

Women After Marriage - Part 2

Her Duties towards the Husband

The Holy Quraan says: "So the righteous women are obedient (to Allah and submissive to their husbands), and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard (i.e., their chastity and the prestige and property of the husband)" (4: 34)

As a wife, side by side with enjoying equal fundamental human rights, a woman has been placed one degree below the husband in the matter of administering the affairs of the family. The Quraan says: "but men have a degree (of advantage) over them" (2:228)

For those who can afford it, marriage is an obligation. The Quran says: "Marry those among you who are single, and the pious among your slaves, male or female: if they are in poverty, Allah will give them means out of His Grace: Allah is of ample means, and He is aware of all things." (24: 32)

Compare this with the following verdicts of the exponents of modern scientific thought on this problem.

Says Nemilov: "Man, perhaps even down to the protein molecules of his tissue cells, is biologically different from woman. From the very moment of sex formation in the embryo, the biological ducting of the sexes develops along entirely divergent paths. We must recognize the unquestionable existence of the biological inequality of the sexes. It goes deeper and is of far greater import than it would appear to those not familiar with natural science." (*1).

The desires and conduct of the two sexes, says Mercier, "are not similar but are complementary and reciprocal. In courtship the male is active: his role is to court, to pursue, to possess, to control, to protect, to love. The role of a female is passive. Consequent on this fundamental difference are certain others. For pursuit, greater ardor is necessary than for mere reception; and the courting activity of the male is, throughout the whole animal kingdom, more ardent than that of the female; and this greater ardor is connected with certain other differences." (*2).

Julian Huxley observes: "I venture to prophesy not only that the inherent differences between the sexes will not tend to diminish in the course of evolution but that man will continue, as now and in the past, to emphasize them by custom and convention."(*3).

It should, however, be clearly kept in mind that, in the Quraanic teaching, the husband and the wife stand in complementary relation to each other, and never in the relation of the ruler and the ruled. The Quraan enjoins upon men: "They (women) are your garments and you are their garments." (2:187)

In the presence of the husband, the Holy Quraan has not chosen her to function as the head of the family, because owing to his masculine constitution and appropriate mental make-up, the husband is better equipped to earn livelihood for the family, to bear the physical strains, and to avert dangers to the family in general. The Holy Quraan refers to these functions of the husband when, speaking of his role for the wife. It says: "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they spend of their wealth (for supporting them and other members of the family)." (4: 34)

Of course, the husband has to administer the family jointly with the wife, according to the Quraanic Law: "(Believers are those) who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation (and not arbitrarily)." (42: 38)

As a follower of the Quraan, it is only in extreme cases that the husband may differ irreconcilably with the wife. But, then too, he cannot transgress the bounds of justice and mercy of the Holy Quraan, which commands him to be always just, merciful and considerate.

The second position of the wife as administrator is, thus, not a source of suffering for her but a source of strength and a blessing.

Every woman must obey the legitimate commands of her husband. Appeasement of husband is a great virtue while the displeasure of the husband carries heavy prosecution. The Holy Prophet of Islam (sallal laahu alaihi wasallam) has said: "If I were to command humans to prostrate before anyone other than Allah, I would have commanded the women to bow down before their husbands."

The Messenger of Allah (sallal laahu alaihi wasallam) has also said: "If a woman dies in a state that her husband is happy with her, she would enter the Paradise".

The Glorious Prophet (sallal laahu alaihi wasallam) has also said: "When the husband calls his wife for some work, she should immediately attend his call even if she may be sitting by the side of her hearth (for cooking)". The Hadith means that the wife should give top priority to attend to her husband.

Another Hadith says: "If a husband says to his wife to transform a yellow mountain into a black one or turn a black mountain into a white one, she should obey his orders". The Hadith means that the woman should try to perform the hardest of the hard job assigned by her husband.

The Holy Prophet (sallal laahu alaihi wasallam) said: "Allah's Angels curse the woman throughout the night whose husband calls her to bed but she refuses and the husband goes to sleep in anger".

Relations between husband and wife have been conceived as based on mutual cooperation, love and compassion. The Holy Quraan says: "And among His Signs is this that He created your mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts); verily in that are Signs for those who reflect." (30: 21)

It means that: -

marriage is essentially a spiritual bond of union, rather than a mere physical relationship;

marriage should be contracted with the firm resolve of maintaining the relation for life;

Monogamy should be ideal, because that is the ideal condition in which mutual cooperation, the common man can practice harmony and love normally and smoothly.

Polygamy

The Holy Quraan has permitted polygamy on humanitarian grounds, under exceptional circumstances, and with severe restrictive conditions. The only Quraanic verse which contains the permission for polygamous marriage, says: "And if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry of the women who seem good to you, two and three and four; and if you fear that (in case of having more wives than one) you shall not be able to deal justly (with them) then (marry) only one (free woman) or (a captive) that your right hands possess. That will be more suitable to prevent you from doing injustice." (4: 3)

'Polygamy', says Roberts, "was the rule among the Eastern peoples before Mohammad's time." (*4).

Important points, worthy of being carefully noted are:

This verse does not enjoin polygamy, but only permits it.

Unrestricted polygamy, which had been rampant among the pre-Quraanic Arabs and many other nations of the world, has been restricted to the maximum four. Fixing the maximum at four seems to be based on the natural law relating to monthly courses, whereby the husband can do justice in respect of conjugal relations even if he has the maximum of four wives.

The permission relates to situations of emergency, and not to normal conditions of life and society. This verse was revealed after the Battle of Uhud, which gave rise to a situation of emergency. Appreciable numbers of Muslim men were killed in the battle, leaving behind orphans and widows, and giving rise to many adult females. Also, there were some women captives of war. Polygamy was prescribed for those who were Allah-fearing and whose sole mission in life was spiritual refinement and pursuit of Divine Pleasure. Notice the conditional clause about orphans, introducing the rules about marriage. This reminds us of the immediate occasion of the promulgation of this verse. It was after the Battle of Uhud, when the Muslim community was left with many orphans and widows, and some captives of war. Their treatment was to be governed by principles of the greatest humanity and equality. The occasion is past, but the principles remain. Marry the orphan if you are quite sure that you will in that way protect their interests and their property, with perfect justice to them and to your own dependants, if you have any. If not, make other arrangements for the orphans.

The permission is based, not on considerations of lust, nor on any benefit accruing to the marrying male, but on the principle of sacrifice - of providing protection and support to orphans, while undergoing a severe tension of dealing with all the wives.

The permission is conditioned by one's ability to deal equitably with his wives, which even at the formal level is an extremely difficult condition to fulfill except for those who are thoroughly disciplined, stick to spiritual and moral values above everything else, and enter into marriage for spiritual considerations - for the sake of obtaining Divine Pleasure.

Thus, this verse, instead of inducing the men to practice polygamy, recommends to them monogamy.

Finally, looking at the Quraanic permission for polygamy with an unbiased mind, every rational person is bound to be convinced that in situations of emergency, namely, whenever there is an abundance of females - as it happens after the wars - and whenever there is the problem of the uncared for and unsolicited widows and orphans, it becomes a moral duty of Allah-fearing people to practice polygamy, whereby alone the individuals can be saved from disaster and the community can escape the horrors of prostitution.

There is, wrote Dr. Annie Besant, the renowned English leader of the Theosophical Movement, "pretended monogamy in the West, but there is really a polygamy without responsibility; the

'mistress' is cast out to be the woman of the street, for the first lover has no responsibility for her future and she is a hundred times worse off than the sheltered wife and mother in the polygamous home. When we see thousands of miserable women who crowd the streets of western towns during the night, we must surely feel that it does not lie in the Western mouth to reproach Islam for polygamy. It is better for woman, happier for woman, more respectable for woman, to live in polygamy, united to one man only, with the legitimate child in her arms, and surrounded with respect, than to be seduced, cast out into the street perhaps with an illegitimate child outside the pale of law unsheltered and uncared for, to become the victim of any passer-by, night after night, rendered incapable of motherhood, despised by all." (*5).

The Holy Quraan repudiates polyandry (or, plurality of husbands) and the Hindu custom of Niyoga (or, loaning the wife to another person for getting an issue), and the custom of exchanging wives practiced by certain savage tribes.(*6).

Temporary conjugal relations are prompted purely by lust, and in no case for establishing that sublime spiritual relation between man and woman, which alone can form the basis of building up the family. Therefore, the Holy Quraan disallows temporary and passionate marriages. It says: "Except for these (prohibited relations), all others (i.e., other women) are lawful, provided ye seek (them in marriage) with gifts from your property (as dower-money), desiring chastity (in permanent companionship), not lust (in any form of temporary marriage)" (4: 24)

The wife has several duties towards her husband. Following are some very important duties:

The wife should not go out of the house without the permission of her husband. She should seek prior permission of her husband to visit her relatives and friends.

It obligatory on her part to safeguard her husband's house and other properties in his absence. She should not allow anybody to enter the house without her husband's permission. She should not give her husband's minor or major belongings to anybody without his permission.

She should not indulge in any activity that her husband may dislike.

She should look after his children carefully.

She should keep herself and her house clean. She should decorate herself with ornaments and suitable make-up to attract the attention of her husband and to win over his love and affection. A Hadith says: "Best is that woman who comforts her husband by her good looks and loving gestures and fulfils the pledge of her husband and plays the role of a guardian and a well-wisher in safeguarding her chastity and the belongings of her husband in his absence."

How to live happily with the husband

Remember, the relationship between a husband and his wife is a very strong and life long association. The affinity and understanding between the two is the greatest grace of the Almighty Allah. Once this understanding gets disturbed, the life on both the sides gets spoiled.

The domestic quarrels between husband and wife have become very common these days. Several Muslim houses are burning in this fire. The difference of opinion between wife and husband reaches a stage when both of them pray for death. It is very easy to eliminate this difference of opinion and a state of civil war within the household.

Here are some ways to establish permanent peace on the home front:

Every wife should try to appease her husband day and night. This would satisfy his ego and he would feel that there is someone in the house that cares for him. A husband likes a wife who obeys his orders without arguments and without asking why and how. If the husband asks her to massage him throughout the night, she should bear that much pain and patiently obey his command. This little trouble would bring to her immense love from her husband.

Every wife should understand the temperament of her husband. She should know the likes and dislikes of her husband. By living with him for years together she may excel in knowing what makes him happy and what annoys him. She should master in her husband's habits and tastes.

It is obligatory on the part of the wife never to fight with her husband. She should not pass sarcastic comments to him nor should she criticize him bitterly. She should not give him a sharp and rigid reply nor should she pass any left-handed comment. She should also not find out defects in things brought by him nor should she describe his house and other property as useless and base. She should not pass adverse comments about the parents of her husband as this may lead to unnecessary arguments and will ultimately end in hatred towards each other. This hatred gradually aggravates to the extent of separation. The wife will leave her husband's house and go to her parent's house where her brother's wife and unmarried sisters may make her life miserable by taunting at her. This may lead to a bigger fight between the family of the woman and the family of man. The matter ultimately goes to the Court and drags for years together.

The wife should not ask her husband to give her money beyond his capacity. Whatever her husband gives her for running the house; she should accept it smilingly and run the household within the budget. Let the husband himself ask her what she would like him to bring for her. And when the husband brings something for her, she should appreciate it and express happiness in accepting the gift.

The wife should never pass comments on the looks and physique of her husband nor should she ever be ungrateful to him. She should not complain: "I have never been happy in your house. Oh Allah! My whole life spent out in sorrows and hardships. What I saw after coming to this ruined house. My parents have thrown me into this hell. They married me to a pauper and unlucky man like you." This

sort of groaning will make the husband disappointed and disgusted. This frustration gradually will lead to constant fights and face-to-face confrontation and finally to the divorce. The Glorious Prophet of Islam (sallal laahu alaihi wasallam) said: "I saw plenty of women in the Hell". The Companions asked: "How come, O Allah's Apostle (sallal laahu alaihi wasallam)" He said: "For two reasons: First, the women indulge much in taunting and criticizing others. Secondly, the husbands may be treating them well for years but once they experience something less than their expectations they would say: "We have never seen any good from you."

The wife should show utmost restraint and respect in front of her husband. Whenever the husband returns home, she should welcome him leaving all the work aside. She should arrange for his comforts. She should not talk to him in a way that may annoy or confuse him. If the husband gets annoyed with the wife over some issue, she should keep silence and should not utter anything that may aggravate his anger.

If the husband gets annoyed over some of her mistake and rebukes her, she should not feel it bad. She should unconditionally beg his pardon and bring him back to his good mood by persuasive methods. If the husband rebukes her without any fault, she should not repay him in the same coin. This would be her greatness to make her husband happy.

The wife should not ask her husband the account of his debit and credit. The husband gets irritated over this accountability and this irritation leads to conflicts. Similarly, the wife should not investigate her husband's whereabouts and engagements nor should she express any doubt on the character of her husband, as it would disturb the mutual trust.

As long as her husband's parents are alive, she should obey them and attend their requirements. The husband is their son and if they incite him against the wife, he will be annoyed at her that will ultimately result in deterioration of relations. Similarly, she should treat her husband's brothers and sisters nicely. She should never try to divide the family. She should never insist on her separate household. However, if the parents of her husband themselves decide to live separately; she should welcome their idea happily. But after this separation she should always visit her in-laws and find out their difficulties and help them promptly.

If the wife faces any hardship in her husband's house, she should never narrate it to her parents and relatives. This creates tension between the two families.

The wife should concentrate more on her looks - her clothes and personal hygiene. She should take into account her husband's likes and dislikes. She should occasionally apply Mehndi (Henna) in her hands and feet. She should not keep her hair shattered and disturbed. A little carelessness with regard to the physical fitness may compel the husband to go to other women who make special arrangements to look good to the husbands of careless women.

The wife should take food last of all in her husband's house. She should arrange food for her husband, his parents, his brothers and sisters. She should always play a hostess at the dining table.

The wife should not develop a habit of admiring her parents and other relatives in her husband's house. This would create an impression in the minds of her in-laws that she is lowering their status.

The wife should not spy upon her in-laws. She should not try to listen secretly to the conversation of other women in her husband's house. It is very foolish of her to presume that they might be talking bad about her.

The wife should share housework with the mother-in-law and the sisters-in-law/s. This would create a feeling of helpfulness in the hearts of the women in her husband's house. The women folk will start liking her and cooperate with her in all matters. She should attend to her ailing mother-in-law or other sick members in her husband's house, as this would give her a dignified status in that house.

If the husband is poor and has no capacity to employ a maid-servant, the wife should not make any complaint of doing the work herself. Many tradition of Sayyiduna Rasoolullah (sallal laahu alaihi wasallam) reported in Bukhari indicate that the beloved daughter of the Holy Prophet (sallal laahu alaihi wasallam), Sayyidah Faatima az-Zahra (radi Allahu anha) personally attend to the domestic affairs of her home. She went to the community well herself, filled up the container with water and carried it on her back to her home. She used to grind the flour at home and due to this rugged exercise, her palms got wounded. Similarly, Sayyidah Asma (radi Allahu anha), the daughter of Sayyiduna Abu Bakr Siddique (radi Allahu anhu) did the entire domestic work alone in the house of her husband Sayyiduna Zubair (radi Allahu anhu). She brought date seeds from distant orchards to feed the camels and massage the horses.

The wife should keep a balance between the income of her husband and the expenditure of the house. If the husband is very poor, she should not insist upon him to bring items of luxury. She should be content with whatever is available within the limited resources.

The wife should not demonstrate any obstinacy and stubbornness in her husband's house. This is a general habit of women that they get furious very soon. Their parents may bear this fury but the in-laws will not bear this. The stubbornness of a woman in her husband's house becomes an issue of great criticism. Her obstinacy earns her a very bad name.

The house of the husband is a new place for every woman. She comes across with so many strange faces with different habits and behaviors. There is a possibility of difference of opinion and a clash of interests between the two parties. But the wife should keep patience and be kind to the mother-in-law and other members of her husband's house. One day or the other, the family of her husband itself will feel ashamed of their rude behavior and extend a hand of friendship and cooperation towards the new comer.

The wife should live in her husband's house with discipline. She should neither talk too much nor too less. She should talk sense. Her diction and intonation should be soft, clear and sublime. Her speech should not hurt any body.

[1] Biological Tragedy of Woman, pp.75-78

[2] Conduct and its Disorders Biologically Considered, pp. 289-290

[3] Essays in Popular Science, p. 63

[4] Social Laws of the Qur'an, p.8

[5] Annie Besant, The Life and Teachings of Muhammad, p.3

[6] Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. I., p.125