

The Religion of Al-Islam and Marriage

Marriage is one of the most sacred bonds between a man and a woman, and this text explains in details the various issues concerning marriage in the light of Islamic Laws and Ethics

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Marriage in The Quran And Sunnah of The Prophet (S)	5
The Age Of Marriage	9
What is the Meaning of 'Maturity'?.....	9
Marriage Age for Girls	10
Age Difference Between the Husband and Wife.....	11
The Beginning of Sexual Life: Bulugh and Rushd	12
The Preconditions to the Aqd Of Marriage	13
1. Looking at the Other Party Before Marriage	13
2. The Istikhara in Relation to the Boy or Girl.....	14
3. The Mahr - A Gift to the Woman.....	14
Note	16
The Marriage Aqd (Contract)	17
The Wedding Night And It's Etiquette.....	19
The First Two Years: A Marriage Survival Guide.....	21
1. Lack of Proper Information before Marriage.....	21
2. Who's In Charge?	21
3. The Divorce Option	22
4. Sexual Problems	23
5. In-Laws.....	24
6. Realism.....	24
7. Making a Schedule and Establishing Rituals.....	25
8. Marriage as a Restriction	25
9. Friends and Islamic Activities	25
10. In Relation to Secrets	26
11. Finances.....	26
12. Giving Each Other Space.....	26
Opinion of The Ulama In Relation To Marriage	28
Opinion of Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Ali al-Husaini as-Sistani	29
Opinion of Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Ali al-Husaini	Khamenei
Opinion of Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Lutfullah as-Safi al-	Gulpaygani.....
Opinion of Ayatullah al- Uzma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Nasir al-Makarim	ash-Shirazi
Marriage Helps In Spirituality.....	33
Recommended Book List for Coupes or those planning to get Married	34
.....	34

Introduction

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Man - just like any other creation possessing both a body and a soul (ruh) is in need of several things - each of which is essential for the safeguard of one's survival and well-being. For example, the hunger pains and desire for nourishment compel one to eat so as to build up energy to live another day; the feelings of thirst make one drink water, which is also essential for one's life. These and many other things facilitate man to live a prosperous and healthy life.

Similarly, the sexual desires and the need to fulfill one's sexual requirements and passions play a key role in the protection of mankind, and continuation of the human race. Therefore, it is not sensible to defy this necessity or try to suppress it.

Since man has been chosen as "the best of creations", Allah (SwT) has laid down the foundation of marriage in order to allow this need of life to be fulfilled in a legitimate manner. As well, the guidelines are very much in accordance with the intellect since the laws are divine and the specific conditions are befitting to the valuable souls of both men and women alike.

Historically speaking, the very first relationship that was established was that of marriage between a male and female not that of a mother/daughter relationship, nor a father/son relationship. Thus, it can be deduced that marriage is one of the most sacred bonds between a man and a woman. In the book, Etiquette of Marriage, it mentions the beautiful story of Prophet Adam (as), the first vicegerent of Allah (SwT) on the earth and his marriage, which we narrate here.

After Adam (as) was created, he felt lonely and complained to the Almighty about his solitude. Allah (SwT) put Adam (as) to sleep and then created Hawwah (as) with the utmost beauty. He covered her with the robes of paradise and brought her forth with other ornaments of beautification.

At this time, He instructed Hawwah (as) to sit near the head of Prophet Adam (as). When he awakened from his sleep and his eyes fell on Hawwah (as), he was so obsessed and captivated by her charm that he wanted to reach out and touch her. At this point, the angels forbid him from doing so.

Adam (as) asked them, 'Did Allah (SwT) not create her for me?' The angels replied, 'Yes, but you have to approach her in the appropriate manner. First you must propose to her (by asking her guardian for permission to marry her), then you must grant her the Mahr (gift), followed by the recitation of the aqd (marriage contract).'

Prophet Adam (as) questioned, 'Who do I have to ask for permission to marry her?' The angels replied, 'You must ask Allah (SwT).'

Then Adam (as) asked, 'O Allah (SwT)! What will her Mahr be?' Allah (SwT) replied, 'Teach her the rules of My religion and send blessings (salawat) on Muhammad (S) and the family of Muhammad (S).'

From the above historical event, we can see that when a man wants to agree upon the Mahr with his wife, they should make an agreement that (as a part of the Mahr), he will teach her the rules and regulations of the religion of Allah (SwT). Details of the Mahr will come later on, Insha-Allah.

Therefore, from this narration, we see that the first relationship that was created by our Creator for humanity was that of marriage.

With this said, we must know the finer points and overall rulings of this sacred foundation in order to have a fruitful and successful life in this world and more importantly, in the life hereafter.

In this special issue of Al-Haqq Newsletter, we will be covering various issues of the marriage that will be applicable to both the younger couples getting married and also to those older men and women who are either divorced or who have had to bear the death of their spouses due to sickness or old age. All the information has been taken from the original Islamic sources and Insha-Allah, will aid in the education and enlightenment of our Muslim community.

Any questions or comments on the contents of the articles can be forwarded to us at lhs@primus.ca.

Marriage in The Quran And Sunnah of The Prophet (S)

By Saleem Bhimji

One of the recognized and indisputable commandments of Islam is that of marriage - the sacred union that takes place only between a man and a woman. In relation to this revered bond, there are many verses of the noble Quran and countless ahadith that encourage marriage for any single man or woman - of any age or background. This is not only limited to the young brothers and sisters who have never been married and are looking for their life mate, but even those who have been through divorce have also been encouraged to re-marry and to "complete" their faith.

From the ocean of traditions and verses of the Quran on this topic, we quote the following:

وَأَنْكِحُوا الْأَيَامَىٰ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُعْطِيهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

"Marry the single people from among you and the righteous slaves and slave-girls. If you are poor, Allah (SwT) will make you rich through His favour; and Allah (SwT) is Bountiful, All-Knowing." (Surah 24, Verse 32)

In this verse, Allah (SwT) commands us (by Him using the imperative form of the verb) to marry the single, righteous man/woman from among us. Allah (SwT) even gives us a guarantee that if we are poor or lack the proper funds, still we should not delay the marriage as Allah will take care of the couple and grant them bounties from His Grace and Mercy.

وَلْيَسْتَعْفِفِ الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ نِكَاحًا حَتَّىٰ يُعْطِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ

"And let those who cannot find someone to marry maintain chastity until Allah (SwT) makes them rich through His favours ..."(Surah 24, Verse 33)

In the continuation of Surah 24, in the above quoted verse, Allah (SwT) commands the believers to remain chaste and faithful if they cannot find a suitable spouse to marry until Allah (SwT) grants them bounties out of His favors. Thus, one must not resort to evil, sin or illicit sexual relationships because they cannot find a permanent spouse.

One such avenue open to those who cannot afford to marry a woman in Nikah, as the Quran has commanded us and the numerous ahadith from the Prophet of Islam (S) and his 12th Infallible successors, the Aimmah (as) have done is to perform the Muta and marry a man or woman in "temporary marriage" so as to be able to fulfill our natural desires in a legal and permitted means:

وَأَحِلَّ لَكُمْ مَا وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِينَ ۚ فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْهُنَّ فَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً ۚ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا تَرَاضَيْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْفَرِيضَةِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

"... and besides these, it is lawful for you to marry other women if you pay them their dowry, maintain chastity and do not commit indecency. So those (women) whom you marry for an appointed time, you must give them their agreed upon dowries. There is no harm if you reach an

understanding among yourselves about the dowry, Allah (SwT) is All-Knowing and All-Wise." (Surah 4, Verse 24)

This is a commandment from Allah (SwT) which was not only mentioned in the Quran, but which He commanded his last and greatest Prophet (S) to convey to the Ummah, which can never be made forbidden by anyone as that which Muhammad (S) has made halal is halal until the Day of Judgement and that which he has made haram will remain haram until the Day of Judgement.

In another verse of the Quran, Allah (SwT) compares the husband and wife to garments for one another:

هُنَّ لِيَاسِرٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِيَاسِرٌ لَهُنَّ

"They (your wives) are a clothing (covering) for you and you too are a clothing (covering) for them." (Surah 2, Verse 187)

In our day-to-day life, we see many uses for clothing. Not only does our dress act as a beautification for ourselves, but it also covers any defects that we may have on our physical body - thus, if a person has a scar or burn mark on his body, the clothing will cover this from others around him and thus, they would not know that he has such a physical 'defect'.

The husband and wife are to play the same role in relation to one another. If the wife has spiritual defects or lacks something in her character, then the husband must cover these up and not expose her shortcomings to others. The wife too, must cover up and hide her husband's deficiencies and weaknesses and protect her mate. Not only has Allah (SwT) commanded the believers not to make fun of one another and not to mock or ridicule others, but they are also supposed to protect the honour and integrity of one another.

In the 30th Surah of the Quran, ar-Rum, Allah (SwT) tells us that:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

"And one of His signs is that He has created for you, spouses from amongst yourselves so that you might take comfort in them and He has placed between you, love and mercy. In this there is surely evidence (of the truth) for the people who carefully think." (Surah 30, Verse 21)

In this verse we see that Allah (SwT) regards the creation of spouses - the husband and wife - as a sign of His greatness. Not only has Allah (SwT) created these two individuals, but in order for there to be peace and harmony between the two of them, He himself has placed love and mercy between them so that they can live a life of tranquility.

In Surah al-Nisa, verse 1, Allah (SwT) addresses all of mankind - Muslim, Christian, Jew, Non-Believer - by stating:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

"O' mankind! Have consciousness of your Lord who has created you from a single soul. From it He created your spouse and through them He populated the land with many men and women. Have spiritual awareness of the One by whose Name you swear to settle your differences and have

***respect for the wombs that bore you. Without doubt, Allah (SwT) keeps watch over you all."*(Surah 4, Verse 1)**

Again in this verse of the Quran, we are once again reminded that it is Allah (SwT) who created mankind and then made its spouse and through these two has the world become populated. It goes without saying that it is only through the natural act of marriage between a man and woman that children can be brought into this world as all others forms of "marriage" are deviations that can never produce a child and thus, an increase in the population.

The noble ahadith are also replete with traditions narrated from the Prophet (S) and his immediate successors, some of which we present below.

قال رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم): من سنتي التزويج فمن رغب عن سنتي فليس مني

The Messenger of Allah (S) has said, "Of my tradition is to marry. So then whoever turns away from my tradition (Sunnah) is not from me (my nation)."

In this famous tradition mentioned in all books of Islamic narration, the Prophet (S) clearly spelled it out to the believers that in order to stay on his path which is the true path of salvation, we must marry - not only the youth who are getting married for the first time - but also older people who may have divorced or lost a spouse must also marry in order to remain on the Sunnah of the Prophet (S).

قال رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم): ما بُني بناء في الإسلام أحب إلى الله عز وجل من التزويج

The Messenger of Allah (S) has said, "There is no foundation that has been built in Islam more loved by Allah, (The Greatest and Noblest) than marriage."

This hadith shows us the great importance that Allah (SwT) and His Messenger (S) have placed on marriage, such that it is the most loved foundation or establishment upon which the Muslim man and woman can build their life upon. If such a foundation is built with love, honesty, sincerity and true faith in Allah (SwT) and all that He has commanded, then there is nothing that could destroy such a firm building.

عن أبي عبد الله (عليه السلام): جاء رجل إلى أبي فقال له: هل لك زوجة؟ قال لا. قال (عليه السلام): لا أحب أن لي الدنيا وما فيها وإني أبيت ليلة ليس لي زوجة

It has been narrated from Abi Abdillah that, "A man once came to my father. My father asked him, "Are you married?" The man replied, 'No.' My father (as) replied, 'I would not love to have the world and all that is contained within it if it meant I had to spend one night without a woman (beside me).'"

This saying from our sixth Imam (as) shows the importance that the rightful successors of the Prophet (S) placed on marriage. In this hadith, we are told that the Imam (as) would not even trade all the beauties and material treasures that exist in the world, if it means that he had to spend even one night alone! This may point to the fact that the evil whisperings of Shaitan may penetrate a single man or woman to go towards the prohibited and thus, contaminate his or her faith and belief.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ
لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

"And of His signs is that He has created spouses for yourselves from your own selves so you might take comfort in them and He has created love and mercy among both of you. In this there is evidence (of the truth) for the people who (carefully) think." (Surah 30, Verse 21).

The Age Of Marriage

By Mehri Zinhari [From Mahjubah Magazine]

Puberty is a natural phenomenon that occurs at varying ages in different individuals. Research in global human behavior seems to indicate that girls and boys who are born and live in warmer parts of the world are more likely to reach puberty earlier, than their peers living in the colder regions and climates of the world. For example, those who live in the Middle Eastern Arab countries tend to reach puberty at an earlier age compared to those who live in Northern European countries.

However, reaching the age of puberty should not be considered as the only criteria for deciding on an appropriate age for marriage. Other factors such as the overall maturity of a person, and his or her ability to discern between what is good or bad, such that his personal approval or disapproval in important decisions of life become valid, must also to be taken into consideration.

What is the Meaning of 'Maturity'?

Like all other living beings, the human being too goes through a process of constant change and growth. This natural overall process can be seen distinctly through changes in height, weight, habits, skills, and social, economic and emotional behavior. All these patterns have been widely studied and discussed through psychology and other related sciences.

Ayatullah Khomeini (may Allah be pleased with him) has defined 'maturity' thus: 'Maturity implies powerful presence of mind and intelligence in one's dealings, one's ability to safeguard one's possessions from being squandered away and one's prudence in spending in a judicious manner.'

For girls, maturity may be defined as follows: 'A girl's ability to manage a good life, her level of acceptance of the responsibility of motherhood and child-rearing, as well as her appropriateness in social behavior.'

From the above definitions, we can see that although one may have reached the age of puberty and according to Islamic practical laws, Salat (prayer) and Sawm (fasting) are now obligatory on him/her, but if he/she is not socially active and economically productive, then he/she may be termed as an adolescent, but not as 'mature'.

The prime age of marriage for girls, would also depend on their mental and psychological maturity. It may be possible that in some cases by the age of 14, a girl may be mature enough to shoulder the responsibility of family-life and motherhood, but a woman of 30 may not yet be mature enough to do so!

Therefore, what is important in determining the ripe age for marriage is one's own level of maturity and readiness, whether one has reached the legal age for marriage or not! It would be very naive to ignore geographical and regional conditions and norms, as well as the needs of the youth of the day, and such negligence could lead to many problems.

In the present world, with the greater intermingling between sexes, better nutrition, educational facilities and more awareness due to advanced mass media, children are reaching "maturity" much earlier than ever before; and

considering these factors, raising the legal age for marriage for boys and girls is quite unjustifiable.

It is interesting to note that at one point of time, the British Parliament had passed a law that had set the minimum legal age for marriage of boys at 21 years, whereas the minimum permissible age for being candidate for the post of Prime Minister was 18 years! When the people raised an objection to this absurd law, the Parliament responded by declaring that it was often more difficult to manage a wife than to manage a country.

Raising the legal age of marriage and not permitting young boys and girls who are dealing with strong sexual urges, to have a healthy and safe outlet for their natural, youth-related tendencies, only leads to the spread of promiscuity and moral corruption in the society. If boys aren't allowed to form a family before the age of 18 or 20 years; or if girls are forced to face emotional and psychological pressures due to the same reasons, then they become very prone to social and psychological problems.

Thus, we conclude that a suitable age for marriage would be the time of physical and mental maturity in a person. Islam has specified the age of physical maturity but it has not specified the age of mental maturity. Rather, it has left it open to the discretion of the parents and children themselves.

Those who are in favor of raising the legal age for marriage argue that:

1. Boys, before the age of 18 and girls, before the age of 15 aren't equipped to form a family and aren't in a position to bear the heavy responsibilities and difficulties of family life.

2. Early marriages are a contributing factor to criminality.

3. Women who have fled from their husbands' homes and have them become resentful towards them, are mostly women who have got married before the legal age of marriage.

In response to such arguments it could be said that although there is no denial of the fact that early marriages, before physical and mental maturity, may lead to betrayal, family disagreements and many other problems; however, when a girl or a boy is physically and mentally ready for married-life, then there is no reason why the legal age for marriage should be increased.

Marriage Age for Girls

The Noble Prophet (S) has said: "Virgin girls are like fruits on trees. If not plucked in time, the sun will rot them and the wind will disperse them. When girls reach maturity and their sexual instincts arise, like that of women, their only remedy is marriage. If they aren't married, they are prone to moral corruption. It is because they are human beings and human beings are prone to making mistakes."

There is a very subtle message in this saying of the Prophet (S). Just as there is proper timing for plucking fruits, there is a proper age for marriage, for every girl. A girl who cannot understand and shoulder the responsibility of married-life is like a raw fruit that needs to remain on the tree (i.e. her father's home) until it ripens and sweetens. On the other hand if a girl loses the freshness of youth while yet unmarried, then she is like an over-ripe fruit that would further wither away, as the time passes.

Age Difference Between the Husband and Wife

Is there a relationship between the age gap of the husband and wife and success of the marriage?

Since there is a difference in the age of puberty of girls and boys, they don't reach mental maturity at the same age either. Moreover, since women lose their sexual desires relatively earlier than men, a 5 to 6 year age gap between the husband and wife seems to be appropriate. With this age gap, women reach menopause when the sexual desires of men have somewhat subsided. This would add to the possibility of the success of their marriage and increase the spirit of sacrifice and intimacy between them.

If the man happens to be much older than his wife, in that case he could end up treating his wife like a daughter and the wife may think him to be more of a father than a husband. As a result there may exist lack of compatibility and friendship between the two.

On the other hand if the wife happens to be much older than the husband, she may be more of a mother to him and not be able to play the role of a wife. This could lead to indifference and anger, for, there doesn't exist a mental and physical balance between the two. Under such circumstances they would be unable to perceive each other's needs. So a healthy age difference between the husband and wife is very important for a happy and successful marriage.

Thus, we could conclude that the personal physical and mental state of a boy and girl are the most important criteria to decide on the appropriate age for marriage.

The Beginning of Sexual Life: Bulugh and Rushd

**Extracted from the book Marriage & Morals In Islam by Hujjatul
Islam Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi**

Sexual desire is aroused in human beings at the age of puberty. In Islamic legal definition puberty (bulugh) is determined by one of the following:

1. Age: fifteen lunar years for boys and nine lunar years for girls;
2. Internal change (in boys only): The first nocturnal emission. Semen accumulates in the testicles from puberty onwards and more semen may be formed than the system can assimilate; when this happens, semen is expelled during the sleep. This is known as nocturnal emission wet dream or ihtlam in Arabic.
3. Physical change: Growth of coarse hair on lower part of abdomen.

Since the sexual urge begins at puberty and as Islam says that sexual urge should be fulfilled only through marriage, it has allowed marriage as soon as the boy and the girl reach the age of puberty. In the case of girls, it not only allows them to be married as soon as they become mature, but also recommends such marriage. It is based on such teachings that Islam discourages girls from postponing their marriage because of education; instead, it says that girls should get married and then continue their education if they wish to do so.

Physical maturity by itself, however, is not enough for a person to handle the marriage responsibilities; rushd (maturity of mind) is equally important. On the other hand, our present way of life has become so much complicated that a considerable gap has appeared between puberty and maturity both in financial and social affairs.

A recent article on the American youths says, "Young Americans entering the 21st century are far less mature than their ancestors were at the beginning of the 20th. The difference is evident in all areas of youthful development: sex, love, marriage, education and work. Physically, today's youths are maturing earlier than previous generations, but emotionally they are taking much longer to develop adult attachments." (Newsweek, Special Edition Spring 1990, p. 55) Consequently, it is not easy for boys and girls of our atomic era to marry as soon as they become physically mature.

The Preconditions to the Aqd Of Marriage

By Saleem Bhimji

Even before we discuss the rulings and method of reciting the marriage Aqd and married life in general, there are many preconditions that must be covered and understood by both parties. These issues that we bring forth have, unfortunately, been twisted and contorted to fit our cultural background or in some cases, outright refused as not being Islamic principles. Insha-Allah, we will cover some of these preconditions in brief.

1. Looking at the Other Party Before Marriage

This discussion can actually be divided into two separate and distinct categories:

- (1) the look and touch before proposing to the other party;
- (2) the look and touch after the proposal has been accepted;

However, the Aqd has not been read - this is commonly known as the 'engagement' period.

It is well known that a man and woman who are not related to one another through a direct blood relationship or through one of the other ways (that are mentioned in the detailed books of Fiqh) are not Mahram of one another. Thus, they can not touch or look at each other without the proper covering or with a lustful or seductive glance.

Once the temporary or permanent Aqd has been performed, then the man and woman become Mahram to one another through the marriage formula and can talk, be in a secluded place with one another, hold hands, touch, hug, kiss, etc...

However, while the man and woman are talking with one another in order to get to know each other, they are not permitted to be in a secluded place together, nor have any sort of physical contact - these are all forbidden (haram) in Islam.

Once they have agreed to marry one another, the next step, in order for them to be able to talk in private, go out together for dinner or be able to touch each other, is that they must recite either the temporary or permanent Aqd. In most cases, the couple-to-be recite a Mutah, with the knowledge that within a certain time frame, they will be getting married (permanently).

The Mutah too has various conditions that must be followed, of which, we highlight the most important ones:

1. If the girl is a virgin, then she must have her parent's approval before the Mutah can be performed.
2. The time period and the dowry (Mahr) must be specified before the Mutah contract is pronounced, otherwise it is void.
3. The parties can make conditions, such as no sexual intercourse or other conditions - these too must be made before the contract is read. However, if later on, both parties agree to change any of the conditions made, they are free to do so.
4. The contract should be recited in the original Arabic and if this is not possible, then a representative should perform the Mutah and if this too is not possible then the third option is that the boy and girl can read the

translation of the contract themselves in the language which would convey the same meaning of the Arabic¹.

5. If the couple decides to get married permanently before the time period of the Mutah ends, the husband must "give back" or forgive the time to his wife that remains. Once this has been done, then and only then can they marry in permanent marriage. If the couple is in a temporary marriage and they then marry permanently while the temporary marriage has not ended, then the permanent marriage will be null and void, and at the completion of the time period of the temporary marriage, they will not be classified as being married to one another.

2. The Istikhara in Relation to the Boy or Girl

One of the other incorrect philosophies that a majority of people have adhered to is the Istikhara or seeking the best from Allah (SwT) before a marriage.

Before the boy and girl even get a chance to meet one another and talk and see if they are compatible with the other, the parents will rush to their local Mawlana or Alim to perform the traditional Istikhara. If the answer comes 'good', then even if the boy or girl is the biggest sinner or ill-mannered person, the parents will welcome him/her into the family with open arms.

The opposite has also been seen that if the boy or girl is an upright, virtuous, and pious believer, but the Istikhara comes out 'bad' then they are automatically rejected with no chance to go forward.

This idea, which is so prevalent amongst the Muslim community, must be uprooted and thrown out with all other such traditional and cultural practices that have no basis in Islam.

The Istikhara is a method that has been taught and approved by our Prophet (S) and Ahlul Bait (as), however, there are many preconditions and steps that must be followed before we rush to the Quran or Tasbih.

These stages, in relation to marriage include:

- Speaking to the boy or girl and getting to know their thoughts, ideas and beliefs.
- Asking friends and family members about the boy or girl. Although in Islam, backbiting or speaking bad about others is prohibited, however, the Ulama have mentioned that this is one scenario where the law is accommodated for the betterment of the family structure.
- The many supplications (such as Dua 33 in as-Sahifah al-Kamilah as-Sajjadiyah, known as the Supplication for Seeking the Best) should be recited and the person must sincerely ask Allah (SwT) to guide his/her heart to that, which is truly the best.

If one is truly in doubt after all these stages have been exhausted, then and only then should one resort to the 'traditional' Istikhara. There is a comprehensive book on this topic, which has recently been published by the Islamic Humanitarian Service entitled Istikhara: Seeking the Best from Allah (SwT) which can be purchased from www.al-haqq.com.

3. The Mahr - A Gift to the Woman

The Mahr - or dowry as it is usually translated - is one of the ways through which the woman becomes halal for the man - the other (which goes along with and is side by side) is the actual Aqd or reading of the vows.

The Mahr, which must be specified before the Aqd, is a gift to the wife and in no way can be referred to as the price or worth of the woman. By examining the Islamic traditions, we see that it is not necessary that money or gold or some physical item be given as the Mahr - rather, anything that the woman requests and the man agrees to would be considered as the Mahr.

It is for this reason that we see at the time of the Prophet (S) that a man married a woman and the Mahr was that he would teach her the Quran! There are many instances such as this in the history of the Muslims where the Mahr was either a very small amount or a non-materialistic gift.

Unfortunately, in many communities nowadays, the trend has been to set the Mahr to substantial amounts of money, jewelry, gold, and other material goods - where as in Islam, the recommended act is to have a 'small' or modest Mahr, such that the husband is not put into any difficulty to pay it and thus, a large Mahr is actually Makruh or highly discouraged.

According to the Scholars, if the Mahr is set to such an amount that even in the future, the man will not be able to pay it, or if the man does not have the intention to pay the Mahr, then such a marriage is a matter of doubt.

Also, it must be made clear that the Mahr is not something that one pays only in the event of a divorce, as is seen in some East Asian cultures. Therefore, the wife can even demand that this amount be paid to her before she agrees to have sexual intercourse with her husband.

The husband and wife can agree on a time frame when the amount will be paid and as it has been mentioned in the Islamic books of law, if the wife demands the money after it has become due, then it becomes obligatory on the husband to give it to her even if it means that he must take a loan. If he does not pay the money while possessing the ability, then he has committed a grave sin and will be held accountable by Allah (SwT).

In relation to the Mahr and its importance, Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) has stated:

إِنَّ أَحَقَّ شُرُوطٍ أَنْ يُؤَقَّ بِهٖ مَا اسْتَحْلَلْتُمْ بِهٖ النُّزُوجَ

"This (the Mahr) is the most important of all the conditions through which, the private parts (intercourse) have been made lawful and permitted for you."

We conclude the section on the importance of the Mahr with a stern warning from our Prophet Muhammad (S) about those men who refuse to give their wives that which they promised them:

مَنْ ظَلَمَ امْرَأَةً مَهْرَهَا فَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ زَانٍ. يَقُولُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ: عَبْدِي رَوَّجْتُكَ أُمَّتِي عَلَى عَهْدِي فَلَمْ تُؤَفِّ بِعَهْدِي وَظَلَمْتَ أُمَّتِي؟ فَيُؤَخَذُ مِنْ حَسَنَاتِهِ فَيُدْفَعُ إِلَيْهَا بِقَدْرِ حَقِّهَا. فَإِذَا لَمْ يَبْقَ لَهُ حَسَنَةٌ أُمِرَ بِهٖ إِلَى النَّارِ بِنِكَتِهِ الْعَهْدِ. قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى: (وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا)

"The man who oppresses his wife in relation to the Mahr is considered as a fornicator in the eyes of Allah. On the Day of Judgement, Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) will say to such a man, 'O' My servant! I married you to My bondservant on My promise (the Mahr) and then you were not loyal to

My promise and you oppressed My bondservant!' At this time, Allah (SwT) will take all of this man's good deeds and will give them to her in accordance to the rights of her that he had taken (the Mahr). When there remain no more good deeds, then Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) will order him to the hell fire with the other people who had broken their promise. Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) has said, (And be honest in your promises. Surely the promise is something that (you) shall be questioned about.)"

Note

1. Please note that this and all other ruling in this magazine are in accordance to the fatawa of Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Ali al-Husaini as- Sistani. Muqallidin of other Maraja should check their rulings on these and other issues contained in this discussion.

The Marriage Aqd (Contract)

By Saleem Bhimji

In keeping with the eternal tradition of our Prophet Muhammad (S) in the style of the recitation of the marriage Aqd, as he had done during the marriage of his daughter Fatimah binte Muhammad (as) to Ali ibn Abi Talib (as), the ceremony is preceded by a Khutbah or introduction extolling the Oneness of Allah (SwT) and His characteristics, and then sending praise and prayers upon the Prophet of Islam (S) and his noble family members. Once this has been recited, the actual Aqd or contract is performed.

According to a majority of our Ulama, the contract MUST be recited in the correct Arabic language however Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Ali al-Husaini as-Sistani, in his recent book, A Code of Practice for Muslims in the West, states that if the man or woman can not read the Arabic correctly, then they should take a representative who could read the contract on their behalf. If this too is not possible, then they may recite the contract in their own language (translation) as long as the meaning remains the same as the original Arabic.

In the examples given below, we will assume that the brother and sister will be reading their own Aqd (contrary to that of having a Representative for each side).

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ. بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

I seek refuge in Allah (SwT) from the accursed Satan.

(I begin) in the Name of Allah (SwT), the Merciful, the Compassionate

أَحْمَدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي هَدَانَا لِهَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لِنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْلَا أَنْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ. وَصَلَاةُ وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا وَنَبِيِّنَا وَمَوْلَانَا
وَخَبِيبِ قُلُوبِنَا وَطَيِّبِ نَفْسِنَا أَبِي الْقَاسِمِ مُحَمَّدٍ. وَصَلَاةُ وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ الطَّيِّبِينَ الطَّاهِرِينَ الْمُعْصُومِينَ
الْمُظْلَمِينَ. وَلَعَنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى أَعْدَائِهِمْ مِنْ يَوْمٍ أَوَّلٍ ظَلَمَهُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ. أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَقَدْ قَالَ اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى فِي
كِتَابِهِ:

All the praise belongs solely to Allah (SwT), the One who guided us to this and we could not have been guided to this had it not been for the direction of Allah (SwT). And prayers and salutations are sent upon our Master and our Prophet and our Mawlana and the love of our hearts and the spiritual physician of our souls Abil Qasim Muhammad (S). And may prayers and salutations be upon his progeny, the Purified, Immaculate, free from sin, oppressed (individuals). May the perpetual curse of Allah (SwT) and removal of divine blessings overwhelm their enemies from the first day they committed such oppression, until the Day of Judgement. And after this, verily Allah (SwT), the Glorious and High has said in His Book:

وَأَنْكِحُوا الْأَيَامَى مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ. إِنْ يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُعْزِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ
عَلِيمٌ

***"Marry the single people among you and the righteous slaves and slave-girls. If you are poor, Allah (SwT) will make you rich through His favour; He is Bountiful and All-Knowing"* (Surah 24, Verse 32)**

قال رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم): من سُئِيَ التَّرْوِيحُ فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَنْ سُئِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي

The Messenger of Allah (S) has said, "Of my tradition is to marry. So then whosoever turns away from my tradition (Sunnah) is not from me (my nation)."

1a) The bride-to-be would say:

أَنْكَحْتُ نَفْسِي لَكَ عَلَى الْمَهْرِ الْمَعْلُومِ

1b) The husband-to-be would say:

قَبِلْتُ الْبَيْعَ لِنَفْسِي عَلَى الْمَهْرِ الْمَعْلُومِ

2a) Then the bride-to-be would say:

رَوَّجْتُ نَفْسِي عَلَى الصَّدَاقِ الْمَعْلُومِ

2b) The, the husband-to-be would say:

قَبِلْتُ التَّرْوِيجَ لِنَفْسِي عَلَى الصَّدَاقِ الْمَعْلُومِ

3a) The bride-to-be would say:

أَنْكَحْتُ وَرَوَّجْتُ نَفْسِي لَكَ عَلَى الْمَهْرِ الْمَعْلُومِ

3b) The husband-to-be would say:

قَبِلْتُ الْبَيْعَ وَالَّتَرْوِيجَ لِنَفْسِي عَلَى الْمَهْرِ الْمَعْلُومِ

These lines are usually repeated two or three times over for the sake of precaution to make sure they have been recited properly. After these few lines have been said, the man and woman are then joined together in marriage according to the laws of Islam. There is no other 'ceremony' needed - a Walimah is Mustahab, but other things are part of our cultural practices (some are permitted to do, but we have to be careful so as to not perform anything haram).

The Wedding Night And It's Etiquette

By Saleem Bhimji

The first night of the newlywed couple is one full of divine blessings and mercy and it with this in mind that the new couple should start their married life together. Instead of resorting to music and dance parties to celebrate the happy occasion (as has unfortunately become common place in our time), we must take lessons from the method of the Ahlul Bait (as) and how they commemorated such an auspicious occasion.

The reason why we say night and not day, contrary to the way that most marriages and ceremonies take place these days is that there are clear ahadith from the Prophet (S) and his Ahlul Bait (as) instructing us to have the ceremony at night and for the new wife to be taken to her new home in the evening time (after sunset):

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ جَعْفَرُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ الصَّادِقُ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): زَفُوا عَرَائِسَكُمْ لَيْلًا وَأَطْعَمُوا ضُحَى

Imam Jafar ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has said, "Take your wife home at night time and during the day, eat food."

By eating food here, it is meant the customary and recommended Walimah or ceremony that is usually kept after the recitation of the Aqd.

Since this is the beginning of a new life, we have been instructed by the Ahlul Bait (as) to begin it in the name of Allah (SwT), and to seek protection in Allah (SwT) from the accursed Shaitan. This is done by performing the following acts which have been narrated in the various books.

It has been recommended that the husband perform Wudhu, a two Rakat Salat for the wedding night and then recite the following supplication:

اللَّهُمَّ ارْزُقْنِي أَلْفَهَا وَوُدَّهَا وَرِضَاهَا بِي وَأَرْضِي بِي وَارْضِنِي بِهَا وَاجْمَعْ بَيْنَنَا بِأَحْسَنِ إِجْتِمَاعٍ وَأَيْسَرَ اتِّبَافٍ فَإِنَّكَ تَحِبُّ
الْحَلَالَ وَتَكْرَهُ الْحَرَامَ.

Allahummar zuqni ulfahaa wa wuddahaa wa ridhaahaa bi; war dhini bihaa waj ma banyanaa bi ahsani ijtimaain wa aysara tilaafin. Fa innaka tuhibbul halaala wa takrahul haraama.

"O' Allah (SwT)! Bless me with her affection, love and her acceptance of me; and make me pleased with her, and bring us together in the best form of a union and in absolute harmony; surely You like the lawful and dislike the unlawful things."

The husband should then request his wife to perform Wudhu and also perform a two Rakat recommended Salat before you are ready to go to bed.

In the well-known book, Makarim al-Akhlaq, it has been narrated from Imam Jafar as-Sadiq (as) that when the new wife enters the room where her husband is, they should both face the Qiblah and he should place his hand on her forehead and recite the following supplication:

اللَّهُمَّ بِأَمَانَتِكَ أَخَذْتُهَا وَبِكَلِمَاتِكَ إِسْتَحَلَلْتُ فَرْجَهَا فَإِنْ قَضَيْتَ لِي مِنْهَا وَلَدًا فَاجْعَلْهُ مُبَارَكًا سَوِيًّا وَلَا
تَجْعَلْ لِلشَّيْطَانِ فِيهِ شِرْكًَا وَلَا نَصِيْبًا

Allaahumma bi amaanatika akhadhtuhaa wa bi kalimaatika istahlalatu farjahaa. Fa in Qadhayta li minhaa waladan, faj-alhu mubaarakan sawiyyan wa laa tajal lish-shaytaani feehi shirkan wa la naseeba.

"O' Allah (SwT)! I have taken her through Your trust and have made her lawful for myself by Your words. Therefore, if You have decreed for me a male child from her, then make him blessed and pious and do not let the Satan have any part in him."

In another narration from Imam Jafar as-Sadiq (as), it has been mentioned that when a man intends to have intercourse with his wife, he should start in the name of Allah (SwT) by saying بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ . If this is not done, then Shaitan puts his hand in the conception of the child.

When the Imam (as) was asked as to how we could know if this had happened, he replied that we should look at the child and how his love or hate is for the Ahlul Bait (as) - if Shaitan had a role to play in the conception, then that child will have enmity for the Ahlul Bait (as), while the child who loves the Ahlul Bait (as) was protected by Allah (SwT) from the accursed Shaitan.

Another recommended act is that when the bride enters the room, the husband should greet her and take off her shoes and socks. He should then wash her feet in a basin and sprinkle this water around the house.

It is through this act, according to the Prophet of Islam (S), that 70,000 types of poverty will be removed and 70,000 types of desires (that the inhabitants need) will enter into the house. The Prophet (S) went on to mention that 70 blessings and mercies would be showered upon the bride such that each of these will fill the house with mercy and as long as the wife is alive, she will never be afflicted with madness or leprosy.

The First Two Years: A Marriage Survival Guide

Adapted By Saleem Bhimji From the Article Found on
www.soundvision.com

More Muslim marriages in North are breaking up in their first year than ever before, according to the scholars in North America who are having to cope with the increase in marital disputes and divorce cases.

The first five to seven years are the most challenging of any marriage. They are the time that the couple spends getting to know one another better and adjusting to each other's habits and personalities. Below, are some of the main problems couples face in the early years, and some possible solutions.

1. Lack of Proper Information before Marriage

A number of problems are caused simply by the fact that the couple and their families go not discuss crucial issues beforehand. Some of these include:

- Whether or not the wife will work outside the home?
- Will the couple wait to have children?
- Which city and country will the couple live in after marriage?
- Will they live with his parents or have their own house or apartment?

These and other relevant issues need to be discussed and decided in the beginning stages of the marriage process.

2. Who's In Charge?

One of the biggest problems is the tug-of-war between couples over who is in control in the relationship. This has led to a stalemate in disagreements, as well as bitter feelings. Many couples today are refusing to compromise within moderation when differences arise. While from an Islamic perspective, the husband is given the leadership role in the marriage relationship, this does not mean that he can run the family life like a dictator. Allah (SwT) instructs in the Quran that:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ خَافِضَاتٌ لِّلْعَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ

"Men are the maintainers of women because Allah has made some of them to excel others and because they spend out of their property; the good women are therefore obedient, guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded..."(Surah 4, Verse 34)

It must be remembered that Islamically, a leader is one who serves, manages, provides and nourishes. A leader must also have humbleness and humility and deal with all of those under his care and protection with justice and equality.

A husband exercises the right kind of leadership by listening to and consulting with his wife.

Also, a husband is bound to follow the rules of the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet (S) and the Ahlul Bait (as). So differences in opinion should be referred back to these sources (and of course the Religious Scholars in our local community), instead of becoming a source of tension and problems.

Not only is it the duty of the head of the house to make sure that the material needs of the family and order are kept, but it is also his duty to protect himself and his family from the fire of hell:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

"O' you who have true faith! Save yourselves and your families from the fire which is fueled by people and stones and is guarded by stern angels who do not disobey Allah's (SwT) commands and do whatever they are ordered to do." (Surah 66, Verse 6)

Therefore, the head of the house must make sure that he has the proper Islamic knowledge to keep himself away from the hell and more importantly, guide his wife and children to the straight path and keep them on this road. In this regards, the husband has four important duties:

1. To invite his wife and children and any others under his care to obey Allah (SwT). The husband should call his family to follow the religion and encourage them in this regard.

2. Teach those under his care their religious duties and obligations ñ of course this means that the husband must first and foremost know his own religion and beliefs. If he is not well acquainted with his religion, then he must employ the services of the local Masjid and the scholars and either invite them to his house or go to the Masjid for Islamic classes.

3. Encourage the family members to perform good deeds (Amr bil Maruf), as not only is this one of the obligatory acts in our religion, but it will also help the family both in the short term and long term. If they know their responsibilities and are continuously guided to them, then peace, harmony and tranquility will rule throughout the house.

4. The father must also make sure and remind other members of his family to stay away from evil and sin (Nahi Anil Munkar). Again, this is a part of our beliefs and without doubt, that home in which people are not plagued with committing sins and evil acts is one in which Allah (SwT) looks favourable upon and blesses the inhabitants of it.

3. The Divorce Option

Once upon a time, "divorce" was the seven-letter word most Muslim couples avoided using. Today, amongst many Muslim couples in North America, it is one of the first recourses turned to when conflicts occur in a marriage.

It should be remembered that out of all of the things that Allah (SwT) has made halal (permissible), divorce is the one He hates the most. Couples need to look at several other alternatives before turning to this drastic measure. The Prophet of Islam (S) has told us that:

ما خَلَقَ اللَّهُ شَيْئاً عَلَى وَجْهِ الْأَرْضِ أَحَبَّ مِنْ الْعَتَاقِ وَلَا خَلَقَ شَيْئاً عَلَى وَجْهِ الْأَرْضِ أَبْغَضَ مِنَ الطَّلَاقِ.

"Allah (SwT) has not created on the face of this Earth anything more beloved by Him than freeing a slave, and He has not created anything on the face of this Earth more despised than divorce."

The couple should seek the help of older, wiser and trustworthy elders and Scholars who will try to help them resolve their differences. Allah (SwT) tells us in the Quran that:

وَأِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُوا حَكَمًا مِنْ أَهْلِهِ وَحَكَمًا مِنْ أَهْلِهَا إِنْ يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا خَبِيرًا

"If there appears to be discord between a wife and her husband and if they desire reconciliation, then choose arbiters from the families of both sides. Allah (SwT) will bring them together; Allah (SwT) is All-Knowing and All-Aware." (Surah 4, Verse 35)

Generally, the couple needs to make a sincere and concerted effort to try and work things out before divorce is even considered.

4. Sexual Problems

It is unrealistic to expect the issue of sex and sex-related problems to mysteriously disappear once a couple gets married.

In the sex-saturated culture of North America, couples tend to place very high expectations of each other in this area. They also expect instant results.

In reality, it takes time, commitment, disappointment and investment to establish a sexual relationship in marriage which is in tune with the needs of each partner.

It's important for Muslim couples to walk into marriage with proper information about sex and sexual etiquette from an Islamic perspective (the book Marriage and Morals in Islam, by Hujjatul Islam as-Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi is one such valuable resource). They both need to know what is halal (permissible) and what is haram (forbidden). They should also keep in mind that spouses must never discuss their sexual relationship with others, unless it is to get help for a specific problem and that too one must get it from the right person.

On a similar note, it is important for both the husband and the wife to remember that they need to make themselves physically attractive for each other. Too many couples take marriage to mean an excuse to now let themselves go. The couple or one of the partners may gain too much weight, or may not care about hygiene or their looks in general.

The universal teachings of Islam also instructs the husband and wife to maintain cleanliness and beauty for the spouse. The Prophet of Islam (S) has commanded us that:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ جَمِيلٌ يُحِبُّ الْجَمَالَ وَجِبُّ أَنْ يُرَى أَثَرُ النَّعْمَةِ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ

"Certainly Allah (SwT) is Beauty and He (only) loves beauty and He loves to see the effects of (His) blessings and bounties on His servants." (Al-Kafi, Volume 6, Page 438)

The Prophet (S) has also told us that:

إِغْسِلُوا ثِيَابَكُمْ وَخُذُوا مِنْ شَعْوَرِكُمْ وَاسْتَاكُوا وَتَزَيَّبُوا وَتَنْظَّفُوا فَإِنَّ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لَمْ يَكُونُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ذَلِكَ فَرَزَتْ نِسَائِهِمْ

"Wash your clothes and trim the excess hair on your bodies and brush your teeth and beautify yourselves and keep yourselves clean, since certainly the Children of Israil never did these things and thus, their women committed adultery." (Nahj al-Fusahah, Page 72)

We quote one final hadith on the importance of keeping clean and looking nice for one's spouse where the Prophet (S) has been described as:

كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ يُنْفِقُ فِي الطَّيِّبِ أَكْثَرَ بِمَا يُنْفِقُ فِي الطَّعَامِ

"The Messenger of Allah (S) used to spend more money on perfumes, than he used to spend on food." (Wasail ash-Shia, Volume 1, Page 443)

Thus, both the husband and wife must take the time out of their schedules to maintain proper hygiene, to look nice for one another and other such things related to their physical appearance. Our beloved Prophet (S) has recommended husband and wife both to do these things.

5. In-Laws

The first few years of marriage are not just a period of adjustment for the married couple, rather, it is one of getting used to in-laws as well.

Husbands, wives and in-laws need to practice the Islamic rules of social relations with each other. These include avoiding: sarcasm, backbiting, calling each other by offensive nicknames, and instead, making a special effort to respect each other as a family.

More importantly too, comparisons need to be avoided, since every individual and every couple is different. Therefore, wives should not be compared to mothers and sisters and similarly, husbands should not be compared to fathers and brothers. In-laws should not be compared to parents, and so on.

In addition, there should be regular, healthy contact between spouses and in-laws. This can mean visiting each other at least once or twice a month, or phoning regularly if distance makes it difficult to get together.

We should remember that many times in the Quran, we have been ordered to maintain our family ties and relationships and one of the greatest sins in Islam is to sever ties with family members. However at the same time, the husband and wife must maintain a balance between the time they spend with parents/in-laws and with themselves:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُم لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

"Surely Allah (SwT) commands (people) to maintain justice, kindness, and proper relations with their relatives. He forbids them to commit indecency, sin, and rebellion and (Allah) gives you advice so that perhaps you will take heed." (Surah 16, Verse 90)

In another verse of the Quran, Allah (SwT) instructs us as such:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

"O' Mankind! Have fear of your Lord who has created you from a single soul. From it He created your spouse and through them He populated the land with many men and women. Have fear of the One by whose Name you swear to settle your differences and have respect for the wombs that bore you. Allah (SwT) certainly keeps watch over you." (Surah 4, Verse 1)

6. Realism

Boy meets girl. They fall in love. They live happily ever after. This is the plot of many Hollywood movies, where everyone is "perfect". Real life is very different.

Couples may enter marriage with high-flying romantic ideas and expecting their partner to be the ideal human, however all humans have good and bad points. Husbands and wives have to learn to accept each other, warts and all and since we ourselves are not perfect, how can we expect that from someone else?

7. Making a Schedule and Establishing Rituals

Making a schedule may seem like an end to spontaneity but that is not true. It allows you to establish your own lifestyle and rituals as a couple. It is especially important if both the husband and wife are going to school and/or working. In this scenario, a schedule helps in setting time aside for each other, during a fast-paced week of work and studies.

Some rituals couples can establish may include:

- Praying at least one prayer together.
- Performing the recommended supplications such as Dua-e-Kumayl, Dua-e-Tawassul, Dua-e-Nudbah, etc... together.
- Attending a study circle together once a week.
- Deciding on a weekly menu.
- Having a pancake breakfast every Saturday morning.
- Setting aside one day on which no work or studying will be done.
- Setting a day when both the husband and wife will clean up the house.
- Setting a time to discuss finances and a budget.
- Making a phone call to your spouse during the day.
- Deciding on a particular day and time once a month at least to visit each other's parents.

By discussing and setting up these rituals, couples learn how to talk to and feel responsible for each other. They also learn to become a team instead of two people living in the same house with separate lives.

8. Marriage as a Restriction

Muslim men who have grown up in North America may find marriage restricting. After all, before, they could hang out with their buddies and come home around 11:00 p.m. and no one would say a word. After marriage though, they have to be home by 7:00 p.m. if not earlier!

While marriage comes with responsibilities and a tighter schedule, the benefits are also there. It takes time and patience to realize that in the end the benefits (i.e. a life partner, children, etc.) are greater than the restrictions.

9. Friends and Islamic Activities

Friends are a joy and a good friend is someone you want to be close to for the rest of your life. But friends are often the source of many marriage conflicts. Too much time spent with friends - either hanging out with them or being on the phone - means time lost with one's spouse.

Also, friends, especially if they are of the same age group, may give the wrong advice on marriage, due to their own inexperience in the area.

Some possible solutions to the friend dilemma could be:

- Working out a "friends time" at least once a week where the husband and the wife meet and/or talk with friends privately.
- Developing friendships with other married couples so spouses can befriend spouses (but keeping in mind the separation of the sexes).
- Islamic activities fall in a similar category. Young Muslim activists may think they can keep attending those three-hour Islamic discussions as they did before marriage.

Not so.

Too much focus on outside Islamic activities takes one away from spouse time. Give Islamic activities their due, but within a balance of everyone's rights, including those of your spouse.

10. In Relation to Secrets

A number of young married couples are notorious for not keeping secrets, especially those related to sexual matters, and thus expose their spouse's faults. This is not only unacceptable - but it is un-Islamic as well.

Couples should seek to hide each other's faults. They should seek advice on marriage problems from a "marriage mentor", someone who is older, wiser, trustworthy and has the best interests of both parties at heart. The Holy Quran tells us that:

هُنَّ لِيَاسٍ لَّكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِيَاسٍ هُنَّ

"They (your wives) are a clothing (covering) for you and you too are a clothing for them."

(Surah 2, Verse 187)

The functions of clothing are numerous, however one of them is to cover any defects or faults a person may have on his or her body and thus, the husband and wife must act, just as the Quran commands us, as "clothing" for one another, meaning a cover.

11. Finances

How much should be spent on furniture, the house, food, etc.? These are staple issues of any household and can lead to a tug-of-war between husband and wife.

To keep spending in check, husbands and wives need to draft a budget and stick to it. The household will run more efficiently and that's one less source of conflict in a marriage.

A special note to husbands: in the beginning of marriage, husbands tend to shower their wives with gifts. They do this as an expression of love and because they want to provide for their wives. However, as time passes and they keep giving, they go into debt or experience financial difficulty. As well, wives get used to a certain level of comfort which husbands can no longer afford.

Providing for a wife (and later on, a family) is not just reserved to material things. It includes spending time with them, and treating them with equity and kindness. In fact, most wives would prefer this kind of provision over expensive gifts.

12. Giving Each Other Space

A number of couples think being married means always being together and serving each other on hand and foot.

Wives may initially take over all the household chores, not letting the husband help or even do his own things (i.e. ironing his own clothes). They later regret this as household responsibilities increase and their husbands become dependent on them for the smallest things.

Husbands may think getting married means being with their wives all the time. This later may lead them to becoming irritable and cranky.

The key is to focus on being caring, fond of and accepting each other and giving each other sufficient space, yet at the same time, being there for one another. Doing this provides a necessary balance in a relationship which is so close both physically and emotionally.

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ): مَنْ تَزَوَّجَ أَحْرَزَ نَصْفَ دِينِهِ

The Messenger of Allah (S) has said, "He who marries has safeguarded half of his religion."

Opinion of The Ulama In Relation To Marriage

The issue of an early marriage for the youth and the re-marriage for the widowed or divorced is of such importance that we could not neglect asking our leaders, the Maraja Taqlid for their advice and guidance. During the ghaybah of our 12th Imam, the Maraja are our link to the true teachings of Islam and thus, we have requested four of them to provide us with valuable spiritual guidance in this area.

We have requested Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Ali al-Husaini as-Sistani, Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Ali al-Husaini Khamenei, Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Lutfullah as-Safi al-Gulpaygani, and Ayatullah al- Uzma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Nasir al-Makarim ash-Shirazi (may Allah keep them all under His protection) to guide the Shia Muslim community of the 'West' by answering the following questions:

"May the Peace, Mercy and Blessings of Allah (SwT) be upon you. With greetings to your Eminence and the hope that your obedience to Allah (SwT) and your worship of the Most High Truth are all accepted, please guide us in the below mentioned issues:

Question 1: In your humble opinion, please explain how important is it for the young person living (in particular) in the West to get married at an early age (according to the society they are living in and their own individual needs and financial capabilities). In addition to this, for that person who has lost his or her spouse (through death) or is separated from his spouse (through divorce) - please explain to us the importance of these two groups of people remarrying.

Question 2: Are there any Islamic legislations from the Noble Prophet (S) and the Infallible Leaders (as) by way of the noble ahadith or verses of the Quran in which we have been recommended to marry at an early age? Or is there anything in the hadith in which we have been advised to remarry after either divorce or the death of our spouse?

Question 3: If it is possible, can you please cite some historical events in which the Prophets, Aimmah or their great Companions encouraged widows or divorcees to remarry?

In closing, please remember the brothers and sisters of Canada and America in your supplications, especially the dear, valuable youth."

Opinion of Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Ali al-Husaini as-Sistani

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Answer 1: Marriage in itself is a highly recommended act such that if a person fears that he/she will fall into a forbidden (haram) act, and the only way that he can prevent himself from committing that (forbidden) act is to get married, then it becomes obligatory (wajib) to get married.

Answer 2: It has been narrated from the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) that:

مَنْ تَزَوَّجَ أَخْرَزَ نِصْفَ دِينِهِ

"The person who marries safeguards half of his religion."

And he (S) has also stated that:

مَا اسْتَفَادَ امْرَأَةً مُسْلِمَةً بَعْدَ الْإِسْلَامِ أَفْضَلَ مِنْ زَوْجَةٍ مُسْلِمَةٍ تَسْرُهُ إِذَا نَظَرَ إِلَيْهَا وَتَطِيعُهُ إِذَا أَمَرَهَا وَحَفِظَتْهُ إِذَا غَابَ عَنْهَا فِي نَفْسِهَا وَمَالِهِ

"There is nothing that has benefited the Muslim after (accepting the religion of) al-Islam greater than marrying a Muslim woman. He becomes elated when he looks at her and she obeys him when he directs her to do something and she protects him (her husband) when he is not there in relation to her self and his wealth."

It has been narrated from Imam Jafar ibn Muhammad as- Sadiq (as) that:

رُكْعَتَانِ يُصَلِّيْهَا الْمُتَزَوِّجُ أَفْضَلُ مِنْ سَبْعِينَ رُكْعَةً يُصَلِّيْهَا أَعْرَبُ

"The two Rakat that a married person prays of his Salat is better than seventy Rakat that a bachelor performs."

Answer 3: It is sufficient to look at the code of conduct of the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) after the death of Khadijah (as) and the code of conduct of Amir al-Mominin Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) after the death of Siddiqatul Kubra (as).

Office of Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Ali al-Husaini as-Sistani
[25th of Safar, 1423 (April 28, 2003)]

Opinion of Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Ali al-Husaini Khamenei

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful
Salam Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh,

Answer (to Questions 1, 2, & 3): Marriage is one of the highly recommended acts (in Islam) and that which has been mentioned by way of encouragement in getting married and the perils of not getting married are too much to enumerate (in the ahadith). From our master, Imam al-Baqir (as), it has been related that he said:

"The Prophet of Allah (S) has said, "There is no structure in Islam which is more loved by Allah (SwT) than that of marriage."

In addition, our master, Imam Jafar as-Sadiq (as) has said, "Two Rakat of Salat of a married person is better than seventy Rakat of Salat of a bachelor and it is not good that marriage should be delayed due to poverty or other (material) needs..."

It has been narrated from the Noble Prophet (S) that, "The person who delays marriage due to fear of poverty, or other such reasons has had negative thoughts about Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He)."

May you all be successful and assisted (by Him).

Office of Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Ali al-Husaini Khamenei

**Opinion of Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Lutfullah
as-Safi al-Gulpaygani**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Wa Alaikum Salam wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh,

Answer (to Questions 1, 2 & 3): Nikah (marriage) is one of the highly recommended acts in Islam which we have been commanded to observe in the Noble Quran and according to the noble ahadith of the Messenger, marriage is counted as being from the Sunnah of the Noble Prophet (S), which Muslims must not turn away from. It has been narrated from the Infallibles (as) that if a person marries, he has safe-guarded half of his religion and in other narrations, he has safe-guarded one-third of his religion.

In this regards, there is no difference if this happens to be a person's first marriage or after separation from his spouse, he or she remarries. In addition, if a person fears that by not getting married, one will fall into sin and transgression (of the laws of Allah), then it becomes obligatory upon one to get married. And Allah (SwT) knows best.

May you all be successful,

Lutfullah Safi

[SEAL]

9th Dhul Qadah, 1423

11th of January, 2003

Office of Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Lutfullah as-Safi al-Gulpaygani

Opinion of Ayatullah al- Uzma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Nasir al-Makarim ash-Shirazi

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

After greetings and salutations to you all,

Answer (to Questions 1 & 2): There are various verses within the Noble Quran, and in addition, countless ahadith from all of the respected Masumin (as) in which they have recommended and encouraged those who are single to keep alive the Sunnah (tradition) of the Noble Prophet (S) and to get married as this act safeguards half of a person's faith.

These sorts of verses of the Quran and ahadith are in both in relation to those youth who have not yet gotten married (for the first time), and even those men and women who were married in the past however at the present time, are once again single (for whatever reasons).

Answer (to Question 3): This issue has taken place many, many times during the lifetime of the Prophet of Islam (S) and the Pure and Sinless Aimmah (as).

And may the peace and blessings of Allah (SwT) be upon all of you.

Office of Ayatullah al- Uzma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Nasir al-Makarim ash-Shirazi

Marriage Helps In Spirituality

**Extracted from The Book Marriage & Morals In Islam by Hujjatul
Islam Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi**

In Islam, contrary to Christianity, marriage and sex are not antipathetic to the love for and worship of God. Instead of an obstacle, marriage is regarded as an asset in acquiring spiritual perfection.

The Prophet (S) said, "One who marries has already guarded half of his religion, therefore he should fear Allah (SwT) for the other half." A person who can fulfill his sexual urges lawfully is less distracted in the spiritual journey. Love for women and faith are inter-related.

In one hadith, Umar bin Zayd quotes Imam Jafar as-Sadiq (as) that, "I do not think that a person's faith can increase positively unless his love for women has increased."

The same Imam (as) said, "Whenever a person's love for women increases, his faith increases in quality." He also said, "Whosoever's love for us increases, his love for women must also increase."

The Prophet (S) said, "If anyone likes to meet Allah (SwT) in purity, then he should meet Him with a wife."

A woman came to the Prophet's (S) house and her strong perfume soon filled the house. When the Prophet (S) inquired about the visitor, the woman said that she had tried everything to attract her husband but in vain; he does not leave his meditation to pay any attention to her.

The Prophet (S) told her to inform her husband about the reward of sexual intercourse which he described as follows: "When a man approaches his wife, he is guarded by two angels and [at that moment in Allah's views] he is like a warrior fighting for the cause of Allah (SwT). When he has intercourse with her, his sins fell like the leaves of the tree [in fall season]. When he performs the major ablution, he is cleansed from sins."

These quotations from the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet (S) and the Imams of Ahlul Bayt (as) show that the Islamic view on sex and marriage is in complete harmony with human nature. It can easily be concluded that in the Islamic sexual morality:

(a) marriage and sex is highly recommended and it is in no way associated with evil, guilt or sin;

(b) monasticism and celibacy is unacceptable;

(c) marriage is considered a helping factor in attaining spiritual perfection it prevents the Muslims from getting into sins and also enhances the value of their acts of worship.

These teachings neutralize the need for a sexual revolution in a Muslim society. Since there is no sexual suppression, the question of a sexual revolution does not arise.

Recommended Book List for Couples or those planning to get Married

All titles are available from the Islamic Humanitarian Service head office for the below mentioned prices, which include Shipping & Handling
Islamic Humanitarian Service 81 Hollinger Crescent
Kitchener, Ontario Canada, N2K 2Y8 Tel: 519-576-7111 I Fax: 519-576-8378

www.al-haqq.com | ihs@primus.ca

- 1) Marriage and Morals in Islam, by Hujjatul Islam Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi (\$8.00)
- 2) Marriage and Family Ethics, by Ayatullah Ibrahim Amini (\$8.00)
- 3) Islamic Family Structure, by Hujjatul Islam Husain Ansariyan (\$15.00)
- 4) Youth and Spouse Selection, by Ali Akbar Mazaheri (\$10.00)
- 5) Women and Her Rights (also titled Rights of Women in Islam), by Allamah Shahid Murtadha Mutahhari (\$15.00)
- 6) A Code of Ethics for Muslim Men and Women, by Sayyid Masud Masumi (\$8.00)
- 7) A Code of Practice for Muslims in the West, by Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Ali al-Husaini as-Sistani

Many of these books are also available on the InterNet. Log on to www.al-islam.org for quick reference of these and many other texts that deal with Marriage, family rights and duties and other relevant topics.

This Islamic Marriage Guidebook can also be read / downloaded in PDF format from www.al-haqq.com or www.muslimyouth.ca

Additional copies of this booklet can be acquired from the Islamic Humanitarian Service head office.