

The Purposes of Marriage, in Islam

'Among Allah's signs is this, that He created mates for you from among yourselves, that you might dwell in peace with them. And He put love and mercy between your hearts. Without doubt, in this are signs for those who reflect.' (Surah 30:21).

It was not without good reason that our Blessed Prophet taught that marriage, in Islam, is 'half the faith'. The goal of married life is much greater than just two people trying to live successfully together. It is to practise Islam within a set group of people (your family – spouse, offspring, dependants), to bring about peace, love, security and happiness, and having achieved this in the microcosm of your own family, to then reach out to the world at large and spread these values to all.

None of this just comes naturally – it has to be created with love, patience and compassion, and practised without ceasing, and protected at all costs against the selfishness, laziness and temptations that will beset the relationship. We can see all around us the effects of people neglecting and abusing the family relationship. Muslims are requested by Allah to do their utmost to create happy, pious, content and secure households, and to follow the prophet's *sunnah* (practice) as far as possible.

When the Prophet's wife Aishah was asked about the way the Prophet lived at home, she replied simply: 'His way of life *IS* the Qur'an.' He was the same beloved person, noble and compassionate, within the privacy of his home as he was in public outside it!

The Aims of Muslim Marriage

The first and main aim of Muslim marriage should therefore be *ibadah*, the worship of Allah. This includes:

- believing without question that Allah is Lord, and is aware of your every thought, intention and action, and that everything you have been granted in life, even your next breath, is a gift – which could be withdrawn at any moment should Allah so wish.
- Being aware that you do not know how long your time will be on this earth, or when you or anyone you love will be taken away - and therefore being noble, kind, tolerant, compassionate and generous in all your dealings.
- Performing as nobly as possible all the rituals requested by Allah – which include not only the five 'pillars' of shahadah, salah, sawm, zakah and hajj, but also, in marriage, the promises of sexual fulfilment and companionship, etc.
- righteousness and honesty in all behaviour and transactions
- offering to Allah all your deeds and words in all walks of life, in your service to humanity, productive efforts, words spoken etc. If both husband and wife observe this main purpose, they would overcome many difficulties and shortcomings.

The second aim is to respond to the basic biological instincts and needs, for sexual fulfilment, personal companionship, safety and security, and procreation – to provide the most wholesome and happy atmosphere for bringing up the next generation.

The third aim is to protect us against the social and character problems that are associated with celibacy (that is, living without sex at all by subduing the natural urges), immorality, promiscuity, illegitimacy, loneliness, and depression.

Marriage in Islam is therefore:

- a form of ibadah
- a social contract
- a means of emotional and sexual gratification
- a mechanism to reduce tension and promote happiness
- a means of legitimate procreation
- a way of encouraging good family and group solidarity
- an act of piety