Allah be upon him) records a hadith transmission in which Hadrat Abu Huraira رضي الله عنه lists the four reasons for choosing a spouse as spoken by the Messenger ﷺ of Allah.

First and foremost marriage is commonly sought after for financial purposes, and thus a wealthy family is desired. Hopes are for a good and stable profession accompanied by

a good home and transportation. The basis for such a marriage is wealth alone.

The second reason given is beauty and the third family status. The fourth reason for marriage is righteousness, and the Messenger ﷺ of Allah advised that this should be the primary basis for marriage.

A house cannot stand if built on weak foundations. Wealth, beauty and status are all temporary and all fade with time. Sincerity and devoutness in religion are such characteristics that improve with time and thus a house built on such strong footing will last forever and weather any storm. Hence, men should search for wives with these characteristics as a beacon. A man pleases his eyes when he looks at his beautiful wife, but pleases his heart when looking upon a righteous wife.

A hadith from the *sahih* of Imam Muslim (May the mercy of Allah be upon him) says that the most valuable commodity in the world is a righteous wife. Whosoever is fortunate enough to have such a wife should be grateful for a great blessing from Allah ﷻ.

Another hadith states that deeds are rewarded according to their intentions. If the intention behind marriage is wealth or beauty or status the partnership will be ripe with argument and tension. The home will be in peace and harmony only if the intention behind the union is the pleasure and service of Allah ﷻ.

A hadith recorded by Imam Ibn Majah (May the mercy of Allah be upon him) states that after fear of God and righteousness a man benefits most from a righteous, chaste and obedient wife. The hadith continues the definition of

this quality by specifying that such a wife fulfills whatever is asked of her, guards her honor and her husband's assets in his absence, and is a joy to her husband whenever he looks at her.

### **The Best Woman in the World**

Once there was a discussion in one of the Prophet's ﷺ gatherings as to what characteristics make for the best woman. Various Companions commented on different qualities and so the discussion continued as Hadrat Ali ﷺ returned home on an errand. At home he mentioned this topic to his wife Hadrat Fatima ؓ who replied, "I will tell you who such a woman is. She is one who does not look at a non-related man [non-*mahram*] nor provides the opportunity for such a man to look at her."

Hadrat Ali ﷺ returned to the gathering and informed the Prophet ﷺ of his wife's definition. The Messenger ﷺ of Allah smiled and said, "Fatima is a piece of my heart."

### **Qualities of a Good Wife**

*The people of Allah* ﷺ have defined four essential characteristics of a good wife, which are as follows.

- Modesty and humility should be evident from her face. This implies that her heart is enveloped in the same qualities. A well-known proverb says that the face is a reflection of the heart. Hadrat Abu Bakr ؓ used to say that modesty is good in the man but best in the woman.
- The wife should be soft-spoken and often speak well. She should not be regularly scolding the

children and complaining to her husband. The former traits promise harmony whilst the latter only tension.

- She should have good intentions and sincerity in her heart. Moreover she should be used to work and should remain busy in keeping a good home.

Indeed the woman who possesses these qualities will be a good wife and will spend her life in joy and happiness.

#### **Qualities of a Good Husband**

Two glorious examples from the life of the Prophet ﷺ are sufficient for anyone searching for a husband for his daughter. The first is the example of Hadrat Ali رضي الله عنه. Allah ﷻ had given him the heart of a lion and a youthful body that could withstand any hardship. He was very responsible in all areas. Allah ﷻ had also given him unparalleled knowledge.

The second example is that of Hadrat Uthman رضي الله عنه, a gentleman of exemplary humble character who was renowned in society for his characteristics before and after having accepted Islam. He was a good businessman whose finances were in good health. He was extremely soft-spoken and shy of nature. The Messenger ﷺ of Allah once said that even the angels shy away from Hadrat Uthman رضي الله عنه.

The Messenger ﷺ of Allah has placed examples in front of anyone looking for a match for their daughter, examples unparalleled in the history of mankind.

Allah ﷻ has made the man the head of the household and for this reason one of the most important qualities he

should have is forbearance. He needs to exercise patience in all situations otherwise the household will be in chaos. If he panics at everything and erupts angrily at every minute detail, complaints will abound on small things such as lack of salt in the food and the improper ironing of clothes.

The poor wife works hard all day but never gets a compliment from such a man, who is quicker than lightning to shower insults and complaints. In such circumstances that call for sound judgment such a man is very hasty and foolish in his readiness to use the dangerous words of divorce. The man's example and position is that of a king and the wife's that of a queen and they must behave as such. Relationships in which the men do not exercise forbearance and a higher degree of patience become stalled and refuse to grow.

There was an incident in Sweden where a husband would insist on brushing his teeth in the kitchen instead of the bathroom. The wife would understandably insist on him using the bathroom and the couple unfortunately divorced on this little insignificance. Life can never be a success without forbearance and patience. There will no doubt be countless struggles and endless arguments in families that live together, and these can only be settled by someone who exercises patience and restraint in bringing matters to resolution.

The second important quality in a husband is that he should be one who embraces work and responsibility and does not try to avoid it. Society does not have a better example than in the Messenger ﷺ of Allah. Despite being

the prophet of mankind and having the endless duties of that status he would help his wives with housework.

Likewise while on a journey Hadrat Musa's ﷺ wife had to stop because of a headache and so Hadrat Musa ﷺ told her to rest while he fetched firewood to build a fire for warmth. Here we have excellent examples in which we see prophets engaged for the ease and comfort of their wives. Hence men should not shy away from any kind of work and responsibility but embrace the opportunity.

Just as small rocks make mountains, little indifferences and arguments will build up to form even larger troubles that endanger relationships. Unfortunately if these differences are left to fester then walls form to divide hearts and relationships even forty years old can end in divorce. If the man wishes that his wife should obey him and fulfill his needs then likewise he must also fulfill her wants and needs. This equation can only remain balanced when both partners in the marriage carry their own responsibilities. The *shariah* has given the couple checks and balances and only by properly fulfilling each other's rights can they live in harmony. Allah ﷻ teaches us in the Holy Quran that the whole purpose of marriage is a life shared in love and harmony, not one in which only one partner is in ease and the other in pain.

Commonly, a day does not pass in which a husband and wife do not chastise each other at least once, a sad consequence of our lack of knowledge and thus true character. Forgetting the larger and more beautiful picture we get lost and entangled in small, insignificant details because our lower-self [*nafs*] wants the upper hand.

### **The True Picture of Marriage**

No society except that of the Messenger ﷺ of Allah has been able to surpass the unparalleled concept of marriage as outlined in the Holy Quran. Allah ﷻ says regarding the couple:

هن لباس لكم و انتم لباس لهن

*They are your garments and you are their garments* [23:187]

There is extreme wisdom behind the use of the word *garments*. Garments bring honor to the person and hide the shameful body parts. Likewise a couple should hide each other's bad characteristics. Garments are also the closest thing to the human body, hence the message of the Holy Quran is that a couple needs to be close to each other in love and not distanced by quarrels.

It is recorded in hadith that Hadrat Hawa ؑ was created from the rib of Hadrat Adam ؑ. Why? She was not created from the head because she is not meant to be put on a pedestal above the man nor dominate the man, and she was not created from the foot because she is not meant to be a slave under a man's feet. She was created from the rib because she is meant to be a companion close to one's heart. The Holy Quran does not merely state that one has to go through life aimlessly but that the man needs to spend a meaningful and peaceful life with his spouse.

و عاشروهن بالمعروف

*Live with them on a footing of kindness and equity [4:19]*

This is a tremendous blessing from Allah ﷻ upon all wives that Allah ﷻ is cautioning the men on their behalf. Men should realize that by heeding Allah's ﷻ words and hence taking care of their spouses they can be forgiven on the Day of Judgment.

#### **What Constitutes a Good Husband**

It is recorded in hadith that the Messenger ﷺ of Allah said:

خيركم خيركم لاهله و انا خيركم لاهلي

*The best among you is the one who is best to his family, and I am the best to my family (among you)*

The Messenger ﷺ of Allah set himself forth as an example to all. To ascertain a man's character one should not look to his dealings with his friends or even his business but should ask his wife as to what kind of a person he is. That man is only a good person if his wife says he is.

اكمل المؤمنين ايمانا احسنهم خلقا

*The most complete of the believers in faith is the best (of them) in character [Hadith]*

Once a woman came to the Prophet ﷺ and complained that her husband not only made issues out of the minutest incidents but also beat her at times. What the Messenger ﷺ of Allah said in reply stands as pinnacle guidance to all men, and they should be indeed heedful of this. He said:

*One of you continues to hit his wife like a slave and then he continues to go to her and he does not feel ashamed?*

The woman is meant to be a partner and not a plaything that is held close and kissed as a close partner at one moment and then beaten like a disobedient servant the next. The *shariah* has allowed for a husband to rebuke his wife if she commits a grave sin. However, it is a sad truth that a woman exercises little control over her tongue and a man likewise over his hands. This makes for a dangerous combination.

### **The Ill Mouthed Wife**

The ill mouthed and ill mannered wife will take her husband to Hell faster than a galloping horse, and that husband will never have a peaceful moment in his life. The woman has been instructed to be soft spoken and sweet, but even the sweetest woman will have some degree of venom in her only because marriage is such a delicate relationship that tension is unavoidable.

The *shariah* has advised a woman to speak kindly to her husband but if necessity calls for having to speak to a non-related male [non-*mahram*] then she should keep the conversation short and businesslike. Unfortunately this paradigm is reversed in the fashionable women of today. They will speak to their husbands with the venom of a cobra but speak to a stranger with all the sweetness of a flower. It is all too true that the tongue will tear apart those relationships that even the sword cannot separate, and the woman's tongue is a sword that never rusts. Sadly most

women destroy their homes because of their uncontrollable tongue.

As mentioned above, the *shariah* has advised the woman to speak kindly to her husband and harshly to a non-*mahram* male. A wise man once said that there would be peace and happiness in the home if only the wife would speak as softly to her husband as she speaks to a non-*mahram* male. Consequently the home would be peaceful if the husband looks at his wife as lovingly as he looks at a non-*mahram* woman.

#### **The example of our righteous predecessors**

Allah ﷻ has detailed married life and the rights associated therewith in the chapter [*surah*] of the Holy Quran entitled *al-Nisa*. Thus, our righteous predecessors would make it a routine to teach their daughters the explication [*tafsir*] of both *surah al-Nisa* and *surah al-Nur* before marriage. If the Muslims of today do not or cannot teach their daughters the entire Holy Quran they should at least teach their daughters the above named *surahs* so they would be familiar with their rights and responsibilities when the time of marriage comes.

Since there was no printing press at the time, our righteous predecessors used to make a habit of having their daughters transcribe the Holy Quran by hand when they had finished or were close to finishing their education. Hence the girl would perform ablution and happily transcribe parts of the Holy Quran daily, and when complete the father would bind it in gold and this would be given as dower at the time of marriage. This was the dower in those times, thereby informing the future husband that

whatever free time the girl had in her home was spent in transcribing the Book of Allah ﷺ.

### **Rights of the Husband**

When discussing women's rights the Messenger ﷺ of Allah said that if the *shariah* had permitted prostration to anyone in addition to Allah ﷻ he would command the woman to prostrate to her husband. It is further recorded in hadith that if a woman fulfills all her obligatory duties to Allah ﷻ and dies in a state in that her husband is pleased with her then she can enter Paradise through any gate without judgment. Consequently on the other hand the Messenger ﷺ of Allah also said that the angels curse a wife all night whose husband is annoyed with her for a legitimate *shariah* reason and goes to sleep without the wife having obeyed him. Therefore Allah ﷻ has included the husband's pleasure with His Own. In fact, nobody demonstrated better regard for their husbands than the female Companions (May Allah be pleased with them).

A female Companion ؓ was blessed with a child while her husband was away for battle, but the child became seriously ill and died merely a few hours before the new father arrived. Very worried that her husband would be extremely saddened at the news, she sat contemplating what she should do. Not telling anyone her sad news, she bathed the child's body and laid it in the cot with a blanket over it. When her husband arrived and asked where the child was she merely replied, "He is at peace." The husband hence thought the child was sleeping and then the couple ate

together, discussed the husband's ordeals in battle and then retired for the night.

May Allah ﷻ give Paradise to such a heroic woman who undertakes the enormous burden of knowing her son's lifeless body is merely lying a few feet away, but bears this pain for the sake of sparing her husband who has just come home from battle.

The next morning she asked her husband, "If one is given a trust by someone else and he wants it back after some time should it be returned with pleasure or a heavy heart?" Her husband replied that all trusts should be returned to their rightful owners with pleasure since they were only given in the first place for safeguarding and not ownership. His wife thence continued, "Then Allah ﷻ also gave you a trust for a limited time but claimed it just a few hours before you arrived. Now go and bury it with pleasure." The strength of such women goes beyond imagination for they truly fulfilled the rights of humanity.

Her husband promptly went to the Messenger ﷺ of Allah and told him what had transpired and that his wife had borne all her pain simply to spare him the harsh news so soon after his arrival. The Prophet ﷺ therefore supplicated to Allah ﷻ who blessed their previous night together and gave them a son who grew up to not only memorize the entire Holy Quran but thousands of hadith as well.

### **Rights of the Wife**

First and foremost it should be clearly understood that the *shariah* has not made the woman responsible for her own expenses. When in her parents' home the responsibility of

her keep and welfare is her father's, and after marriage it becomes her husband's. In the case that she is unmarried and her parents are no longer living the responsibility falls to her brothers or other male relatives. Likewise if she is a mother and has outlived her husband the responsibility falls to her male children.

The *shariah* has never mandated that the woman should be responsible for her expenses. After marriage the woman leaves her dear home and family for the husband's sake and so the *shariah* has ordered him to not only provide for all her necessities such as food, clothing and shelter but also to regularly give something extra for her private needs based on what he can afford. Furthermore the husband should not question her as to what she did with this allowance because she is fully within her rights to do whatever she pleases with that money.

Another basic right of the woman is that the husband is required to provide his wife with a private room for her own privacy and belongings. It is inappropriate for her belongings to be in the same room with that of her in-laws or anybody else's. It is obvious that not all can afford their own houses but even in the case of a joint family home she is to be given her own room for this is one of the husband's obligations.

Another requirement upon the husband is that he should be kind hearted and patient to his family since he is the head of the household and therefore the main responsible party for the welfare of those in his care. Allah ﷻ will deal mercifully with the person who deals mercifully with His creation on earth. He who is quick to forgive will be

forgiven quickly, and he who conceals others' faults will have his own faults concealed on the Day of Judgment. Note the famous saying:

ارحموا من في الارض يرحمكم من في السماء

*Have mercy on whosoever is on the ground and the One in the heavens will have mercy upon you*

The concept of the wife in Islam is that of a life companion and friend and not of a servant or slave. Wherever Allah ﷻ mentions the life or rights of marriage He also cautions the couple to be fearful of Allah ﷻ. No one else is between the couple in this private relationship to check them and so Allah ﷻ continuously reminds them to be fearful because everyone has to return to Allah ﷻ one day.

Since the couple lives alone without anyone else to check them they are very quick to hurt each other. Hence this warning is so that people can reflect upon the Day when they have to face Allah ﷻ after having hurt each other all their lives. Forgiveness is a very beautiful yet simple virtue that the couple should practice. They should not only ask for forgiveness but also be quick to forgive each other if any partner makes a mistake. Admitting a mistake and asking forgiveness is strength and not a weakness.

An incident from the glorious life of Hadrat Maulana Ghulam Habib (May the mercy of Allah be upon him) provides a beautiful example of this virtue. Before departing for the mosque to lead congregational prayers his wife was helping him in performing ablution in a way that displeased

him. He hence scolded her but she remained silent and completed the ablution in the way he wanted. Walking to the mosque he stopped halfway and reflected on what had happened, weighing in his mind how he could possibly lead the people in prayer when he had dealt so harshly with his wife. Hadrat then returned home and apologized to his wife for his previous actions and continued to the masjid after being forgiven. Such individuals are indeed a shining example of sincerity in that their lives become a beacon for all to follow.

#### **Marriage and Eastern Society**

By Allah's ﷻ Grace the majority of marriages in our eastern societies survive peacefully, and ninety-nine percent of girls who leave their homes after marriage carry with them a sincere desire and intention to build their own homes in peace and harmony. From here on it is equally if not more the husband's responsibility, for their life will be peaceful if handled properly but chaotic if not.

Most Islamic women are blessed in that they are totally devoted to their husbands and refrain from even glancing at other men, a quality which compares them to the women of Paradise. This is a tremendous blessing from Allah ﷻ that such women still exist today without a thought of non-related men in their minds, and still others who despite being widowed will take on the full responsibility for their children, being both mother and father. A widow's life suddenly turns from the height of spring to harsh winter at the loss of her husband and subsequent responsibility of

offspring, which is why Allah ﷻ gives her the reward of battle [jihad] for her hardship.

### **Happily Ever After**

“To run a big show requires a big heart” is an English proverb that reveals a great deal of what is required in married life. If love is lacking then the smallest differences become enormous obstacles and molehills become mountains. The *shariah* hence advises a couple should live in love and harmony.

Marriage demands great forbearance and patience. It seems so strange that a husband quarrels with the wife who has dedicated all her life to him and likewise the wife quarrels with the husband who not only takes care of her needs but also holds such a high status in their marriage.

No marriage is perfect, and many times even the most educated of couples become estranged mostly because of pride or lack of religious knowledge. Both husband and wife become so indifferent to each other that both search for faults to highlight in the other. Sadly they are physically so close but so far apart at heart.

It should be well noted that a husband and wife rarely fight because of each other but more often because of a third party, usually in-laws. To offset this the *shariah* raises the in-laws to the level of parents after marriage, and the woman is taught that whereas before marriage she had one mother now she has two, and vice versa for the man. Hence the wife should make it a point to always try and please her husband’s parents and the husband should do likewise for his wife’s parents. Lives will change and homes will become

peaceful if only people were to apply this principle to their lives.

Whenever one partner becomes angry the other needs to be calm to neutralize the situation because the matter only escalates to a dangerous level if both flare at the same time. It is recorded in hadith that both the husband and wife are given the reward of Hadrat Ayyub's ﷺ patience whenever one partner exercises patience and restraint at the other's anger. So if the reward for restraint is so great people should seriously ponder over the petty things they become angry upon.

#### **Protection from Negative Thoughts**

Avoiding negative thoughts about the other partner is crucial in the survival of a marriage, because everything concerning an individual that one likes appears rosy but at the same time everything concerning an individual that one dislikes appears evil. Moreover one becomes preoccupied nearly to the point of obsession in searching out the targeted party's faults. If this negativity infiltrates a marriage then the husband and wife begin to see everything of the other partner as poison.

There is a renowned story about such negativity that tells of a wife who would constantly chastise her husband at every opportunity. He hence supplicated to Allah ﷻ one day to bestow such a miracle by which his wife would be impressed and start to respect him. Consequently he was inspired that if he so desired he would be given the power to fly. He seized this opportunity and flew over their house. When he returned home in the evening his wife snapped at

him in her usual fashion, “You flaunt yourself like you’re somebody important. Today I truly saw such a one who was flying overhead.” The husband smiled because he saw his opportunity and proudly said that that had been him. The wife thought hard at this and finally said, “That’s why I was thinking to myself, why is this person flying in such a crooked fashion!?”

Negativity threatens to destroy a marriage and so a husband and wife must always try and see each other in a positive light. There will be no need to deal harshly or apply pressure on the other partner in an effort to get one’s own way if both partners treat each other with love, kindness and respect. A rosebush has beautiful roses as well as sharp thorns but it is up to us to focus on the good and not the bad.

#### **Even a Smile is Kindness**

It is recorded in hadith that Allah ﷻ smiles favorably upon a husband and wife when they look and smile at each other. Hadrat Aisha رضي الله عنها said that the Messenger ﷺ of Allah would always enter the house with a smile on his face. Husbands should leave their daily troubles at work and enter the house with a smile, thereby earning the reward of this sunnah and contributing to a happy household. At the same time the wife must make an equal effort to return her husband’s smile rather than keep a frown on her face all day. Being so simple, a smile has an awesome power to change hearts.

### **A Guiding Principle**

Bricks put together build a house but hearts joining together build a home. “A house is built by hands but a home is built by hearts” is a renowned saying in English worth noting. Muslims should pay heed to such important wisdom and live harmoniously as a couple. Muslims who are living in foreign lands should keep in mind that their petty squabbles only provide non-believers reason to find fault with Islam and the honorable example of the Messenger ﷺ of Allah. It is indeed a grave pity that we provide others with such ammunition because of our misgivings, and even more serious that we fail to realize that Allah ﷻ will question us regarding such behavior.

Family quarrels should always be settled in the home and should never be allowed to grow so large that they spread out into the community and become local gossip. We need to look beyond our own selfishness and bring honor and dignity to the Muslims instead of ill repute. However such magnanimous people who put Islam before themselves are so few that one needs a lamp even in daylight to search for them.

Unfortunately people only realize the worth of a thing after it is gone and the same holds true for people. A proverb says that familiarity breeds contempt, and understandably from time to time there will be tension between a husband and wife who live so closely together and share everything. However, if the husband or wife were to die without the couple having resolved a quarrel then the surviving spouse will be reduced to sadness and self blame for the rest of his or her life and be left only with memories.

Also commonly seen is that often a husband and wife divorce each other in a fit of anger, and then realize their grandiose mistake after calming down but unfortunately too late to rectify the situation. Then these people go to various *ulama* trying to find any loophole within the *shariah* that will allow them to remain husband and wife. There is no loophole after such a grave step as divorce has been taken. Therefore one should take the appropriate steps to make sure that circumstances that can lead up to a declaration of divorce never even come to pass in the first place. Marriage is a delicate partnership that needs tremendous forbearance and patience. People need to value each other instead of taking one another for granted lest those people are not alive tomorrow and things are left unsaid and quarrels unresolved.

*Life already is so short my friend  
Why pass so short a time in useless quarrels?*

#### **A Unique Occurrence**

According to our scholars there was once a very beautiful woman married to a dark man whose features made him look extremely strange and scary. There were both however very happy together because both were very righteous individuals who were devoted to Allah ﷻ. One day the husband happened to smile in happiness as he looked at his wife, and at this she said, “We are entrants of Paradise.” Her husband asked how she came to know this and she continued, “When you look at me you smile in gratitude

and when I look upon you I exercise patience. A hadith says that both the grateful and patient shall enter Paradise.”

### **Love After Marriage**

The *shariah* has not given permission for any sort of pre-marital relations and hence any marriage that is based on such a concept as “love before marriage” will indeed be on a very weak footing. The unfortunate results of love marriages in non-Islamic societies are reflected in staggering divorce rates because they are based on a false and temporal love.

Marriage in Islamic societies is based not on this but on the *shariah* and the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. Parents as rightful guardians select the best companion for their son and daughter based on various factors and hence the couple starts a new life together according to the tenets of the Holy Quran and sunnah.

### **A Life Filled with Love**

The Prophet’s ﷺ glorious life was complete with shining examples for his nation to follow. He ﷺ once entered his home and saw Hadrat Aisha ؓ drinking from a glass. In fondness he used to call her Humaira and so standing where he was, he called to her and asked her to leave some water for him also. Despite being a prophet and mercy for mankind through whom the entire world was and would continue to benefit the Messenger ﷺ of Allah requested his wife to save him some of what she was drinking although he had no need to do so.

Hadrat Aisha ؓ complied and as the Prophet ﷺ was about to drink he asked her the specific location on the glass

where she had put her lips. Hadrat Aisha رضي الله عنها pointed to where she had taken drink from and hadith literature states that the Messenger ﷺ of Allah turned the glass around and applied his noble lips to the same location indicated by his wife and thence drank.

The world does not have a better example for all walks of life than the Messenger ﷺ of Allah. There would be no need to pressure a wife into obedience if all husbands were to follow the supreme example of love and family life put forth by the Prophet ﷺ. If treated right with love and respect a wife will certainly do her utmost to please her husband. She will reply to love with love and to respect with respect. Couples need to discard petty jealousies and selfish desires and follow the true Islamic concept of marriage that teaches spouses to build a clean and loving life together. May Allah ﷻ bless us all with the ability to build such beautiful lives together.

*From where do people find time to hate,  
When life hardly allows time for love?*

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