

MARRIAGE

A Step Towards Fulfilment in Life

BY

DR. AMIR G. N. LAKHA

&

ALHAJ MULLA ASGHAR M.M. JAFFER

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OF
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CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	v
CHAPTER ONE:	
THE CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE.....	1
CHAPTER TWO:	
THE CODE OF MARRIED LIFE.....	8
CHAPTER THREE:	
THE STATUS OF A WOMAN.....	22
(1) BEFORE ISLAM	
(2) THE ISLAMIC VIEW	
(a) A WOMAN	
(b) A DAUGHTER	
(c) A WIFE	
(d) A MOTHER	
CHAPTER FOUR:	
THE WEDDING.....	34
(1) PROPOSAL AND MAHR	
(2) THE NIKAH CEREMONY	
(3) THE WEDDING ROOM	
CHAPTER FIVE:	
SEX IN MARRIAGE.....	41
CHAPTER SIX:	
CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS.....	44
CHAPTER SEVEN:	
SOURCES OF STRESS IN MARRIAGE.....	50
CHAPTER EIGHT:	
DIVORCE AND ITS EFFECTS	54
(a) ON THE PARTNERS	
(b) ON THE CHILDREN	
CHAPTER NINE:	
MARRIAGE COUNSELLING.....	56
INDEX	61

PREFACE

It is a sad fact about human nature that experience does not seem to be communicable; each person must make his own mistakes. This applies to nations as well as to individuals. We see Third World Countries following the same paths as Western Nations and beginning to make the same, often catastrophic mistakes. However, an awareness, of the possible mistakes that can be made, can enlighten an alert mind to the consequences.

The function of religion is to add a spiritual dimension to life which science can not do, and that of science is to develop a rational system of knowledge which religion can not do. The spirit must lean on science as its guide in the world of reality and that science must turn to the spirit for the meaning of life. Fortunate is he who has either scientific knowledge or religious experience, but blessed is the man who has both, for he knows something of the complexity and structure of life, experiences its wonder and sanctity and perceives its underlying harmony, rhythm and divinity.

The foregoing facts were uppermost in our minds during the course of writing this Book. It is hoped that the contents will interest the young as well as the old, the unmarried as well as the married members of our Community.

Efforts have been made to keep the language as easily understandable as possible and the contents to stimulate the minds of our Community members from all over the World regardless of the cultures that they are exposed to.

Modern ideas have been combined with traditional beliefs. Some guidelines have been offered to readers. However, this book is in no way to be regarded as a complete guide for the rules and regulations as prescribed in Islam. For the clarification of the regulation as it applies to a particular individual, he has to turn to the priests and to detailed specialised Religious books on individual topics.

We are greatly indebted to Alhaj Muhsin Dharamsi who proposed the idea for this book. We thank professor Najib

Khan and the Golden Crescent Group of Daressalaam who kindly agreed to allow us to extract material from their book "The Code of Married Life". The book had been published by the Group in loving memory of Crescent Marhum Yusuf Husein Sheriff.

We thank all those who offered advice and those who assisted us in making this Book a reality.

The publication of this Book will go a long way in fulfilling the pledge of the Matrimonial Advisory Council (M.A.C.) to publish literature on marriage for the benefit of our youths.

The proceeds from the sale of this Book will go towards the Foundation Fund of the World Federation of Khoja Shia Ithna-asheri Muslim Communities.

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THE CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE

In a society where changes are occurring over an increasingly shorter and shorter period, there is more dissatisfaction now than ever before. All existing institutions are regarded as imperfect, obsolete and in need of improvement. The ancient institution of marriage is no exception.

In parts of the Western Society there is a cry for abolishing the rites, rituals and religious ceremonies of marriage. Therefore, more and more youngsters have turned to free and promiscuous love without actually entering into a proper marriage contract. There are other more permissive members of the Society who advocate group marriages, open marriages, trial marriages and even homosexual marriages. These are the bitter facts and they have to be mentioned for two reasons. Firstly, to alert the readers to the existence of this trend and secondly, to prevent a change in the attitude of a vulnerable group of people from our community who are exposed to such ideas. It is of paramount importance that the high moral and traditional standards are upheld. It is imperative that steps are taken to caution the innocent and the unwary so that the sufferings can be prevented. With a thorough understanding of our religious, cultural, social and moral standards, the young newly married couples will be better equipped to shoulder their duties in the institution of marriage.

The number of divorces in England and Wales, for example, have increased over the years as permissiveness has increased. In 1958, there were 22,654 divorces. In 1969 (10 years later) there were 148,300 divorces. These figures do not take into account those couples who cohabit and then separate. It appears from the figures that the change in the attitudes of the people during 1960's (women's liberation groups, etc) had a very adverse effect on the strength of the bonding in marriage.

The mass media (television, newspapers, magazines and posters) play a vital role in changing the attitude of the people. It seems to most of the people that the rules of the game are

being changed every time that they turn their TV set on or open the newspaper. The constant revision of moral standards and social rules in this huge world has left some of the people with a sense of paralysis. With so many choices which conflict with each other, being presented to them, they feel that the best they can manage is to simply hold on to dear life and do nothing at all. However, Islam has prescribed certain rules and regulations which are permanent and these encompass each and every facet of married life.

The formal religious ceremony brings a man and a woman together as husband and wife. They enter into a very highly specialised field of human relationship where utmost adjustment and careful dealing is necessary, in order to achieve happiness and success in it. Everybody sets out to build an "Ideal Marriage" when he or she gets married.

The term "Ideal Marriage" is interpreted by each person in the context of his own personality, family upbringing and his observations of married couples known to him. However, throughout most of history and in most parts of the world, an "Ideal Marriage" has implied that the role of the husband and that of the wife complement one another. The husband was viewed as the bread winner, the provider who was strong and aggressive outside the home and completely dominating within. The wife was viewed as the home-maker and the mother who was submissive and easily tearful. These complementing roles were considered as "natural and how God intended it to be". Couples who did not identify themselves with these roles were treated with contempt and disgust by members of the public and relatives of the couple, particularly so when the wife was a domineering decision maker and the husband was "hen-pecked".

These days, however, we find ourselves in situations and circumstances where both the husband and the wife have to work outside the house to make ends meet. In a set-up of this nature, it would not be practical for the couples to live up to the stereotypical example mentioned above.

The essence of an "Ideal Marriage", in the present society,

is the element of co-ordination in all of the couple's activities according to the circumstances in which they find themselves. It is preferable for the husband and wife to do everything together, have common interests or pursuits outside working hours.

The other features contributing to an "Ideal Marriage" include good temperament, comradeship, a good sense of humour, a satisfactory sex life for both, good housekeeping and cooking, mutual trust and love for each other, tolerance of the faults of each other and finally the all-important universal desire of a couple — non interference from the in-laws.

In reality, the married life is not smooth sailing and there are ups and downs and minor conflicts and differences of opinion are bound to arise, particularly in the early years of marriage. This occurs because two separate minds can not be expected to think and feel alike. Human nature, being what it is, the newly married couple optimistically feel that their marriage is going to be the most perfect marriage. They feel disillusioned and disheartened sometimes when the honeymoon period is over, the novelty has begun to wear off and the couple have established their everyday routine as man and wife.

Most marriages, in our culture, occur through a traditional system — of arrangement by the parents, elders or other relatives. In a smaller proportion the first meeting takes place at a social gathering or outside the Mosque and in a very small proportion, through a meeting at school, University or place of work. Some have childhood acquaintances or friends or lived in the same village or locality.

From time immemorial, the most important question has been — Is there any factor, like destiny, which ensures that a particular man and a particular woman come together to form a marriage partnership? Are marriages "made in heaven" as the myths say? Is it destiny or is it a chance occurrence or is it something which is directly under the control of human minds? Is it a matter of "like attracts like or like attracts unlike" i.e. extroverts attracted by extroverts or extroverts attracted by introverts or vice-versa?

Whatever the mechanism involved, if the newly married couple are young then their individual personalities are in a state of transition. Although they have a lot of flexibility, they tend to have less tolerance for the shortcomings of their partner. Their thinking pattern revolves more on fantasy and wishful thinking rather than practicality. There is a lack of knowledge by virtue of the fact that marriage for everybody is a novel experience full of suspense, excitement and that it has the inherent pleasant and unpleasant aspects. Each married youth, at the beginning, is trying to establish a pattern in their married life by a system of trial and error. The knowledge derived from observation of their parents' married life and those of their siblings and relatives will contribute to the ways of the newly married youth. The youth may lack foresight and harbour a desire to be independent although the marital union has already taken place. On the other hand, if the newly married partners are older, they might have reached a fixed personality of their own and there may be little room for adjustment. Marriage, being a major exercise in the art of adjustment and "give and take", would lead to a lot of frustration and misery if there was inflexibility on the part of the husband and wife. The partner resisting a change would bring about a state of dissatisfaction and marital disharmony and sometimes, though it is rare, to a divorce.

What is the right age for marriage? It is difficult to answer this question. It can, however, be stated categorically that each individual matures at a different age. The factors responsible for the maturation are his genetic inheritance, environmental factors, culture and subcultural and family factors and the experiences of the individual during his childhood and adolescence. It is possible to have adults of thirty-five years of age who possess immature personalities and adolescents of sixteen years of age who show a mature outlook to life.

The influence of regular prayers and piety is very strong in determining the age at which a youth has sexual experience before marriage. It has been shown that even nominal adherence to our religious duties, i.e. Namaz, and fasting seems to

have some restraining influence. In the majority of youths the desire for the fulfilment of their sexual drive encourages them to get married early. The youngster finds out later that it is not "all romance and roses". The mental preparedness of the youths for the ups and downs in the marriage helps to make their marriage a happy one.

At the initial stage, immediately after the marriage, the common tendency is for the husband to shower a lot of attention, affection and gifts on the wife, who in turn reciprocates. The expectation of each other's personalities and temperament is based on this early relationship. The partner gets used to this mode of relationship and the married life is planned in this spirit. It is only after some months have passed and the daily routines have been established, the realities of the social and economic commitments have been faced and novelty has begun to wear off that the true personality and temperament of each of the partners emerges. One mistake the youths of today make is to, subconsciously, desire for the novelty and excitement of early stages of marriage to remain the same for as long as they live.

It is likely that a couple will contemplate renting or owning a house, purchase furniture and other household items. At their stage in life this imposes a heavy financial commitment. This may go on for several years, and be a source of stress on both the partners. Simultaneously, the channels for relaxing and getting away from the stress i.e. holidays, outings and visit to friends and relatives may have to be curtailed because of the scarcity of the funds. During this period there may be additions to the family and the expenses for the children's clothes and other necessities will then lead not only to further financial strain but also a reduction in mobility of the couple. If the wife was also earning an income, then, that may stop because she has to remain at home to look after the young baby. The wife's energy and affection is divided between the husband and the child, whereas the husband enjoyed individual attention and affection from the wife before the arrival of the child. The same applies to the wife who enjoyed the husband's individual

attention and affection previous to the birth of the child.

All these are realities of life and most of the couples often overlook the fact that it is these various factors that have caused changes in their daily life. It is important that these changes are not blamed on lack of love towards each other. The real-life factors can cause a lot of irritability, misunderstanding, doubts, suspicions, anger, hostility, dissatisfaction, aggression and violence, infidelity and sometimes depression. If the situation is not clarified through continuous communication and understanding then it may result in a serious rift in the marriage. A healthy mind needs a change of surroundings from time to time. If the couple are stuck at home all the time, without any change of scenery then frustration results. This leads to aggression and to marital disharmony. The attitude between the partners can be one of hate and hostility and both may show no intention of resolving the conflicts. At this time each partner begins to reconsider whether the choice of their marriage partner was wrong and blames himself or herself or the people who arranged the marriage. They are not prepared to accept that both may have contributed to the misunderstandings. The essence of a happy marriage is that one should not expect goodness and understanding in their partner only. He or she must himself or herself possess more goodness and provide more understanding. This lays down very fertile grounds for love to flourish. It is not important how famous, rich, or educated a person is, it is the amount of "goodness" he has.

The Christians have a marriage vow which they take during the Wedding ceremony. We can learn something from the words of the vow, which is "I take thee to be my wedded wife; to have and to hold, for richer for poorer; in sickness and in health; to love and to cherish till death us do part". It is true that the divorce rates are high in the Western Countries but it is my contention that if the Westerners took the vow seriously, then, the divorce rates would be far lower.

Most marriages have their ups and downs and one has to learn to accept that friction has to be dealt with by discussion

and polite expression of feelings. One has also to exercise a degree of tolerance for the weaknesses and shortcomings of the partner. This approach brings the two partners much closer and in this way love and affection between the husband and the wife is enhanced.

Marriage is like two horses running together pulling a cart. Both have to move in step and in the same direction. Being harnessed together and pulling in opposite directions, is how many marriages are doomed.

CODE OF MARRIED LIFE

A successful and happy marriage is a great source of joy and blessing in life, which will overshadow all other adversities throughout life. A successful marriage, like other successful adventures depends on efforts of both partners and constant sacrifice from both, and give and take, all the time. Utmost sacrifice and support is needed at the weakest moment of the spouse and that has to be without the spouse even knowing.

A successful marriage can result by understanding each other's viewpoint. Two adults with fixed ideas and habits can only make a happy team together if they co-operate and meet half way. A happy marriage is like a drama of life where constant effort is required to produce a successful comedy and avoid a tragedy. In a successful drama, acting of a superb degree is necessary so that it appears natural. By appearing to look cheerful when returning from the office, even after a bad day, will bring cheer into the entire house and make one even forget his gloom. There is no point in increasing miseries and despair.

No man is a hero to his valet, but a trained valet always makes his master look and feel a hero. Wife and husband know each other better than the valet, but they should both play a trained valet to each other. Never let your spouse feel that you know his or her weaknesses and never expose them to others but cover them up. Perpetual joy can only be had in married life by giving and not by taking.

There must be differences of opinions and intelligent arguments between two grown up individuals who live together. Tempers may become frayed, but please on no account should both lose tempers at the same time; only one at a time.

The person who loses her or his temper first should have the floor and the other partner next time. By the other partner remaining calm and cool when one partner has lost his or her temper, many a catastrophe can be saved. The most precise

words to settle a quarrel are "I am sorry"; and there is great joy in asking for forgiveness from one's partner especially when one is not at fault. It is a large hearted person who admits his or her faults, accepts blame and asks for forgiveness. Another golden rule is never be critical of your partner. The best way to achieve agreement over a disputed problem is to first emphasise the area of agreement, no matter how small, and then slowly with patience expand the area of agreement to the eventual exclusion of disagreement.

Do not ever criticise your in-laws; you will make your own family out-laws for your spouse. Do not be resentful against your partner and do not let anything about your partner get under your skin. Appreciation, not only acceptance, of your partner's good points as well as bad is essential. By thinking of good points one may overlook the bad ones.

Difference of opinions and quarrels are part of life. The great poet expressed this so well when he said:

"What is life, what is death and what is resurrection. Your friendship, your quarrel and your meeting again."

But do not let the quarrel last longer than the next meal and you should not miss the next meal. Consider the meal times a great favour of God for giving us our daily bread and partake that happily and harmoniously forgetting the quarrel. Never let any unpleasant or controversial subject be discussed on the dinner table.

Romance is essential for a successful married life and that should be kept alive. Do not ever neglect your appearance but remain attractive to your spouse, no matter what be your age. Sex plays an important role in a happy marriage in all ages. Sex play can only be successful if both partners participate and co-operate. It should, however, be remembered that when worried, anxious, and under fear of tension, sex dies . . . It is only in cheerful and happy times when interest in sex occurs.

Little courtesies to each other go a long way. Remembering each other's birthdays and the wedding anniversary is therefore essential. Do not let petty annoyances against your partner be reflected as bad temper or criticism or sarcasm as that

will only amount to pouring fuel over fire.

When there are children in the family it is essential that the two partners respect each other and appear united and never show their differences to the children. Family quarrels in the presence of children have a terribly bad effect, on the mental health of the children, and mental health is much more important for the future of the child than physical health. Therefore, threatening gestures, and not to say of hitting one's spouse, is unforgivable.

It is of no use to keep on harping on the past mistakes, commissions or omissions of each other. It is best to forgive and forget.

Rigidity does not pay but flexibility and meeting your partner more than half way gives a high dividend of happiness and harmony.

Home is the domain of the wife, and business or professional life the concern of the husband. Let each mind his or her own business and let there be no interference from the other. That does not mean lack of interest but avoiding back seat car driving.

It is true, distance lends enchantment. Thus, often other couples look different from ourselves and their partners appear better.

Facts husband and wife may bear in mind

Men and women think differently, have different goals, enjoy different social activities and are physically different.

Women must remember that the husband's qualities are necessary for her security and for the security of the children. A man must remember that the woman's nature gives him the goals worth struggling for in life. These goals are love, a home and biological immortality. The husband's highest aspirations are served by a wife's moral, emotional, social and sexual traits.

Best marriages are those which are performed in a very simple manner.

The best and blessed Nikah is that which entails least expenditure.

Courtship is an interesting phase when both the partners are at their best behaviour to impress each other. They usually try to follow the film land idea of a perfect gentleman and a lady, often doing things as an actor, to impress.

Honeymoon puts the couple to test. With shyness and inexperience often interesting situations develop. For example a young lady on her honeymoon burnt her sari when pressing her dress for dinner. She was so petrified that she wanted to hide it from her husband. The phase of getting accustomed to each other usually settles down into one of informality and intimacy. However, in some, awkwardness continues and those are the problem cases.

If some minor misunderstandings develop and unless clarified from the very beginning they keep on multiplying themselves. Mountains are made out of mole hills and complaints are harboured in the heart to accuse each other. When these people are asked to give concrete examples of what happened during the previous week they have nothing to state but they bring in old trivial complaints over which they have been fuming and blaming the other partner. With misunderstanding, dissatisfaction develops and even the simplest and normal expressions and actions assume hidden meanings and arouse further misunderstanding. Sharp reactions should always be avoided. If once hysterical reactions are allowed to occur it is apt to be repeated. The man who raises his hand on his wife is a barbarian, uninhibited brute, and an uncivilized man, as he has violated his primary duty of protecting the fair sex.

Misunderstandings between husband and wife are not uncommon in married life and there is hardly any marriage where at one stage or the other misunderstandings have not arisen or where suspicion and doubt have not crept in. These are to be controlled and rationally explained not only to oneself but to the other partner as well.

Sometimes this is not possible and it is there that the mar-

riage counselling can help. Islam has also enjoined the same thing and ordered that before divorce, marriage counselling should be resorted to. For successful marriage counselling neither the family of the boy nor the girl are suitable but a competent person can help.

Communication is vital for a happy marriage. Without communication between the husband and wife, fear grows, doubts multiply and misunderstanding is bound to develop. Therefore to understand each other, communication should be developed from the beginning of the marriage and even the most busy couples must make an effort to talk. That is not easy but with an effort and desire on the part of both to meet more than half way, communication can be continued. Begin by developing a sensitive antenna and at the same time be a good listener. Be always available, do some preliminary thinking of your problems, respect each other's confidence, show appreciation for every little thing and stop being critical and communications shall develop. To start with talk about the subject that interests your partner and not complaints of your everyday difficulties. Some women complain that their husbands do not take their wives into confidence about their business or professional life. That is because the husband considers his home as a heaven and retreats there to escape the worry and torture of his office. At times the husband talks about his problem to his wife, not so much to get her advice but to unload himself to somebody in whom he has confidence and who he knows will not betray his confidence.

In a married life it is not always talking that is required but a glance or a little pressing of the hand can convey a great deal more than words. After a busy day in the office, or at home, an unwinding period is necessary before understanding and communication can be started. The three golden words for a happy marriage are "I LOVE YOU". Use that charm with two other words "THANK YOU".

The satisfying activities of eating and conversing together are a unifying force for each family member. Father would entertain with stories of when he was a boy, relating interesting

adventures of cycling, fishing and horseriding on Sundays. On the other occasion mother would share her experience of her childhood. In other homes, time is spent around the table relating interesting events of the day, sharing from each other's experience, in discussing events and relating them to Quranic truths.

Parents — ask your children what they did in school. With whom they did it. What did they learn by it. You'll find yourself in a discussion with your children if you do.

Take the family on a picnic — spend more time with your family. Take your children with you. Make them a part of your activities. Taking them outdoors is an excellent way to tie the family together and make a marriage more exciting.

Supervise your children's dressing, their hygienic measures — and do so with real cheer in your voice, teaching them how to do it better, more effectively.

Think about the activities of the day — don't just bury yourself in a morning newspaper, or worrying about the problem you will face later. Think about the welfare of your own family first!

Facts a husband may bear in mind

“The best individual among you is one who is more kind and courteous to his family, and I am the same to my family.”

— **Prophet Muhammad (SAW)**

Women are treated with respect only by those persons who are kind and magnanimous and nobody treats them with insult except those who are mean and wicked.

Always remember that a woman is more delicate than a man and she is to be protected in all spheres of life and given all she needs. A good husband anticipates his wife's needs and if the wife asks for anything it should be regarded as a privilege by the husband to grant her with.

Always make your wife feel she is the most important person in your life and never stop paying compliments to her. Criticism and hard language and foul temper only add to unhappiness and never serve any useful purpose.

A present, no matter how small, given with affection by the husband to his wife enhances her vanity and ego, and that is essential to maintain romance in married life.

A woman is a gentle creature and has to be treated as such. Neglect, harsh words, rough handling will result in psychological trauma which she may not show at that time, but this has serious effects in the long run.

Do not take advantage of the wife's weaknesses and her gentle nature. She by nature IS a mother and wants to protect and serve as a mother. She may do something without realising that she is to play the wife not the mother to her husband but take no notice of that. She means well.

To a wife her entire life depends on her husband, his success, his health, his happiness. Therefore she is bound to be over anxious at times just as a husband is about his job. In anxiety and worry normal reactions are not easy.

To the mother the child is important and a child is also the husband's. Therefore do not let jealousy ever develop between you and your children over the lady of the house.

Learn to switch off your office worries when you switch on your car to go home so that you can meet your family without being tense.

See that your wife and you are at times alone together on outings and holidays. For a wife who is in the house all day it is important for her to be taken out of the surroundings of the kitchen and the house. A man who is out all day does not realize the captivity of a wife in the house.

Facts a wife may bear in mind

To charm, to strengthen and to teach, these are the three great words of Might.

You need a triangular relationship. Not the triangle as depicted in today's society but a triangle formed by God, your husband and you.

“The bravest battle ever fought,
Shall I tell you where and when
On the maps of the world you'll find it not,

It is fought by the mothers of men.”

Choose books, magazines, programs and entertainments that will make you a better wife, a better mother, a better friend and a better muslim.

“Men have authority over women on account of the qualities with which God has caused the one of them to excel the other for what they spent of their property, therefore the righteous women are obedient. (4:34).”

“O’ (our) Prophet (Muhammad) say to your wives and to your daughters and to the women that they put down upon them their cover garments and that they may be recognised (dignified ladies) so that they will not be troubled, God is forgiving the Most Merciful (33:59).”

On your wedding day the mind naturally turns to the blessed days ahead. A good marriage is a life-long miracle. You and your husband truly can not envision how blessed it will be! The poet Lyttelton wrote, “How much the wife is dearer than the bride”.

Dear wife, play the wife and not mother to your husband as your grown up husband needs a wife not a mother. Do not play mother to your husband who is as old as you are when you have never learnt to play mother to a grown up man, and therefore your efforts to play mother to your husband will do more harm than good. Nobody can play the mother and the wife at the same time, so it is best to play the wife. Your husband has a mother and if you also try to play the mother you shall be a step-mother.

Normally a man is born aggressive and a wife should complement his effort to run their house. A man is born to lead and it revolts his mentality and damages his ego if he is ordered by his wife.

An intelligent wife can influence her man tactfully without ever making him feel that she is directing or criticising or nagging him. Nagging only results in antagonism. Demoralising effects of nagging the husband are irreparable. No man can achieve anything with a nagging wife. It is only encouragement in a gentle manner by a gentle woman that can help.

Let your partner feel that he is the most important person in your life. You may have greater concern for your children or be worried about other problems of the family but the father of the family should be given the first priority, at least he should be made to feel that he is not neglected. Therefore in spite of your occupation with household duties never forget to regard the departure of your husband for his office in the morning for the day's struggle in life, as an important moment when you wish him well and see him off. Similarly when he returns from his day's business, that should be an important moment in your life and he should be received as a hero and a welcome guest while you make yourself look your best.

Do not ever pose problems to your husband while he is going to work or immediately he returns from work. While going to work he is apprehensive of what the day may bring and while he returns he has come to his heaven to escape from worries and problems of business. Let him feel at ease and then your problems will no doubt receive attention.

Do not irritate the sensitive points of your husband and never say "I told you so".

Never, never, no matter what the provocation, ever leave your home to go to your mother. The house is yours and adjust rather than leave. The quarrel will have lost its thunder by the next day.

A professional woman must remember that if she wants a family life she has to sacrifice her career interest in favour of her husband and her children. By nature a woman is passive and respective psychologically. Her basic traits are shaped by her primary need — to bear children and to create a home for them. Her ego primarily is based on her performance as wife and mother.

Always try to look as attractive to your husband as possible. Nobody can resist an attractive woman. If you do not keep him captivated somebody else will. "There is no ugly woman; there are only women who do not know how to look pretty."

Your husband may be doing his best to give you the best. Be glad that you are better off than many others. Big things,

expensive homes, expensive clothes do not make a happy home but contentment and thankfulness for what one has, creates a successful marriage. Be grateful for what God has given you, which is a great deal, and pine not for what you do not possess. Look how full the glass is and not how empty it is.

Do not let your false pride stand in the way of expressing your true emotions and sorting out your problems with your spouse. Correct priorities in life are essential in self adjustment.

Cheer him when he's depressed. Lighten his load whenever you can. Complain as little as possible. Look for constructive approach to difficult situations. Make home a place where he wants to come.

To honour him is important. Every husband needs a wife's acceptance, her admiration, her appreciation. When you recognize and fulfil his ego needs, you are encouraging him to give his best to the marriage.

Of course, true love doesn't guarantee the absence of problems. To the contrary, true love does have problems, but walks hand in hand through them.

Dealing with food takes more hours each day and each week than any other household activity. There are two approaches. One is to hate it, resent it and make short work of meals. The other way is to enjoy it, have fun at it and create dreamy dishes to delight the family.

Cooking seems to be about the only creative job left in many homes. With the right view-point it can be an exciting adventure which will last a life time.

And to be a good cook, you'll first need to realise its importance. Secondly, you'll need to study and observe, and lastly, you'll have to practice.

Aren't we aware of their importance in a happy, successful marriage? Their importance towards building happy families? Many a man starts the day preparing his own breakfast or eating at the coffee shop, while his wife lies in bed, fast asleep and unconcerned. How tragic! Maybe she does not have to get up as early as he, but she could go back to bed or snooze a

while in the afternoon. A nourishing warm breakfast prepared by a loving wife, plus a cheerful conversation during the meal, is the start every man needs for the day. Then at the end of a strenuous day to be greeted by a contented wife and find a nourishing, appetizing meal perfectly tops the day.

Mothers influence their daughters as to whether or not they'll enjoy cooking and washing dishes. They must have the right attitude and take time to teach their daughters how to cook and bake.

Mothers, let's emphasize true beauty of heart and mind and character. Let's remember that kind, gentle, pure, loving, happy and thankful thoughts springing from a heart of love, create true beauty of face. We will not be loved primarily for our lily white hands and school girl complexion but for what we are — and for what we think and do. Let's pass on to our daughter these beauty formulae which are guaranteed to give lasting results.

Mothers need to work. In the past they worked long, hard hours! Women worked in the small shop or on the farm. A wife worked alongside her husband and children. She was available. She could stop weeding the garden or leave the shop if her child needed her. Also her work was directly related to the family and to their needs.

But today's work is vastly different. It's away from home, away from husband, (and usually with someone else's husband). And when the wife fails to provide love and companionship, many husbands find it elsewhere.

Mother's work is away from children. There is a constant shift of baby-sitters. There's no continuity in the child's life, no mother's love and tenderness when he is ill or in trouble. These conditions create deep and tragic problems for today's families. And I think mothers should be aware of them before taking on a job. They may find something to do at home that would bring an income.

Dr. Habib Nathan, a University of Florida psychiatrist, conducted a research concerning the results when mother is separated from her preschool child. He found that most out-

standing result was the high incidence on antisocial tendencies — lying, stealing, no sense of right or wrong, destructiveness and guilt, as well as a greater preoccupation with their own bodies. These children also showed less identification with parents.

Some hurdles of married life

During the early part of married life, family finances, especially the household budget may cause worry. In a partnership, finances are mutual responsibility, and both partners can put their heads together and solve whatever difficulties may arise. It should be also remembered that at the beginning of married life nobody has unlimited resources but it is fun to save pennies together and build up the home. Do not forget that your parents also started in the same way, and that they did not always have what they had when you grew up.

To reduce tension and facilitate the struggle of life, the role of hobbies can not be over emphasised, especially the hobbies in which the couple participate together. If developed in youth that would also be a blessing in later part of life.

For the middle age

In the middle age the two partners are in tune with each other and life can be a heaven.

Then comes the problem of children who are growing up, but if it is realised that the children are the dividends of the joint company and that both partners have the responsibility and privilege to guide and direct them, there should be no difficulty and this should further cement the marriage.

In the middle-life, the wife may face some problems when at the menopause her sex glands cease to function as reproductive organs. The body has to get accustomed to that change. During this temporary phase she may feel tense, depressed, irritable, and lose interest in her appearance and life in general. At this juncture it is the tender and affectionate care of the husband which will prove to be a vital stimulus in her recovery, though of course a doctor can help.

In the middle-age, usually the husband is at the height of his career and therefore unduly preoccupied with his work at the expense of the time devoted to the family. It should not be forgotten that the man of the house is also needed at home as much as in the office. A happy balance between the two is essential. It is no good losing the battle of the home by neglecting that front. Personal influence and affection of the father of the family over the growing children is extremely important, and the children deprived of the fatherly influence suffer great harm, for which there may be no remedy afterwards.

For the old age

The ancient saying that a woman is as old as she looks and a man as old as his arteries, is true. With modern knowledge that can be rephrased for both sexes, a man is as old as he feels. It is the feeling that is important. Feeling can be transferred into wish and with a wish to look youthful, one can look young, and keep the arteries soft by care and attention to diet and exercise.

It is customary to regard a person who has lived for 6 decades or more to be old, and that usually signifies decay, obsolescence and retirement from occupation. Surely this is not correct. It is not how long one has lived but how one has lived is important. There are many scientists and men of letters and professional people as well as leaders in industry and commerce who have made great contributions after that age and remain active. Nobody who has his own business ever retires at that age.

Recent studies have revealed that one who remains mentally and physically satisfactory engaged, does not have to face the so called adverse effects of old age, even till the very end of his life. The key to eternal youth and vigour is continued activity, mental as well as physical. Given that, married life at all ages is a bliss. With the children having grown up there need be no worry on their account. With no more lust for fame, position, power or money, one can be glad to be out of the rat race, which mars the joy of life. Happiness in life can be truly

achieved with the life-long partner who has shared the most previous memories together.

But, at times, that peace and tranquillity, deserved after a life time of labour is lost. That happens by some odd rule that a man is declared old and retired overnight on a certain birthday. To be cut off suddenly from life long association with work can be harmful if there is nothing to replace the void. Unless the man has life for after-retirement his suddenly being put out on the shelf comes as a great shock. Such a man may become a recluse, and lost in the dreams of the past and of his heydays. He is loath to mix with his friends or take an interest in anything around him, but desires to be confined to bed. He can thus be lost to himself, his family and the community. The role of the wife in preventing such a catastrophe by prudently preparing her husband for this retirement, and minimising the harm after retirement, can not be over emphasised. His ego has to be protected and he is to be made to feel as tall as ever before. If the wife cares she can make her man feel taller than before by her tender and affectionate care. Nagging and re-primination at that stage is most ill advised. When the temporary phase of depression and despair is over, there are many happy years of married life ahead for the couple, no matter what the chronological age.

It is at this juncture that hobbies can help a great deal. But it is never too late to develop a hobby. Sir Winston Churchill became a painter late in life, when once he was unemployed and without occupation, he bought himself a box of paint, and a few brushes and plenty of paper and set out to paint. We all can do that.

It is said that youth itself is attractive, but real beauty lies in being graceful in old age.

THE STATUS OF A WOMAN

(1) BEFORE ISLAM

It is an established historical fact that Arabs before the advent of Islam did not think much of their womenfolk. They were treated as mere chattels, and it was considered quite normal for a son to inherit the wives of his father, other than his own mother, as a part of the estate, and take them as his own spouses if he preferred.

The Holy Quran gives a graphic illustration of how women were viewed then.

“And when a daughter is announced to one of them, his face becomes black and he is full of wrath.

He hides himself from the people because of the evil of that which is announced to him. Shall he keep it with disgrace or bury it (alive) in the dust? Now surely evil is what they judge” (Ch:16:58,59).

And in another SURAH, God describes the events which will take place on the day of the Judgement, just as it dawns. This is Surah of TAKWIR, in which He says:

“And when the female infant buried alive is asked,
For what sin she was killed?” (Ch:81:8,9).

The abhorrent practice of burying daughters alive was rampant in the tribe of Banu Tamim, and it gradually spread into other tribes. History is fraught with incidents when sympathetic mothers somehow managed to hide away their newborn female babies, announcing to the father that the child had died.

Once the Prophet, peace be upon him and his descendants, was sitting in the mosque among his companions, when an Arab arrived. Accosting the Prophet (S.A.W.) and those present, he nervously sought a place near the Prophet, and then with an evident tremor in his voice he asked: “O Mercy of God on earth, I am a sinner. My sins are grave. Can I be forgiven?” With a genuine condescension, the Prophet told him that

Allah's mercy encompassed every creature, and that He was forgiving and benevolent. But the Arab seemed sceptical. He said, "But I have committed a grave sin. Can I be forgiven?"

And then he decided to relate to the Prophet (S.A.W) an incident which had taken place in his life before he was converted to ISLAM. The story he related was a very disquieting one, but he insisted on relating it. Perhaps the burden of guilt overwhelmed him, and he wanted to get relieved by getting it off his chest. He said:

"Once when my wife was pregnant, I undertook a distant journey. In my absence, she delivered a baby girl. Knowing that I would be displeased with this, she managed to conceal the child away from the house, and when I returned, she announced to me that the child had died. I resigned to the fate and conveniently forgot about it."

"But, O Prophet of God, then a strange thing happened. During one of those days when my wife found me in a happy disposition of mind, she brought before me a well groomed young girl of six, and announced that she indeed was our daughter who was born in my absence. She told me how she had hidden her away, and now that she had grown up to approach womanhood, I might accept her lovingly."

"In a fit of temper I rose, and O Prophet of God, I dragged her to a place in the desert, and amid her plea and appeal for mercy, I BURIED her."

The Prophet could hear this no longer. His complexion changed, displaying evident anger and displeasure, and turned away his face, He said: "You better go away from my presence, for I fear that the wrath of ALLAH may descend while we are all assembled here".

The Surah of Takwir quoted above is among the earliest revelations. According to the commentators of Quran, it is the fifth SURAH to be revealed to the Prophet (S.A.W). When the verses of the chapter were first recited by the Prophet (S.A.W) to a small group of his followers, and then repeated by them to many believing Arabs, the contents of the Surah set the wheels of a social revolution moving. Both men and

women, believers and infidels, chanted the verses to themselves repeatedly, and some of the ladies recalled their plights.

The mother of Ammar, Sumayya said: "Yes Muhammad is right. My sister was innocently buried . . . alive! How I remember her faint cries as she disappeared under the heap of dust!"

The Quran reminded the women that they had a right to live.

A woman in all her three major roles as a daughter, a wife and a mother, enjoyed neither any respect nor any right. Looked down upon as mere subjects of sexual desire and lust, women were encouraged to become the standard bearers of vice and moral degradation. Women of loose character were praised, and were asked to display a standard or a flag near the house which would identify them as whores. They were officially known as "Dhatu R'Rayat", the ladies with the banner.

With the passage of time, women seemed to have accepted the humiliation and spite without any protest. A famous incident in the battle of UHUD reported by renowned historians like Tabari, Ibn Athir and Ibn Sa'd gives us an insight into how women behaved to show themselves as little more than vessels of men's base desires.

As the battle of UHUD raged, and the enemies of ISLAM began to falter, HIND the wife of ABU SUFYAN gathered all the women around, and shamelessly sang the following song, so as to arouse their soldiers:

"We are the daughters of the morning star!
If you advance with valour,
We will embrace you
and spread our cushioned mattresses for you.
And should you retreat, then we part,
never to meet for making love."

(2) THE ISLAMIC VIEW

(a) A Woman

Islam views a woman as a human being, in no way inferior to a man. Unlike all other schools of thought which have existed, and unlike many of its contemporary and preceding

religions, it does not accept a woman as a woe to mankind.

The Holy Quran says:

“They (women) are an apparel for you and you are an apparel for them” (2:187)

The word used in the Ayah for an apparel is ‘LIBAS’ which ordinarily means a dress. But a dress has many functions other than merely covering a human body. It is a form of embellishment and adornment. This is why ulema, in their exegesis of Quran, have lent an extra meaning to this Ayah. A woman is an adornment to a man just as a man is an adornment to a woman. The idea of a woman having been born from the left ribs of man, or from the residual clay from which man was created, is not entertained in ISLAM.

Allah has assigned duties to both, man and woman, and has promised an equal reward to them. In ISLAM, the virtues of a man are the same as that of a woman, and this indeed is a very important point. As commonly held, ISLAM is not a religion of man.

“Surely the men who submit (to Allah) and the women who submit, and the believing men and the believing women, and the obeying men and the obeying women, and the truthful men and the truthful women, and the patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women, and the almsgiving men and the almsgiving women, and the fasting men and the fasting women, and the men who guard their private parts and the women who guard, and the men who remember ALLAH much and the women who remember — ALLAH has prepared for them forgiveness and a mighty reward” (33:35).

From this we find that ALLAH has equal expectations from his creatures, regardless of whether they are men or women. And such an expectation from ALLAH ALMIGHTY presupposes that both are capable of executing their duties with excellence.

If a woman according to Islam, can be virtuous, God-fearing, chaste and an earnest worshipper and believer, it follows that she can be a very important member of human

kind. This is why ISLAM forbade the Arabs to inherit the wives of their fathers. She was not just another chattel to be inherited like a commodity. Above all, she was a human being with all her dignity and independent conscience.

On various occasions, Quran has declared that the whole creation was created for the benefit of man. The heavens and the earth, with all the members of the various systems existing in between and around them, were meant to work under the natural laws which man would exploit and harness. But never has Quran stated that women belonged to men the way other creations did.

“And do not covet that by which Allah has made some of you excel others; men shall have the benefit of what they earn and women shall have the benefit of what they earn; and ask ALLAH of His Grace, surely ALLAH knows all things”. (4:32).

In a human society as envisaged by ISLAM, men and women are beautiful manifestations of divine qualities, some of them shared commonly between them and some singular to each sex. But those singularities are not meant to throw them asunder. They are supplementary to their own role to play individually and jointly. ALLAH has created a bond of love, affection and sympathy between them, which when promoted legitimately, forms the foundation of human family, fraternity and society.

Man was created virile, venturesome, strong, aggressive and loving. Woman is submissive, emotional, fair, tender and beloved. And ISLAM does not boast of equality at the expense of fairness. For to expect equal responses from creatures to whom diverse qualities have been endowed, and various duties have been assigned, is at variance with all standards of justice and fairness.

While man is humble, so is a woman. But ISLAM assigns different characteristics to this virtue in respect of a man and a woman. The Prophet said that a woman is humble before ALLAH, her parents, her husband, her relatives and other members of the womenfolk. While dealing with them, she dis-

plays her humility and cordiality. But he warned, and so does Quran, that a woman does not show that sort of humility before a strange man. This is to discourage a stranger from exploiting the woman as a chattel of his lust and base desires.

Another example is that of being generous. The Prophet said that while men may be generous in all his dealings, it becomes a woman to be stringent. She may be generous in her attitude, spend in the ways of ALLAH, but she has to be cautious when she guards her husband's purse, and economises her family expenses.

In ISLAM, she is a beloved daughter, a respectable, beloved wife, and a revered mother. In all these three major roles, she has her rights and her duties. Viewed in this light, the word 'equality' emerges as nothing but an empty verbiage. The true word is 'equity', which ALLAH enjoins upon us all, as men and women.

(b) A Daughter

While Arabs in pre-Islamic days were ashamed of their daughters, some of their tribes brutally burying them alive, the Prophet of ISLAM, peace be upon him and his progeny, displayed a totally different behaviour towards his own daughter Fatima (A.S.). Our history tells us that whenever Fatima (A.S.) appeared, the Prophet would stand up and allow her to sit in his own place.

The Arabs observed this behaviour, and very well understood that it was not a mere demonstration of paternal affection. To rise and allow one's own daughter to take one's seat is a mingle of love with respect. And while they were surprised to see him do so, they distinctly understood the message. The Prophet, by his conduct, proved that a daughter was just as dear as a son is, a gift from ALLAH to be loved and admired. Among many names of Fatima (A.S.) there is one which the Prophet himself gave to her. It is "Ummu-Abeeha", which means "her father's mother". The Prophet elevated her status to that of his mother, and by so doing conveyed implicitly that a daughter is as respectable as a mother.

Allama Majlisi in his famous work on Islamic ethics and etiquettes says that the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) enjoined upon his followers to be kind to their children. "When a father returns home after a day's toil, let him enter his house with a smile, and with his hands full of gifts. It may not be very expensive ones. It may simply be some fruits. And he will give them away lovingly to his children. And if he gives first to his daughters and the to his sons, ALLAH rewards him more". (HILYATUL MUTTAQEEEN).

In other traditions reported from the Prophet and our Aimma (peace be upon them) we find a clear suggestion that daughters must not be left uneducated. "Teach them religion, so that they are truly submissive to ALLAH. And teach them reading, so that they may be able to benefit from the written message of ALLAH. Let them be taught stitching, and also arithmetic." It is therefore surprising when any civilization lays pretence that educating women was unknown to ISLAM, and that it has alone now come up as women's sole benefactor. The Muslims, men and women, are themselves unaware, unfortunately, that the guidance had already been given by the apostles of ALLAH.

The Prophet said: "Whoever prepares his daughter for marriage, training her in all the necessary disciplines of wifeness and motherhood, earns the pleasure of ALLAH. And if he is ever blessed with three daughters or more whom he gave away in marriage, he shall be in my proximity in the Heavens".

We observe that a very clear goal has been set for a daughter. She has to grow up, first and foremost, as a true and ardent Muslim. And then she has to be educated, trained and groomed to become a sensible wife and a loving, tending, nursing mother. This is her sacred role, and all her virtues are judged in this context.

The most revolutionary change wielded by ISLAM was granting a woman a right to inherit. This had not only shaken the very fabric of the society of the olden days, it has also been a lesson to emulate for many lawgivers of our days. A daughter would inherit, the Prophet said. The Holy Quran

gave clear injunctions.

History sometimes makes a very amusing and interesting reading. Rather than appreciating this bestowment which was unprecedented, the non-believers started arguing why her right to inheritance was half of what the sons inherited. They conveniently forgot, and do so even today, that in their own society, women did not inherit at all. In fact to them this was unthinkable. For, instead of giving them any privilege of inheriting, women themselves were inherited like any other part of an estate.

Ibn Abil Awja', the famous atheist, once asked Imam Ja'far Sadiq (A.S.):

“And why does a poor, wretched woman inherit a part, while man inherits twice as much?”

This question was asked to portray that a woman ought to be pitied for being deprived of what a man gets. Ibn Abil Awja' refuses to admit that ISLAM has granted that which was never allowed to a woman before. However, Imam did not take that line of defensive argument. The answer he gave makes an illuminating reading. He said:

“This is because a woman in ISLAM has been blessed with several exemptions. She will not go to the wars, and will not take part in any army. She has the right of Mahr and full maintenance from her husband, and in many cases, she is absolved from paying any compensations”.

A daughter inherits from her father, half of that which goes to the sons. And if she is the sole heir, half of the legacy would devolve upon her as inheritance, and the other half would be given to her “in return”. Summarily, she gets all that is left by her father, if she is his sole survivor.

In a famous will to his son Imam Hasan (A.S.), our First Imam, Ali (A.S.) says:

“Be kind and considerate to a woman. She is a tender flower, and not a slave in the household”.

(Nahjul Balagha)

(c) A Wife

“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).

Islam clearly says:

“Man shall be sympathetic, condescending and loving to his wife. Wife shall respond in love and submission.”

Whatever be the clamour of the modern age, one fact remains undisputed. A woman herself feels secure when in company of a man. If she is a wife, her husband is her protection. She likes her consort to be a person of courage and valour, just as he likes to see his spouse tender and loving. These things are natural. In Quran, a married woman is “MOHSANAH”, one who is protected or is in a fortress. And in Islamic Law, this implies a wife’s unblemished character or reputation.

There is no room for an assertion from a wife that she would go her way, regardless of her husband. Islam calls this so-called independence as injurious to a healthy family life. Nor is there any connivance at man’s irresponsibility. Islam deplores both, and sets rules to regulate the behaviour of both.

“And live with them (wives) equitably and with all fairness”. This is how Quran enjoins upon Muslims to treat their wives.

However rich a wife might be, the onus of maintaining her would fall squarely upon the husband. And even after the marriage, a woman remains the sole proprietor of her own wealth. She neither loses nor foregoes her wealth after becoming a wife. Islam gives her full right to spend her own wealth, or treasure it, without any encroachment from the husband.

Going a step forward, the Quran says:

“If they suckle (your children) for you, give them their recompense, and enjoin one another among you to do good”. (65:6)

As a wife, a woman has a right to demand a separate shelter from her husband. She can not in any way be compelled to remain together with other family members of the husband.

She has a right to expect all the natural, instinctive services from her husband. The husband cannot deprive her by refusing to satisfy himself her intrinsic sexual instincts. The Islamic Law ordains sexual intercourse as *wajib* upon the husband, at least once in four months. It was not surprising when the Prophet ordered his companions to repair to their homes soon after ISHA obligatory prayers. "You have a duty to your wives" — he told them.

And while the household chores and other related matters are looked after by the wife, ISLAM does not recognise them as the husband's rights. The work she does at home, for her husband and his children, for their comfort and convenience is voluntary. It springs from her natural loving care, and is based on her affection for the family. Naturally, this is reciprocal.

Of course, since she is a wife, her faithfulness to him has to remain unquestionable, untarnished. In Islam, there is no permissiveness, no promiscuity. It is for this reason, that a Muslim, Mominah wife would not leave the house without her husband's explicit or implicit pleasure and permission, or at least without his full knowledge. The idea is to protect her from those situations which give rise to loose and slovenly behaviour. And here, ISLAM allows man to be jealous. In this form of jealousy, which is conducive to the preservation of one's integrity, ISLAM sees no shame or evil. His wife is SACRED, and the sanctity must be guarded. She is not everybody's toy, nor is she a bauble for the indiscreet. She belongs to a person, exclusively, and so does he to her. ISLAM is not at all apologetic about it.

(d) A Mother

Perhaps, the best role in a woman's life is that of a mother. Islam views a mother with that love, affection and respect, which is little short of absolute submission and reverence.

The Quran says:

"And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve (any) but Him, and goodness to your parents. If either or both of them reach old age with you, say not to them (so much as)

'Ugh', nor chide them, and speak to them a generous word.

And make yourself submissively gentle to them with compassion, and say: O my Lord! have compassion on them, as they brought me up (when I was) little". (17:23,24).

The fondling arms of a mother, her nursing breasts and warm affectionate laps wherein a child rests with that feeling of security never to be experienced again, all are considered to be important and equally sacred contributions to the formation of a healthy ISLAMIC society.

Imam Ja'fer Sadiq (A.S.) was once asked by a companion: "O Son of the Prophet, at times it so happens that my old father and my old mother both call me together. To which of them shall I attend first?" Imam (A.S.) said: "You will apply your mind to your mother, and hearken her call"! The companion was surprised, and stood silent with a questioning glance. Evidently, he could not believe his ears. "My mother? and not my father?" "Yes", Imam (A.S.) said. "Yes, your mother and not your father. And if you will choose to continue asking me this even seventy times, my answer shall be the same. Harken your mother's call".

It was truly said that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. Islam believes that it is only a true Muslim mother, an obedient, virtuous Mominah mother who is capable of giving to her society a true, faithful Muslim and Momin. She, as a mother, rules. She controls the destiny of the generation she has produced. And for her efforts, she deserves all the reverence.

The Prophet said:

"Paradise is under the feet of the mothers."

This Hadith must be pondered upon in contrast with the prevalent behaviour of the Arabs before the advent of ISLAM. Suddenly, for the first time, a woman felt dignified. She became conscious that her being a mother was not an ordinary role. This is true, even today.

Once a Jew convert told the Prophet to allow him to discontinue serving his old mother. "She is a Jew, a disbeliever. She refuses to accept Islam", he said with contempt and some deri-

sion. The Prophet said: "You will now serve her more. For you are a Muslim, and Islam teaches obedience and acquiescence to the parents".

Abidingly, he began to show more sympathy and condescension to his mother. And the old lady did not fail to notice his zeal and readiness. And one day she could not help asking: "My dear son, you have always been so obedient and kind. But, I find an added warmth and zeal in your service to me." The son said: "Yes mother, my Prophet has taught me so. It is my religion. Islam says I must earn your pleasure". This was a message that did not need any further repeating. Raising her feeble arms, she demanded: "Carry me unto the Prophet, so that I may embrace ISLAM, and accept the Truth that teaches such values in life".

A man took his aged mother to Haj, and while doing TAWAF, carried her upon his shoulders. Complacent with the good turn he did to his mother, he came to our Imam Zainul Abedeen (A.S.) and asked: "I have taken her to HAJ, and walked around the KA'BA with her high above my shoulders. Have I repaid her obligations?" And the Imam says: "Not even for a single rocking of your cradle".

He was taken aback. After all the pains he had taken, he could not measure up with his mother's services. Why? Imam said: "Well there is a basic difference in her services and yours. She served you, expecting that you may live. She prayed for your longevity, and took pains for your survival. You serve her at the end of her life, expecting her to die any day. There is a difference."

Woman as a mother reaches the pinnacle of her role, and becomes an ideal for all her children, male and female. We are what our mothers made of us. Man — and by this I mean a male member of the humankind, is so very much indebted to a woman — his mother!

THE WEDDING

(1) PROPOSAL AND MAHR.

For a man to become eligible for taking a woman's hand in marriage, ISLAM has several recommendations. According to Islamic Laws, when a boy attains the age of fifteen, or becomes sexually potent, he is BALIGH, and has attained puberty. But this is not enough for entering into a contract of marriage.

Apart from the laws related to puberty, there is a concept of 'RUSHD' which can be translated as 'capability of a sensible conduct' or maturity. And in marriage, this is considered important. A husband has to be RASHID, a wife RASHIDAH; so that the responsibilities of married life are sensibly discharged.

The Prophet gave no recognition to the class distinction. But in marriage, he stressed upon compatibility. The marrying partners must be KUFW of each other, so that there are no unnecessary misgivings later.

In Islam the process of proposal by a man to a woman for her hand in marriage, or for that matter, to her family, is encouraged. Islam considers this natural, and recommends it as an act of respectability and dignity for women. It is not for a woman to seek a husband, or go around 'man-hunting'. This is below her dignity. Islam sees her as a self-conscious, tender being, who must shy away from such spurious advances emanating from herself. But when a proposal has been made, it is solely a matter of her discretion. While ISLAM recommends that she may seek her guardian's consent, no male, not even her father or grandfather, can force her into acceptance.

And the intending husband is asked to offer a MAHR to the bride. It is perhaps one of the most misunderstood injunctions of ISLAM.

Or is it a victim of deliberate distortion by the non-believers? MAHR has been translated as 'bride-price', or

“dowry” etc. to denote that Muslims have been asked to fix and pay a price for ‘purchasing’ a woman and making her his wife.

Later on, within the Muslim societies, Mahr assumed another tragic interpretation. Parents of both the families would assemble to determine the MAHR, and a high bid was construed as prestigious. This un-Islamic practice by the Muslim societies led observers to believe that MAHR was indeed a ‘price’.

Nowadays, some reformists have gone a step further. They consider MAHR as an indemnity or a guarantee against divorce. They argue that MAHR must be substantial, so that it could support a woman who is rendered helpless when divorced, or abandoned. In all these interpretations, the simple Islamic concept of MAHR has been totally overlooked.

Quran says:

“And give women their MAHR as a free gift”... (4:4)

The following points are worthy of consideration:

- (a) MAHR must be agreed by the marrying partners themselves, not by the parents.
- (b) MAHR is given to the bride and not her parents.
- (c) MAHR is her right, to which her husband remains indebted.
- (d) It is a free gift, and not her price.

We find that Mahr is a gesture from a man to a woman whom he intends to marry. It is neither a bride price, nor is it meant to be any indemnifying act.

A woman once came to the Prophet and said: “I request you to take me as your wife”. It must be remembered that the social changes were then taking place surely but imperceptibly. After ISLAM, women no longer preferred to live unattached. So whenever a distressed, despondent woman found herself unprotected, she ran to the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) to get an aid. This statement by that woman implied that she wanted to get married and secured. The Prophet understood the implication and so did the companions. That is why we find that immediately after her request, a companion stood up and said, “O

Prophet of God, I am prepared to marry her”.

The Prophet asked: “What will you give in Mahr?”

“I don’t possess anything”, he said.

“This is not possible. Go into your house, and try to find out something you might be able to offer as Mahr”, the Prophet advised.

The companion complied and then upon return, said: “O Prophet, I found nothing”.

“Nothing at all? Not even an iron ring?” the Prophet asked.

At this stage, a friend stood up to assure the Prophet that the fellow indeed was poor.

But the companion said: “O Prophet, I will give half my dress as Mahr”.

The Prophet smiled and replied:

“This is not a satisfactory arrangement. For it will leave each of you in need of the other half. Do you know any SURAH of Quran by heart?”

“Yes”, he said.

“Well”, the Prophet said,: “I shall read your NIKAH to this lady, and the MAHR shall be that you teach her the parts of Quran you know”.

Is MAHR an indemnity?

Is MAHR a bride-price?

(2) *THE NIKAH CEREMONY*

Marriage according to ISLAM is a simple, joyous occasion. It culminates into a brief ceremony of NIKAH, when prescribed words are recited by the marrying partners themselves. It is the woman who initiates the contract, and the man who reciprocates. According to Sheriah, the wife-to-be or the bride would say:

“ANKAHTU NAFSI NAFSAKA ALAL MAHRIL MA’LOOM.

I have given away myself in NIKAH to you, on the agreed Mahr.”

Immediately, the man (the bridegroom) would respond:

“QABILTUN NIKAHA

I have accepted the Nikah.”

With these pronouncements, they become husband and wife.

In a society where the marrying couples are unable to pronounce these words in Arabic, or are unaware of the simple recitation which is required, one or two persons or priests are appointed and authorized to officiate. One who represents the bride would first seek her explicit consent to officiate on her behalf, and so would the other who acts on behalf of the groom. Naturally, there would be slight variation in the pronouncements, because the persons reciting them are appointees.

A person who represents the bride would initiate by saying:

“ANKAHTU MUWAKKILATI MUWAKKILAKA
ALAL MAHRIL MA'LOOM.

I give away in Nikah the woman who has thus appointed and authorized me, to the man who has authorized you, on an agreed Mahr.”

The groom's representative would respond:

“QABILTUNNIKAHA LIMUWAKKILI ALAL
MAHRIL MA'LOOM.

I accept the Nikah on behalf of the one who has appointed me, on the agreed MAHR.”

As is customary, these words are repeated more than once, in other forms bearing equivalent meanings. But legally, the Nikah is complete with the first proposal and acceptance.

It is Mustahab to recite a brief discourse or KHUTBA before the NIKAH formula is enunciated. In this KHUTBA, ALLAH is praised for His Wisdom in regulating the lawful process of procreation; and then the traditions from the Prophet (S.A.W.), are also recited. The Prophet (S.A.W.) said:

“Nikah is my way and recommendation. And whoever turns away from Nikah (marriage) is not from me”.

And again, he said:

“Marry and multiply. For no doubt, I shall take pride over all the people, on the day of Judgement, because of your number, even if it be a miscarriage.”

(3) THE WEDDING ROOM

The desire among men and women to have the company of each other as wife and husband is natural, and Islam recognises the attraction and affection each holds for the other.

The Holy Quran says:

“And of his signs is that He created for you from yourselves, mates that you may dwell inclined to them and caused between you love and compassion. Verily in this are signs for a people who reflect.”

The grace and beauty with which Allah has endowed a woman is regarded as an asset. But Islam adds another natural virtue to these qualities to act as a guard against social evils. And this is what Islam calls — AL HAYA — bashfulness.

Imam Muhammed Baqir (A.S.) said:

“The best of women is she who, when in the intimate company of her husband, is gentle and inviting. And when not in the company of her husband, she puts on the garb of diffidence and bashfulness.”

The natural sexual instinct in human beings has been discussed and explained healthily in Islam. It has not been looked down upon as a dirt or a taboo. It is for this reason that we find that Islamic FIQH and TRADITIONS deal amply with several intimate conditions in the lives of a man and a woman, giving him or her a divine guidance.

Islam forbids any lustful contact between a man and a woman before the NIKAH has been performed. And these contacts have been described in three stages. The first one is ‘NADHAR’ or a glance. When a man wants to propose on a woman, he is allowed to have a glance at her face. This must be a discreet exercise. But to indulge in the practice of glancing at women for the sake of satisfying base pleasure, with a viper of evil intent and lust in the bosom, is one of the gravest sins. This leads ultimately to another vice.

The second stage is KALAM or talking to a strange woman. If one talks to a strange woman or man when it

becomes absolutely necessary, it is understood and permissible. But when this is done with an intention to endear, or create an unlawful proximity, it is forbidden. The Quran bids the wives of the Prophet (S.A.W.) not to talk to the strangers softly, the reason assigned to this is given in very clear terms. The Quran says: "So that those who are sick at heart may not be the victim of lust."

And finally, the physical contact. In Islam the idea of any physical contact between a man and a woman, before they are lawfully wedded, is unthinkable. The Prophet (S.A.W.) forbade all forms of contacts, including the handshake. There is no doubt that the sense of touch is the most delicate one, and with all its dumbness and subtlety, it can convey much more than speech.

To summarise, we find that while Islam allows a man and a woman to have a brief encounter when each wants to genuinely decide about the marriage, it does not encourage promiscuity. The idea may seem utterly orthodox, but Islam is not at all apologetic about it.

Chastity and virginity are positive virtues, and a woman must possess these virtues before marriage. This is applicable to men also, in that he must not engage in unlawful acts of fornication or adultery.

The notion that a man and a woman must 'know' each other before they decide to marry each other, so that they may then be able to live happily together is an illusion. Had there been any element of truth and validity in this, the divorce and separation rates in the societies which practice it would not have shown a steady rise. Similarly, the marriages which take place without such pre-marital contacts would not have been known to last happily.

In Islam, marriage is an intention to spend the life together. It is not restricted to an evening or occasional meeting. And life, as we know, is not always a bed of roses. To know a man or a woman in jovial mood, with an artificial smile sometimes hanging on the lips, is one thing. And to see him or her at the worst, with all the trial and tribulations of

life around, with the changes of temperament, with the initial artificial charm and grace worn-off, is another thing altogether. To put it simply, in Islamic marriage, 'wife is dearer than bride'.

Once a companion came to the Prophet (S.A.W.) and said "I have a wife who welcomes me when I enter the house, and follows me to the door when I go out. When she sees me worried she says: "What are you worried about? If it is about your sustenance, then ALLAH is there to provide. And if you are worried about the life hereafter (AKHERAT), then may ALLAH increase your concern".

When the Prophet heard this, he said: "Allah has His workers, and your wife is among His workers. She has half the reward of a Martyr".

The day a person weds, therefore, is a new day. The wedding night, as seen in ISLAM, is a night of joy and blessings. On this occasion, there is the first encounter, which has to be new and unprecedented.

Imam Ja'fer Sadiq (A.S.) told his disciple Abu Baseer: "When you go to your wife on the wedding night, pray two Rakaats of thanksgiving, and then say:

"O Allah, I have decided to take a wife, so let her be among the pure and chaste. Protect her for herself and for my bounties. Let her be a cause of ample sustenance and sustained fortune. And grant us a virtuous offspring, to become our noble descendant in our lifetime and after death".

And then Imam continued to say:

"Place your loving hand over her forehead, and say: "O Allah, I have married her according to Your Book (Sheriah), and have accepted her under Your Trust. And have made her my lawful spouse with Your Words (NIKAH). Grant me from her womb children safe and without defects, and do not make them partners of the devil".

SEX IN MARRIAGE

After the introduction of contraceptive methods like the condom, pills, coil etc., sexual acts can now be looked on as an end in themselves instead of a means of procreation. The word Matrimony was actually derived from the word "Maternity" i.e. procreation but the present day concept of marriage is incompatible with the original concept.

It is common to believe that sexual problems in one partner or both, eventually lead to the breakup of a marriage. It must be emphasised, however, that good sexual relations strengthen a marriage and that sexual problems may be the result rather than the cause of a weakening marriage. Yet, there can still be a good, strong stable marriage, where sexual difficulties may be existing, provided that there is genuine loving relationship between the marriage partners in the other areas of their life together.

Sexual love is a very individualistic personal matter because no two people behave and react in the same way under a given set of circumstances. Much to our amazement the youths of today do not know about sexual intercourse as much as we imagine that they know. I have encountered young western couples in whom the sexual problems were due to ignorance and shyness. Knowledge of the anatomy of the male and female genitalia and the sensual areas and the sex technique, is necessary if sexual satisfaction is to be achieved. The demands of the partners vary with experiences and are also influenced by the knowledge from magazines, newspapers and television.

For the achievement of mutual sexual orgasms, there has to be mutual love and trust and tenderness. It is a fallacy to believe that orgasm is necessary in the woman for sexual satisfaction. There are times when a woman who normally enjoys sexual intercourse may not want it: sometimes, this is because she is tired or ill or anxious or worried or about to have her monthly period. No harm, however, results in having

sexual intercourse during pregnancy. During menopause certain changes take place causing changes in interest in sexual activities. After menopause the feelings may change again and in some women the sexual desire increases. There is no normal or abnormal time at which intercourse becomes less frequent or stops. With many couples sexual activity is still frequent in their sixties and may even continue until the eighties. With some couples intercourse is rare after fifty. It is usually the husband's ill-health which puts an end to sexual activity. By the age of seventy years, about twenty-five per cent of the males are impotent. Regular sexual activity may help to maintain a certain degree of sexual competence.

Some women suffer a lot more than others a few days before and during the monthly period. In some the distress is so great that these women behave in a very aggressive hostile way which is not in keeping with their normal character. There is a condition called Premenstrual Tension Syndrome which affects some women. All these difficulties are caused by marked fluctuation and reduction in certain hormone levels at the time of menstruation. During such times women have been known to feel very depressed, have major quarrels with the husband or children and sometimes even have been physically aggressive. The anger and irritability is uncontrollable and after the difficult period has passed, the woman sits back and can't understand why she behaved the way she did. It is of paramount importance for husbands to be more considerate to their wives during the wife's monthly period and especially if she is one of those who suffers from Premenstrual Tension Syndrome. I have known marriages that have been ruined because of tempers flaming at this difficult time.

Sexual intercourse has the best results in terms of satisfaction and intensity of pleasure when it is undertaken when both the partners are in a relaxed state both physically and psychologically. This applies more to females. However, in men sometimes there may be a failure to achieve an erection if they are very tired physically or mentally from a hard day's work or a hard day's journey. This problem is temporary and

should not worry the man because as soon as he is relaxed the next day or the mental tension has disappeared in a couple of days this problem will disappear. Some men become frightened that it is permanent and then psychologically become helpless and convince themselves subconsciously about their inability, thus making it a permanent disability. Sexual intercourse frequency also can determine the intensity of the pleasure derived from it. Long intervals of abstinence enhances the pleasure intensity.

In a survey carried out, it was estimated that two-thirds of the males and females considered sexual activities of vital importance in a happy marriage. That being so, it is an important duty of the partners to communicate freely their feelings about sex and to aid each other to achieve sexual satisfaction.

CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS

Contraception is the prevention of conception by methods other than abstinence from sexual intercourse. Contraception is recognised as important in the field of preventive medicine, being essential to the health and welfare of individuals, families and whole communities.

The sex urge is the mechanism whereby nature ensures the continuance of the race. Contraception enables partners free expression of sexual needs without incurring the risk of pregnancy. The alternative to contraception is complete or partial abstinence from sexual intercourse and this, for a loving married couple, is unnatural and it introduces stresses which threaten both marriage and mental health.

Contraception has been practised in one form or another throughout history but has frequently been countermanded by law or custom. Some individuals, as well as religious groups, still have conscientious objections to birth control or to certain methods whereby it is achieved.

INDICATIONS FOR CONTRACEPTION

(1) COMMUNAL:

The number of babies, younger children and adults dying from disease and ill-health has gone down considerably. This has been partly due to medical advancement. The World Population has doubled in the last fifty years. It was 2,500 million in 1950 and 3,500 million in 1965. By the year 2000, it should be 7,000 million if the same birth rate persists.

(2) INDIVIDUAL

(a) *Temporary ill-health in either husband or wife:*

The sex urge sometimes remains strong during illness, and it is theoretically possible that conception occurring at such a time is more likely to result in a poor quality of offspring. A

more practical consideration is that pregnancy would put a financial, nervous and physical strain on one or other partner at a time when they are ill fitted for it. This argument applies to recent operations and disease.

(b) Chronic Systemic diseases in the wife:

These include Kidney diseases, high blood pressure, Heart problems, lung problems, mental illnesses, blood diseases, and any disease which makes a woman less able to withstand the strain of pregnancy and labour, or which makes her unfit to cope with the rearing of another child.

(c) Previous Obstetrical Complications:

Recurrent Toxaemia of pregnancy, (high blood pressure, swelling of the feet, and Proteins in the urine), recurrent miscarriages, repeated caesarian section, fistulas and a previous serious gynaecological operation can justify the avoidance or deferment of further childbearing.

(d) Disease transmissible to the foetus:

The best examples are syphilis and haemolytic disease (Blood problems) but certain diseases in which inheritance plays a part — epilepsy (fit), deafness and mutism and haemophilia (Blood problem), for example — deserve mention. Avoidance of conception is also often indicated when there is a high risk of offspring being mentally or physically defective, as there is amongst couples who have already had two or more abnormal children.

(e) Birth Spacing:

If a woman has children too frequently, she has no time to recover from one before she is faced with the next. She is then prone to suffer from anaemia (lack of blood), muscle and back aches and nervous exhaustion. She becomes unable to cope with her domestic responsibilities, allows the home to become dirty and cheerless, neglects her children and her husband.

(f) *Family Limitation:*

In general the dangers to the mother and the child rise with each pregnancy after the fourth.

(g) *Early Marriage:*

Marriage calls for more readjustment than is generally realised. The bride often finds herself plunged into a new environment, away from her relatives and friends, and with responsibilities which frighten even if they do not overwhelm. She may well have to learn to cook, sew and manage a house and to do so under the critical eye of her husband's relatives, friends and business associates. Many young brides decide to have a limited number of children as soon as is reasonable with the object of completing their childbearing within a few years and of returning to their work or profession immediately their maternal responsibilities allow. Those who choose to wait longer should be warned not to wait too long. Parenthood at an early age favours health and happiness.

(h) *Later years of marriage:*

Contraception is again indicated in the later years of marriage — when the family is complete and when the parents are set in their ways. When the menopause arrives, contraception should generally be continued until there has been no monthly period for two years.

METHODS

There are various methods available these days. Long ago, only simple and less sophisticated methods were used.

(1) *SAFE PERIOD, RHYTHM METHOD:*

If the menstruation cycle is regular and is of twenty eight days duration, then the safe period comprises the nine days before menstruation begins and 3 days after it has stopped. In all women the seven days before the menstruation are the safest. The disadvantage of this method is it is only applicable to some and that sexual intercourse is dictated by arithmetic rather than spontaneous sexual desire.

*(2) INCOMPLETE COITUS (SEXUAL INTERCOURSE)
COITUS INTERRUPTUS:*

It is an extremely common practice and is usually implied when an individual says that pregnancy is avoided by "being careful". Sexual intercourse takes place but the penis is withdrawn immediately before ejaculation. This method has the advantage that it costs nothing and requires no special appliance. Nevertheless, it is not a very reliable method, and also not a satisfactory one for the achievement of sexual fulfilment. This method can also cause nervous and emotional reactions leading to Neurosis, heavy periods, painful periods and other ills. So it is said, but it must be pointed out that coitus interruptus is probably the most widely practised of all methods of contraception yet. Apart from having an occasional unwanted pregnancy, people using this method never seem to come to any harm.

(3) MALE SHEATH (CONDOM):

A sheath is made of fine rubber and is used to cover the erect penis to contain the semen when ejaculation takes place. Although this method has been criticised it is one which is used more commonly than any other, except coitus interruptus, and is applicable to population control in many communities.

(4) DOUCHING:

Washing the private parts after sexual intercourse is an ancient method. Fluids commonly used for this purpose are water, a weak solution of soap, vinegar, lemon juice in water and antiseptic solutions of all kinds. This method is reasonably effective only if applied immediately after intercourse.

*(5) CHEMICAL & PHYSICO-CHEMICAL
CONTRACEPTIVES:*

Spermicidal pessaries, tablets, creams or jellies can be inserted or injected into the vagina before intercourse. These are used immediately before intercourse.

*(6) VAGINAL OCCLUSIVE PESSARY
(DUTCH CAP, VAGINAL DIAPHRAGM):*

The "Dutch Cap" consists of a saucer-shaped rubber diaphragm with a metal coil spring in its rim which fits snugly across the inside part of vagina. The cap needs to be inserted every night before the woman retires to bed.

(7) SPONGES:

"Household Methods" include the use of small sponges soaked in vinegar or soap solution and packed in upper vagina.

*(8) INTRA-UTERINE CONTRACEPTIVE DEVICES
(IUCD) COIL:*

These are small devices of metal or plastic which are inserted into the uterus (womb) by a qualified person. This device remains in the womb for several years. Only authorised and trained people should be consulted for the insertion of this device.

(9) ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES:

The oral contraceptive or "the Pill" consists of hormones oestrogen and progesterone. These pills are taken by women in a prescribed manner. They have to be examined and questioned about any serious illnesses before the decision to start them on the pills is taken. Doctors and authorised personnel can advise on the use of the pill.

(10) HORMONE DEPOTS:

Intramuscular injections of the hormone can be given every three months.

(11) THE "MORNING AFTER" PILL:

These pills can be given after a woman has been exposed to the risk of a pregnancy. It has to be started early and taken for 4-6 days after intercourse.

(12) SURGICAL OPERATION METHODS:

(a) TUBAL LIGATIONS (in Women)

This involves the tying of the Fallopian Tubes in women in order to prevent pregnancy.

(b) VASECTOMY (In Men)

This involves tying of the Tubes in men in order to prevent pregnancy.

SOURCES OF STRESS IN MARRIAGE

What factors bring about misery and dissatisfaction in marriage? In some cases it is only one factor but in others it may be a combination of more factors. A short list of factors is being mentioned below to give an idea to the readers about the sort of factors that may be directly or indirectly responsible.

- (1) Lack of consideration for the other partner.
- (2) Lack of communication with each other.
- (3) Lack of frankness.
- (4) Lack of genuine attitude.
- (5) Not going out at all — Get shut indoors with children all the time.
- (6) Lack of mutual trust.
- (7) Presence of selfishness — no “give and take”.
- (8) Infidelity.
- (9) Intolerance.
- (10) Temper outbursts.
- (11) Lot of hostile arguments.
- (12) Quarrelling and fighting.
- (13) Lack of affection and love.
- (14) Jealousy.
- (15) Very possessive and selfish.
- (16) Lack of cleanliness and order in the house.
- (17) Lack of personal cleanliness.
- (18) Lack of agreement on how to bring up the children.
- (19) Childishness.
- (20) Fussiness over petty things.
- (21) Complacency.
- (22) Laziness — won't help.
- (23) “Taking for granted feeling”.
- (24) Moral faults.
- (25) Domineering.
- (26) Bossy.
- (27) Nagging and Moaning.

- (28) Extravagance.
- (29) Too houseproud.
- (30) No answer — always says “don’t know”.
- (31) Not listening to the partner when being talked to and dropping off to sleep in the chair.
- (32) Not patient.
- (33) Not understanding that changes occur when one grows older.
- (34) Never seems to be contented.
- (35) Never tries to know what the other partner wants.
- (36) **A Husband may cause stress by any of the following:**
 - (a) The husband not being understanding after the birth of children and not appreciating that energies and affection have to be shared.
 - (b) The husband being mean with money given to his wife.
 - (c) Husband going out alone in the evenings and spending too much money which should be spent for the home needs.
 - (d) Husband is a gambler.
 - (e) Husband smokes cigarettes.
 - (f) Husband’s greed over money-making too important — putting money before happiness and neglecting the wife and children.
 - (g) Leaving the wife alone too much.
 - (h) Expecting too much of the wife when she has young children.
 - (i) Husband not able to see when a woman needs rest.
 - (j) Husband becomes completely immersed in his business and he may not think that his wife wants to be taken out.
 - (k) Husband spends too much time out with his male friends and neglects his family.
 - (l) Husband spends a lot of time on his car, hobby or interests.
 - (m) Husband goes out for half an hour and comes back three hours later — then he doesn’t understand why his

wife should be irritable when he gets home.

(n) Husband puts his money and attention in other people or things i.e. neighbours, car, hobby, relatives.

(o) Husband thinks that the wife is a servant.

(p) Husband doesn't show enough authority where the children are concerned and criticises the wife.

(q) Husband is away from the home too much.

(r) Husband expresses admiration of other women to the wife — but does not show the appreciation he may well feel for his wife and family.

(37) A Wife may cause stress by any of the following:

(a) The wife does not show understanding towards the husband's problems and difficulties at his business or office.

(b) The wife makes big demands on an already exhausted husband who has just returned home from a hard day's work.

(c) The wife making excessive demands for money without appreciating the husband's small income.

(d) The wife spending too much money unnecessarily on clothes, make-up and other luxury items.

(e) The wife is engrossed completely in the kitchen or sewing, and ignores the presence of the husband in the house.

(f) The wife spends a lot of time in women's social gatherings and at neighbours' and her friends' houses while the husband does baby-sitting.

(g) The wife is not able to see when a man needs rest.

(h) The wife spends a long time chatting on the telephone with friends and relatives and neglecting the family.

(i) The wife gives too much attention and energy to her own relatives and tries to run their homes.

(j) The wife thinks that the husband is a servant.

(k) The wife does not exercise her duties in the upbringing of the children.

(l) The wife expresses admiration of other men to her husband — but does not show the appreciation she may

well feel for her husband and family.

(m) The wife keeps quiet and doesn't reply to the husband's queries.

(n) The wife keeps on demanding attention all the time and starts weeping when it is not forthcoming.

(o) The wife makes false excuses when the husband seeks sexual gratification.

(p) The wife belittles her husband in the presence of relatives or friends.

(q) The wife shows complete disregard for her in-laws.

(r) The wife totally neglects her personal appearance.

The list of factors is endless. It is not always possible to pinpoint a factor in marital disharmony. Sometimes, it is just a slight misunderstanding of the true feeling or intention of the other partner. A partner who truly and deeply loves the spouse may become very possessive and appear to be suspicious, non-trusting and interfering. The interfering and suspicious attitude has arisen as a result of the insecurity of losing the very dearly loved partner. In some cases the concern for the partner's health or prosperity may be interpreted wrongly by a partner as interference, overprotectiveness and nagging.

A Human mind is a very complex phenomenon and it is not easy to predict how it would react to a particular factor. Something that may be considered as very petty by one person may be seen by another as a major shortcoming. It, therefore, depends on the interpretation of each individual, whether a particular factor is a stressful factor or not.

With mutual trust and love a husband and wife can together solve the majority of problems that they come across in their married life. The source of stress can be identified, polite discussion can follow and a "give and take" attitude should help to resolve the problem. If that is not the essence of married life, then what is?

DIVORCE AND ITS EFFECTS

(a) ON THE PARTNERS:

When the first marriage has failed, then the chances of the second or the third or the fourth marriage being successful are very slim. The exception to this statement are cases where an individual had unfortunately unknowingly married previously an alcoholic, or a drug addict or adulterer or an impotent person or a compulsive gambler or a chronically ill person with physical or psychological problems.

It is therefore very prudent that both partners should try and make a success out of their first marriage, no matter what the odds are against them. Drifting apart as a result of some of the trivial stresses (mentioned in Chapter seven) is not the solution to a happy future. However, at the time of the arguments and crises the partners are so full of anger, hostility and vengeance that it appears to both of them that a divorce would solve all their problems and relieve them of the misery. Little do they realise that a divorce is only the beginning and not the end of great misery, hardship, loneliness, disillusionment, embarrassment, insecurity and depression.

When one is miserable in the first marriage, it is natural for a human to feel that he or she will be happier in the second marriage, but the fact remains that when one is a divorcee then he or she belongs to a different category to an ordinary bachelor or spinster. One is, as a divorcée, exposed to several problems and also the chances of meeting an unmarried youth from a decent, respectable background are not that great as when one was single before the first marriage.

In the second marriage there will be the additional problem of the children from the first marriage of the second partner. Indeed it is not easy to keep a stable marriage in such circumstances when the loyalties are so much divided and the affection has to be shared. Therefore, it boils down to "staying on in the first marriage and making the most of your life with the devil you know rather than the devil you don't".

(b) ON THE CHILDREN:

It has also been well recorded in text books of good reputation and through research that the children of divorced parents are affected very adversely — not only socially, educationally, morally but also psychologically. Such children have higher chances of becoming juvenile delinquents, drug addicts, failing badly at school and also developing depressive illnesses. These children pay a heavy price just because they did not have a stable and happy background. Other illnesses like psychopathic personality disorders are also common amongst these children when they grow up. These children, in their turn, when they get married go through a stormy marriage because of the above-mentioned attributes and characteristics. These unfavourable characteristics would not have been acquired by them had their parents not been divorced. Their marriages also may end the way their parents' marriage did. Therefore, parents by divorcing each other not only make their own lives miserable but the lives of the next generation who are totally innocent.

It has also been recorded, after research, that there are higher chances of alcoholism and suicide among divorcees in the Western Countries. It must be impressed to the readers that one does not have to go through a divorce itself first in order to learn about the misery and hardship of a divorcee. You just have to read books and observe around you, within the community and outside to understand what divorces can do to people. The divorcee, once divorced, faces torment, social and economic hardships and becomes the gossip material for members of the Community. However, there are people who despite the awareness and knowledge of all the hardships that a divorcee faces, wants to stubbornly go ahead with a divorce because his or her ego should not get hurt whatever else happens.

In times of difficulty in one's marriage, one should remember this book and go through it once more to remind oneself of how to make a marriage into a happy and enjoyable one.

MARRIAGE COUNSELLING

A realistic view of marriage has to recognise not only the cliché that “all marriages have problems”, but that in the course of a marriage over time every marriage has serious problems to the point where divorce or separation is at least considered.

It is not possible for one, whether he is a friend or relative of a couple, to make an accurate judgement of the stability of a marriage by observing how the husband and wife behave with each other in social situations. People always assume that other people's marriages are working. It is true, in a sense, that the public reports given about one's marriage are like the communiqués issued by heads of state after an International meeting. Neither one tells you very much about what is really going on.

When a couple is going through a “stormy marriage”, they should be bold and take the initiative to obtain some guidance from either elders in the Community, or expert Marriage guidance counsellors or members of the Matrimonial Committees in their locality. The Counsellor is not emotionally involved in the couple's difficulties and so is expected to be able to think clearly and impartially. He is in a position to view the marital problems from the outside and can often see where one partner is deficient in his behaviour towards the other.

It must be admitted that there are some counsellors who make matters worse than before. The choice of a counsellor should be based on whether he is sincere, honest, helpful and of a mature personality. Some couples try to be their own marriage counsellors, when they have reached a breaking point in their marriage. It is futile to expect clarity of thought and balanced judgement in an atmosphere of highly charged emotion.

One of the biggest hurdles has been to persuade both partners to be together in the same room as many of them say that they can no longer stand the sight of each other. Some-

times, it is only one of the partners who actually wants a divorce, and the other keeps insisting that the marriage is not over.

Every community has its own methods and criteria for dealing with marital problems amongst its members. Ours is no exception. When a marriage is on the verge of a breakup, the couple and their relatives, having identified the crisis, appoint a representative or representatives respectively for the husband and wife. These representatives meet in a genuine spirit of reconciliation. It is of paramount importance that the intent for reconciliation exists, without which most of the time gets taken up with arguments and reconciliation fails dismally. Each case is treated on its individual merit and the decisions reached accordingly. Sometimes, it may become clear, when the various factors have been taken into account, that separation or divorce is the best compromise. However, the couples who have the best prognosis, and who will make it with each other, are the ones who state, in essence, "We basically love each other and want to stay married, but for some reason we can't get along".

Marriage counselling has a long and respectable tradition. It involved a type of "Catharsis" whereby both the parties were able to ventilate their feelings and express their anger, hostility and their suggestions for bringing about improvement in the other partner. The counsellors, having heard both sides, then proceeded with the work of reconciliation. This type of counselling should be distinguished from conjoint Marital therapy, a form of depth treatment, which not only deals with the intrapsychic dynamics of each spouse but also examines the interlocking nature of the marital bond. Marital therapy is carried out by people who have specialised training and who view the marital relationships in the context of the whole family, including the children, as well as the extended family.

About fourteen years ago a striking phenomenon was reported which was at first sight so glaringly obvious that it seemed hardly worth comment; the only way married couples will understand each other is for them to take notice of what

the other person says and does. The way to get the partner to change behaviour is for each to change his/her behaviour first. The way to initiate change was to reward the partner for carrying out whatever behaviour they liked in him/her. This reward may be whatever is appropriate according to the couple's financial capacity and circumstances. The association of a reward with the desired behaviour will result in the repetition of that behaviour. This applies to both husband and wife who may reward each other. This form of approach constitutes what is called as *Behaviour Marital Therapy*. Each partner must take the responsibility for initiating the changes they want and not wait for the other person to act first. The "give-to-get" principle should be used i.e. each partner rewards the other for carrying out behaviour they like in him or her. The sort of behaviour that are rewarded are: (i) wife wants husband to spend more time with her and children, (ii) wife wants husband to show consideration and understanding when she has a lot of domestic chores to complete (iii) wife wants husband to look smarter (iv) wife wants husband to converse seriously with her (v) wife wants husband to make arrangements for household repairs. Similarly (i) the husband wants the wife to spend less on luxury items (ii) the husband wants the wife to look more attractive (iii) the husband wants the wife to keep the house in order and in a clean state. (iv) the husband wants the wife to allow more frequent sexual intercourse (v) the husband wants the wife to be more understanding and to show consideration when he has had a difficult day at work. The list of behaviours is endless.

Another approach used is Marriage therapy in couples Group. In this form of therapy married couples, with marital difficulties are put together. Couples, during the course of therapy come to realise that their marital difficulties are not unique, and some marital relationships improve simply from recognising how general marriage conflicts really are. It is not uncommon for a couple leaving the first session to say, "My God, did you see those two! and I thought our marriage was bad". In our community people do not get much opportunity

to examine other people's marriages in depth and also to participate in such group therapy. However, this chapter will have served its purpose if couples can realise that every marriage has to work out accommodations in the universal areas of the handling of children, sex, money, and in-laws and that people all over the world are essentially more alike than different.

For a couple to take the initiative to seek help, when there are marital difficulties, is not easy because both the husband and wife have to swallow their pride and admit that they need help. Once the advice has been sought and obtained then it is imperative that it is taken seriously and implemented. Some of the advice may not be easily palatable but the efforts that the couple make at that time to help themselves will be rewarded later. Those couples who make considerable progress often report that they feel really married for the first time. It is not unusual for older married couples, who are also not immune from marital difficulties, to act like adolescents in love after having sought advice.

Many years later, when the couple are both old and they benefit from each other's companionship and need each other for comfort and support, all the rows, squabbles and conflicts of the younger days seem very alien and unbelievable.

INDEX

A

- Abu Baseer, 40
- Adulterer, 54
- Akherat, 40
- Alcoholic, 54, 55
- Ali, Imam (A.S.), 29
- Allama Majlisi, 28

B

- Baligh, 34
- Banu Tamin Tribe, 22
- Behaviour Marital Therapy, 58
- Birth Spacing, 45
- Blood Related Problems, 45

C

- Chastity, 39
- "Catharsis", 57
- Chemical Contraceptives, 47
- Christian Marriage Vow, 6
- Coil, 41, 48
- Coitus Interruptus, 47
- Communication in Marriage, 12
- Condom, 41, 47
- Conjoint Marital Therapy, 57
- Contraceptive Methods, 41, 44

D

- Deafness, 45
- Dhatu R' Rayat, 24
- Divorce, 54
- Douching, 47
- Drug Addict, 54, 55
- Dutch Cap, 48

E

- Epilepsy, 45

F

- Facts for Husband, 13
- Facts for Middle Age, 19
- Facts for Old Age, 20
- Facts for Wife, 14
- Fatima, Bibi (A.S.), 27
- Family Limitation, 46

G

- Gambler, Compulsive, 54
- Group Marital Therapy, 58

H

- Haemolytic Disease, 45
- Haemophilia, 45
- Haj, 33
- Hasan, Imam (A.S.), 29
- Hilyatul Muttageen, 28
- Hind, Wife of Abu Sufyan, 24
- Hormones, 48

I

- Ibn Abil Awja', 29
- Ibn Athir, 24
- Ibn Sa'd, 24
- Ideal Marriage, 2
- Impotence, 42, 43, 54
- Incomplete Intercourse, 47
- Inheritance for Women, 28, 29
- Intra-uterine Contraceptive Device, 48

J

- Ja'fer Sadiq, Imam (A.S.), 32, 40
- Juvenile Delinquents, 55

K

- Ka'aba, 33
- Kalam, 38
- Kufw, 34
- Khutba, 37

L

- Libas, 25

M

- Mahr, 29, 34, 35, 36
- Male Sheath, 47
- Marital Therapy, 57, 58
- Marriage Guidance Counsellor, 56
- Maternity, 41
- Matrimonial Committee, 56
- Matrimony, 41
- Medical Illnesses, 45
- Menopause, 42, 46
- Menstruation, 42, 46
- Mohamed Prophet (S.A.W.), 39, 40
- Mohsanah, 30
- "Morning After" Pill, 48
- Mohammed Baqir, Imam (A.S.), 38
- Mutism, 45

- N**
 Nadhar, 38
 Nahjul Balagha, 29
 Nikah, 36, 37, 38, 40
- O**
 Obstetric Problems, 45
 Oestrogen, 48
 Oral Contraceptives, 48
- P**
 Physical Problem, 54
 Pills, 41, 48
 Pregnancy, 42, 48
 Premenstrual Tension Syndrome, 42
 Progesterone, 48
 Psychological Problem, 54, 55
 Psychopathic Personality Disorder, 55
- Q**
- R**
 Rhythm Method, 46
 Rushd, 34
- S**
 Safe Period, 46
 Sexual Difficulties, 41
 Sexual Intercourse, 41, 42
 Sexual Love, 41
 Sexual Orgasm, 41
 Sexual Satisfaction, 41
- Sheriah, 40
 Sponge, 48
 Stress Caused by Husband, 51
 Stresses in Marriage, 50
 Stress Caused by Wife, 52
 Suicide, 55
 Sumayya, 24
 Surah of Takwir, 22
 Syphills, 45
- T**
 Tabari, 24
 Tubal Ligation, 49
- U**
 Uhud, Battle of, 24
 Ummu- Abeeha, 27
 Uterus, 48
- V**
 Vaginal Diaphragm, 48
 Vasectomy, 49
- W**
 Wedding, 38
 Womb, 48
- X**
- Y**
- Z**
 Zainul Abedeem, Imam (A.S.), 33

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