

LOVE AND TOLERANCE AS A STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE MARRIAGE IN ISLAM

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ABSTRACT

The most common challenge faced between spouses in marriage is lack of love and tolerance. The situation is compounded by lack of adopting the moral teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. This paper provides Love, and tolerance as a strategy for sustainable marriage in Islam. The angles observed, includes the mistakes that husbands and wives commit during an argument, arranged marriage, forced marriage, and Sadaq. It also outlines right and duties of husband and wives, understanding love, tolerance, and Peace building between spouses. Where it makes recommendations and suggests a way forward on Islamic Perspective of Love, and Tolerance in Marriage.

Introduction

Marriage is a sacred bond between a man and woman, which makes each other permissible for them to enjoy life and live happily. Allah has described, in the most moving and eloquent terms. This eternal and natural relationship between man and woman, which is filled with security, love, understanding and compassion: the Qur'an Said:

"And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect." (Qur'an 30:21).

Commentary This refers to the wonderful mystery of sex. Children arise out of the union of the sexes. And it is always the female sex that brings forth the offspring, whether female or male. And the father is as necessary as the mother for bringing forth daughters. Unregenerate man is pugnacious in the male sex, but rest and tranquillity are found in the normal relations of a father and mother dwelling together and bringing up a family. A man's chivalry to the opposite sex is natural and God-given. The friendship of two men between each other is quite different in quality and temper from the feeling which unspoilt nature expects as between men and women. There is a special kind of love and tenderness between them. And as woman is the weaker vessel that tenderness may from a certain aspect be likened to mercy, the protecting kindness which the strong should give to the weak, (see also 4:1).

Marriage is also an important part of the Sunnah. The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H) said: "The Nikah is my Sunnah (way), whosoever leaves my Sunnah is not from amongst me" (KitabusSunan – Mishkat)

The Prophet of Allah (P.B.U.H) has also said as narrated by Ibn Masud:

"Young men, those of you who can support a wife should marry, for it keeps you from looking at non permissible females and protects you from immorality. However, those who cannot should devote themselves to fasting, for it is a means of suppressing sexual desire." (Bukhari and Muslim)

However, we also find that in today's day and age that there are many marriages that are improper or unfair and can make a person's life miserable. These marriages are either forced or arranged against a person's will. Islam does not support in any way a marriage where either the man or woman is unhappy with the set up.

Definition of Marriage

Islam has placed emphasis on marriage as an institution of great benefit to the individual and society. Marriage has existed since the time of our earliest forefather Adam, when Allah created him a mate, and they had children. (Lemu,2005. P.163). Allah refers to the purpose of marriage in a verse of the Qur'an Said:

"And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among (3525) yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them, (3526) and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect." (Qur'an 30:21).

Commentary

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The friendship of two men between each other is quite different in quality and temper from the feeling which unspoilt nature expects as between men and women. There is a special kind of love and tenderness between them. And as woman is the weaker vessel that tenderness may from a certain aspect be likened to mercy, the protecting kindness which the strong should give to the weak, (see also 4:1).

The emphasis on the desirability of marriage is found again in Qur'an chapter 24 verses 32 which said:

"Marry those among you who are single, or the virtuous ones among yourselves, male or female: if they are in poverty, Allah will give them means out of His grace: for Allah encompasseth all, and he knoweth all things." (Qur'an 24:32).

Commentary

The subject of sex ethics and manners brings us to the subject of marriage."Single" (ayama, plural of Ayyim) here means any one not in the bond of wed lock, whether

unmarried or lawfully divorced, or widowed. If we can, we must marry in our own circle, but if we have not the means, there is no harm if we choose from a lower circle, provided our choice is determined by virtue. Poverty in the other party does not matter if there is virtue and love. A happily married man has the best wealth in a virtuous wife, and his very happiness makes him a better potential earner of wealth. A slave becomes free by marriage. Allah's mercy is for all: it is not confined to a class or grade of people.

This paper provides love, and tolerance as a strategy for sustainable marriage in Islam. It draws the historical antecedents of tolerance and love in Islam as well as the sunnah of the holy prophet on the need for a peaceful co-existence between the couples in marriage which will provide an everlasting peace and understanding.

Understanding Love

Love is a virtue that is exalted by people of all faiths. Unfortunately, some have interpreted love as something other than what it ought to be. This has introduced the dichotomy of love as it ought to be and love as it is, tending to obscure the real meaning of love in creation. Philosophically, love as it ought to be is an end in itself. However, love, as it is, betrays love as a means to an end, an instrument of some sort. (Gulen, 2010, p.4) notes that “love is engrained in the soul of a human being.... Altruism is an exalted human feeling, and its source is love.” (Kamil, ed. 2016, P 3).

Tolerance in the Life of Individual

Tolerance was first introduced on this Earth by the prophets whose teacher was God. Even if it would not be correct to attribute tolerance to God, he has attributes that are rooted in tolerance, like forgiveness, the forgiveness of sins, compassion and mercy for all creatures, and the veiling of the shame and faults of others. The All-forgiving, the All-merciful, and the All-Veiling of faults are among the most frequently mentioned names of Allah in the Quran. Forgiveness and tolerance are given great importance in the messages of the prophets, which are from divine and celestial sources. (Gulen, 2011.P37).

The exercise of taqwa (fear of Allah and righteous conduct) which will complete his religion is of course much easier for a person who is protected by legal marriage from the sins of Zina, promiscuity and homosexuality. (Lemu, 2005.P.165).

Today in most countries Muslim marriages are facing various challenges between the family members of both groom and the bride. All those challenges occur as a result of lack of love, and tolerance between the husband and wife, lack of following the moral teaching of Islam and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet. That is why today's marriages are unfair, unjust, which result to miserable life, this type of marriage is either forced without the knowledge of the wife due to the interest from the parents to life in a better life and forget the challenges of poverty. While the wife in particular was denied her better choice and was forced to marry the rich old man in order to protect the interest of her parents. It is haram for a woman to abandon her husband's bed denying him sexual relations based on the saying of the holy prophet (saw) “if a man invites his wife to his bed and she refuses to answer his call, the Angels will curse her (throughout the night) till day break.” Related by Bukhari and Muslim.

The Mistakes That Husbands and Wives Commit During an Argument

- Hiding one's intentions and feelings
- Inviting others to take part in the dispute
- Rushing to the courthouse
- Destroying the other person's confidence and sense of self dignity
- Fighting in front of the children

The Noble Quran guides us to the following steps that the husband should take in order to bring back not just normalcy but harmony as well to a marriage that is temporarily derailed by fight or argument. When a disagreement arises, the situation worsens when the wife begins to rebel and disobey her husband.

Hence a man should;

- advise his wife in a wise manner
- leave her to sleep alone in her bed and cut off all physical relationship with her
- discipline her with his hand or with a siwak (a stick that is used to clean one's teeth with)

These three stages should be followed in order, only when one step doesn't work should one move on the following one. And if all of these stages do not work then arbitrators need to be appointed, one from the husband's side and the other from the wife's side, in order to try to bring harmony back to their marriage.

When a man has two or more wives, he must be fair and just to them all. The messenger of Allah said:

"Whoever has two wives and is not just between them, will come on the day of resurrection, and his side will be falling"

Another narration of the same hadith is worded thus; ".....And his side will be slanting." The prophet would spend an equal amount of nights with each wife; he would spend on them equally; he would provide them with clothing equally; anything that he could do to be just and fair to them all, he did he said; Reported by Abu Dawud.

Arranged Marriages

Arranged marriages are allowed and promoted in Islam as long as they are accepted by both the bride and the groom. One of the conditions for the Nikah (marriage ceremony) to be valid is both the man and woman are asked independently of each other as to whether they agree with the marriage or not. If either of them says 'no' then the Nikah cannot continue, however, silence is regarded as consent. (RaddulMohtar).

The parents have a responsibility to ensure that both couples are compatible and do not arrange a marriage merely for their own social or personal reasons (i.e. 'she's my brothers' daughter, let's get our son married to her!'). If the latter is the case then they will have to answer to Allah. The Prophet of Allah (P.B.U.H) gave the strictest orders with relation to the rights of others. He said:

"Truly Allah has totally forbidden disobedience (and the subsequent hurt) to mothers, burying alive daughters, with-holding the rights of others, and demanding that which is not your right." (Hadith Muslim 4257. Recorded by Mughirah b. Shuba).

When a suitable partner is chosen then four things are considered, out of which one should take importance and this is the religious practice of their prospective partners.

Whilst the following Hadith is in relation to choosing a woman, it refers to both sexes: the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H) said:

"A woman (or man) may be married for four things: for her wealth, for her noble descent,

for her beauty or for her religion. Choose the one who is religious, lest your hands be rubbed with dust!” (Bukhari and Muslim)

Although the Prophet advised the young Muslim to look for a religious partner, it does not mean that they should ignore their preferences regarding the physical beauty. The Prophet (P.B.U.H) encouraged seeing a prospective partner before finalizing the marriage, so that a Muslim does not find his/herself trapped in a marriage with a woman/man he/she finds unattractive.

Al Mughirah Ibn Shaibah said:

“I got engaged to a woman at the time of the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace). He asked me “Have you seen her?” I said “No”. He said “go and have a look at her, because it is more fitting that love and compatibility is established between you.” (Nasai)

Therefore, in the above situations we find that Islam promotes love and compatibility between husband and wife and recognizes that these are vital ingredients in a successful marriage.

Forced Marriage

Whilst we understand the importance of love and compatibility, we must also ensure the approval of both parties. However, one must also recognize that forced marriage is a problem occurring today and Islam condemns it to the highest degree. The issue of forced marriages is not one that is limited to some Muslims, but Hindus, Sikhs and other religions also acknowledge it as a problem as explained above, Islam regards marriage as a right of the individual and therefore others cannot make the decision for them. If a woman/man is forced in marriage then the marriage would not be valid and would therefore need to be cancelled.

However, daughters and sons should also recognize the rights of their parents and come to an agreed solution before the marriage takes place.

If this does not happen then those who forced the marriage and those who allowed it are both guilty and have committed a major sin.

The following incident clarifies the position of forced marriages in Islam; Khansa Bint Khidam said:

“My father married me to his nephew, and I did not like this match, so I complained to the Messenger of Allah (May Allah bless him and grant him peace). He said to me “accept what your father has arranged.” I said “I do not wish to accept what my father has arranged.”

He said:

“Then this marriage is invalid, go and marry whomever you wish.” I said “I have accepted what my father has arranged, but I wanted women to know that fathers have no right in their daughter’s matters (i.e. they have no right to force a marriage on them). (Fathul Bari Sharah Al Bukhari 9/194, Ibn Majah Kitabun Nikah 1/602)

Sadaq

Saddaq is a legal right of a wife in Islam. It is a condition that saddaq must be in money from the proofs of this are; the saying of the Holy Prophet (saw), “I have married her to you based on what you memorized from the holy Quran”. From Anas Bin Malik (RA), indeed, the messenger of Allah set Safiyyah free (from slavery) and made this (her freedom) her Saddaq”. Bukhari and Muslim related it.

Rights of Wife over her Husband

- Adequate financial support, clothing, feeding and lodging based on the saying of the Holy Prophet (SAW) “....and they have the right to feeding, and clothing with fairness, over you” Muslim reported it.
- Companionship with fairness. Based on the saying of the Almighty Allah “.... And live with them honorably”. That is, make well your utterances to them; make well your behavior an attitude to them to your utmost capability. Be pleasant with them and refrain from causing harm to them even with your offensive utterances. Kindly bear with their misdeeds based on the saying of the Holy Prophet (saw), “have the based intention with women; because they were, indeed, created from the rib and the most bent part of the rib is the uppermost side (from where they were, they were created). If you insist to straighten it you end up breaking it and if Bukhari reported it.
- He has to guard and protect her from anything that can run down her honor, her prestige and her pride.
- He has to have sexual intercourse with her even if once after her purification from every menstrual circle, if he is capable to do so. If he fails to do this, he has become a sinner to almighty Allah based on the saying of Almighty Allah, “and when they have purified themselves, then go in onto them as Allah has ordained. For you (go in unto them in any manner as long as it is in their virgins” Baqarah: 222). Which said:
“They ask thee concerning women’s courses. Say: They are a hurt and pollution. So keep away from women in their curses, and do not approach them until they are clean. But when they have purified themselves, ye may approach them in any manner, time, or place ordained for you by Allah. For Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.” (Qur’an 2:222).

Commentary

Adhan: hurt, pollution. Both aspects must be remembered. Physical Cleanliness and purity make for health, bodily and spiritual. But the matter should be looked at from the woman's point of view as well as the men. To her there is danger of hurt, and she should have every consideration. In the animal world, instinct is a guide which is obeyed. Man should in this respect be better: he is often worse. Haythu: A comprehensive word referring to manner, time, or place. The most delicate matters are here referred to in the most discreet and yet helpful terms. In sex morality, manner, time, and place are all important: and the highest standards are set by social laws, by our own refined instinct of mutual consideration, and above all, by the light shed by the highest Teachers from the wisdom which they receive from our Maker, Who loves purity and cleanliness in all things.

Rights of the Husband over his Wife

- She should follow his order except if it contravenes the Shariah. She should keep him constantly in her mind and protect his properties. She should prevent anything that can arouse disgust in men. She should not always scorn or frown her face or appear in a detested picture that will make him hate her.
- She should always oblige him anytime he invites her to the bed based on the saying of the messenger of Allah (saw), “if a man invites his wife to the bed and she refuses; and he

goes to bed in annoyance with her the Angels will continue to curse the woman until the day break". Agreed upon.

- She should always express her gratitude to him. She should not be ungrateful, based on the saying of the Holy Prophet (SAW), "I saw hell-fire. Majority of its dwellers are women; they are always ungrateful". It was said, "were they ungrateful to Allah?". He (SAW) said "they were ungrateful to their spouses. "They are ungrateful of (all) goodness. If you do well to one of them for a lifetime, later, if she finds a single (displeasure) in you, she would say, I have never seen one singe (favor) from you". Agreed upon.
- She must not do a voluntary fasting without his permission; based on the saying of the holy prophet (SAW), "it is not allowed for a woman to fast, in her husband's presence, except with his permission..." Bukhari reported it
- She must not bring somebody to his house except with his permission based on the saying of the Holy Prophet (SAW) "do not permit into his house except with his permission". Bukhari reported.
- If he dies, she should mourn him for four months and ten days, based on the saying of the messenger of Allah (SAW), "it is not allowed for a woman who believes in Allah and the last day, to mourn for more than three days except her husband; for four months and ten days". Agreed upon.

Conclusion

Islamic scholars and religious leaders have vital roles to play in teaching the couples the need to follows the moral teachings and the Sunnah of the holy prophet (SAW) to enhanced love, tolerance, and peaceful co-existence between themselves in their marriage institution so as to avoid the challenges of marriage conflict, tensions, illegal divorce, and other grievances that can generate into mental conflict. It is important for the Muslims couples to critically review their understanding and practice of Islamic forms of marriage.

Recommendation

In light of the above Quranic and Prophetic traditions quoted from the Islamic Perspective of Love and Tolerance, spouses should exhibit the habit of following the moral teachings of the Quran and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet on marriage so as to avoid any grievances within themselves. Certainly, any form of mistakes such as

- Fighting in front of their children's
- Hiding one's intentions and feelings, and
- Inviting others to take part in their dispute should be avoided.

Since the noble Quran have guided us with the necessary steps that the husband should take in order to bring back not just normalcy but harmony as well to a marriage that is temporarily derailed by the fight or argument.

They should tolerate one another by way of forgiveness, because forgiveness and tolerance are given great importance in the messages of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) which are from divine and celestial sources.

Finally, Muslim ummah should understand that Islam does not support in any way a marriage where either the husband or the wife is unhappy with the set up.

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