

Islam's Original Plans for Marriage

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And those who pray, "Our Lord! Grant unto us wives and offspring who will be the comfort of our eyes, and give us (the grace) to lead the righteous." [Holy Quran: Furqan 25:74]

Marriage Negotiations

When a marriage is being considered, it is customary among Muslims to conduct investigations about both families. Then they conduct negotiations to determine the conditions for the marriage and the wedding ceremony, and to establish the amount of the nuptial gift. Among the questions asked, the families should try to answer those questions that are appropriate and within the framework of the holy religion. They should also do the same regarding the questions they ask. In these negotiations, it is best to exercise the utmost honesty.

They should tell the true age of the couple, the real job of the man, his actual wealth, behavior and morality; his true spirit; relationships; degree of education; and any defects or shortcomings. The defects may be negligible. The woman's family too should be honest in responding to the questions asked by the man's family. They should not be afraid to tell the truth, since this will prevent any future problems or a probable deadlock. It will prevent any future harm, bad feelings, separation, inter-family arguments or the ruining of the relationships between the two families.

Honesty and truthfulness can protect both families against any harm, bad feelings and sorrow. It eases decision-making for both sides and causes prosperity. Concealing the defects of men and women, deception and trickery are immoral and religiously prohibited. They are considered to be great sins.

The bad effects of this will not only harm the couple, but will also damage both families. Concealing defects of men and women, deception and trickery sometimes result in the break up of a wedding, the cancellation of the nuptial gift, and the breaking up of the marriage without a divorce. This is the leeway Islam has granted to either side who may have been deceived by concealing defects. The Glorious Quran has prohibited any deception, trickery or concealing of defects and considers those who deceive, deserve divine punishment in this world and the Hereafter.

The Prophet (Pbuh) said: One who deceives a Muslim does not belong to our nation. [Bihar al-

The Commander of the Faithful (Pbuh) said: Deceiving one who has trusted in you is equal to atheism. [Mizan al-Hikmat, pp.166-167]

He has also said: One who deceives people will be harmed by his/her deception. [Mizan al-Hikmat, pp.166-167]

Regarding the characteristics of the pious, Imam Ali (Pbuh) has said the following in Sermon 193 of Nahj ul-Balaghah: The pious ones do not get close to people by deception.

The Prophet (Pbuh) said: Deception, trickery and treason will result in the Hell Fire. He also said: One who is a Muslim does not engage in deception or trickery. I heard from Gabriel that deception and trickery will result in the Hell Fire.

The issues related to concealing defects of men and women; deception and trickery; continued marriage; separation or divorce; the duty of man to pay the nuptial gift or not having to pay it are extensively discussed in volume 100 of Bihar al-Anwar, Vafa Press, Beirut starting from page 361 and also in the practical treatise of great Shiite scholars.

The Necessity to Pay the Nuptial Gift

The two sides should agree on a reasonable amount after honest negotiations. The less strict you are about the amount of the nuptial gift, the more God will be pleased. The leaders of Islam have instructed us to be lenient about this issue to ease the marriage of our young daughters and sons. The families should not imagine that an expensive nuptial gift arranged will prevent the disruption of the family and will help its continuation. There have been many married young women who have had expensive nuptial gifts but returned to their parent's home after marriage. They got seriously hurt and fell apart!

You should rely on God's Favor in these issues, and avoid what might cause pain, belittling or insulting of either party in the future. Once an amount has been agreed upon, and the bride and the groom have accepted it, then half of it is due to be paid immediately upon the establishment of the marriage contract, and the other half must be paid after the marriage is consummated. If it is all paid at the time of the marriage contract, it is much better. The youth must realize that the payment of the nuptial gift is obligatory, and refusal to pay it is a great sin. This necessity to pay the nuptial gift has been clarified in verses 236-237 and 241 of Chapter Baqara, verse 4 of Nisaa, verses 27-28 of Qisas, and verse 49 of Al-Ahzab. No one should impose the least harm or oppression upon women, in this respect or in any other form.

The Prophet (Pbuh) said: A man who oppressively does not pay a woman's nuptial gift is considered an adulterer by God. On the Day of Judgment God will tell him: "O my servant, I

married my servant to you based on a certain contract. You did not honor that contract, and oppressed her." Then God will take away some of the man's good deeds and will credit it to his wife's record of deeds. If there is not enough good deeds to fulfill the woman's rights, he shall be thrown in the Hell Fire due to not honoring his contract. Contracts bring responsibility. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.100, p.349, Vafa Press, Beirut]

Imam Sadiq (Pbuh) said: There are three groups of thieves. Those who are envious of paying the alms tax; those who consider it rightful to devour the nuptial gift; and those who borrow money and do not intend to pay it back. [Ibid]

Imam Reza (Pbuh) has quoted his ancestors as having quoted from the Prophet (Pbuh) as saying: God, the Almighty will forgive any sin except denying a woman's nuptial gift, not paying the wages of an employee or selling a free man. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.100, pp.350-351]

Imam Sadiq (Pbuh) said: The most wicked sins are murder, not paying the nuptial gift, and not paying the wages of an employee. [Ibid]

Noble women have been instructed to forgo the nuptial gift if possible. This is a highly moral act and is a symbol of nobility and generosity.

In a very important tradition from The Prophet (Pbuh) we read: A woman who forgoes her nuptial gift after the wedding and before consummation of the marriage, will be credited for the reward of freeing one slave for every Dinar of the nuptial gift. Then the Prophet (Pbuh) was asked what if she forgoes her nuptial gift after the consummation of the marriage? The Prophet (Pbuh) answered: Forgoing the nuptial gift after the consummation of the marriage is a result of love and companionship. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.100, p.351]

The Wedding Trousseau

It is customary among Muslims that the father prepares the wedding trousseau for his dear daughter who is the apple of his eye. He does this through his nobility, kindness and love for his daughter. In this regard, we should remind the groom and his respectable family not to forget contentment which is one of the attributes of the Imams, the Prophets and is a fact truly loved by God. They should be content with and grateful for whatever the bride's family sends with her. This is usually as much as they can afford.

They should not let this be the cause of insults, belittlement or attacks on the personality of the parties involved. The respectable father of the bride should consider his own social status and that of the groom's family. He should also not be wasteful, since God is the enemy of those who waste. The wedding trousseau need not be extensive or extremely expensive.

It need not consist of extraordinary goods. The expenditures for the wedding trousseau should not be out of traditional and religious bounds. It should not cause a great debt behind. For sure you should not try to keep up with the Joneses. Do not raise the expectations of the youth regarding the wedding trousseau, so they only go to propose to women with filthy rich fathers. This will cause a serious problem for the rest and is really inhumane; despised by God; and is a cause of torture in the Hereafter.

You should spend rightfully earned income to purchase the wedding trousseau, so that the obligatory worship rituals of the couple on the clothes and rugs that are purchased are acceptable by God. Do not put yourself through too much trouble due to your children's excessive expectations. Do not let this cause you eternal torture and punishment.

A Divine, Spiritual Model for the Wedding Trousseau

In his valuable book Bihar al-Anwar, Allameh Majlesi has narrated Imam Sadiq (Pbuh) as saying the following about Fatimah (Pbuh):

The Commander of the Faithful (Pbuh) did not have much material wealth. All he had was a couple of dresses, a camel, a sword, and an armor. He earned his daily bread by working in other people's gardens and farms.

When he came to the Prophet (Pbuh) to propose to marry the Master of all women, the Prophet's daughter Fatimah, the Prophet (Pbuh) told him to get up and sell his armor. He sold his armor and gave the money to the Prophet (Pbuh). Neither did he say how much it was, nor did the Prophet (Pbuh) ask. The Prophet (Pbuh) gave a fistful of the money to Bilal and asked him to buy perfume for his daughter. He gave some of the money to Abu Bakr and asked him to buy her clothes and household appliances. He told Ummar and some of his companions to help in the shopping. The following items were purchased:

- 1- Shirt: seven Durhams
- 2- Shawl: four Durhams
- 3- Black Kheybar veil
- 4- A rope bound bed
- 5- A couple of mattresses with Egyptian linen cover and palm fiber and sheep wool filling
- 6- Four pillows with Tayef leather cover and filled with stuffing.
- 7- A woolen curtain
- 8- A straw mat
- 9- A hand grinder
- 10- A copper tub

11- A water-skin

12- A bowl

13- A small bucket

14- An ewer

15- A green jar

16- Several ceramic vases.

When they brought all this to the Prophet (Pbuh) he took a look at them and said: May God bless them for the Household. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.43, pp.111-112]

The author continues by writing: That simple trousseau belonged to a woman whose father had an unprecedented popularity and power. His companions were ready to sacrifice their lives instead of gold and silver. But he neither forced the sorrow of going under debt upon his groom, nor did he spend from the Muslim's treasury which must be spent for the welfare of the general public, the orphans and the poor. He did not spend a lot to show off or buy excessive luxuries.

He did not raise the level of marriage expenditures to pressure others who might use this wedding as a model all throughout history. Thus he saved millions of people from hardship, stress and sorrow. The most important point is that when he recognized that he was unable to provide for the trousseau for which he was morally responsible, he asked his noble groom to sell his armor. Using the money he bought the trousseau and the living necessities, and showed how much sincerity and love existed in their relationship.

He was not ashamed of this act. The noble groom, too, was so sincere and spiritual that did not think about or even say one word about it being the duty of the father of the bride to buy the trousseau. The fruit of this marriage are eleven of the Immaculate Imams. This family has so far produced thousands of jurisprudents; scientists; wise men; mystics; God lovers; religious authorities; and believers. There has never been another such marriage with all its blessings in the whole history of mankind.

Praying at the Wedding Threshold

Imploring God, praying and supplication, crying in His Presence are all desirable forms of worship at all times, especially before the wedding. This kind of prayer is closer to be accepted by God, and it can establish a background for the fulfillment of many legitimate aspirations. The Commander of the Faithful (Pbuh) said: One who intends to get married should perform two units of prayer, recite the chapters Fatiha and Ya-Sin, and then praise God and say: O God, please grant me a deserving, kind, child bearing, grateful, content, zealous wife.

She would thank me when I am kind to her; she would forgive me if I hurt her by mistake; she would help me if I remember you; she will remind me if I forget; she would protect herself and my honor in my absence; she would be pleased when I enter; she would obey when I command; she would abide if I swear; she would make me happy if I get angry. O' Owner of Grandeur and

Nobility, please I ask You for I will not receive anything but what You destine for me.

The Commander of the Faithful (Pbuh) then said: Whoever does this at the wedding threshold, shall get what he wanted by God's Favor.

The Time and Etiquette for Wedding

A group of families think that the marriage or wedding ceremonies provide a permit for carrying out whatever carnal desires they please. At the time of the wedding of their children, they commit divinely forbidden acts based on the request of their children, the couple's friends, or their relatives. They think that this way they make the party more fun. However, marriage and wedding ceremonies should be accompanied by dignity; nobility; respect; and should be void of sins; forbidden acts and arousing elements. Thus they can be a cause of God's pleasure and can yield divine blessings.

Imam Musa, the son of Jafar (Pbuh) said: It is not at all required to abstain from unforbidden pleasures. Of course, we must be happy during a marriage ceremony and a wedding party. We should not forget to engage in legitimate means of entertainment like comics, jokes and singing. Even singing wise poetry, meaningful lyrics; pleasant slogans and the customs that are usual among Muslim women in such ceremonies are all fine. It is quite natural to stay up late at these times.

The Prophet (Pbuh) said: It is fine to stay up until late in the three following situations: reciting the Quran; studying to acquire knowledge; accompanying a bride to her husband's house.[Bihar al-Anwar, v.100, p.267]

In Islam it is considered better to perform the wedding at night. Fatimah's wedding was carried out at night. Jaber Ansari said: When the divine Prophet married Fatimah off to Ali, a few narrow minded people came to him and objected why he had married her off with a very small amount of nuptial gift. The Prophet (Pbuh) told them that this was not his decision. It was God who married off Fatimah to Ali. On the night of the wedding the Prophet (Pbuh) prepared his piebald camel. He threw a gown over it and asked Fatimah to ride it. He ordered Salman to pull the camel. He himself followed it from behind. Midway through he heard something come down. He looked and saw that Gabriel and Michael had descended from Heaven each accompanied with seventy thousand angels. He asked them the reason for the

descension.

They replied: We have come to see Fatimah off to Ali's house, and then they express their congratulations. Then they said "God is the Greatest", so did the angels. The divine Prophet too said "God is the Greatest". Thus, it became a tradition to say "God is the Greatest" when accompanying the bride. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.100, p.266]

Yes. You must prepare for and conduct the wedding ceremonies in a manner that will result in the descension of angels and God's blessings.

Imam Sadiq (Pbuh) said: Take the bride to the groom's house at night. [Marriage in Islam, p.112]

Imam Reza (Pbuh) said: Wedding at night is one of the traditions of the Prophet, since the night is for resting in peace and a woman is for peace, too.[Marriage in Islam, p.112]

The Prophet (Pbuh) ordered the daughters of Abdulmutalib and the women of Medina to follow Fatimah (Pbuh) at the night of her wedding; be happy and sing; say God is great and praise be to Him; and avoid saying what God dislikes. [Marriage in Islam, p.114; Mustadrak, Chapter on Marriage, section 31]

On the night of the wedding it is recommended to feed the guests who have accepted the invitation.

The Prophet (Pbuh) said: There are only five occasions for a banquet: Marriage; childbirth; circumcision; purchasing a house; and returning from the pilgrimage. [Marriage in Islam, p.114; Mustadrak, Chapter on marriage, section 31]

It has been narrated that the Prophet of Islam (Pbuh) said on the wedding night of Fatimah Zahra (Pbuh):

O' Ali. Prepare an excellent dinner in honor of your spouse.

He added: We will give the meat and the bread, you provide the dates and the ghee. Then Imam Ali (Pbuh) said: I bought the dates and the ghee. The Prophet (Pbuh) rolled up his sleeves and shredded the dates into pieces and dropped them in the ghee. He mixed them until it became a mixture of dates, oil and flour. He sent a ram to be slaughtered. A lot of bread was baked. He then told Ali (Pbuh) to invite whoever he wished. Ali says: "I went to the mosque and asked the people to accept the invitation to Fatimah's banquet". [Marriage in Islam, p.91]

Regarding being invited to a wedding party, the Prophet (Pbuh) said: Do not rush to go to a wedding party if you are invited. Wedding ceremonies remind us of the worldly issues.

But rush to a funeral ceremony when invited since that reminds you of the Hereafter. The families must arrange the marriage and wedding ceremonies in such a way that it not only has a bad influence on the kids, the youth and the young participants and but not also foster or

encourage them to commit any sin. It also provides a convenient place for the believing men and women invitees to participate.

Nuptial Night Customs

There are many verses of the Glorious Quran and traditions regarding intercourse which are very beneficial for both men and women. Consider some of the recommendations of the Prophet (Pbuh) and the Holy Household in this regard which have been narrated in the most authentic books on traditions.

It is polite for the groom to take of the brides' shoes once she has been brought to his house. Then he should wash her feet and spread water from the house entrance door to as far away as possible. This can block seventy thousand causes of the family becoming poor. Seventy thousand blessings will cover the house. Seven angels of mercy will start to fly over the bride's head and their blessings will fill the whole house. The bride will be protected against diseases like insanity and leprosy for as long as she lives there.

The bride should avoid eating milk, vinegar, coriander or sour apple during the first week of the marriage. These four can have a negative effect on her womb and may turn her sterile. The Prophet (Pbuh) said: If a woman starts her period while drinking vinegar, this will slow down its termination. Coriander will extend the duration of the period, and will make delivery difficult. A sour apple will quickly stop the period and the blood which remains in the womb will cause illness.

Avoid lovemaking at the beginning, the middle and the end of the (periodic) month. Do not make love in the afternoon. It is not good to talk, it is very bad to stare when making love. It is extremely psychologically damaging to the child who may get born if the man thinks about another woman while making love.

It is better to wear a light clothing when making love.

It is inconvenient to make love standing up like animals.

Avoid intercourse on the night of Fitr Holiday (the end of the holy month of fasting); and Sacrifice Holiday; under a tree; under the sun; between the two consecutive calls for prayer (Adhan and Iqamih); the night of the fifteenth day of Sha'ban (the birth date of the Holy Twelfth Imam); on the roof; and on the night of travel.

Weddings and intercourse are recommended on Sunday night; early Monday night; Wednesday night; on Thursday; Thursday night ; the eve of Friday. These times have a lot of material benefits as well as very important spiritual effects. Making love at the times that intercourse has been prohibited may result in children with insanity; leprosy; foolishness; cross-eyedness;

deafness; blindness; jealousy; becoming feminine; argument and separation; being sterile; having six fingers; having four fingers; being poor; extreme desire to attack other people; blind-heartedness; ugliness and dumbness.

The times that intercourse has been recommended can result in children with such qualities as memorizing the Holy Quran; being pleased with divine decrees; faith; security from torture; love and kindness; compassion; nobility and generosity; being refined; having mastery over science; religiousness and prosperity; and attaining the status of God's saints.

These are issues that cannot be recognized with material tools or medical instruments. They are facts that the Noble Prophet of Islam (Pbuh) has recommended and said to the Commander of the Faithful (Pbuh), and has asked him to guard these recommendations on marriage and lovemaking as he has guarded them after receiving them from Gabriel [Bihar al-Anwar, v.100, p.280; Elal al-Sharayeh, pp.514-517; Amali Sadoogh, pp.566-570]

It has been prohibited to make love instantly. This is oppressive to women and sexual foreplay is both necessary and beneficial to both men and women.

The Prophet (Pbuh) said: Three actions are oppressive: Being accompanied by a man and not asking his name; Being invited to a party and not attending; Or not eating food if one has accepted the invitation; And lovemaking without foreplay. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.100, p.285]

The sixth Imam said: Three actions are the tradition of divine Prophets: putting on perfume; shaving the private parts and thoroughly fulfilling your wife's carnal desires. [Ibid]

The Commander of the Faithful (Pbuh) said: Not sleeping with your wife and not fulfilling her sexual instincts is a cause of torture in the grave. [Elal al-Sharayeh, p.309]

It is forbidden to make love during the period. It is forbidden not to make love for over four months without any good excuse or the spouse's consent, and it has retribution. Making love while unclean is undesirable.

Hazrat Ali (Pbuh) has said: Do not make love instantly. The woman has sensual and physical needs. Help her with foreplay, then make love. If you see another woman and feel that she is beautiful, then immediately go to your wife.

God has granted your wife the same beauties. And not looking at another woman and going home to make love to your own wife will block Satan from conquering your heart.

If you are not married, then perform two units of prayer immediately. Praise God and send benedictions upon the Prophet (Pbuh) and his Household. Then seek help from God.

God may grant you what you need through His Kindness. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.100, p.287]

The reward of fulfilling a woman's carnal desires is so great that according to a tradition the noble Prophet of God told a man: Are you fasting today? The man said no. Have you gone to

visit the ill today? The man said no. Have you gone to a funeral today? The man said no. Have you fed one who cannot work today? The man said no. Then he said: Go back home and make love with your wife, since this is similar to a donation from you to her. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.100, p.289]

You should not make love in the presence of a child, since this is both morally and psychologically bad for the child. The sixth Imam (Pbuh) has said that this increases the chances of the child committing adultery in the future. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.100, p.290]

One should avoid intercourse with a full stomach, since it harms your health. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.100, p.290]

Do not make love when there is a baby in the cradle who may observe you.

[Bihar al-Anwar, v.100, p.295]

How wonderful is the religion of Islam in its full coverage of all issues regarding moral, educational and sensual affairs. Especially the coverage on women's rights with a precise look at all affairs of life. It really grants us a good outlook on personal, family and social issues. It must be so since Islam is the manifestation of revelations; divine knowledge and the insight of the Prophet (Pbuh) and the Holy Household, and it is not derived from a limited earthen mentality