

A REMINDER TO OUR BIG SISTER



MUSTAPHA MUHAMMAD

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In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful. Perfect peace and blessings be upon Muhammad SAW, his household, his companions and all of mankind who follow sincerely in submission on his path of guidance. O Allah, enable us to see the truth as truth and bless us with the will to follow it. And enable us to see what is false as false and bless us with the will to distance ourselves from it. O Allah guide us and guide others through us.

Our dear sister, I hope, Allah willing, that this modest effort will in some measure prove useful and I seek Allah's forgiveness for any shortcomings. I pray that as you journey on in marriage you will grow to know and share from your experience, to bear all that life has to offer, and that you will live your life, through Allah's limitless providence and guidance, fully and in total submission to His compassionate will as a believer in Islam.

Our dear sister, if a reminder were unnecessary because of good manners and dignified character, then it would have been unnecessary for you, because you possess these qualities. Allah said He has sent the Prophet to mankind not as a guide but as a reminder to those who choose to freely belief. I pray the following will serve as a reminder for the purpose of forgetfulness and will support those who are wise in marriage.

Our dear sister, if a believing woman is able to do without a husband by virtue of her modest background and her need for her parents, then you of all people would be most able to do without a husband, but Allah has said that He created us in pairs, and that women were created for men just as men were created for women.

Our dear sister, you are about to leave the house in which you called home, where you first learned how to tie a wrapper and how to cook, to a husband who is

foreign to you. By marriage he has become your leader and his instructions are to be obeyed. If you serve him like a servant, he will also be like a servant to you. Invest in the following traits and watch how easy it is that a marriage could flourish, as it will become easy for you to be loved and lived with:

Be a contented wife to your husband for contentment brings peace of mind and be a good listener and obey him for obedience to your husband pleases Allah SWT.

Be the wife who always looks good and emit pleasant smell at all times, and a husband will not find you unattractive. Allah has approved a higher level of beautification for you above that of your husband. A clean breathing air in a home is better than the rarest perfume.

It is unhealthy and irresponsible to serve breakfast or any other meal late. For serving meals late ignites anger which is like lighting gasoline on the fire, and the volume of stereo speakers should be lower than mute when he sleeps and avoid making noise or engaging him in a lengthy conversation if and when tired. Let the man sleep in peace.

Take very good care of his children and take care of his wealth, for taking care of his children reveals how much you value him, and taking care of his wealth demonstrates your organization.

Never reveal or discuss any of his secrets to anyone, and avoid disregarding his instructions, for revealing and discussing his secrets will qualify you for his possible betrayal and you would have earned his mistrust in full, and if you make a habit of disregarding his instructions, his heart will be overflowed with extreme dislike towards you for it may translate to outright disrespect.

Our dear sister, be conscious of displaying joy in front of him when he is displeased, and do not grieve in front of him when he is excited, because the former exposes a lack of sound judgment whilst the latter will make him miserable. You should relate with understanding and positive encouragement.

MARRIAGE

Marriage in Islam is a legal contract between a man and a woman. The pair of the adults is expected to consent to the marriage out of their own free will. A formal joining must take place and witnessed by the public which will outline the rights and responsibilities of the husband and wife. This is considered essential to a religiously valid Islamic marriage. Marriage in Islam is usually until death or separation on the grounds of a valid divorce. The first reference for a believer in marriage is defined by BELIEF in Allah and the example of whatever the Prophet instructs because when it comes to marriage, *Iman* sets the pace. While Islam does not prohibit other attributes that can be inviting, it is better understood and appreciated across such limitations. Islam does not equally class celibacy as high *Taqwa*.

Islam recognizes the social necessity of marriage because through marriage, families are established and the fundamental unit of society is procreated through it. Therefore, marriage is the only legitimate or *Halal* way to indulge in intimacy between a believing man and a believing woman. Marriage serves as the only legal outlet through which one's sexual needs can be satisfied along with strict regulation so one does not become a slave to his or her own desires. It is worthy of note that Islam takes the middle course on sexual relations. It neither condemns it like certain religions, nor does it allow it freely. Say for example, Islam prohibits a husband from having sexual relation with his wife through the anus. It also

prohibits a husband in plural marriage to engage in marital relations at the same time with both wives. Islam urges believers to control and regulate their desires, whatever the fantasy a believer must necessarily remain dignified and not drop to the chains of animals.

THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

The broad purpose of marriage is being a means that both husband and wife should be able to provide pleasant companionship to one another, love for and to one another, procreate children, and live in peace and tranquility in absolute obedience to the commandments of Allah SWT and as exemplified by the Prophet SAW.

Marriage been a means to emotional and sexual gratification, it also serves as a means to ease tension. Anything else is in error. One is at liberty to live in sin, however by choosing marriage one is in direct obedience to Allah.

It is to be born in mind that marriage is a serious pledge in Islam. It is not a matter which can be taken lightly. It should be entered into with total commitment and full knowledge of what it involves. It is not like the buying of ice cream where one can ask for a substitute if the vanilla fails to be as tasty as expected. A partner should be your choice for live. Believers are expected to be of age to understand the demands of marriage so that the union can withstand the test of time before going into it.

However, for a marriage to be valid certain conditions must be met.

- a. Consent of both parties
- b. A gift from the groom to the bride
- c. Witnesses two male or female

The marriage should be publicized; it should never be kept a secret to avoid suspicion and troubles in the society.

The general opinion is that if a person, male or female fears that if he or she does not marry they will commit fornication, then marriage becomes *Wajib*. If a person has strong sexual urges then it also becomes *Wajib* for that person to marry. Marriage should not be put off or delayed especially if one has the means to do so. Imam Shaaf'I considers marriage to be preferable.

The general principle is that the Prophet enjoined his followers to marry. He said "When a man marries, he has fulfilled half his religion, so let him fear Allah regarding the remaining half." This is narrated by Anas. Islam generally encourages marriage because it shields one from falling into sin and upholds the family unit which Islam places great importance on.

SELECTION OF A PARTNER

The choice of a partner should be the one with the most *Taqwa*. The Prophet recommended that parties see each other before going through with the marriage. It is unreasonable for two people to be thrown into marriage together and be expected to relate and be intimate when they know nothing of each other that can either be inviting or avoided. The couples are permitted to look at each other with critical eye and not a lustful one. This ruling does not contradict the verse which says that believing men and women should lower their gaze.

The couple however, are not permitted to be alone in a closed room or go out together alone. As the Hadith says "when a man and a woman are together alone, there is a third presence of Shaitan."

There is to be no physical relationship whatsoever before marriage. The romantic concept that young people and society often hold, has since proven in most cases to be unrealistic and destructive to those involved. One only has to look at the alarming divorce rate in the west to fully appreciate this point. Say for example, the prospecting couple are expected to know each other for years, should have freedom to be intimate, live together, and so on yet somehow this does not guarantee the success of the future marriage. Romance and love simply cannot and can never guarantee everlasting bond between two people. Therefore, a simple evaluation would reveal that romance and love die out awfully fast when living with one another in the real world. These unrealistic expectations that young people have is what often contributes to the failure of marriages.

Indeed those who make fun of arranged marriages discover later that they are more likely to be successful and lasting than romantic types of courtship because time and effort has not been wasted on discovering each other. This is because people are blinded by the physical attraction and thus do not choose the compatible partner. It is not uncommon to have people blinded by love to the potential problems in marriages like owls. The security of arranged marriages is that they are based not on physical attraction or romantic impressions but on critical evaluation of the compatibility of the parties. This is why they often prove successful.

One of the conditions of a valid marriage in Islam is consent of the parties and by definition a voluntary union of two people. The choice of a partner by a Muslim virgin girl is subject to the approval of the father or guardian under Maliki School. This is to safeguard her welfare and interests. The Prophet said “the widow and the divorced woman shall not be married until she has consented and the virgin shall

not be married until her consent is obtained. The Prophet did revoke the marriage of a girl who complained to him that her father married her against her wishes.

THE WIFE'S RIGHT AND THE HUSBAND'S OBLIGATIONS

MAINTENANCE

Our dear sister, a believing husband is responsible for the wife's maintenance. The right is established in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. It is inconsequential whether the wife is a Muslim, non-Muslim, rich, poor, healthy or even sick. A piece of his role as a leader is to bear the financial responsibility of the family in a generous way so that his wife may be assured security and thus perform her role devotedly.

A wife's maintenance entails her right to shelter, clothing, food and general care, like medication, hospital bills and genuine needs that should not go beyond what the husband can afford. A believing husband shall strive to meet the needs of his wife and family from his wealth so as to ensure her privacy, comfort and independence. If a wife has been used to a maid or is unable to attend to her household duties, it is the husband's duty to provide her with a maid if he can afford to do so. The Prophet is reported to have said: the best Muslim is one who is the best husband.

DOWRY

Our dear sister, a believing husband must recognize that a wife is entitled to a marriage gift that is her own. This may be prompt or deferred depending on the agreement between the parties. A marriage without dowry is invalid. It does not have to be cash or even gold. Indeed the Prophet once contracted a marriage with the understanding that the husband will teach the wife from his knowledge of Qur'an as the gift to the bride. The Shariah does not approve the bride or her

parents to pay a prospecting husband to marry their daughter. This practice debases women and is contrary to the spirit of Islam. There is no specification in the Qur'an as to what or how much the gift has to be as it has been freely granted by the parties to agree upon.

Our dear sister, a husband has been commanded to treat his wife with equity, respect her feelings and show kindness and consideration, especially if he has another wife. The Prophet last sermon stresses kindness to women. However, a wife is equally enjoined to do same for the purpose of a fruitful marriage.

THE WIFE'S OBLIGATIONS AND THE HUSBAND'S RIGHTS

Our dear sister, it is one of the core duties of a wife to contribute to the success and blissfulness of a marriage. A believing wife must be attentive to the comfort and wellbeing of her husband. In the Qur'an chapter 25 verse 74 illustrates this point as "Our Lord, grant us the delight of our eyes from our wives and our offspring". A believing wife must be faithful, trustworthy, honest, and she must never deceive her husband deliberately. She must not allow any other person to have access to that which is exclusively the husband's right – sexual intimacy. A believing wife shall not receive or entertain guest either male or female does not matter in the house without his knowledge and consent. A wife shall not be alone with a male in the house without the husband's knowledge and consent. She should not be alone with a strange male. She should not accept gifts from other men without his approval. This is to avoid jealousy, suspicion and gossip. The husband's possessions are her trust. She may not dispose of his belongings without his express permission.

A believing wife should make herself attractive to her husband and be responsive to her husband's advances. The wife must not refuse her husband as this can lead

to marital problems and worse still – tempt the husband to adultery. The husband of course should take into account the wife’s health and general consideration should be given.

OBEDIENCE IN MARRIAGE

Our dear sister, the purpose of obedience in marriage is to keep the family unit as efficiently as possible. The husband has been given the right to be obeyed because he is the leader and bears the first responsibility and not because he is superior. If a leader is not obeyed like a king, his leadership will be ineffective and cannot birth progress. This is what makes a teacher or a parent without requisite authority useless.

However much obedience is enjoyed in marriage for a believing wife, it does not mean blind obedience. It is subject to certain limitations:

- a. It is required only if what is asked from the wife is within the permissible categories of action.
- b. It must be maintained only with regard to matters that fall under the husband’s rights.

PATIENCE IN MARRIAGE

Our dear sister, there is no medal, trophy, reward, certificate, and gifts or even recognition in this world for patience. The most you will get out of humans if you are patient is either an acknowledgement of it or a speech on how poorly you allow others take advantage of you. However, patience has its own virtue which can be discovered only after restraint and its application governs actions and inactions. Allah has enjoined believers to be patient, so has the Prophet exemplified it. Nana Asiya has earned paradise as a result of her patience in marriage.

The beauty about patience is the self realization of Allah which makes Him subtle even as He responds. Say for example, overtime patience with friends exposes hypocrisy so also is patience with in-laws. At no material time in human relation does patience fail, even though it takes time to be fully understood provided one is not careless. It is like a debt that must be repaid in full.

Marriage like childbirth tends to reset a person's brain, thinking or mindset. The security of a patient wife is that her restraint is guaranteed and it does not matter even if the husband is a fool. Islam has made available the fortress that protects either of the pair of you. Why because we shall individually answer for our actions.

A foolish mistake young couples make is to seek for martial counsel from friends who are either single or not in the same "boat" with them. Say for example, you are the first wife. You start having minor issues with your husband because he has taken another wife which is clearly not unislamic. The natural thing is to speak in confidence to a friend. But unfortunately, the friend is ALONE with her husband. In other words, she has no co-wife. And you idiotically heed to her counsel. You have forgotten that her situation, circumstance and experiences are different from yours.

The same poverty of thought rolls out if a marital issue comes up, a person who is not yet married CAN NEVER, IS NOT QUALIFIED to even make a comment because his or her perspective of solving the problem is merely an imagination. Of course this does not rule out a few cases where a humble observer guided with the fear of Allah, can give positive advice.

Our dear sister, believing women in marriage tend to make more sacrifices than men. But the problem is that those outside the family especially IN-LAWS, DO NOT RECOGNIZE the wife's contributions. They assume that the husband does

everything. Say for example, I know a family whose head only covers the payment of school fees and healthcare related issues with his salary as his exclusive responsibility while his wife services the running cost of the house which includes whatever is consumed in the house like foodstuffs, clothing and pockets money for the children from her own salary. This was later innocently revealed by the husband after one of the brother-in-laws demanded for a ram a day to the naming ceremony of his newly born daughter.

I have equally heard of a wife who sold the gold necklace she bought with her share of mother's inheritance in order to buy some outstanding things for her newly born daughter's naming. You and I are equally a witness to the daughter who sold her new gold necklace in order to clear the debt of her husband's relation. I can go on and on.

Is this to encourage you to sale your things to help the family? Quite on the contrary. I want you to inculcate the attitude of PATIENCE because this is the time you need it most. Your husband has relations. But at the same time, friends and relatives may look up to him for one or two financial assistance. They may get tempted to start comparing what he does for them against what he does for you. When you buy a new wrapper for yourself, do not be taken aback when some say "he bought it for you." They see you with a new shoe, "It's his money." They ask for something and he says he does not have, and then you flaunt a new handbag, "You are a gold digger." And in his presence, they will all pretend to like you.

You cannot run away from these "small small" accusations. But be PATIENT. Put your trust in Allah. Make Qur'an your friend. Treat them all EQUALLY. Do not take sides with any of them or form cliques or form clubs. Restrain your tongue. And again BE PATIENT.

LOVE IN MARRIAGE

Our dear sister, love in marriage is at odds with love before marriage. Love in marriage can even mean that a husband loves his wife so deeply and still not love her as she wants to be loved. Because love means different things to different people and they interpret it differently. This is why a husband marvels at a wife asking whether he loves her or not because she has failed to realize his own meaning of love, which is paying house rent when it is due, struggling to pay school fees, taking care of the bills is also love. But a wife would rather a husband comes home and ask how was your day? And may be play with her. Anyone looking forward to this kind of marriage everyday will be deeply disappointed.

The discoverable thing about love in marriage is that it is achievable long after marriage. It can be as early as ten years, provided both parties are reasonable and realistic in their demands. Arranged marriages can be successful too. The early coming of children may be very helpful in speeding the process. It will be unwise to tie love in marriage to having children because it can rarely be the case, at the beginning of marriage.

Hajiya once told me that there are four shades of love in marriage. The first is the initial attraction a man has for a woman, after seeing her for the very first time. The second is after he has spoken to her and has gotten approval to keep seeing her. The third is the joy that overflows his heart after the marriage is contracted. The fourth is the love that sustains the marriage as a result of the coming of children. Say for example, it is not unusual to hear a frustrated husband saying if not because of these children I would have separated from you. Hajiya said that is when the woman needs to be careful because the love has dropped to the benefit of her children.

What can be established from the onset that can be real is the initial stage of fair or good attraction and companionship. These two attributes can and should lead to willingness to openness and gradual commitment to love. The first phase is necessarily expected or required to be inviting and pleasant, since the attraction has been secured. The second phase is the test of required maturity overtime and the admissibility of individual errors.

Those who fail the second phase will have to start all over again if they must develop love in marriage. Those who stick, most often succeed in creating a shade of love. This means that love has different shades. These shades can either be seen or felt or shared, by either the husband and wife or families, and relations. And regardless of the shade, it is most important for the admission of some pleasure and commitment to it, by the members or the pair of you.

The seeds for planting the right crops are always selected by the pair of you or on an individual basis from individual idea of what constitutes love to the maturity of those ideas overtime, by the roles of the relationship with parents, in-laws, siblings, friends, and relatives against their previous definition of love and the purpose of life as defined by Allah and exemplified by the Prophet.

Accordingly, if either party is obsessed with the first part of initial attraction, the second will not be reached and a valuable time wasted. This explains how and why Nana Khadijah approached and got the consent of the Prophet for marriage. She gave him children and spent her wealth in his course. Nana Aisha later complained about the love of the Prophet for her, even after her death. This is Nana Aisha whom the Prophet consented to as a reliable reference for half of our religion. This is also a pointer to why and how arranged marriages succeed more often than the impractical type.

Our dear sister, there are people in marriage and are living with it because they are committed to pleasing their parents or children or to continue belonging to a cluster. Some are in it to get children, some to keep money coming for maintaining their siblings or parents. You can be sure that they all can be looking happy. And they will express that they are the ones more in love than the partner. Have you not heard or met women who abandon their marriage to please their mothers? They will submit that the partner does not love them enough.

Love in marriage can never be realized when and if one party is destructive of the foundation. What do you think is responsible for your immediate observation that other homes are badly run? If you fail to develop your own idea of love, you will be building exactly that. It will be same or burdensome if one party is unwilling to support the building.

Our difference has always been that love consists of whatever Allah and His messenger instruct or permit and our developing contentment with it. A believing woman who nurses or expresses the contrary is only blocking the path to her fulfillment. And glory is to Allah for providing the fortress for individuals before and after marriage. The stupidity, ignorance and betrayal of one party does not affect the outcome of the other in the end. A wife or husband that gets infected with Human Immune Virus and gets the other partner killed is not absolutely unfortunate for the dead. Sleeping outside is equally accountable to Allah. So, we have chosen and are living on a safe platform of Islam.

A good Muslim wife shall continue to acquire the right religious knowledge and live by it. The scholars must be the resort, as they are the inheritors of the Qur'an and Sunnah. I pray that this will give you a better and more meaningful

understanding of what people commonly say, when they talk about love in marriage.

SPIRITUALITY AND FAITH IN MARRIAGE

Our dear sister, know that just as believers are not exempted from the standard rules that apply for faith and spirituality in Islam, marriage also does not prevent you from realizing and growing in your faith and spirituality. Rather it further provides opportunities to perform greater acts of worship to Allah. Unbeknown to many, if Allah remains our compass and guide, He gives us a sense of direction in our marriage and by putting Allah first we are sure to be on the straight path. This is why those who are careless about Allah in the long run often find some form of emptiness in their lives and marriages even when Allah favours them with worldly comfort because the atlas has been misplaced. Spirituality for a Muslim household should mean that prayers and fasting are done together with much care, attention, and emphasis in the month of Ramadan.

Spirituality however, does not mean trampling on the right of either the husband or the wife. For there was indeed a time when the Prophet heard that an ascetic Companion, Abdullah ibn ‘Amr, was in the habit of praying all night and fasting all day, he told him to moderate his devotions, pointing out that ‘Your eyes have right over you, your guests have right over you, and your wife has a right over you.’ (Bukhari)

In another narration:

Abu S’ad, once reported that the Prophet once rebuked the wife of Safwan ibn al-Mu’attal for being over pious to the detriment of her marriage. She used to read two long chapters during her night prayer, keeping her husband waiting; and she fasted frequently without his permission, which made her tired and prevented any

opportunity for marital relations during the day. The Prophet ruled in favour of the husband, recommending that she limit her recitation to one chapter, and only fasted with her husband's permission.

What this tradition teaches is that the legitimate needs of both partners must be taken into consideration even in one's spirituality because sometimes a husband or wife fails in his or her responsibility merely because of his or her selfishness or just a poor Muslim with narrow understanding even though he or she may be found praying five times daily. At times, sadly a husband or wife can fail in marriage out of simple ignorance of what his or her responsibilities entail, and make him suffer as well as the wife, quite needlessly. This is not what Allah intended for either of them in their marriage and with a little effort and knowledge it could so easily be put right. This is why a believer does not discontinue seeking for knowledge and equally striving to apply it.

In order to get spirituality and faith in marriage right, one must go back to the twin lost keys of marriage. The first is to love Allah, and to seek to apply His principles in every situation and relationship. How do I mean? That each and every action we take should be for Him and because of Him. Only in this way can fulfillment and contentment be saturated in the heart even if it be trying to accept. Say for example, when someone wrongs you and you choose to forgive and swallow your anger instead, as against retaliating. This is different from a situation where one cannot retaliate even if he wishes to. It is from the understanding of scholars that the one who is at liberty to retaliate and also has requisite authority to do so have more reward than the former in the sight of Allah. Why? Because mercy has been shown.

It is from the understanding of scholars that a man in anger as a result of clear cheating would have the veil between him and Allah lowered such that supplications at that very moment are as good as accepted. Why then shall a believer seek for absolute retaliation or the infliction of the same dosage of pain on the other party instead of seeking for nearness to Allah or acceptance into the gardens of paradise? Why?

Our dear sister, know that knowledge is wasted if not practiced. Say for example, it is not permissible for a woman to call the *Adhan* or the *Iqama*, for such is restricted to men only. Islam is true knowledge and its application. One cannot suffer at the instance of the other.

The second has to do with the suitability of a partner before the joining of the marriage. As a believing woman, the person to be chosen must be a Muslim. The person needs to be seen, heard, felt, known and understood to be a practicing Muslim by society. These would accommodate the person's right knowledge to separate the standard rules of Islam and what people and society decide to impose on them. A believing woman should prefer this kind of men and believing men should prefer this kind of women because they are people who know how to do the right things and live by doing them. Either of the individual does not necessarily have to be a *hafiz* of the Qur'an.

FAITHFULNESS AND COMMITMENT IN MARRIAGE

Our dear sister, no Muslim household ever grew around carelessness to self or husband or children. You must be committed and respectful of the institution of your marriage. Your husband must not at any point doubt or crosscheck any information that might have come from you. Once you introduce that, a window would have opened for mistrust and lack of confidence to set in. A similar thing

plays out during courtship. Where would-be couples engage in illicit sexual activities before marriage, they have made *Zina* a foundation.

The wall of trust and guidance against chastity has collapsed even before marriage, from where will trust begin anew? If the parties are destitute of knowledge enough it may not come across as a problem until later when the husband indicates the interest of taking a new wife. A fully blown war will erupt because the wife is aware of the level of her husband's immorality and now frowns at it completely. Your chastity as a mother and a wife should have the course to be questioned. Those who foolishly think they can hide and illegally quench their desires and urge discipline elsewhere will surely answer to Allah. Your primary responsibility is absolute loyalty and commitment to your husband, children, and the family. Without these instruments in place, nothing worth planting can germinate.

Once you have commitment at the back of your mind, you will strive to make your marriage work as best as you possibly can, but that is after you have reminded yourself of our family's golden rule of the forbiddance to return after setting out. With the exception of death that Allah promised every creation. However, it does not include deliberate suffering, humiliation, and oppression in the relationship. That is not the purpose of marriage. The constant of marriage is a loving companionship and it goes both ways which can be counted upon. You are therefore encouraged to seat with your husband and come up with things that will work for the pair of you.

Say for example, I have enjoyed the friendship of a family of six whose head travels outside of their station for work and only returns during weekends. The wife is a full time housewife who is a graduate just like her husband, but the enormous need to run a decent household was far too great that she turned down

employment and focused so well that she later became the chairperson of Parents Teachers Association of New Horizons Nursery and Primary School. This was long after all her children have graduated. The children all turned out to be exceptionally disciplined. Afterwards, the husband started nurturing the idea of taking another wife which is clearly not *haram*, but after counting his blessings so well, and the weight of her sacrifice was far too great that he turned down taking a new wife having quietly retired himself from the Central Bank of Nigeria.

A good husband understands that if the wife spends all her time caring for her home, then the husband must appreciate this sacrifice and dedicate sufficient time to her as reward for her efforts. He should notice what she has done, and take an interest in it. You are equally a witness to the genuine affection and companionship shared between our mother and father which ignited her voluntary resignation from a secured banking desk when our father retired from service, even when she had transfer options.

Each and every marriage has a pillar you are therefore free to build yours. First year of marriage has been observed to be the toughest after the loving three to six months of sparks has died down and each partner is reverting to type and character. It should not come as a surprise that if you are having issues from the onset of marriage is because some pillars are not firmly buried or have not been catered for to accommodate minor misunderstandings.

The Prophet said: ‘Any woman who dies in the state that is pleasing to her husband will enter paradise.’ What this means is that if a wife dies and her husband is satisfied with her conduct and he is sure she has protected herself for him in their marriage and her behavior is most satisfying then Allah has promised paradise to her. That is not to say Allah will excuse her account for prayers and other rights of

Allah over his creations for worship. No, but between she and her husband there is a hope for paradise.

Look at the story of Nana Asiya the wife of Firaun, she obeyed Allah and obeyed her husband and has been promised paradise while Firaun is in hell. The wife of Prophet Nuhu AS also is in hell while her husband is in paradise and his son Khan'an is also in hell because he did not have faith and refused to follow his father.

It is written in a letter titled **THREE DAYS OF HALIMA MUSTAPHA OF MUHAMMAD SA'IDU JIMADA:** *"O ALLAH, I AM HER HUSBAND, UNDER WHOSE FEET YOU HAVE PLACED HER SALVATION AND PARADISE. I GRANT IT TO HER, WITH YOUR PERMISSION AND WILL."* The above prayer was said by a husband in respect to his wife at the time of her death but what is unique about this prayer is the timeliness and how it was said for it was during the laying of the dead in the grave.

Naturally, most husbands would echo the same thing sympathizers will be saying "may Allah have mercy on her" which is not bad but not good enough because Allah has placed the paradise of a wife beneath the feet of her husband and from the prayers offered one can be sure that Allah will oblige the husband.

When a husband ignorantly fails to realize his superiority over the wife to sincerely say the prayer for her, it will be an ignorant drawback. If she was a submissive wife, by the saying of such prayer on her behalf, we can hope for a lot of things in the grave to be much better. It will be shocking to find wisdom on why any husband thinks telling sympathizers how good a wife was is better than knowing the above prayer and at the appropriate time it should be said. The ignorant ones would rather wait for judgment day to say "I have forgiven her" when she could be

excused from the torments in the grave since marriage is half the religion. A husband dying before his wife is actually of no good use to her.

However, with this kind of prayer, the husband's right over her is settled now she has only to account for the other half of her religion. Say for example, parents have rights over their children and when a child fulfills them, it does not exclude the rights of Allah and that of others. No, believers will be called to account for the rest. And it is from the wisdom and understanding of scholars that infants, martyrs, and a few from among men would be excused from questioning in the grave. There are no tricks in Islam.

Our dear sister, *Hajj* is one of the rights of Allah, just like *Salat*, and *Saum* which must be given priority over the rights of the husband. If a woman must continue praying while having labor pains just as a sick person prays while suffering pain does not justify stopping *Salat*, why then should a believing wife fail to commit and develop her marriage? The faithfulness and commitment of a wife in marriage must remain intact also. Know that you will have nothing to lose in this world or the hereafter so long as your intentions remain pure and your husband is satisfied with your conduct.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN MARRIAGE

Our dear sister, a good wife will demonstrate good communication skills in the morning, afternoon, and at night in all matters. Until you realize that whatever comes out from your mouth can either be a weapon of mass destruction or a source to calm the nerves and emotion, you will fail to have communicated effectively.

The Prophet said:

‘I counsel you to be kind to your wives, for they are your helpers. You have taken them only as a trust from Allah, making their private parts lawful through a word.’

One day Umar ibn al-Khattab said: ‘O Messenger of God, what should I take from this world?’ And he replied, ‘Let each of you take a tongue that remembers Allah, a heart that thanks Him, and a wife who has faith.’

The Prophet placed a pious and worthy wife next to remembrance and gratitude of Allah. How then can a wife be careless about her utterances to the husband? One of the blessings of having a beloved and worthy wife is that it allows a husband more time to be free to engage in the work of the hereafter.

Umar RA said:

‘After belief in Allah, a man can have no better gift than a virtuous wife.’

A virtuous wife would weigh her words carefully, she searches for resolution whenever she speaks. Whatever her contribution, it should not aggravate or provoke when things go wrong. This is the only way she can safely be said to have assumed her motherly form. The instrument is patience to wait and see the reward of what is put into the relationship. The seeds of your relationship start bearing fruits when you hold on to patience, the water with which the seeds necessarily require in order to germinate.

A WIFE’S BEHAVIOUR IN MARRIAGE

Our dear sister, those who place religious uprightness below a woman’s wealth, status, and beauty will sooner discover that while love certainly does cover a multitude of sins it is insufficient for building a responsible and responsive Muslim household. How do I mean? Whoever sees wealth beyond a tool with which one can earn Allah’s pleasure, will at best deploy it for a wrong purpose and therefore not optimally use it for the purpose it was meant. As it has no value on its own

except for what it is used for. Say for example, one deploys it to the sponsorship of evil as against good; one will earn benefits from Allah for either of the purpose.

Ibn Majah reported that the Prophet said that this world is pleasurable but the most pleasurable thing is to have a pious woman. That a woman is married for four things: A woman is married because of her wealth, her beauty, her family, and her religion. But the Prophet has encouraged us to marry the religious one. Disregard the one with wealth for wealth can finish, beauty is impermanence. Eventually people will grow old or it will fade over time or you find another that is more beautiful than her. If it is her family, what if Allah takes the life of all her family members? But if you marry the religious one, there will be no need to replace her. If you say maybe her father is a senator, what if he loses another round of election? Then what? But if you stick to the religious one you would have earned profits on your hands.

A wife should be pleasurable to be around and must be felt by the husband. It is the same with her presence and not matter, in whatever circumstance. How about your absence? Shall it not be felt and noticed? A husband should naturally be looking forward to coming home to you his wife and it goes both ways. It does not matter before or after the coming of children. The home should be a safe haven for the pair of you and the children. Always talk, eat, pray, and sleep together. If there are issues like in all marriages, then how do I go about smoothing them and not making them rougher than they already are? Better still have the courage to discuss it with your husband when things do not seat well with you.

Be the conscious parent who is always careful of what they model for the children. Are you comfortable with what your children see you do on a daily basis and would one day replicate whatever they saw in your home? Whatever they see you

do is exactly what and how they are going to do with their partners in future and how they will raise their children.

There should be a solid foundation built that everything will naturally fall into place. The Qur'an and Hadith should be the final reference on any given issue. Take your time to observe your husband's subtle affectionate pattern. There might be things you will be doing and assuming your husband is not responding enough to, that you think he likes. Say for example, it takes more than the occasional means to keep the relationship afloat and it is usually the small things that count.

If you care to observe closely you would have discovered people in general will offer a hand of help if you ask politely. It is the same thing with when small complements are dished out in marriage. The verbal expression of care and affection which comes from things like "thank you I noticed the fridge has been fixed" or "you looked really nice today." On the contrary, verbal abuse can be particularly offensive to a partner that responds to the verbal expression of care and affection.

Acts of kindness also goes a long way to remind each other of how appreciative you are of each other's company. It does not have to be big or even frequent, it could be by taking the pains to cook his favorite meal properly and on the other hand him making sure you do not run out of your favorite box of cornflakes or watching a movie you have always wanted him to see.

The wife of the Prophet was reported to have said that the Prophet of Allah would busy himself with the house chores and leave off when prayer is announced. What this means is that you are not the only one shouldered with the responsibility of managing your home and because the Prophet was reported to have done so himself, we are enjoined to follow in his footsteps. Therefore, kindness to one

another can also come in the form of helping with the chores which is also another way of expressing affection so do not overlook it and accompany it with words of encouragement. If you are lucky to have a husband who expresses his affection majorly through chores, your lack of support or observation will be more damaging than anything else.

You should also look out for times when the husband may choose to do any other thing but would rather seat close to you or even engage in an activity that you particularly like instead of going out or doing something else. Do not fail to see through it, for some people express their affection through it and acknowledge because it will mean the pair of you are conscious of each other.

Another form is through innocent or causal touch. It may come in simple ways like holding hands even in private. The absence of such by partners who express their affection through this would make them feel isolated in the relationship and sooner or later they become distant and demoralized because of misplaced sense of belonging. If you really care for a long and lasting relationship, take your time to acquaint yourself with each other's subtle affectionate pattern. With this knowledge, you will be better equipped to meet your husband's emotional needs. Start by thinking of how you like to give and receive love. Ask yourself: when I want to show affection, how do I do it? Do you cook a really nice meal? Or you look great? Send an appreciative text message? Think about what makes you feel most loved and cared for? Do you feel close to your partner when they do something helpful?

Allah will ask how you related with your husband and how you fulfilled your husband's obligations. There is nothing more pleasurable than coming back to a

home and not to a house, coming back to your home to your friend, confident, lover, and your partner for life.

MUTUAL RESPECT IN MARRIAGE

Our dear sister, no matter how upset you get the way to relate with your husband shall and must be with respect. Children need only not to see their parents love and respect for each other, but see a united front, and a clear willingness to assist each other. Society has bastardized parenthood to mean that either a father or mother must be the disciplinarian while the other only shows love and compassion and at the same time losing the spine and the backbone to enforce obedience when and where necessary. It is a shame that children pick up this misplacements pretty quickly in homes. If there is to be family happiness, each parent should receive the child's love and respect. On no account should a mother and father allow a child to pit one against the other.

If children are expected to respect their parents, then the parents must live in such a way that they are deserving of respect, and offer a good example for the child to follow. Selfishness, ill temper, unfairness, idleness, dishonesty, and indecency are all qualities rapidly picked up by children. Earn respect by providing a peaceful and loving Muslim home, a good set of standards, a good and consistent example in your own conduct, sound training in manners and morals, and a loving and gentle discipline when needed shall light up the way.

How often in life do great problems stream from the breakdown of understanding? The evidence is all around us. Fear and hatred are strong emotions but is no match for the power of mutual understanding and respect. You could receive help from the last person on earth if there is room for understanding and respect because if

we truly understand each other everyone gains, a husband and wife must not only know this but thoroughly understand it.

You will never find a partner who is hundred percent perfect. It doesn't matter whether you pick your partner or someone else picks for you. You will fight but the difference must be even when you do you should be holding hands in respect. If one is faced with a problem in any relationship try to pull less and bend more and you will be sure the problem can be fixed.

It is not the exclusive responsibility of a husband to hear you as a wife, but it is your responsibility to speak up in order to be heard. It is your responsibility to speak up to your husband it does not matter at home, at work, and the society.

A good husband shall strive to emulate the Prophet by avoiding beating completely and discouraging it in others also. It is not at all becoming of a Muslim to be a wife-beater in defiance of the Prophet's explicit dislike of the practice.

This brings us to another interesting aspect of the Prophet's relationship with his wives. The Prophet apparently allowed his wives to do what is called "answering back." Those husbands who think that wives like children should be seen but not heard are clearly wrong by this narration. There are several recorded instances of the Prophet's companions remonstrating with him or with his wives about this practice. Even so he chose to allow his wives to speak their minds.

One day Umar RA rebuked his wife for something and she sharply answered him back: and when he expostulated with her she replied that the wives of the Prophet were in the habit of answering him back so why should she not do the same. "And there is one of them", she added, meaning their daughter (Hafsah), "who speaks her mind unabashed from morning till night". Greatly troubled by this, Umar went to Hafsah, who did not deny that what her mother said was true. "You have neither

the grace of Aisha nor the beauty of Zainab,” he said, hoping to shake her self-confidence; and when these words seems to have no effect, he added: “Are you so sure that if you anger the Prophet, Allah will not destroy you in His anger?” Then he went to his cousin Umm Salamah (another wife of the Prophet) and said: “Is it true that you speak your minds to Allah’s Messenger and answer him without respect?” “By all that is wonderful,” said Umm Salamah, “What reason have you to come between Allah’s Messenger and his wives? Yes, by Allah, we speak to him our minds, and if he allows us to do so, that is his affair, and if he forbids us he will find us more obedient to him than we are to you.” Umar then realized he had gone too far and withdrew. (Bukhari)

Aisha RA went further in another tradition to say that when the Prophet told her something she would question him closely about it so that she could understand its rationalization before she would be satisfied. The Prophet did not tell her she had no right to grill him because he was a Prophet and a man, while she was only a young woman and a wife. No, rather it came on the contrary that he appreciated her critical faculty and clear thinking.

Our dear sister, from this we can see that the Prophet had such calm inner certainty and natural leadership qualities that he did not need to assert himself over his wives, or be on the defensive against them.

It is equally interesting to read from the above that we can learn clearly from the voices of women who respect their husband not because they are afraid of him or out of hypocrisy, but out of genuine admiration and love. The fact that the Prophet allowed his wives to speak their minds speaks volume of his sterling character as he never regarded wives as slaves but as human beings to whom Allah has given reason and the ability to distinguish right from wrong as He has given men. It is

therefore, my personal view that any husband who is not a good listener will fail and continue to fail in marriage because the blood of a wife is not blue.

A simple choice of words can make one to either accept or deny your message. You can have a very beautiful thing to say but if you say it in the wrong words it is gone. Do not be a wife that fails to use the right words always, for words have power. You can change a life, inspire a nation and even make this world a beautiful place. A mouth can spit venom or heal a broken soul.

The foundation of a man is his intellect, his honor in his religion, and his manhood in his character – Umar *ibn* al-Khattab

MUTUAL GROWTH IN MARRIAGE

Our dear sister, if your marriage is to be successful, you must also be considerate towards the legitimate needs of your husband, and not just look to your own gratification. If you are going to be happy, then your husband must be happy also, or your marriage is ruined. Human beings have physical needs, not only for marital relations but also for food, clothing and shelter. Humans also have emotional needs like understanding, kindness and compassion. We have the need for companionship and friendship, a person with whom we can share our intimate thoughts and still feel secure. Someone who we know is not going to laugh at us or mock us, but is going to care about us. We need to feel that we are building something up together, and accomplishing something that is good for our individual growth and development provided it does not go against the teachings of the Prophet.

Then, we have the spiritual need for inner peace and contentment. We need to feel at home with a husband whose way of life is compatible with our own sense of

morality, and our desire to live in such a way as is pleasing to Allah. Islam is not just on the lips, but has to reach the heart. We are not hypocrites but Muslims.

We will not feel comfortable if we are settled in a marriage with someone whose ways, morals or habits makes us uncomfortable or disapproving. That would not qualify for our inner peace, but would be a terrible worry. We want to feel secure. This has nothing to do with satisfying our urges for career, fame, wealth, and material possessions. Such things are pleasant no doubt, but Muslims know that there is a hunger of the spirit that remains even after all these physical needs is accounted for or even satisfied. The love of the world is a tricky fantasy. Muslims know that no matter how pleasant they may be, the things of this world are temporary and will pass away quickly because they are dependent on the will of Allah. Imagine a person of fame or wealth or however placed one may be can be grounded into the earth at the slightest turn of fate. Nothing of this world can be taken with us when we leave here to make the journey that comes after this brief life.

Family backgrounds often have a great deal to do with the set of values people have and the estimation of the content of their souls. When backgrounds of both husband and wife are similar, they will probably find it easier to grow together. However, Allah and His Prophet have stated that people from widely different backgrounds can make very good marriages, so long as their attitude to their religion is intact.

A slave who believes is better (for you) than an idolatress, though she attract you.
(Qur'an 2:221)

TRUST IN MARRIAGE

Our dear sister, you should endeavour to naturally accept that whatever your husband says is going to be truthful and it does not matter if otherwise. You are therefore cautioned not to waste your time in trying to establish or confirm whatever he says may or may not be truthful, because believers shall answer for everything they do. The standard of Allah has guaranteed individual safety from utterances and actions and who is a better witness than Allah?

Your complete trust in Allah shall protect you from the deceit of individuals. This is why knowledge of how to execute *Zakah* is necessary. For instance, it will be wrong to choose for oneself executing it to ones parents and family members only. This is in spite of the fact that it is obligatory upon the husband to spend on their behalf from his own wealth if they are in need of it and he has the ability to spend on their behalf. What this means is that the actions of believers must be consistent with the right knowledge and standard of Allah. This is why a believer cannot be useful to himself or society if he himself is ignorant and does not practice.

A good husband knows that respect cannot be lorded over a wife and can never ever be gained by simply telling someone to respect you. Respect has to be earned or commanded. It starts from how you speak to how you act. In other words, through the total being of what you are. A wife may foolishly think that her attendance in ceremonies be it of a close or distant relative or that of a friend without the consent of her husband appears harmless even without the express request and granting of the husband. It can and will either be blessed or otherwise. This is because the Prophet has warned that any married woman that goes out without the permission of her husband is in the anger of Allah until she returns to her husband and ask for forgiveness and the husband forgives her.

Our dear sister, the trust in Allah and the following of the footsteps of the Prophet is necessarily by knowledge and practice, for Islam is advice, there is no compulsion. Say for example, the prayer of a slave in the sight of Allah is as good as accepted provided he does not harbor any form of doubt in his heart. Why then should a believing woman doubt the protection of Allah over her affairs?

FORGIVENESS AND BENEFIT OF DOUBT IN MARRIAGE

Our dear sister, understand that perfection is Godly, no human is perfect, because we all have our shortcomings. With marriage the odds of errors increases as the husband and wife spend their lives together with each other. It is not an affair of a day, a week, a month, and a year. Marriage is a lifetime commitment and becomes compulsory to consider it as such, since it is half the religion. Allah has said about marriage that it is the most loved of all relationships and the Prophet has said that anyone who can afford it should get married. With such a commitment in mind, a husband and wife should remember that it will not be always smooth sailing. There will be times when you will be miserable and feel disappointed and hurt by the actions or inactions of either party.

Do not panic if and when you feel so, it is all part of the journey. Remember that this life is not perfect because you were not made for this life. If all things were sailing smoothly, this would have been *Paradise*. Be rest assured that your husband will hurt you and that you will hurt your husband in random daily instances wittingly or unwittingly, knowingly or unknowingly. Hurting each other is only human. These instances though may seem huge in the beginning, but would later only help to make your relationship stronger. You must remember that apart from love and respect in marriage for both parties, Allah has equally asked us to

show compassion and forgiveness. So you must learn to forgive your husband's faults and go on to nurture your marriage.

If you are flexible enough to pull less and bend more on any given issue, as you wish to be pulled less and bend-in for, the easier it will be for the pair of you. In Muslim marriage, it is reality that counts not fantasies.

Allah has said in the Qur'an: "He has put affection between their hearts. Had you spent all that is in the earth you could not have put affection between their hearts, but Allah put affection between them; verily He is mighty, wise." (Qur'an 8:63)

Allah has told us Himself that He has put compassion and love in our hearts, so much so that we can even forgive our worst enemies. Then imagine how much compassion we have in our heart to forgive ourselves. If the Prophet can forgive the people who threw stones at him for preaching Islam, then we can certainly forgive our own better halves say for example, talking rudely in the heat of the moment or not doing something they were expected to do. By forgiving one another we actually become better Muslims.

When one remembers that just like a husband may have shortcomings so does the wife too, only then will we be more compassionate towards the thoughts of forgiving soon. And may Allah lead us all to the right path.

THE GOOD CHILD AND THE BEST PARENT

Our dear sister, the good child and the best parent are those who do not go near evil. Parenting just like marriage is not obligatory. To have children though highly encouraged but children do not choose their own parents, Allah does. But they did not ask to be born, we chose to have them. However, we do not choose their character or their personality. They are Allah's gift to us still they can also be a

trial but what is most disturbing is that we can also be a gift to them or a trial. Shall we then fail to have deliberate plans on how to raise our children? Shall we not be conscious of our behavior? If Allah sees it fit to keep up your strength, shall you not give your children the best that is in you?

Those who love Allah and His messenger most are the best of those who hate and keep away from those things Allah and His messenger does not approve of. They fear Allah because they continue to do their best, which may not be good enough before Allah. They fear Allah because He is perfect and they are not. This ultimately means that their best is not sufficient validation, except with the mercy of Allah. Their fear is persistent by the consciousness of the mistakes they make or fall into that will qualify them for punishment. They fear Allah most because they understand that if He desires good for them, no one can deny them and if He desires evil for them not a soul can protect them against it. To constantly remain in this state of consciousness will require that you uphold the five pillars of Islam strongly and your faith will be safe. If you neglect any of them your faith will be weakened. The significance of this is that your religion is not only your private business, but that it shadows your behavior as a Muslim, not only in name but much more in your conduct. The natural result of all acts of worship (*taqwa*) throughout the Qur'an is used as the most valuable quality that a man or a woman should try to attain. The constant is that in Islam, belief and the carrying out of religious obligations are not enough. The Qur'an always couples belief with right action, emphasizing that it is those who belief and do righteous deeds that will find their reward with Allah. There is no simple formula that will keep you away from straying. It really depends on the sincerity of your belief as a Muslim.

The good child and the best parent are those who are contented with whatever Allah and His messenger provides for them. They do not compare themselves with

those who are given more of the good things of this life. They look at those given less and constantly thank Allah.

Say for example, it is in my honest opinion that children are naturally supposed to be better than their parents and it is the responsibility of each and every parent to make sure that that happens. The simple reason is that it is not intelligent for a society and a nation to be producing individuals worse than themselves. You and I grew up in Niger State. We attended good schools, what a reasonable number of people will consider to be privileged. Our parents deliberately and carefully chose the schools we attended, which did not only teach us how to read and write but also shaped how we question things. The schools we attended were often times neither the most expensive nor were they the best, but at least it never tempered with the character our parents wanted us to have. Which I can testify today to be the noblest of things that has made me the person I have become.

Government may choose to make education free but it is your responsibility as an observant parent to make sure it does not corrupt your child. The type of character you want your child to have will be taught by you the parent not formal education. Society is in dear need of people with a well-formed mind that have broad knowledge of what is beyond the four walls of a classroom. No matter the quality of education offered by a prescribed faith school, those who do not belong to that category of faith should always contemplate other options. This is because the avoidance of this will birth inter-clash in religious ideology. Your religion will at best make more sense to your child when taught by you the parent rather than surrendering it to formal education completely. The standards of the society cannot be effectively improved unless mothers and fathers are well-educated themselves.

The Prophet SAW said:

“Whoever brings up two daughters and gives them a good education, and treats them well, and gives them in marriage, for him is Paradise.” (Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi)

The Prophet commanded that every Muslim, male and female must as a responsibility seek for knowledge. This alarm for education was reflective in his own teaching of Aisha RA, who although was still young when the Prophet married her, and was only age eighteen when he died. Had a natural aptitude for learning and a strong sense of interpretation, and she learnt as much as she could from him. He was so impressed and satisfied with her learning that he even enjoined us to learn half of our religion from her.

Know that you shall answer to Allah for how you raised your children and what you did with them. Just as children will be called to account on how they took care of their own parent in their old age. When parenting fails it goes beyond a parent or an individual, for that is how dysfunctional children are raised, children who will grow up to be a problem to their children as well. Eventually, we end up creating a menace to society. Take a critical look at the youth today, it all boils down to the lost of family values. Many at times we get married and nine months later the children are there and we end up being accidental parents because we did not have deliberate plans on why we want to have them and how we intend to raise them.

Our dear sister, you will be drilling a dry hole if you make parenting to be the kind that children get everything they want just because they can have it or because you can afford it. Children should be able to differentiate between what is *WAJIB*, *FARD*, and *MUSTAHAB* in life. It is laughable that some ignorant parents assume they can possibly shield a child from what Allah has destined for him or her. In the end, a child with inbuilt entitlement syndrome matures into a fully blown liability

instead of an asset to society. Children should be taught how to live without their parent not just how to live life. Only that way, will they not depend on you for everything. Any child raised under such circumstance would have been cheated in the name of love. You grew up in a home of love, compassion and Allah's consciousness. You grew up in a household of making yourself useful and living a life of purpose. If you were this fortunate, why should you fail to replicate that in your newly found home? It is unfortunate for some people for their families were a trial.

Shall you fail to train and equip your children with the tools that they need to succeed and thrive as parents someday? Always remember that children will repeat whatever they see in the home. You have to start with yourself, you have to start somewhere. You cannot teach or share what you do not know and what you do not have. What will you teach? What will you share? What will you contribute? Until you can recognize that some things are not right and ought to be done better you cannot be a good parent. What are the most important lessons you want to teach your children? What are the examples and qualities you have that you want your children never to forget? What are the most important contributions that our parents made to you and the family? What are they doing today that you want them to do differently? What are the most important lessons that Hajiya has taught you? Which example and which qualities of them will you never forget? Sincerely answer them and you will have a compass guided by goals for your children, family and marriage.

No child deserves to be born into a home where there is no love, no laughter, no compassion, growth or happiness. Teach your children the Qur'an, its meaning and application in their daily lives. For as important as memorizing the Qur'an is, it is even sweeter to have and be conscious of Allah and to apply the lessons from the

Qur'an and Hadith in our daily lives. Say for example, one wonders why parents fail to teach children how to apply the Prophetic saying that goes: 'your faith is not complete until you love for your brother what you love for yourself' when it comes to feeding and food is housed in a flask and children are expected to take a share so others can do same without anyone having nothing to eat. Why shouldn't a child know that while he or she is at liberty to take more than what he or she can consume, it will be another form of *Sadaqa* to take a small part so that others can have more or at least one person will eat to heart content? This is something that can and should be taught and until we learn to teach children how to make small sacrifices, we will only be deceiving ourselves to expect them to have empathy towards us or others. All these are good, but they are far from sufficient if it does not help them to become better Muslims in private or in public.

The Qur'an is not just an academic course book to be read. It is meant to be studied and understood and most importantly it is meant to be lived as exemplified by the Prophet. Let your children see in you that you are a striving model Qur'an and Sunnah with a character defining moment that shows strength and knowledge at all times. A character defined Muslim shall show Islam in actions and deeds even as one holds on to Allah tight and the nut that binds one to their children.

Our dear sister, do not raise seasonal Muslim children who are only seen to behave and practice Islam in the month of Ramadan and after Ramadan they go back to their old self. Do not raise children that say oh am fasting I cannot gossip, or is Ramadan I cannot lie as if after Ramadan we are allowed to go back to our old ways of gossiping and lying or that the sin is not as heavy during the month of Ramadan. Can't we restrain from these as we do during the month of Ramadan?

Society has focused so much on how much of the Qur'an we memorized more than how much of the message we have gotten and understood. We want to show off that our children are hafiz of the Qur'an, more than how much they have translated from what they learned into action. So even though there is a huge reward for reading and memorizing, the greatest purpose of the Qur'an is that it is meant to be a guide for us. This requires us to understand the meaning and the message. So what is the point of reading if you don't get the message? While it is beautiful to recite the Qur'an, if it is not translated into action we have missed the message from Allah. It has a message that has been put in place to guide us, to inspire us, to caution us, to comfort us, and to solve our problems.

Our dear sister, avoid fighting or arguing at the instance of your children. Never raise your voices. Let your children see you taking care of your parents because someday you will be in their shoes and your children will do the same thing they saw you did to your own parents. Allah has reminded us of the opportunities enabled to earn reward, so if one plant a tree and a bird get to seat on it or someone get a shade from it are we not going to reap reward from it? Live a deliberate and purposeful life guided by the consciousness of Allah and the teachings of the Prophet. Know that your existence is not by chance or accident for Allah does not make mistakes. Balance your relationship with Allah, your husband, children, parents and loved ones, for neglecting either for the other is most irresponsible.

Sometimes you do everything in your power to make your marriage work and things don't work out. Sometimes you do everything in your power to raise your children in the best possible way you could and they still go astray. Therefore, children are not born today and the following day they start walking or talking. Remember it takes time, do not lose hope and keep praying the doors of Allah are forever opened. Just because children grow in Muslim homes does not

automatically make them practicing Muslims, you and I are witnesses. Children must see the right things in practice. Remember that we give birth to children but would not give birth to their character. Everything boils down to individual choices. You cannot force your children to go a certain way, so do not be hard or too strict because they could repel and break away from you. Even some of the Prophets couldn't guide all their children. The Qur'an also reminded us that the Prophet was just a reminder for guidance is exclusively the reserve of Allah. Allah reminds in the Quran yet again that our wealth and children are a trial to us just as it can be a blessing.

Our dear sister, you are the first school to your children. Raise children that will grow up and respect themselves, children who will not just settle for being children. Raise children who will grow up to respect and value people and do things for themselves. It is so easy to forget that parenting is for life. Keep your children away from the chaos and the battle field. Restrain from making them your lawyers or worse still present them with a choice to take sides. Do not make them resent your husband for sooner or later the truth will be out in the open. Whatever you do that does not make you a better wife, a better mother, a better Muslim shouldn't have any space in your heart. Instead be the best wife, the best mother, and best Muslim you can possibly be.

A GOOD HUSBAND AND WHAT IS EXPECTED OF HIM

Our dear sister, it is to be born in mind that the husband is required to be faithful in marriage as much as the wife is. The punishment for adultery of a married person, either male or female under the *Shari'ah* is death. However, the legal conditions of the proof of adultery are four trustworthy eyewitnesses to the act. In most cases, such proofs are rarely available. The fact that the punishment may not be applied in

this world at any particular time or place does not make the sin any less grievous in the sight of Allah. It is from the understanding of scholars that a sin not expiated in this world is after all going to follow a person to the grave.

Shall a husband then fail to follow Allah's command in the Qur'an?

“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and to be mindful of their chastity: verily this will be most conducive to their purity (and) verily Allah is aware of all that they do.” (Qur'an 24:30)

It maybe ignorance or the sheer desire to be governed by evil, that married men are seen prying on young innocent women, and a few times a case of clear child abuse while they have legal wives at home and society normalizes it to be the exclusive responsibility of parents to enforce discipline. This backwardness speaks volumes of such weak individuals who have lost the spine and the backbone to control their lower desire and have dropped to ranks of animals which qualifies them to automatically forfeit all rights to demand chastity from their wives. Islam does not suspend obedience to one party and the other immorality.

The Prophet SAW said:

“If anyone of you sees an evil, he must change it with his hand. If he is not able to, then he should do so with his tongue. And if he is still not able to, then with his heart and that is the weakest Faith.”

There is no doubt society can and could frown on disgusting acts like this. If there happens to be no authority, the people whose job is to enforce rights of the collective society, then it is part of helping in removing evil by one's tongue. It is also part of helping one another in righteousness and piety. Allah will not fail to support all those who protect others from every evil.

However, if for any reason a husband cannot abstain from others even with one wife, then he is not prohibited from taking another wife in marriage, provided it is done in a legal and honorable way.

The freedom to marry more than one wife at a time is however conditional:

“If you fear that you cannot do justice between them, then marry only one.”
(Qur’an 4:3)

This condition has however, construed to mean different things to different people. It should go beyond making the first wife take her husband seriously and the other flimsy excuse is to kick jealousy into her. Sooner or later either of the wives will be dropped and that is common sense. The Qur’an spoke of it. No words in the Qur’an, however, are without meaning, and this verse should not be taken lightly. A weak husband will not be respected and cannot act fairly between his wives. Respect and justice in marriage has nothing to do with wealth or the status of the husband. Those who hang on it sooner or later realize its insufficiency. A weak husband in a plural marriage is likely to lead to injustice, constant disharmony and the disunity of his family, which is not in his interest or theirs or even in the interest of the Muslim community.

If in marrying more than one wife a husband finds that his heart is inclining to one at the disadvantage of the other, he is warned that this inclination should not reach the stage of absolute neglect and abandonment of the needs and wants of the other wife.

“And you will not be able to treat your wives with equal justice however much you may desire it. But do not incline towards one to the exclusion of the other, leaving her as it were in suspense.” (Qur’an 4:129)

The Prophet SAW was reported by Abu Huraira to have strongly reinforced the above verse: “Whoever has two wives and does not treat them equally, shall come on the Day of Resurrection with half his body hanging down (paralyzed).” (Transmitted by Abu Dawud, Nasa’i, and Ibn Majah)

Now let us look at what is not justice and fairness in marriage. Say for example, I grew up in a polygamous family of ten. I am the ninth of them. Our number did not stop me or any other person from getting what was due to them, maybe partly because of the justice and fairness with which the family operated. Justice and fairness does not mean absolute equality, which will be transgressing the limits of Allah. It can and should be done when quantifiable and sensibly so.

A husband shall not get drugs for a wife that has taken ill and just because he wants to demonstrate justice and fairness among his wives, he would now go out of his way to get same for the other healthy wife. This cannot be justice and fairness but clear foolish mismanagement of resources.

There are numerous advantages of plural marriages and it does not stop at the feet of the husband alone. A child raised in a polygamous household if careless may fail to learn justice and fairness on numerous occasions at home between humans as seen and learnt from the leader of the house – his father. Islam is a fortress for oneself, others and the society. It is a shame today that we have collectively chosen to ignore the practice of polygamy or in worst cases practiced carelessly without knowledge even when the Prophet himself practiced it. Polygamy goes beyond taking a burden but equally teaches and grooms children to strive in establishing justice among themselves because they have been beneficiaries of it firsthand. It is only natural that as they grow, they will replicate same in their homes and that is how better and responsible societies are formed. Polygamy curbs selfishness and

the pursuit of the happiness of self against others, and the society. The platform that enables this is marriage provided both husband and wife ultimately submit to the will of Allah.

How did the Prophet live with his wives?

The Prophet was never a difficult or unkind husband of that sort who regarded assisting his wives with chores as a wife's exclusive responsibility. Indeed, there is a Hadith that tells us that the Prophet used to mend his own clothes. And he was not the one to squabble about food. It was recorded in a Hadith from Abu Huraira in the collection of Muslim:

“Allah's Messenger never found fault with food. If he liked something, he ate it, and if he disliked it, he just abstained from it.” Meaning more precisely that the Prophet never complained about the food or its cooking.

Aisha RA records that on more than one occasion she and the Prophet ran races and sometimes she won and sometimes he won. Nowadays husbands consider it beneath their dignity to play with wives and scholarship has touched very little on this, we are all marveled at his personality which blinds us to picture him as someone always too serious, while there are Hadiths informing us that although he rarely laughed aloud, “nobody used to smile as much as he did.” This is in accordance with the Hadith: “Smiling at your brother is charity.”

A good husband shall not enforce limitations on his wife greater than those imposed by Allah, or by the Prophet on his own family. However, it is not expected that a husband would please his wife at all cost. It does not matter right or wrong or against her interests or the interests of the larger family. It will be most unfortunate to have a husband supplying *haram* items to his wife and children simply because he has access to the wealth or means to enable such evil activity.

The Qur'an says:

“O you who have attained to faith! Ward off from yourselves and your families that fire of the hereafter whose fuel is human beings and stones.” (Qur'an 66:6)

In this respect a husband has the first responsibility to ensure that his wife is educated as a Muslim. We all have heard daft arguments like the preference of a woman that either lacks or does not have sufficient knowledge of Allah, in that she would be calmed or rained-in anytime it is mentioned to her that Allah forbids such and such instead of marrying a well-educated one who may challenge or even say she is well aware of the instruction. This argument is however, unintelligent as believers are all enjoined to seek knowledge and practice as exemplified by the Prophet.

The husband is expected to give leadership in the family, it does not consist abuse and dictatorship. The husband is expected to also consult his wife on important matters concerning the family since she also plays a big role in home making, and if her input is good or even superior, there is no harm in accepting it. However, Islam has given the husband authority as the head of the family since he will bear the first responsibility. He is also to abide by the Qur'an and Hadith, and also try to ensure that he and his family do not contravene Islamic customs and tradition.

The kind handling required towards a wife should not therefore include condoning her misbehaviour. The Qur'an has prescribed explicitly in grades a series of three steps which the husband should take if the wife shows by her behaviour that she is revolting against Islamic customs and tradition.

A husband in marriage shall first speak to his wife seriously about the implications and likely consequences of what she is doing. If she fails to respond to this sincere admonition, his next step is to suspend martial relations with her for a period of

time. If this step also fails he is permitted to beat her lightly as a final act of correction. If she then complies the husband should not take further action against her (Qur'an 4:34)

This beating is the last resort, and not the first, since the Prophet placed firm limitations on it, as follows:

- a. It should not be on the face or any of the easily injured parts of the body.
- b. It should not be hard enough to cause pain or injury or leave a mark or a scar. The Prophet indicated that if a man must beat his wife it should be more or less symbolic, with say something like the head tie of the wife.

The Prophet himself very much disliked the beating of wives, and never beat any of his own. In Abu Dawud's collection of Hadith he is reported by Laqit *ibn* Sabrah to have said:

“Admonish your wife, and if there be any good in her she will receive it; and beat not your wife like a slave.”

The Muslim husband therefore has no right to beat his wife indiscriminately or habitually for petty offences, and if he does so the wife will be within her right to seek divorce. The beating referred to here, is the type Bilal was receiving before Abubakar RA bought and freed him from his master. A badly tempered husband is enjoyed to maintain absolute control, and not vent on the weaker sex. The Prophet referred to this in another narration when he said:

“He is not strong who throws people down, but he is strong among us who controls himself when angry.” (Abu Huraira in Buhari and Muslim)

In another narration Aisha RA reported this self-control in the Prophet's behavior: “The Prophet never beat any of his wives or servants; in fact he did not strike

anything with his hand except in the cause of Allah, or when the prohibitions of Allah were violated, and he retaliated on behalf of Allah.”

A good husband shall strive to emulate the Prophet by avoiding beating completely and discouraging it in others also. It is not at all becoming of a Muslim to be a wife-beater in defiance of the Prophet’s explicit dislike of the practice.

Our dear sister, to demonstrate the status of a husband over his wife, The Prophet said if a woman prays her five daily prayers and fasted during the month of Ramadan and protected her private parts meaning another man had no sexual relation with her and obeyed her husband faithfully and loyally then Allah has promised her paradise.

The Prophet said any woman in marriage that opens her mouth to ask the husband to divorce her, Allah has prohibited her smelling of paradise let alone entering it.

Know that when a woman will be questioned about her duty and obligation to the husband, it will not be with choice of the husband. If she has married multiple times and has been of good character, she will be joined with the best among them. And if the pair of them are married and Allah took their lives at the same time then they will be united together.

CONCLUSION

Our dear sister, the success of your marriage and your happiness will depend upon your willingness to make allowances, and adjust. Be tolerant with your husband’s ways, likes and dislikes. Give room for benefit of doubt. No matter how much you may love your husband, you cannot change him into you. Empathy, patience and understanding are virtues that no marriage can flourish without. If you do not fully trust your husband, then your marriage is already failing even before it starts. The

kindest thing in Islam is to cover the fault of your loved one, and set it aside, giving them a chance to repent and not repeat the misdemeanor. Always give your husband the fullest opportunity to make amends for mistakes, trusting that his Islam is strong enough for him to live according to the report by Bukhari and Muslim that the Prophet SAW said, “believers are like one body, if one member aches, the other members ache for it with fever and sleeplessness.”

This is not just a generalized teaching to all Muslims, it is especially important to those who happen to be married to each other.

Our dear sister, once you are fixated on the convenience of this life, much of Islam will begin to make less sense to you. And lest we forget, our life here is not up to one grain of sand in a vast desert when compared with the eternal life of Hereafter. What value should this life have?