

FORWARD

In the passing of the day and the night there are many happy occasions that we are not able to appreciate to its fullest, while at the same time our Merciful Lord continues to bless us with these blessings. He repeatedly asks us by saying: *Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?* We thank Him for His eternal favours: *Alahamdu lillahi Rabil Alameen* (all praise belongs to Allah the Lord of the Worlds).

There comes in life many happy occasions but some of them are so intense it becomes very hard for a materialistic being to grasp the reality of those Heavenly favours; from among these blessings is marriage. Marriage is a dream for many of us. This celebration is a source of immense happiness for not only the person getting married but for the family as well. The intensity of the happiness of the bride and groom can only be matched by their respective parents who want nothing but the happiness of both worlds to be placed at the feet of their children.

What you are about to read is the result of the effort of Hujjatul Islam Maulana Ali Abbas the son of my great teacher the late Ayatullah Roshan Ali Khan (Nawwarallaho Marqadahush Sharif); a unique invitation at the time of his sister's wedding which has been translated and modified and presented to all of you at the time of my daughter's wedding.

The foundation of Islam is based on the Unity of and the Monotheism of Almighty Allah (s.w.t). Monotheism means that Almighty Allah (s.w.t) is Unique in His attributes and Unparallel in His actions. He is the One who has created everything. The process of the creation has been mentioned in His enlightening Book - the Holy Qur'an - when the reality of this materialistic world has been introduced by discussing the creation of pairs: *And of everything We have created pairs that you may be mindful.* (51:49)

One question that arises in our mind is how is it possible that the Almighty's Oneness is represented by His creation of pairs? Imam Rida (a.s) has resolved this mystery for us by saying:

"The Almighty has created intelligence but Himself never been given it, He has created the substance but Himself not a substance, He made his creation antagonistic and manifested Himself by not having an antagonist and He has made every being with a partner while He has no partner. He has created and made them dissimilar to each other such as: light and dark, dry and wet, hard and soft and cold and warm; He is the one Who created love and affection amongst the differing existences; He separated the things which were similar and by doing so proved that a Being exists that not only separates but also One who placed affection between the separated entities and placed love in each other." (al-Mizan Vol. 18, Pg: 576)

Men and women are among those contradictory elements. While possessing differing essentials, they are one. Man is not similar to a woman, likewise a woman does not possess the qualities of a man but their existences unite under the banner of humanity.

The Almighty has created similarly distinct beings within the human race and in order to bring these beings closer He has constructed the institution of marriage. Marriage is a sacred entity in which man and woman become one. Hand in hand they seek the path of internal completion and perfection on which the pleasure of the Almighty is

manifested.

In this small booklet - which is also an invitation - the topic of marriage has been covered for the benefit of all Muslimeen and exclusively for the followers of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s).

Syed Mohammed Zaki Baqri
March 2012 - Rabiul Thani 1433
Toronto, Canada

DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE

Marriage is a social and religious norm. It brings two people together on the path of life by becoming a single unit bound by the ups and downs of this world while fulfilling their physiological needs.

IMPORTANCE OF MARRIAGE

Man is innately driven to seek love, peace and tranquility. He struggles hard to attain these realities. Without love and peace he feels life is incomplete; likewise he never wants to stay alone in life. This loneliness in his early life is fulfilled by his parents; after which this natural demand evolves and is fulfilled with the advent of various friends and relatives. During adolescence, feelings of love and compassion grow within him as he seeks a life partner. It is at this very critical stage in his life that the institution of marriage becomes relevant.

Marriage is the purest path with which human beings experience love and peace. Thus the Almighty, the All-Wise, in order to fulfill this natural need of his creatures, created pairs and made them seek out each other in order to achieve peace and tranquility. He also placed love and mercy between them as a sign for the people of wisdom to ponder on. In the Holy Quran this phenomenon has been expressed in these words:

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 created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest in them, and He put between you love and compassion; most surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect.’ (30:21).

Other than this, there are many places in the Holy Quran where the Almighty God has encouraged and commanded His servants to start a family by way of marriage. He says:

وَأَتَّخِذُوا الْإِثْمَانَ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَانِكُمْ إِنْ يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

‘And marry those among you who are single and those who are fit among your male slaves and your female slaves; if they are needy, Allah will make them free from want out of His grace; and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.’ (24:32)

Marriage is so beloved in the eyes of the Holy Prophet (saw) that he mentions in a famous tradition: *‘Marriage is one of my traditions whoever abandons it is not amongst me (amongst his followers).’*

Another tradition of the Prophet (saw) will help us understand the significance of marriage, he says:

المتزوج النائم افضل عند الله من الصائم القائم العزب

‘The sleep of a married person is better in the eyes of Allah than if a bachelor spends the whole day fasting and the whole night until morning praying.’ (Jame`al-Akhbar: Pg: 101)

All human beings, be them Muslim or non Muslim, have given importance to the subject of marriage. This is not only a natural demand within the human soul but is also beloved in the eyes of God, hence we Muslims give more significance to it. Besides the traditions mentioned above, there are numerous sayings of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s) that teach us the sheer importance of this

subject.

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF MARRIAGE

To get married and start a family is one of the best practices of the human race. It is a practice on which the foundation of human nature and intrinsic disposition lie. Throughout human history it has been a valuable and sacred custom and seen as an admired norm. Marriage is one of the most important essential needs of man and denying this need would be considered going against these accepted norms. The benefits of this great institution will be manifested within the couple, provided the appropriate criteria were used to form this bond. The following are a few benefits that have been mentioned:

PROTECTION OF CHASTITY AND MODESTY

Sexual desire is the most intense desire within the human being. Through the institution of marriage this desire can be fulfilled thus protecting man from indulging in sin. This could be one of the reasons why our beloved Prophet (saw) said: *“Whoever gets married protects half of their religion and whoever wants to meet their Lord with wholesomeness and purity should get married.”* Some of the youth today wait for the right time and the right proposal to get married so that they can protect themselves from deviating from the path of chastity. At this time and age when social media, Internet and satellite dishes are so common, protecting the self and moving away from the path of purity and dignity has become more and more difficult. For this reason, now more so than ever, it is highly recommended to get married at the appropriate age.

PERFECTION AND PROGRESS

When mans religious, moral, social, economical, spiritual and sacred needs are fulfilled its obvious one will begin to tread the path of perfection and growth and begin their journey towards excellence. Generally speaking, the success of a man cannot be obtained without the support of a woman. Women seek opportunities to enhance men so that they become prosperous in their lives. Equally, in order for the woman to enhance her own self, she in turn enhances and attempts to perfect her husband. Once the basic and important needs have been fulfilled, human beings can find peace and tranquility in their life and one can perform their Islamic obligations better. Consequently, it has been narrated that a bachelors seventy Rakât Salat (prayer) is equal to One Rakât of a married person.

OFFSPRING

The very important topic which is usually discussed in the subject of marriage is children. The blessed fruit of the union of marriage is having children; hence it is the most important aspect of married life. Children are the bases for the family’s enjoyment, love and zeal towards life. In the Islamic view, pure and pious children are a source of Heavenly rewards for their parents. Our beloved Prophet (saw) says: *‘Get married and have children and multiply them I will feel proud of your number on the Day of Judgment in comparison with other communities.’* (Safina al-Bihar: Vol. 1 pg: 561)

ASSISTANCE IN OBEYING GOD AND A SOURCE OF GAINING DIVINE REWARDS

In the Islamic view, marriage is a divine, pure and invaluable act. If it is done with the intention of gaining proximity to Allah (swt) it becomes an act of worship and thus a source of reward for the Hereafter. A man who marries a faithful woman (Molina) has married someone who could become the best helper in obeying his Lord; hence a believing spouse is the best gift of God which helps one in both worlds. The respectable companion of the Prophet (saw) Abudhar Ghaffari asked the Prophet (saw): *“Is it possible that when we become closer to our spouse and enjoy each other that that closeness converts into a source of reward in the Hereafter?”* The Beloved Prophet (saw) replied by asking him a question: *“If this act has been done against the rule of Sharià isn’t it a sinful act?”* He replied: *“Yes we will be sinful.”* then the Beloved Prophet (saw) said: *‘If it is done in accordance with the Sharià it will be a source of reward.’*

INDEPENDANCE

Before getting married a young boy or girl are usually seen as dependents of their parents and relatives. They could be dependent upon their parents and so naturally they would like to see themselves as free and independent. Marriage makes the couple free from their dependency and they now have the liberty to earn and spend in accordance with their wishes. After getting married, they form an independent unit which establishes the nucleus of the family. They now have the ability to fulfill their needs and act upon their own will and wish.

COMPLETION OF LOVE, COMPANIONSHIP AND TRANQUILITY

One of man's natural needs is to find a loving, caring and peaceful companion. It is hard and painful for a human being to live alone. A human being needs a companion who is loyal, selfless, caring, kind and loving. A companion with whom one can share their feelings with at the same time be a source of comfort, enjoyment and tranquility. For this reason, man is in constant need of a soul mate and a sincere friend with who he can forgo his love and expect the same in return.

There is no doubt in the fact that a friend cannot relinquish their entire self for another friend. The best person who could be the closest partner for anyone is the spouse. In the case of the friend there are limitations in the relationship whereas in the case of the spouse the boundaries are endless. Their ambitions and goals are the same and they can both strive in achieving these goals with love and compassion.

Peace and tranquility can only be achieved through the institution of marriage not through other means. The Almighty God makes this institution as one of His greatest signs:

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 created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest in them, and He put between you love and compassion; most surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect.' (30:21)

Imam Rida (a.s) has been reported as saying:

ما افاد عبد فائدة خيرا من زوجة صالحة اذا رآها سرته واذا غاب عنها حفظته في نفسها وماله

'There is no remunerations for a servant of God other than the virtuous companion, when he sees her he is pleased and when he is away from her she protects herself and his possessions.' (Wasaail al-Shià: Kitab al-Nikah chapter:2 Hadith:5)

FULFILLMENT OF BIOLOGICAL DESIRES

The Almighty God has placed biological desires inside the instinct of the human. This need cannot be fulfilled without marriage. However, it is a limited desire which tends to weaken and fade after a while. Those who get married only to fulfill their sexual desires will face problems.

In some instances marital problems are caused due to the inability of attaining sexual satisfaction. When this desire is not satisfied it could lead to immoral behavior. If a man is satisfied he will never deviate from the right path rather he will be more focused on the path of Islam.

MODERATION AND PEACE

Today's Ulama say that if man's biological desires are not fulfilled at the right time, it could lead to many physical and emotional diseases such as depression, sadness, despair, anger, seclusion, loneliness and in some cases it may lead to a stomach ulcer. The right way to fulfill sexual desire is through marriage. There are other un-Islamic and unethical ways of satisfying this desire which has produced severe consequences in society which we have all been witness to in this so called modern era. Therefore, anyone who wishes to protect themselves and society should get married soon.

APPROPRIATE AGE OF MARRIAGE

In Islam, the appropriate time for one to get married has been fixed. Within the laws of Islam (Sharia), once a youth reaches the

age of physical maturity (Buloogh) they can get married. However, it is better that they take this important step in their life when they reach some level of both mental and financial maturity as well. Delaying marriage can bring severe consequences in society and it could have mental and emotional affects on the youth.

At the time of maturity there is an intense sexual desire that exists which may act as a distraction for a young individual while they are pursuing their educational career. These powerful feelings may also lead to severe consequences in society. In order to solve this problem, “modern society” has created a free for all sexual society, where as long as one is not married they can be with as many partners as they want. Islam teaches man to safeguard their chastity and dignity and never allow any unlawful sexual interaction to take place at any age. Islam’s solution to this problem is the encouragement of early marriages. Islam teaches its followers their behaviour not only affects their morals but will also have a negative effect in their worldly life as well as their life after death.

The Holy Quran guides us by saying:

وَأَتَّخِذُوا الْإِيْلَهُ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَانِكُمْ إِنْ يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُعْطِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

‘And marry those among you who are single and those who are fit among your male slaves and your female slaves; if they are needy, Allah will make them free from want out of His grace; and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.’ (24:32)

It is clear that this verse is a guide for the parents to get their children married early in order to form a pious and pure society.

SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF ILLICIT RELATIONSHIPS

We learn from history that Islamic marriages were very easy back in the day. Usually in my speeches I say: ‘marriage is a need not a luxury’. The solution to today’s modern society is Islam. If we sincerely follow this path, no youth will remain single at the time that they should be married.

BEFORE CHOOSING A SPOUSE

Marriage is a very important decision which may lead to bigger tests and turbulences. Thus, this blessed happy occasion should begin with the name of the Merciful Lord while seeking His help and assistance in leading a happy life.

Imam Sadiq (a.s) asked his companion: “*Abu Baseer, before you start looking for a potential spouse what do you do?*” Abu Baseer replied: “*I don’t know*” then the Imam (a.s) said “*Whoever wants to get married, both the potential groom and bride should offer two Rakât Salat and then recite the following supplication:*

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَنْزُوجَ اللَّهُمَّ فَتَدْرُ لِي مِنَ النِّسَاءِ أَحْسَنَهُنَّ خُلُقًا وَ خَلْقًا وَ أَعْقَبَهُنَّ فَرْجًا وَ أَحْفَظَهُنَّ لِي فِي نَفْسِيهَا وَ مَالِي وَ أَوْسَعَهُنَّ رِزْقًا وَ أَعْظَمَهُنَّ بَرَكَةً وَ أَقْضِ لِي مِنْهَا
وَلَدًا طَيِّبًا تَجْعَلُهُ لِي خَلْفًا صَالِحًا فِي حَيَاتِي وَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِي

“O Allah I would like to get married! O Allah make plans for me to get married to the best spouse among the women who is physically and morally beautiful and has achieved greatness in chastity; she should be faithful to me and my wealth, blessed with sustenance and an abundant amount of provisions, she could give birth to pious and healthy children who could be my heirs in this life and after my death.”

Likewise, if a sister would like to get married she should offer two Rakât Salat and then recite the same dua replacing the female pronoun with the male one.

CRITERIA OF CHOOSING A SPOUSE

Companionship and partnership is an essential need for progress and prosperity. This matter is so important that one has to take very serious measures in order to find such a person who could be helpful in advancing their needs of both worlds. Without proper contemplation, one should never rush to marry anyone who appears beautiful and attractive. Peace and tranquility will only be attained through a partner in life who provides the best care and love. Therefore, there has to be criteria with which one can choose a life partner. Imam Sadiq (a.s) says:

قال الامام الصادق عليه السلام: انما المرأة قلادة فانظر ما تتقلد

“A woman is like a necklace; be careful of what you are about to put around your neck.”

One of the more essential criteria that Islam has mentioned is the criteria of compatibility. Compatibility can be divided into two sections: Religious compatibility (shari) and Social compatibility (urfī).

Religious (shari) compatibility

Faith: Islam has mentioned faith to be the first and primary priority in choosing a spouse. One should get married with a person who shares the same ideology so that they can easily adjust when they share their new life. A believer should never get married to a non believer which may lead to many complications in life. The Holy Quran in this regard guides us:

وَلَا تُنكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكَةَ حَتَّىٰ تُؤْمِنَ ۚ وَلَا تُنكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنُوا ۚ وَالْعَبْدُ مُؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكُمْ ۗ أَلَيْسَ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَدٌّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى النَّارِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَالْمَغْفَرَةِ بِإِذْنِهِ ۗ وَيُبَيِّنُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

“And do not marry the idolatresses until they believe, and certainly a believing maid is better than an idolatress woman, even though she should please you; and do not give (believing women) in marriage to idolaters until they believe, and certainly a believing servant is better than an idolater, even though he should please you; these invite to the fire, and Allah invites to the garden and to forgiveness by His will, and makes clear His communications to men, that they may be mindful.” (2:221)

Further we read in the Holy Quran:

الْحَبِيبَاتُ لِلْخَبِيثِينَ وَالْخَبِيثُونَ لِلْخَبِيثَاتِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتُ لِلطَّيِّبِينَ وَالطَّيِّبُونَ لِلطَّيِّبَاتِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ مُبَرَّءُونَ مِمَّا يَقُولُونَ ۗ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ

“Bad women are for bad men and bad men are for bad women. Good women are for good men and good men are for good women. (24:26)

Prophet of Allah (saw) has said:

«قال رسول الله: «المومن كفوا للمومنه و المسلم كفوا للمسلمه

“A believing man is compatible for a believing woman; likewise a Muslim man is compatible for a Muslim woman.”

Imam Sadiq (as) has been reported as saying the following three traditions:

«الامام الصادق (ع): لو لا ان اميرالمومنين (ع) تزوج فاطمه (ع) لما كان لها كفوا الى يوم القيامة

Imam Sadiq (a.s) said: *“If Amirul Mo`mineen wouldn't have married Bibi Fatima (a.s) she would never have found a compatible life partner until the Day of Judgement.”*

«قال امام صادق (ع) «المومنون بعضهم اكفاء بعض»

Imam Sadiq (a.s) said: *“Some of the believers are compatible for other believers.”*

قال الامام الصادق عليه السلام: إذا تزوج الرجل المرأة لجمالها أو جمالها لم يرزق ذلك ، فإن تزوجها لدينها رزقه الله عزاً وجلّ جمالها ومالها (من لا يحضره الفقيه 3 : 393.)

“If a man marries a woman because of her wealth or her beauty he will never gain either one however if he marries her because she is a believer, the Almighty God will grant him the beauty of his wife as well the wealth.”

(The same could also hold true if a woman marries for wealth.)

COMPATIBILITY ACCORDING TO THE NORMS OF SOCIETY (‘URF)

Religion

A religious person should look for a person who is equally committed to religious values. If a youth, male or female, is not committed to their religion and marries a religious person, they might influence their spouse to do what is religiously wrong causing difficulty in the marriage.

Good Morals

Human being is known by his or her good morals and ethics. Those who live together as husband and wife must reflect those good traits on to each other.

Imam Rida (a.s) says:

قال الرضا (ع): لا تزوجه ان كان سيء الخلق
(وسائل الشيعة. كتاب نكاح: باب 30 حديث: 1)

“Don’t get married to a man if his morals are not good.”

Likewise our beloved Prophet (saw) said:

قال النبي (ص): إذا جاءكم من ترضون خلقه و دينه فزوجه
(وسائل الشيعة. كتاب نكاح: باب 28 حديث: 1)

“f a man comes to seek the hand of your daughter whose good morals and religious commitment pleases you then you should marry your daughter.”

In one of his traditions it has been narrated that he said:

من زوج كريمته من فاسق نزل عليه كل يوم لعنة
(مستدرک الوسائل: ج 5 ص: 278 ح: 5852)

“The Curse of God descends on a person who gives their daughters in the hands of a vulgar (person).”

Along the same theme, Imam Sadiq (a.s) said:

الکفو أن يكون عفيفا و عنده يسار
(وسائل الشيعة. كتاب نكاح: باب 28 حديث: 4)

“A compatible partner is the one who is virtuous and who can be cared for easily.”

Family background

In regards to compatibility within the family, the Prophet of Allah (saw) said:

تزوجوا في الحجر الصالح فإن العرق دساس
(مكارم الأخلاق: ص: 197)

“Get married in a virtuous family for the effects of the genes are severing”

Within the studies of Genetics it has been proven that genes affect the behaviour of the offspring. In one of his (saw) traditions we read:

أنظر أين تضع نفسك من تشركه في مالك و تطلعه علي دينك و شرك
(وسائل الشيعة. كتاب نكاح: باب 6 حديث: 1)

‘Be careful where and in what situation you are placing yourself! To whom you are making partners in your wealth? To whom you are making known the secrets of your religion? To whom you are making known your personal secrets? To whom you are gaining closeness to with trust?’

Age of the couple

Age also plays a considerable role in the success of a marriage. It is advisable to be closer to each other in regards to age. Past experience points to the fact that an age gap of 5 to 8 years is acceptable. One of the philosophies of the fact that in Islam the age

of maturity for girls is earlier than boys is because girls mature faster than boys thus it is important to adhere to an age gap that is appropriate between the husband and the wife. (Bulooghe Shariè (maturity according to Islamic Canon Law) is 9 for girls and 13 to 15 for boys).

Education

A husband and wife should be compatible in their education and understanding. If the mental wave lengths between the two are the same, it becomes easier to move towards the right direction in life. An educated couple also find it easier to raise children. Many marriages fail due to a lack of education. The couple may appear on the outside that they are on the same page but the reality is that they both live different lives, which is not healthy for a successful family.

Beauty and attractiveness

Although it may not be an appropriate criterion to choose a spouse with, it does play a role in the selection process. Beauty is relative, not absolute as the expression goes: Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder.

The youth of today should look into these factors when seeking a life partner. They should avoid making hasty decisions which may lead to disturbance in their family life. Consultation is the best way for making life easy and successful. In today's era, many have used the process of consultation to develop flourishing businesses for themselves. In this regard, consulting with those who are well versed in the field is important. In Islamic traditions there are numerous mentions of this subject. Unfortunately in the case of marriage, the youth of today rush their decisions and do not seek consultation from the most valuable treasure in their homes namely their parents who have seen the world and gone through the ups and downs of life. Our parents are one of the best avenues we have to seek guidance from in this regard. Thus, the youth of today should never move forward in the area of marriage without the consultation of their respected parents. Victory and success of both the worlds can be obtained by following the guidance of our parents.

Advice:

At this moment I would like to advise the young males – my precious sons - of the community to please avoid falling in love if you can't honour your commitment to the girl or to the religion. In many cases, which I have personally seen all over the world, boys get attached to the girls while they do not even mention their intentions to their parents and when it comes time to proceed with wedding plans there are domestic problems between the parents and the boy.

Likewise to my daughters in the community - Please do not allow yourself to fall in love with someone who is not willing or does not have the courage to speak up and defend you when the time is right. I fear that you may regret falling in love with someone who lacks the courage and strength needed in a man.

Parents: Islam has given the absolute right of marriage to your children. You can guide them and advise them to choose a life partner who is a believing Muslim and a follower of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s).

COMMUNICATION BEFORE GETTING MARRIED

When we thoroughly investigate Islam, it becomes obvious that we as Muslims are either unaware of Islamic traditions and values or have imprisoned ourselves within our cultural norms. It has been narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s) that a man asked:

عن ابي عبد الله عليه السلام قال: قلت له: اينظر الرجل الى المرأة يريد تزويجها فينظر الى شعرها و محاسنها؟ قال: لا باس بذلك اذا لم يكن متلذذا

((وسائل ج3/ص 12، تهذيب ج7/ص 435))

“Can a man see a woman's face and her hair to whom he would like to marry? Imam (a.s) replied: `As long as there is no lust involved in seeing her, there is no problem.”

Customs and traditions in our weddings

Islam is a practical and contemporary religion which caters to all aspects of human life. It guides its followers as the Holy Quran explicitly states:

مَّا فَرَّطْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ

“We have not neglected anything in the Book,” (6:38).

Most of the customs we see in our weddings today correspond to the culture that we belong to. In reality, Islam has guided us in regard to these customs (as discussed below):

Nikah (marriage oaths)

In Islam the recitation of the Nikah (marriage oaths) is the method in which two people become close to each other and form a family and is considered one of the obligatory pillars in accordance to the Islamic Canon law. Without this, the relationship of two people becomes illicit and they become Haram for each other (prohibited).

Mehr (dowries-marriage gift)

وَأْتُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدُقَاتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً فَإِنْ طِبْنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِنْهُ نَفْسًا فَكُلُوهُ هَنِيئًا مَرِيئًا

‘And give women their dowries as a free gift, but if they of themselves be pleased to give up to you a portion of it, then eat it with enjoyment and with wholesome result.’ (The Holy Quran 4:4)

Mehr is one of the components of an Islamic marriage. It has been encouraged that the Mehr be gifted before the consummation of the marriage. The right of the wife is that she can request whatever she desires. Islam has encouraged the practice of keeping the Mehr light and in accordance with the financial ability of the groom. It is highly recommended that the bride overlook and forgive the Mehr.

Walima (Reception)

It is important that during joyful occasions one share those moments with family and friends. One such occasion is marriage in which hosting ones loved ones is highly recommended. Islam is a practical religion which instructs its followers to adapt an easy and simplistic lifestyle. Adapting a simple lifestyle makes life easy which is a basic Islamic teaching. One should never have a reception to compete with others or to present themselves as someone that they are not rather it should be done with simple elegance intending to be an example for the rest of the community to follow.

According to the Holy Prophet (saw) there are a few important occasions where having a Walima is recommended:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و آله : لا وليمة الا فى خمس فى عرس او خرس او عذار او وكار او ركاز فاما العرس فالتزويج، و الخرس النفاس بالولد و العذار الختان و الوكار الرجل يشتري الدار و الركاز الذى يقدم من مكة

(بحار الانوار / ج 384 / 96)

“The Prophet of Allah (saw) said: There are five feasts in Islam: At the time of marriage, at the birth of a child, Sunnate Ibrahim (a.s) (meaning the circumcision of a baby boy), buying a house and after performing Hajj.”

Jahez - Parents gifts to children

One of the ways that parents show love and affection to their children is by showering them with wedding gifts (jahiz). The lifestyle of our beloved Prophet (saw) is the best example to be followed as the Holy Quran states:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

‘Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the latter day and remembers Allah much.’ (33:21)

If we examine the wedding of the only daughter of the Prophet (saw), Bibi Fatima (a.s), we will see that he gifted her very few but essential necessities to start her new life with. They included: a shirt, a shawl, a veil, a mattress, pillows, curtains, a straw

mat, a bed, a mashk (water sac), a bowl, a bucket, a pitcher, a grinder, a copper tub, a green jar and ceramic vases.

Islam preaches moderation and the leaders of Islam have adopted a moderate lifestyle. When the middle path is ignored one will easily stray towards extremism. In India, we see many girls who have been burnt to death by their in laws because they never brought any gifts (jahiz) with them from their parents when they entered their husband's home. In certain extreme cases, many brides set themselves on fire due to the pressure placed on them or simply to relieve themselves from a shameful and stress filled life. The path of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s) is the ultimate salvation for every era and nation.

Other customs

At the time of happiness there is a tendency to ignore the laws of Islam and follow the local norm. In some parts of the world weddings are so luxurious that it has become financially difficult for a simple moderate family to get their children married. In Islam, marriage is a need and needs should never be difficult to grant.

Mixed gatherings are becoming more common in our society whereas Islam prohibits the mingling of Na Mahrams. Some people believe without music weddings are dry and boring. It should be said that if we truly wish to have heavenly blessings showered on the young couple, we should make every attempt to plan our weddings according to the teachings of Islam as taught to us by the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s).

Zafaf (Consummation of marriage)

The moment when two complete strangers get married and come together to start a family, is special. For such moments some wait years and at this exciting moment in their marriage, Islam provides guidelines and recommendations. Initially, one should enter the bedroom in the state of Wudhu and with praises of Allah on their tongue.

Prophet Mohammad (saw) said to Imam Ali (a.s): *“O Ali when you bring your bride home take her shoes off and ask her to sit and then wash her feet. With that water, sprinkle the four corners of your home. If you do this poverty will avoid you, the blessings of Allah will descend, His Mercy will be showered on the bride and you will be secured from mental ailments and leprosy.”* (Makarim al-Akhlaq: pg: 239)

Imam Baqir (a) said: *“Once you bring the bride home ask her to perform Wudhu and you yourself do the same and then offer two rak'at Salaat and then recite this Du'a. and ask the women present to respond to the dua by saying Amin:*

اللهم ارزقني ألفها وودها وارضني بها واجمع بيننا بأحسن اجتماع و انس ايتلاف نحب الحلال و نكره الحرام

“O Allah bestow me her love and understanding and make me pleased with her, make this union of ours the best of the unions. Allow us to be the best of companions and grant us the desire and passion to like what is allowed (Halal) and dislike what is prohibited (Haram).”

After this say:

اللهم ارزقني ولدا واجعله تقيا زكيا ليس في خلقه زيادة و لا نقصان واجعل عاقبته إلي الخير

(مكارم الأخلاق: ص 239)

“O Allah! Grant me a child and make that child pious and virtuous. Complete his creation neither less nor more and make his destiny the best.”

How parents should change once their children are married

After the wedding of their son or daughter the parents have feelings of delight after all these are the same children who are the pride and joy of both the parents involved. However, it is important for the parents to understand how they should change after their child gets married. The parents of the groom should understand that now that their son is married he will be spending time with his wife. This is an obvious fact and one that the parents themselves experienced when they got married. The parents of the groom should accept the fact that their son will always be their son and that no one can take him away from them. They should

always encourage him to be happy and have fun rather than feel threatened by the fact that there is someone new in his life. They should welcome their daughter in law with open arms and make her feel at home. The bride is the one who has to go through the biggest adjustment as she is the one who has to leave her parents, siblings, relatives and friends. She deserves more love and care so that she can concentrate on her duties towards her husband and his family. The groom has a responsibility to love and support his bride so that it becomes easy for her to adjust to her new family.

The parents of the bride should understand that their daughter is in safe hands and that she is going to make a home for herself and that she will be part of her husband's family. They should avoid interfering in the day to day life of their daughter. They should always advise their daughter to be a loving and respectful wife and daughter in law. They should never allow their daughter to complain about her in laws unless the complaints are so severe that they need to be addressed. They should always encourage her to have perseverance in dealing with the affairs of this world and remind her that the real goal of life is reaching ultimate perfection.

It has been narrated that once the family of Ameerul Momineen (as) and Bibi Fatima (sa) began to grow, the work load in the house became heavy for Bibi Fatima (sa). Imam Ali (as) could see the burden this was causing Bibi Fatima (sa) and so he asked her why don't you ask your father to provide some relief for you. When she went to go see her father about this issue, he lovingly replied by saying: *'I will gift you something which will free you from the need of any assistance in this world and the next'*. When she inquired about the gift, he said: *'After finishing Salaat, recite 34 times Allahu Akbar, 33 times Alhamdulillah, 33 times Subhanallah'*. Countless virtues of this Tasbeeh have been mentioned by the Ahlul Bayt (a.s) which cannot be covered in this booklet.

When we ponder upon the above, we see the philosophy here extends beyond some minuscule need of the daughter of the Holy Prophet (saw). She requested for some assistance and was granted something completely different than what we had in mind as the readers of this narration. Let us not forget, that this house is the house of the Ahlul Bayt (as). They are guides for all of humanity. The philosophy here is very clear that all our problems are fed by our constant desire for material needs. One has to be content with what they have in life so that they may be able to enjoy and focus on those eternal spiritual values.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF HUSBAND AND WIFE

These can be divided into two types:

1. Common rights and responsibilities
2. Individual rights and responsibilities

1. Common rights and responsibilities

Understanding the likes and dislikes of each other

If two people have decided to start a family they now have a responsibility to uphold the promise that they made to each other. In the first two years, both the husband and wife must be cautious of their behaviour with each other. In the beginning of this booklet, I mentioned a verse of the Holy Quran: (30:21) which guides us towards the fact that two main components exist in marriage - love and mercy. They should both adhere to fulfilling their bodily, emotional, worldly and Heavenly needs.

This can be easily understood with the help of the praiseworthy saying of the Holy Prophet (saw):

تحب لغيرك ما تحب لنفسك

"Like for others what you like for yourself."

Respecting each other

Love and respect cannot be demanded but rather earned. I always say that we are not infallible (Masoom) we are prone to mistakes and if anyone wants to appreciate the other they should make an effort to see the positives in that person not the

negatives. By treating each other's families like they are your own family you will be showered with blessings - Inshallah.

Loving each other

To love and to be loved is one of the basic motivating factors in life for any human being. In reality, true love is the love for Allah as the Holy Quran says:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“Say: If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your faults, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.” (3:31)

Love is the nucleus of life. Between a husband and his wife, love is a key element for marital success and at times preserving that love for each other can be a challenge.

A husband should always express his love towards his wife as our beloved Prophet (saw) says:

قول الرجل للمرأة انى احبك لا يذهب من قلبها ابدا

(وسائل الشيعه. نكاح: باب 28 حديث: 9)

“When a man says to his wife “I love you!” It never leaves her heart.”

Expressing love to each other verbally has positive effects on the marriage. One has to learn to verbalize their emotions to their spouse in order that the family grows together on the basis of adornment and affection.

Good manners

Islam has given a great deal of importance to good morals and manners. When it comes to the Holy Prophet's (saw) morals and ethics, we see that Allah (swt) Himself has acknowledged these attributes in the Holy Quran by stating:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

“And most surely you conform (yourself) to sublime morality.” (68:4)

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ

“Take to forgiveness and enjoin good and turn aside from the ignorant.” (7:199)

The Prophet (saw) himself has openly declared that he has been sent by Allah (swt) for the completion of morality:

بعثت لاتمم مكارم الاخلاق

(مكارم الاخلاق: ص 8)

Honesty and truthfulness

Islam always gives importance to this subject as our beloved Prophet (saw) started his mission with honesty and truthfulness. Those who rejected him as a Prophet (saw) were forced to accept him as an honest and truthful person.

In married life, honesty and truthfulness play effective roles towards the success of the marriage thus both the husband and wife should be honest and truthful to each other.

One of the traditions of the Masumeen (a.s) says:

اذا حدث الرجل بحديث ثم التفت فهو امانة

“If a person while talking looks around to make sure no one is listening whatever is said must be treated as an amanat (trust) for the listener”

Consultation

In this day and age the importance of consultation can be understood by the simple fact that in today's universities they have

opened a faculty under the name of consultation. In each and every field there are professionals who are ready to render their expertise in their respective fields.

The Holy Quran, 1400 years ago, directs us in this regard by saying:

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُقْفُونَ

“And those who respond to their Lord and keep up prayer, and their rule is to take counsel among themselves, and who spend out of what We have given them.” (42:38)

A married couple should learn to consult each other in their family matters. This will increase the level of trust between the spouses which results in a healthy family.

The Holy Quran has advised the parents, specifically the mother, when it comes to raising an infant child:

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُبَيِّمَ الرِّضَاعَةَ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَا تُضَارَّ وَالِدَةٌ بَوْلِدِهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ يَوْلِدُهَا وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ تُسْرِضِعُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَا اتَّيَمُّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَقْوُوا اللَّهَ وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

“Mothers shall suckle their children for two whole years; (that is) for those who wish to complete the suckling. The duty of feeding and clothing nursing mothers in a seemly manner is upon the father of the child. No-one should be charged beyond his capacity. A mother should not be made to suffer because of her child, nor should he to whom the child is born (be made to suffer) because of his child. And on the (father's) heir is incumbent the like of that (which was incumbent on the father). If they desire to wean the child by mutual consent and (after) consultation, it is no sin for them; and if ye wish to give your children out to nurse, it is no sin for you, provide that ye pay what is due from you in kindness. Observe your duty to Allah, and know that Allah is Seer of what ye do.” (2:233)

This subject requires further discussion which lies outside the scope of this booklet.

Appreciation

Being grateful to your spouse always makes life easier. When you have a spouse who is grateful it makes the difficulties that accompany married life bearable. Islam again has advised us in this regard:

لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لأزِيدَنَّكُمْ

“If you are grateful, I will certainly give you more.” (14:7)

هَلْ جَزَاءُ الْإِحْسَانِ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَانُ

“Is the reward of goodness anything but goodness?” (55:60)

One of the traditions of the Holy Prophet (saw) states:

من لم يشكر الخالق لم يشكر الخالق

“One who does not thank the creations has never thanked the Creator.”

Therefore, it is important for a husband and wife to be grateful to each other and express their gratitude towards one and another in which case their sustenance will be increased.

Fulfilling promises

One of the signs of a believer according to the Holy Quran is the fulfilment of promises:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ

“And those who are keepers of their trusts and their covenant...” (23:8)

Family's Privacy

We all have our own personal secrets which we don't wish to disclose to others. Likewise a family also has their own secrets which they don't want anyone to be aware of. Respecting the privacy of the spouse is important and should never be compromised unless of course the spouse grants permission to do so.

Imam Sadiq (a.s) says:

سرك من دمك فلا يجرين من غير او دلجك

(تفسير نمونه ج : 9 ص : 319)

“Your secret is like your blood it should run in your vein.”

Assisting around the house

Many aspects of the lifestyle of the Ahlul Bayt (as) are unknown to us. This unawareness becomes dangerous when we search for role models to mirror our life after.

It has been narrated from Imam Sadiq (a) that:

عن الامام الصادق(ع): كان امير المؤمنين (ع) يحتطب و يسقي و يكنس و كانت فاطمة (س) تطحن و تعجن و تخبز

‘Ameerul Momineen (as) used to collect firewood, bring water and sweep the house; Fatima Zahra (s) used to grind wheat, make the dough and bake bread.’ (Al-Kaafi: vol. 5 pg. 86)

Caring and thoughtfulness

Man is known by his behaviour and how he is caring towards others. A couple should always be thoughtful to each other. They should help each other before the need arises. The best time sometimes to judge how thoughtful one is towards their spouse is at the time of need.

Cleanliness and being presentable for each other

Islam has given great importance to the subject of cleanliness. The Holy Quran directs us by saying:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُطَهَّرِينَ

“Indeed Allah loves the penitent and He loves those who keep clean.” (2:222)

Not only should the body be clean but also the soul. Our beloved Holy Prophet (saw) says:

«قال النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم: «التطافة من الايمان

(مستدرک الوسائل: جلد 16، صفحہ 319، حديث 20016)

“Cleanliness is the part of faith.”

A modest home can be heaven when clean and tidy and a large castle can be miserable when dirty. There are numerous traditions that we have from the Ahlul Bayt (as) that talk about the importance of the clothing of a Muslim being clean and pure while they are praying.

It is important for a Muslim to be presentable when he or she goes out to meet others; likewise it is essential to be presentable at home for each other as well.

Being sensitive towards the biological needs of each other

It is a well known fact that all living species procreate through sexual relations. Islam has given us clear guidelines in this aspect as well. The Holy Quran considers a husband and a wife as clothing for each other, it says:

هُنَّ لِيَاسٍ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِيَاسٍ لِهِنَّ

“...they are your garments and you are their garments.” (2:187)

Knowing each other's likes and dislikes and being sensitive in fulfilling these desires helps in the establishment of a healthy relationship and a beautiful family.

Contentment

This is a vast and deep topic in Islam. Complete comprehension of this subject is outside the scope of this booklet. For basic guidance I will present two traditions: Imam Baqir (a.s) says:

الكمال كل الكمال: التقه في الدين و الصبر على النائبه و تقدير المعيشه
(تحف القول: 292)

“The perfection of perfection depends upon: Deep understanding of the Religion, Perseverance when it comes to the difficulties of life, Budgeting your provisions.”

The traditions` of the Ahlul Bayt (as) point to the fact that men should be generous in their spending. This helps in the increasing of sustenance; however one should be cautious to not deviate off the path of moderation. Our beloved Prophet (saw) says:

قال رسول الله (صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم): القناعة مال لا ينفد؛
كنز الاعمال، ح (7080)

“Contentment is a wealth which never perishes.”

In one of his traditions it has been narrated that:

قال رسول الله (صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم): أعظم النساء بركة أيسرهن مؤنة
(مستدرک الوسائل: ج: 14: ص: 162 ح 16384)

“The greatest woman in blessings is one who spends less.”

2. Individual rights - Rights of the wife

Nafaqah - Livelihood:

In accordance with Islamic Sharià, the responsibility of providing for the family is squarely on the shoulders of the husband. The Holy Quran considers men as the breadwinners of the family:

...الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ

Men are the (protector) 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; ...” (4:32)

In one other place the Holy Quran says:

وَعَايِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

“Live with them on a footing of kindness and equity.” (4:19)

The responsibility of the husband is not restricted to the wife only but rather extends to the children as well:

وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

“And their maintenance and their clothing must be-- borne by the father according to usage...” (2:233)

Suitable source of income

Islam has encouraged men to give importance to their family life and do all they can to create a simple and well balanced life for their family. Men should never stop progressing in all aspects of life. This has been indicated in one of the traditions:

الكاد على عياله كالمجاهد في سبيل الله

“One who struggles for his family is like a warrior who is fighting on the path of Allah (s.w.t).”

Bed sharing

Human beings' natural needs and desires should never be neglected. Loving, caring and being with your spouse creates a healthy family thus sexual needs should never be ignored. It is the duty of a husband to be intimate with his wife at least once every four months.

Elevating ones spirituality

It is a well known fact that we are in this world for a short period of time. We will then enter the world that awaits us and so it becomes apparent how important it is to be in a constant state of spiritual elevation. Reciting a few verses of the Quran with translation and learning about the various Islamic laws will enhance one's worldly life. In my humble opinion, since we live in the West, where sometimes it's not possible to attend the Masajids often, one act of worship that can be done in our homes is the establishment of Jama'at (Congregation) prayers for both Maghrabain and Fajr. Attending an Islamic event or program at least once a week strengthens ones religion and connection with the community.

Individual rights - Rights of Husband

Intimacy

The Ahlul Bayt (as) have expressed the subject of intimacy in various ways using various wordings. Our beloved Prophet Mohammad (saw) says:

من تزوج احرز نصف دينه فليتق الله في نصف الباقي

Whoever gets married protects half of their religion and the other half depends upon their piety.” (Wasail al-Shià: Book of Nikah first chapter: Hadith: No. 12)

The explanation of this tradition can be found in many books however no one person can claim to have done justice to this tradition. It is clear from the words of the Holy Prophet (saw) that biological factors within a human are so intense that if and when fulfilled lawfully this can help in the protection of at least half of one's religion. Many traditions point towards the fact that a woman should never refuse her husband unless for the following reasons:

1. During menstruation
2. While she is fasting in the month of Ramadhan
3. In the state of Ehram
4. When she is sick
5. During the last months of pregnancy if it harms the fetus
6. When she is tired
7. If the husband has not taken care of her livelihood (if Nafaqa is not paid)
8. At the time when she is distressed and worried

Respect

Although it feels a little uncomfortable to say this, the reality is that the wife should be led by her husband. This authority has been given by God and it should be respected. As the leader of the home, the husband should not abuse this position but rather be humble in such a way that the wife feels as though she is an equal partner with him

in the marriage.

She needs to have the permission of her husband for a number of things, including: leaving the home, giving charity from his money, communicating and speaking with others, optional acts of worships, etc. If an act is done by the wife that compromises her chastity and decency he has the full right and responsibility to direct her and lead her off this path.

Guarding his wealth and his secrets

This right itself shows that Islam gives full permission to the wife to take care of her husband's assets and therefore instructs her to guard his assets. Being a life partner, she should never disclose to anyone that which he asked to remain between them. It has been mentioned in the previous pages that the characteristics of an excellent woman according to the Holy Quran is:

..قَاتِنَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ

“...obedient, guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded; ...” (4:32)

She should never publicize or proclaim her husband's possessions to others without his permission. If she does so, he will be granted the reward she had earned on the Day of Judgment.

Guarding her chastity

It is incumbent upon a married couple to protect and safeguard their chastity from others much like one protects their land by building a fortress around it. Specifically, the wife has to safeguard herself from Na Mahram men when her husband is away. She has to be cautious to not be too free or comfortable with those who lack appropriate moral fibre. The Holy Quran commands the wives of the Prophet (saw) by saying:

يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا

“O wives of the Prophet! you are not like any other of the women; If you will be on your guard, then be not soft in (your) speech, lest he in whose heart is a disease yearn; and speak a good (clear) word.” (33:2)

Although this verse is addressing the wives of the Prophet (saw) it doesn't free our sisters from being cautious.

Raising children

Although it is the duty of both parents to care for and nurture their children, there is a greater role to be played by the mother based completely on her natural God given abilities. Of course, this will work if the wife is not employed but in the event that she is also working, both must take care of the physiological, religious and moral needs of their children.

Housework

It has been narrated from Imam Baqir (a.s) that: Imam Ali (a.s) and Bibi Fatima (a.s) came to the Prophet (saw) seeking advice regarding their duties at home. The Prophet (saw) divided the duties such that Fatima (a.s) would take care of the work inside the house and Ali (a.s) should be looking after the work that is outside of the house i.e, earning, livelihood, etc. Imam Baqir (a.s) said:

تَقَاضِي عَلِيٍّ وَفَاطِمَةَ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ فِي الْخِدْمَةِ، فَقَضَى عَلِيٌّ فَاطِمَةَ بِخِدْمَةِ مَادُونَ الْبَابِ، وَقَضَى عَلِيٌّ بِمَا خَلْفَهُ. قَالَ: فَقَالَتْ فَاطِمَةُ: فَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَا دَاخَلَنِي مِنَ السَّرُورِ إِلَى اللَّهِ بِإِكْفَانِي رَسُولَ اللَّهِ تَحْمَلُ رِقَابَ الرِّجَالِ (مستدرک الوسائل ج: 13 ص: 48)

“Bibi Fatima (a.s) was very happy after hearing this from her father and said: God knows how happy I am about this division of the Prophet (saw) of Allah's for now there is no need for me to mingle with men.”

Imam Sadiq (a.s) narrates from his Grandfather Prophet Mohammad (saw) that:

ایما امرأة دفعت من بيت زوجها شيئاً من موضع تريد به صلاحاً نظر الله اليها ومن نظر الله اليه لم يعذبه

“When a woman moves things from one place to the other in her husband's house with the intention to make it beautiful Allah will look at her with Mercy and promises never to put her in chastisement.”

Adornment

Islam encourages its followers to be clean and neat. It instructs them to look in a mirror before they leave their homes. Islam also asks that the husband and wife appear attractive to each other in their home. When it comes to the issue of makeup for women, Islam has asked the wives to be careful to not display their beauty to others:

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكَ لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ

“Say to the believing men that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts; that is purer for them; surely Allah is Aware of what they do.”

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلَا يَمْشِينَ فِي بَعْضِ مَا يَخْفَى مِنْهَا وَلَا يَأْتِينَ الْبَنَاءَ وَلَا الْوُجُوهَ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوْ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولِي الْإِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْهِ عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

“And say to the believing women that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts and do not display their ornaments except what appears thereof, and let them wear their head-coverings over their bosoms, and not display their ornaments except to their husbands or their fathers, or the fathers of their husbands, or their sons, or the sons of their husbands, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or those whom their right hands possess, or the male servants not having need (of women), or the children who have not attained knowledge of what is hidden of women; and let them not strike their feet so that what they hide of their ornaments may be known; and turn to Allah all of you, O believers! so that you may be successful. (24:30-31)

Our Beloved Prophet (saw) says:

(ان من خير نساءكم المتبرجة من زوجها الحصان عن غيره (بحار الانوار، ج 103، ص 235)

“The best of women amongst you are those who display their ornament to their husbands and they protected themselves from others.”

Imam Baqir (a.s) says:

النساء يحببن ان يرين الرجل في مثل ما يحب الرجل ان يرى فيه النساء من الزينة

(مكارم الاخلاق، ص 80)

“As men would like to see their wives be ornaments for them so that they could look beautiful likewise wives also would like their husbands to appear handsome for them.”

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN IDEAL FAMILY

Love

As has been discussed before, difficulties and worries are a part of life that affect everyone. If one has a loving family to lean on during these problems, it causes one to feel like they can overcome these hurdles on their path. In one of the traditions of the Prophet (saw) he says:

كلما ازداد العبد ايمانا ازداد حبا للنساء

(بحار الانوار، ج 103، ص 228)

“An increase in faith leads to an increase in love towards women.”

The effect of love has a significant impact on human behaviour. For this reason we sometimes see that each and every reality in this world goes back to the love one shares in their family.

Respecting the rights

It is vital to understand that each and every family member has their own rights and responsibilities. The successful and idealistic families are the ones who cater to these responsibilities. Islam has presented these rules and regulations for each family member. It has given very clear instructions to the husbands, wives, sons and daughters as to what their role is and what to expect from each other. The family that caters to the rights and responsibilities of each other becomes a happy, successful, and idealistic family in the eyes of Islam.

Trust

In a healthy family love and trust grows day by day between each family member. A blissful family is one who always thinks positive and never looks at the negative aspects of each other. Having favourable opinions of each other leads to love and trust in the family. The Holy Quran and various traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s) have encouraged families to communicate clearly with each other and to not say anything which may lead to heartbreak or ambiguity.

Expectations

Islam has preached to live a life based on reality not illusion. While there is nothing wrong with having high aspirations and expectations, one should not completely rely upon these. One has to see the needs and requirements of his or her spouse and provide accordingly. The best life partner is one who sees the limits of their partner and expects nothing more.

Communication

Communication is the backbone to any relationship and should never be cut off particularly between a husband and a wife. Experts today have mentioned that communication is based more so on listening rather than verbalizing.

The Holy Quran also states this when it says:

وَالَّذِينَ اجْتَنَبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ أَنْ يَعْبُدُوهَا وَأَنَابُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادَ * الَّذِينَ يَسْمَعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

'And (as for) those who keep off from the worship of the idols and turn to Allah, they shall have good news, therefore give good news to My servants; those who listen to the word, then follow the best of it; those are they whom Allah has guided, and those it is who are the men of understanding.' (39:17-18)

Ameerul Mo'mineen (as) has said in one of his traditions:

اجملوا في الخطاب تسمعوا جميل الجواب

غرر الحكم: ج 1 ص 139))

"Beautify your communication and in return you will receive a beautiful reply."

Imam Sadiq (a.s) has said: *'Allah (swt) has ordained for the Prophets to be morally and ethically sound. One should examine oneself to see if they possess those same ethical qualities that the Prophets possessed. If they do, they should praise Allah, however if they lack these qualities they should ask Allah to grant them the inspiration to develop these qualities. The qualities mentioned are ten: certainty, contentment, perseverance, thankfulness, kindness, good morals, generosity, self respect, bravery and humbleness.'* (Al-Kaafi: vol. 2 pg. 55)

Knowing the rules and regulations of family life

The majority of the problems that exist in today's Muslim Ummah are due to a lack of Islamic insight. Today, society has been influenced by the media in what the Leader of the Islamic world, Ayatollah Khamenai, has coined as a 'Cultural Invasion'. This invasion has resulted in us finding what we believe to be refuge from a source other

than the Quran and Sunnah. As the force of Satan is in full swing, we need to elevate our awareness and insight in building the roots for a successful life and in the process ward off these satanic forces.

Handling things delicately

Prophet Mohammad (saw) says: *“Kindness is blessings and harshness is dreadful.”*

It has been narrated from Imam Sadiq(a.s) that he said: *“Prophet Mohammad (saw) has said: O people can I give you good tidings about a person who will be prevented from feeling the effects of the Hell fire? They all said “ Yes O Prophet of Allah!” he then said: “A person who is nice, loving and humble towards his relatives.”*

Forgiveness

Human beings are fallible beings. Only those who possess infallibility claim to be free from error and fault. If a family member makes a mistake it can always be corrected by apologizing. Imam Hassan (a.s) says:

اقبل عذر من اعتذر اليك وخذ العفو من الناس

(تحف العقول ص 793)

“Accept the apology of a person who seeks it and continue to grant forgiveness to the people.”

Enjoying what is good and forbidding what is evil

One of the most important branches in Islam is the enjoying of what is good and the forbidding of what is evil which is known as Amr bil maroof wa Nahi Anil munkar (أمر بالمعروف و نهي عن المنكر). The main purpose of this obligatory act is to eliminate impurity from society.

The Holy Quran, when discussing some of the requirements of a believer, says:

وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

“..and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience.” (103:3)

Imam Hussain (a.s) has been reported as saying:

و امر بالمعروف تكن من اهله و انكر المنكر بلسانك و يدك

(تحف العقول: ص: 27)

“And enjoin in what is good so that you become one of the good ones and reject the evil with the use of your tongue as well as your hands.”

Good relations towards relatives صلة الرحم

يا 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 people! be careful of (your duty to) your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind) and spread from these two, many men and women; and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship; surely Allah ever watches over you.” (Holy Quran 4:1)

In one of his sermons, Imam Ali (a.s) has said:

و صلة الرحم فاتها مثرة فى المال و منسأة فى الاجل

“...and good relations with the family increases wealth and delays death.”

Serving humanity:

We read in Islamic traditions that one of the best acts of worship is to serve humanity. If a family makes this their goal, they will never allow their own problems to consume them but rather divert all their energy in solving the difficulties of others.

The Ahlul Bayt (a.s) have taught us the importance of this act as the Holy Quran has beautifully described:

{يُوفُونَ بِالَّذْرِ وَيَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا كَانَ شَرُّهُ مُسْتَطِيرًا} {7} وَيُطْعَمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عِلًّا حُبَّهُ مَسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا} {8} إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكْرًا} {9}

“They fulfill vows and fear a day the evil of which shall be spreading far and wide. And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive: We only feed you for Allah's sake; we desire from you neither reward nor thanks.” (76:7-9)

Seeks nearness and pleasure of their Lord:

In married life, as a couple begins to understand the reality of two people living one life together, they should both strive hard to seek the pleasure of Allah while elevating their spirituality towards His Kingdom.

I conclude this booklet by quoting a portion of a dua sent to us by Imam Hussain (as):

“O Allah, if I have found you then what have I lost; and if I have lost you, what have I gained?”