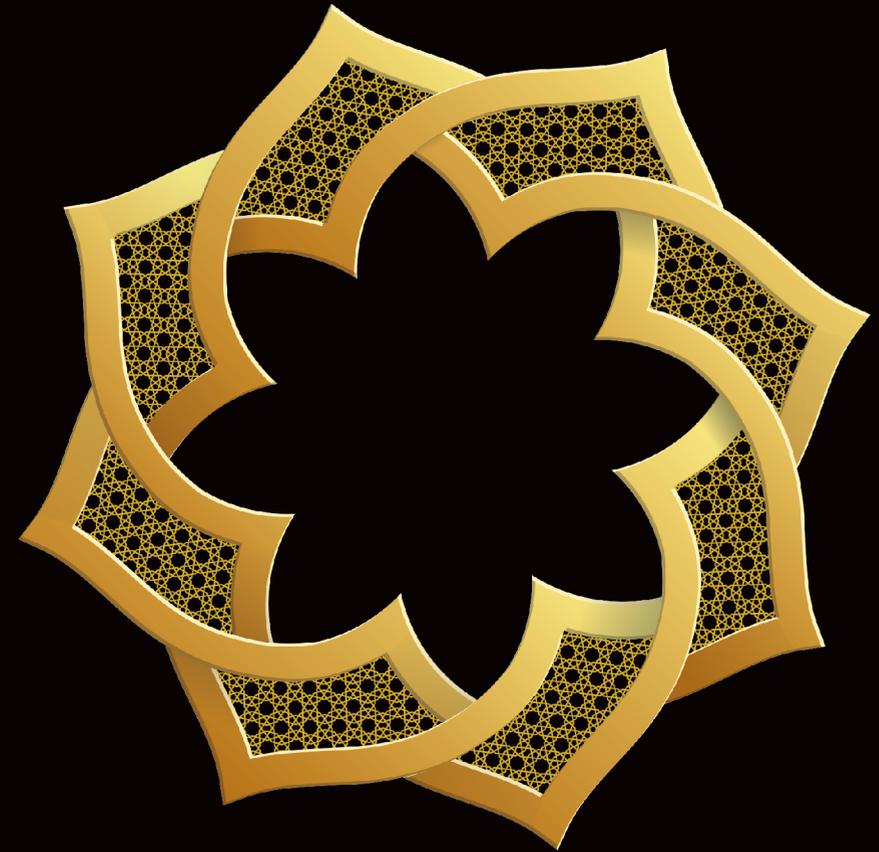


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Marriage Relevance and Importance

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Marriage Relevance and Importance

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Marriage – Relevance and Importance

The meaning of marriage is both a romantic and divisive topic to explore. Marriage is a long-standing social institution, ingrained in human ritual. But, what is the meaning of marriage today? Is it still relevant and revered or has it become a beloved but antiquated idea?

As with many things in life, to understand where you are going, you need to know where you have come from. The emergence of marriage provides an insight into the encompassing cultural influence it has had through the ages. The actual word ‘marriage’ first makes an appearance in the period 1250-1300 AC. To put that into context, Amsterdam was declared a city in 1300 and during this period the Aztec culture started in Mesoamerica.

Marriage has its origins in the Latin word ‘matrimoniu’ meaning ‘mother’ and ‘the action, state or condition’. This then became the Old French word ‘matremoinme’ which developed into the Middle English word ‘maraige’. The original word could be used as a noun for husband in male form or wife in female form. The longevity of the tradition and the universal nature of its applicability across countries, cultures, class and centuries are indicative of its enduring position in society.

The meaning of marriage can be broad and its specificities change from culture to culture, religion to religion and across the timeline of history. However, there are some basic premises upon which the concept is based. Marriage is generally understood as the union and commitment between two people in an interpersonal relationship that is recognized by an official institution, such as the state and religion, and is of a sexual nature. It is also acknowledged by a community or social structure to which the couple belongs, such as their friends, family, colleagues, and acquaintances.

It is rightly said by Elizabeth Gilbert:

“There is no choice more intensely personal, after all, than whom you choose to marry; that choice tells us, to a large extent, who you are”

The dictionary defines marriage as the state of being united as spouses in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law. However, the understanding of the institution of marriage is at times controversial as it has expanded and diversified in today’s world.

Islamic Perspective of Marriage

From an Islamic perspective God Almighty created men and women as companions for each other, and so that they can become parents and live in peace and calmness according to the commandments of God Almighty. God says in the Holy Quran:

“And among His signs is this that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your hearts. Undoubtedly in these are signs for those who reflect.”(Quran, 30:21).

Islam emphasizes on marriage as it has great importance in Islam with many benefits that one could get from it. The above verse can be understood by reflecting on the following discourse.

That is, the Creator’s perfect wisdom is such that He has not created man in one sex only but in two sexes, which are identical in humanity, which have the same basic formula of their figure and form, but the two have been created with different physical structures, different mental and psychological qualities, and different emotions and desires. And then there has been created such a wonderful harmony between the two that each is a perfect counterpart of the other. The physical and psychological demands of the one match squarely with the physical and psychological demands of the other.

Moreover, the Wise Creator is continuously creating the members of the two sexes in such a proportion since the dawn of the creation that in no nation and in no region has it ever happened that only boys or only girls may have been born. This is one thing in which human intelligence has absolutely no part to play. Man cannot at all influence the course of nature according to which girls continue to be born with the feminine qualities and the boys with the masculine qualities, which are perfectly complimentary to each other, nor has he any means by which he may change the proportion in which men and women continue to be born everywhere in the world.

The working of this system and arrangement so harmoniously and perpetually in the birth of millions and billions of human beings since thousands of years cannot be accidental either, nor can this be the result of the common will of many gods. This is a clear indication of the reality that One Wise Creator and One only, in the beginning made a most appropriate design of a man and a woman by His infinite Wisdom and Power.

The second aspect described in the above verse of Quran is that this system has not come about by chance, but the Creator has brought it about deliberately with the object that the man should find fulfilment of the demands of his nature with the woman, and the woman with the man, and the two should find peace and satisfaction in association and attachment with each other. This is the wise arrangement which the Creator has made the means of the survival of the human race on the one hand, and of bringing the human civilization into existence on the other hand.

If the two sexes had been created on different patterns and designs, and the state of agitation which changes into peace and tranquillity only through union and attachment between the two had not been placed in each, the human race might have survived like sheep and goats, but there was no possibility of the birth of a civilization.

This same desire for peace and satisfaction compelled them to make a home together. This same desire brought families and clans into

being, and this same desire made social life possible for man. The real motivating force was the same longing with which man and woman were endowed and which compelled them to establish the “home”.

The third aspect mentioned in the above verse of Quran is Love. “Love” here means sexual love, which becomes the initial motive for attraction between man and woman, and then keeps them attached to each other. The fourth aspect is “Rahma” which means Care Compassion and Mercy. This implies the spiritual relationship which gradually develops in the matrimonial life, by virtue of which they become kind, affectionate and sympathetic towards each other; so much so that in old age, sexual love falls into the background and the two partners in life prove to be even more compassionate towards each other than they were when young.

These two are the positive forces which the Creator has created in man to support the initial longing of his nature. That longing and restlessness only seeks peace and satisfaction and brings the man and the woman into contact with each other. After that these two forces emerge and bind the two strangers brought up in different environments so intimately together that the two remain attached to each other through every thick and thin of life. Evidently, this love and mercy which is being experienced by millions and millions of people in their lives, is not anything material, which may be weighed and measured, nor can it be traced back to any of the constituent element of human body, nor can the cause of its birth and growth found out in a laboratory. The only explanation of this can be that the human self has been endowed with it by a Wise Creator, Who has done so of His own will to serve a special purpose.

Importance of Marriage

The Quran makes it clear that a person get married:

“And marry those among you who are single and those who are fit...” (24:32)

The above verse of the Quran begins with the words; “Wa Ankehoo” (And marry...). The imperative form of the word ‘nikah’ implies that either it is obligatory or highly recommended. According to majority of the scholars, though, marriage is a highly recommended act; it becomes obligatory when there is a chance of falling into sin.

The Quran further explains:

"And Allah has made for you your mates of your own nature, and made for you, out of them, sons and daughters and grandchildren, and provided for you sustenance of the best." [Noble Quran 16:72]

These verses of the Noble Quran clearly show that in contrast to other religions like Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism etc. which consider celibacy or monasticism as a great virtue and a means of salvation, Islam considers marriage as one of the most virtuous and approved institutions. The Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) declared, *"There is no monasticism in Islam."*

He further ordained, *"O you young men! Whoever is able to marry should marry, for that will help him to lower his gaze and guard his modesty." [Al-Bukhari]*

Modesty was regarded as a great virtue by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). He said, *"Modesty is part of faith." [Al-Bukhari]*

The importance of the institution or marriage receives its greatest emphasis from the following Hadith of the Prophet pbuh:

He beautifully explained in a tradition narrated by Anas that the Messenger of God said,

"When a man marries, he has fulfilled half of his religion, so let him fear Allah regarding the remaining half."

The Prophet pbuh considered marriage for a Muslim as half of his religion because it shields him from promiscuity, adultery, fornication, homosexuality etc., which ultimately lead to many other evils like slander, quarrelling, homicide, loss of property and disintegration of the family. According to the Prophet pbuh the remaining half of the faith can be saved by God consciousness (Taqwa).

The Free Consent of the Parties

The Quran [4:21] refers to marriage as a mithaq, i.e. a solemn covenant or agreement between husband and wife, and enjoins that it be put down in writing. Since no agreement can be reached between the parties unless they give their consent to it, marriage can be contracted only with the free consent of the two parties. The Prophet pbuh said,

"The widow and the divorced woman shall not be married until their order is obtained, and the virgin shall not be married until her consent is obtained." [Bukhari]

"When a man gives his daughter in marriage and she dislikes it, the marriage shall be annulled." Once a virgin girl came to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and said that her father had married her to a man against her wishes. The Prophet gave her the right to repudiate the marriage. [Abu Dawud]

Divorced women are also given freedom to contract a second marriage. The Noble Quran says,

"And when you divorce women, and they have come to the end of their waiting period, hinder them not from marrying other men if they have agreed with each other in a fair manner." [Quran 2:232]

The Marriage Process

The process of marriage has been made extremely simple in Islam to encourage men and women from all backgrounds to be able to avail its use. The process comprises of three simple steps. Firstly, choosing a spouse, secondly conducting the ceremony of Nikah or wedding and thirdly; Paying of a bridal gift (Mahr) by the groom to the bride.

1) Choosing the Spouse:

The first thing we are asked to look for when marrying is how committed the person is to Islam. Prophet Muhammed pbuh said,

“A woman is normally sought as a wife for her wealth, beauty, nobility, or God-fearness, but choose a God-fearing woman and you will prosper.” (Muslim)

And he said,

“A woman is married for four things, i.e., her wealth, her family status, her beauty and her religion. You should marry the religious woman (otherwise) you will be a loser”.(Bukhari)

He further said,

“The whole world is a provision, and the best object of benefit of the world is the pious woman.” (Muslim)

The same holds true when looking for a husband, as the Messenger of God pbuh said,

“When someone with whose religion and character you are satisfied asks to marry your daughter, comply with his request. If you do not do so, there will be corruption and great evil on earth. ” (Tirmidhi)

2) Nikah:

This includes a simple ceremony wherein the bride and groom give their consent to getting married and in presence of two adult witnesses sign their Nikah contract. The contract can include any

clause that the couple agree to include and should be made use of by both males and females in order to secure their respective rights with each other. Nikah is concluded by the person who recites a brief Arabic khutba or lecture reminding the bride and groom of their responsibilities as a couple.

3) Mahr or Bridal Gift

The Groom has to pay a bridal gift to the bride and this has to be agreed as well by the couple.

This is how simple the process of marriage in Islam is. It has nothing to do with the wasteful and extravagant use of wealth on weddings which has become the order of the day. Today it can cost a person anywhere between 10 to 20 thousand pounds in UK for a very modest wedding by people's standards. This is one of the reasons why people are avoiding getting married and preferring to live as partners. Islam provides ease and moderation in order to prevent people from living in sin.

Purpose Of Marriage

The basic objectives of marriage in Islam are, first, securing a peaceful, tranquil and a comfortable atmosphere for the husband and wife and, second, producing a new generation of healthy, faithful, positive, progressive and virtuous children. With regard to the first objective, the Holy Quran says:

"One of His signs is that He created for you spouses of your own species, so that you might find comfort with them. And He put mutual love and affection in your hearts. Surely in this there are lessons for the thinking people" (30:21)

A Muslim husband and wife who follow the teachings of the Holy Quran should always be a source of comfort for each other. Their relationship should reach a level far above that of mere sexual enjoyment and should reach the stage of cordial friendship accompanied by mutual benevolence.

With regard to the second objective, the Holy Quran says:

"He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He has given you partners from among yourselves and, similarly, made the cattle also males and females. That is how he multiplies you. Nothing can be compared to Him, He is the All-hearing, the All-seeing." (43:11)

Marriage in Islam is a partnership. This partnership has two founding members, a man and a woman. This partnership has a constitution with a predetermined set of provisions. Its basis is one of love and affection, and its details encompass all aspects of family life. Islam encourages everyone who is able to establish this partnership to hurry and do so. Islam promises us divine assistance and providence if we choose the path of marriage over illicit relationships.

Marriage is the basis upon which the family is established. A man and woman form this important social institution together. Islam emphasizes that this relationship between the man and the woman should be based on affection and mercy.

An important purpose of marriage in Islam is to take comfort in companionship and to bring about happiness. God says:

"It is He who created you from a single person and then created from him his wife so he might take comfort in living with her." (30:21)

God also says: *"They are garments for you and you are garments for them." (2:187)*

Marriage, in Islam is established on the basis of mutual consent and free choice. God says: *"Do not prevent them from marrying their former husbands if they mutually agree on a reasonable basis." (2:232)*

The Quran says:

"Do not retain them to harm them. Whoever does that has wronged himself." (2:231)

And: *“O you who believe, it is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will” (4:19)*

The management of family affairs and decision-making within the family are accomplished in Islam through mutual consultation and shared responsibility. The Quran calls to mutual consultation and consent; in the question of when a nursing child should be weaned.

God says: *“If they both decide on weaning by mutual consent and consultation, there is no sin on them.”(2:233)*

A Loving Mutual Relationship

The Prophet pbuh explained in a subtle but beautiful manner, the care and gentleness in approaching your spouse. He prayed for such people:

“May Allah grant mercy to a man who gets up at night and prays, and wakes up his wife, and if she refuses, he sprinkles water in her face; may Allah grant mercy to a woman who gets up at night and prays, and wakes up her husband, and if he refuses, she sprinkles water in his face.”

The spouses must exercise patience and forgiveness in the case of disagreement or dispute, and not rush to separation or divorce. The declaration of divorce is a grave matter indeed, and the Prophet (s) said:

“Of permitted matters the most disliked before God is divorce”

In another hadith he said; Womanizing -- divorce for the purpose of marrying another woman out of sexual attraction incurs God's curse:

“God's curse is on the womanizing, divorcing man”

Finally even in the midst of and after divorce, God has prescribed kindness upon the man: *“(After pronouncing divorce) she must be retained in honour or released in kindness” (2:228).*

The Prophet (s) said:

"Do not beat your wife." He also said: "Do not strike your wife in the face." The expiation for striking one's slave in the face is to set him or her free on the spot, but what expiation is there for striking one's wife? The Prophet (s) condemned the man who beats his wife in the day and then approaches her at night"

And to beat her to the extent of inflicting injury is enough grounds for her to obtain divorce from the judge.

God instructs men to be kind to their wives and to treat them well to the best of their ability:

"...And live with them in kindness..." (Quran 4:19)

The Messenger of God pbuh said,

"The most perfect of believers in belief is the best of them in character. The best of you are those who are the best to their women"[Tirmidhi]

The Prophet of Mercy tells us that a husband's treatment of his wife reflects a Muslim's good character, which in turn is a reflection of the man's faith. A companion asked the Prophet of God what is the right of a wife over her husband?' He said,

"That you feed her when you eat and clothe her when you clothe yourself and do not strike her face. Do not malign her and do not keep apart from her"(Abu Dawud)

Express the Love for your Spouse

Aisha ra reported that,

The Messenger of God pbuh would give her a vessel to drink, when she was menstruating, then he would look for the spot where she had put her lips on and put his lips on the same spot. (An-Nasa'i)

Anas narrated that the Prophet had a Persian neighbour who was good at cooking soup. One day he prepared some soup and invited the Prophet to it.

Aisha was present so the Prophet suggested to the neighbour that she should join them. The neighbour refused to include her in the invitation. The Prophet, therefore, declined the invitation. The Persian repeated the exclusive invitation for the Prophet who, once again, declined the invitation. In the third attempt, the Persian neighbour invited both the Prophet and his wife, `Aisha. Then, the Prophet accepted his invitation and went with Aisha to the man's house. (Muslim)

Prophet pbuh also taught the best formula or secret of a long lasting relationship by asking people to concentrate on the positive traits of your spouse and ignore the negative ones because there is nothing like an ideal human being, he said:

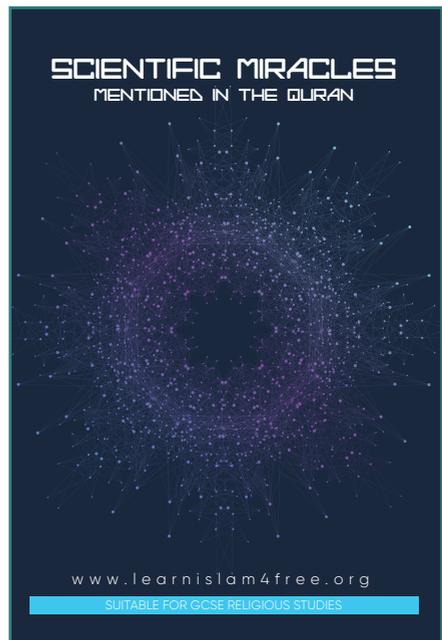
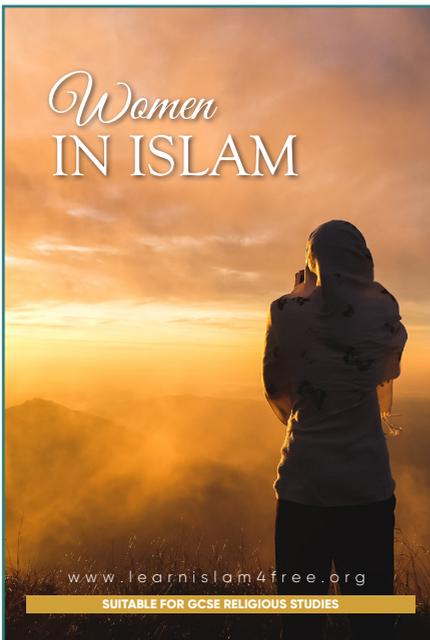
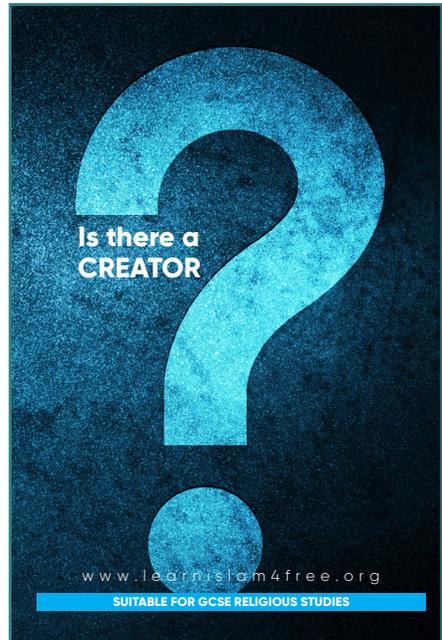
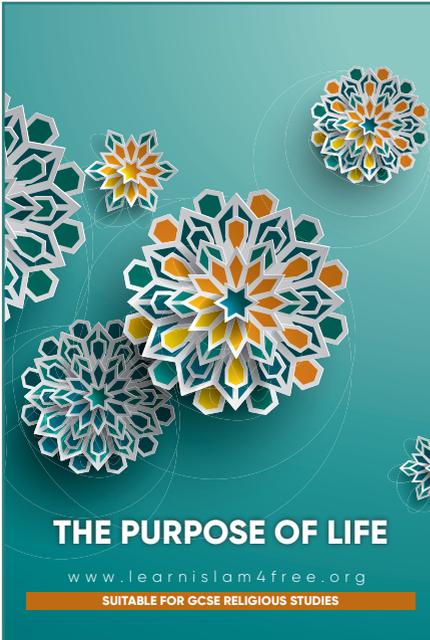
“A believer must not hate a believing woman (i.e., his wife); if he dislikes one of her traits he will be pleased with another.” (Muslim)

All above injunctions apply to wives as well. A wife must similarly give husband a chance to improve by helping each other come close to our creator in order to achieve a fruitful relationship as well as the rewards for our next life. It is better to get married and hold each other's hands in order to attain God's favour and pleasure than to live in sin or seek the unrealistic ideal partner-which does not exist. Prophet pbuh said

“Four are causes of happiness,: A good wife, a spacious house, a good neighbour and a good means of transportation” [Al-Hakim].

Therefore choose your spouse well and be thankful to God Almighty for bestowing love, mercy, care and compassion between the spouses to enjoy and live a fruitful life not just with each other but for the greater good of the society and the whole world!

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