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# VEILS OF DIGNITY

*An exposé on  
Muslim women*

By  
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## PREFACE

All praise is for Allah. We praise Him, we seek His aid and we ask for His forgiveness. We seek Allah's refuge from the evils of ourselves and the evils of our actions. Whomsoever Allah guides, there is no one to misguide him and whomsoever Allah misguides, there is no one to guide him. I testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah alone, who has no partner, and I testify that Muhammad is His Prophet and Messenger.

Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave."

Jesus (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "Seek the Truth and the Truth shall set you free."

Since I was nine years old I have been on a quest to know who God is. He has endowed me with an unquenchable thirst to this end and it has led me to a lifetime journey in pursuit of it. Along the way I have found interest in everything from Buddhism, Animism, Spiritualism, Occultism, Catholicism and Christianity. It is Christianity that I pursued vigorously and sincerely both in my studies (Bachelor and Master's degree in Theology) and my personal life as a professor and Christian missionary. Christianity presented the questions and how ironic that I found the answers in Islam! The first part of this book explores that discovery.

The second part of the book looks at those topics in Islam that concern women most, especially since the Muslim woman has been portrayed in the poor light of suppressed and second-class citizens, with little education and little mind, and victims of the male society out to get her. I have taken the liberty here to incorporate comparisons in the different areas discussed and hope that no one will make this as an exception, seeing that I, too, am a Westerner.

I have often felt frustrated that these topics (courtship, marriage, polygamy and divorce) have never been fully discussed in light of the rights of the Muslim woman on talk shows and news media. Rather the same rhetoric is repeated over and over by the misinformed, thereby keeping the public in the dark. I have started this section with the chapter on the Islamic Dress, because this is the point of contention which is being used by the media as the focal point of the “suppression” of the Muslim woman by men.

To this end my passion has not only been to expel and dispose of these erroneous attitudes, but to inform the public, especially the Westerners, of the true belief in Islam, along with the respect and dignity that the Muslim women hold. I am sure some of the information will be shocking to those who thought that they knew or were so sure of the truthfulness of what they knew, having never read Islamic material written by Muslims.

To the Muslim reader who might be reading for the first time concerning the rights of women in these areas I say: You are

now responsible for the knowledge you have received may Allah benefit you with it and guide you and help you put it into practice.

I further wish to state that I have held true to the teachings of the Holy Quran as revealed by Allah to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him), and to the *Sunnah* or traditions of Prophet Muhammad to the best of my ability. When necessary, I have sought the help of Islamic scholars as to the content and correctness of what I have presented.

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## A JOURNEY WITHIN

Professor, Theologian, Missionary, Pastor, Church Planter, Licensed Ordained Minister, fundamentalist Christian; not a likely candidate for Islam. Yet, in October 1993, after having been raised in the Christian church all my life, (first as a Roman Catholic and then as a Born-Again, Spirit-Filled Christian) and having completed a Standard Ministerial Diploma, Bachelor of Theology and a Master of Divinity, I embraced Islam! What was it that brought about such a radical change?

I started to question Christian beliefs while I was studying for my Master's degree. As was my habit, I read through the Bible once every year for 12 years. I had done this along with multiple readings in connection with my preaching, teaching and studies. It was during these readings that I started to notice certain contradictions. For instance, we teach the doctrine of Original Sin from Genesis 3 but it is contradicted in Ezekiel 18:1-22. If this basic doctrine is not true, the whole foundation of all Christianity falls. I saw these things as I read, and always stopped to ponder over them, but never had time to research on them because of my studies, etc. Yes, during my eight years of study, we read through the Bible book-by-book, chapter-by-chapter and verse-by-verse; however, we never did a cross-study, so any contradictions that were apparent were never addressed. Also, this was the first time we studied Church History by actual history and not from the Bible. It was at this point that I began to question Christian Doctrines that were not in existence during the time of Jesus; rather, they

began 325 years later starting with the Doctrine of the Trinity. The word "Trinity" is not found in any Bible in the world, neither is it in the original Greek and Hebrew languages [these were the original languages that the Bible was written in]. This Doctrine [of Trinity] was introduced at the first of four councils that determined Christianity today, but because the Catholics at that time would not accept it, it had to be reintroduced 68 years later, at the 2nd council of Nicaea. Through the Doctrine of Incarnation, which makes Jesus both God and man, to the Doctrine of Propitiation, or perfect sacrifice, the formulation of all of these doctrines took more than 100 years.

I always had the hunger in my heart to know more of God. One day, I went to my professor and stated, "There has to be more to Christianity than what we teach. We tell the people they must be "Born Again" (meaning you have made a personal statement and commitment by asking Jesus Christ to come into your heart and forgive your sins and make you a new person), or you must be "Filled with the Holy Spirit"-in addition to being "Born Again" (the person has an experience called "glossolalia" or speaking in tongues). I had both of these experiences, although they are not recognized as necessary by all Christian churches or denominations. There is a lot of in-fighting and theological differences between denominations. Protestants do not recognize Catholics as even being Christian because they worship Mary, the mother of Jesus [peace be upon him] along with various saints. Baptists do not have "fellowship" with non-Baptists. In addition, there are Methodist, Wesleyan, Presbyterian, Congregational,

Pentecostal churches and a thousand independent churches that do not belong to any denomination. They all differ on points of doctrine or interpretation of the Bible. I felt that if what we were teaching were genuine, there would be no need for denominations. There should be an apparent change in society around us. Instead, society is in a decline and in worse condition than it was even ten years ago! The so-called Christian countries are among the worst. My professor was lost for words and couldn't respond.

I went ahead and graduated with my Master of Divinity (a degree in Theology) in 1993. A month after graduating, I decided to study the German language. One of my classmates was a medical doctor who had spent six years in Dubai. We became friends and I noticed he was always asking me questions concerning the Old Testament. I was also always asking him questions concerning Middle-Eastern cultures. I was never interested in Islam, although my major throughout my studies was in missions. We had studied Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Animism and Catholicism along with cults. My interest was in Animism, or tribal worship. When this doctor and I were together, I noticed he was different. He always wanted to pray, but in a Christian context. When we were out, he was always giving money to the beggars. He even had a plastic bag full of coins in the car for this purpose. One day I mentioned to him that if I hadn't known better, I would have thought he was Muslim. He confessed to me that when he was in Dubai, he had embraced Islam, but had never told his family. When he returned to the Philippines, he apostatized and was no longer praying or practicing Islam. His family

were devoted Catholics, although he was no longer affiliated with the Catholic Church, rather with the Protestant church. It was within this same time frame that I met a woman who had embraced Islam while working in Saudi Arabia. I was living in Manila at the time, and although there are Muslims there, it's not as though I was out looking for them. I thought this was rather strange that I should meet two people who were Muslims within such a short time. Knowing how God works in my life through ordinary circumstances, I jokingly said, "Okay, God, what are you trying to tell me?"

I asked her about Islam, and the first thing I asked concerned how women were treated. It is well-known (as we are taught in the West and hear through the media) that Muslim women are second-class citizens with no rights. She must hide herself in an *abaya* / *purdah*<sup>1</sup> or covering because her husband does not want anyone else to see her. She must stay in the house and along with this, the husband has a right to beat her! I was stunned by her answer. She said the wife and mother are highly respected in Islam. She explained that women are covered because it is the command of Allah for the protection of women. She also explained that spousal abuse is not a part of Islam at all. I was so sure that what I had been taught was right and I was ready to give all of my sympathy to these poor and deprived Muslim women. Upon being told the truth, as opposed to the fallacy I had been taught, I proceeded to ask her other questions: Who is Allah? Who is Muhammad (peace be upon him) in relation to the Muslims? At that time, I was

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<sup>1</sup> Traditional outer coverings used by Muslim women.

teaching in Christian colleges, so my questions were quite deep. She admitted to somewhat of being a new Muslim and although she could not answer all of my questions, she would accompany me to the Islamic Center where someone could. Upon hearing this, I prayed "Lord, (meaning Jesus at that time), if this is Satanic or Demonic (as Christians are taught that Islam is) then show me. I will not go even one time." After all, I wasn't about to open up myself to some demonic spirit. I didn't feel any hesitation, so I went with her rather cautiously. I was quite surprised at their approach. I taught Church Evangelism. I know that there are many strategies and methods to be used when calling someone to follow your religion. They didn't use any of them! There was no psychological manipulation, no subliminal influence, no harassment, none of this "let's have a Quranic study in your house" as opposed to Christians using a Bible study, and no telephone calls. They were straightforward and honest. They gave me some books and said that if I had any questions they would be happy to answer them. I went home that night and read all of the books they had given me. I was fascinated and surprised. This was the first time I was actually reading a book about Islam written by a Muslim! All the books we had ever read during my eight years of studies on Islam had been written by Christians. These books reflect what they think Islam is. But what they think about what Islam is and what Islam really is are two entirely different perspectives. The Christians are sincere, but sincerely wrong! I went back the next day and discussed for three hours what I had read. They gave me some more books and I went home that night and read all of those books. I went back the next day and we had

another three-hour discussion, this went on for a week. At the end of that time, I had read 12 books and had spent more than 15 hours in discussion. I had studied eight years in formal Christian theological studies yet at the end of that week, I knew cognitively (head knowledge) that Islam is true. Did I embrace Islam then? No, because even then I wasn't a hypocrite. It wasn't in my heart.

Among the first questions I asked that week was the question: Who is Allah? We had been taught the God of the Muslims is a pagan god (somewhat like a Hindu god, but His name is Allah [Quran 20:14] and He is the one the Muslims worship). I was surprised to find out that Allah is The **Omniscient** (All-Knowing), **Omnipotent** (All-Powerful) and **Omnipresent** (All-Present) God. He is the Creator, Sustainer and Provider. This certainly did not correspond with my studies in paganism, and I realized, "Certainly, this is not a pagan god!". There are neither rituals of secrecy, blood sacrifice (human or animal) nor any mediator. He is The **One and Only God**, without partners. This is opposed to the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity where God is three beings: Father, Son (Jesus) and Holy Spirit, all co-equal and co-eternal. We would like to ask our Christian friends who Jesus was when he was supposed to be dying on the cross and he said "Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachtani? - *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* " (Matthew 27: 46). Was he talking to himself? Perhaps you will say, "No, that was the human part of Jesus" (Doctrine of the Incarnation where Jesus was made both God and man) man, you will say, to relate to human suffering. But if you say this, then Jesus was not the perfect Sacrifice (Doctrine of Propitiation)

because according to Christian Doctrine, all men are born with original sin (This is the Christian doctrine where sin is placed upon mankind because of Adam and Eve). If He were born without this sin, he would be less than man, and could not relate to temptation and suffering.

The second question I asked was: Who is Muhammad (peace be upon him) in relation to the Muslims? I was surprised to learn that the Muslims do not pray to Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the Christians pray to Jesus (peace be upon him). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is not a mediator. Muslims ask Allah to bless him and his descendants as we likewise ask Allah to bless the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) and his descendents at the end of our prayers. He came with the same message that all of the Prophets, including Jesus (peace be upon them all) brought. This message is to worship The One True God – Allah. Moses spoke to the people of Israel, "Hear O Israel! The Lord your God is **ONE GOD** and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your strength." (Deuteronomy 6:4) **Jesus (peace be upon him) also delivered the exact same message, "Hear, O Israel, *the Lord your God is One God* and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your strength."** (Mark 12:29, 30) Note: Jesus said **ONE GOD**, not three in one! Jesus, himself, (peace be upon him) never claimed to be Son of God, which is what other people said of him. He always referred to himself as son of man. Each Prophet came with the same message, but there was a distinction in the deliverance of their messages. The message of Moses (peace

be upon him) was delivered with Plagues brought upon Egypt. The distinction of Jesus (peace be upon him) is the casting out of demons and raising the dead, all by the power of Allah. The distinction of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is that the Holy Quran was revealed to a Prophet who could neither read nor write. The message of Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them) was sent to a specific people, the Jews. In the Bible, the words "*Hear O Israel, Hear O Israel*" are repeated over and over by the Prophets, including Jesus. The Holy Quran was not sent to a specific people although Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was an Arab and the language is Arabic. Allah says in the Holy Quran (more than 22 times) that Islam was sent to **ALL MANKIND!**

The third question asked was: What are the words of the prayer? Of course we have all seen pictures of Muslims praying toward the Ka'bah in Makkah. We used to think that the Muslims believe that the black cube is their god or they think their god is in there. This again shows the ignorance that many non-Muslims, the Christians in particular, have about Islam. Since prayer and sanctification (holiness) had always been of utmost importance to me as a Christian, I was very interested to know the way and the words of the prayer.

They replied, "First of all the approach to prayer is in cleanliness, both physical and spiritual." Allah, the Creator of man is the only one who has the right to say how we should come before Him in prayer. Before, as a Catholic, I had genuflected and made the sign of the cross. Later, as a Protestant, we had raised our hands singing, clapping,



shouting, dancing and crying. In our ignorance, we thought that this was the right way to approach God. He tells us in the Holy Quran the exact way we are to approach Him (chapter 5 verse 6). We are to wash our hands, face, forearms, wipe over our heads and wash our feet. By doing so, the minor sins we committed from those parts of our body are washed away. We then assume a standing position while facing Makkah (the focal point of our prayer), and raise our hands to our shoulders saying, "God is the Greatest". After that, we say the first Surah (chapter) of the Holy Quran: **"Praise be to God, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the world, The Most Merciful, The Most Compassionate, Master of the Day of Judgment. It is You we worship and Your aid we seek. Show us the straight path, the path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray."** (Holy Quran 1:1-7). This is then followed by another short chapter of the Holy Quran.

Then again we raise our hands to our shoulders and say "God is the Greatest." This is followed by bowing and placing the hands on the knees while saying "Glorified is my Lord the Great" one time or more. When rising to a standing position, we say: "Allah hears who praises Him. Our Lord, for You is all praise." Again the words, "God is the Greatest." Now the worshipper will prostrate before Allah on the ground while saying, "Glorified is my Lord the Most High" one time or more. After that, he reclines to a sitting position on his feet while asking Allah to forgive him his sins and assumes again the prostrating position while repeating again "Glorified is my Lord the Most-High " one time or more.

I was so stunned at hearing the words of this prayer that I blurted out "There is nothing objectionable about this prayer! It is a prayer of praise to God!!!" The words of the prayer and the execution are by direction of Allah as shown to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) by Angel Gabriel (peace be upon him). This is the way the Angels in heaven pray before the throne of God. Imagine! The Muslims are the only people in the world who pray the way the Angels in heaven pray! In addition, when one stops to think, the Muslims are instructed to pray at stated times which correspond with the positions of the sun. This means that with the rotation of the earth only the Muslims are in continuous prayer before the **ONE AND ONLY MOST HIGH GOD – ALLAH 24 HOURS A DAY!**

The last question I had concerned the authenticity of the Holy Quran. The Bible is made up of 66 books (the Catholic Bible has 73) and was compiled by over 40 different authors. For some books the author is either unknown or not stated, for instance, the *Book of Ruth* in the Old Testament and *Hebrews* in the New Testament. Although *Hebrews* is attributed to Paul, his signature does not appear on it, and in the middle of *Hebrews*, the style of writing changes. Of course, the average Christian is not aware of this and unless you are studying for a theological degree, you will not ordinarily find this out just by reading the Bible. In the Bible, you are also dealing with two languages: Hebrew in the Old Testament and Greek in the New Testament. Neither of these languages is to be confused with the colloquial or spoken languages of today. I have also never heard that Jesus spoke Greek! I had to study both

languages in the course of my studies. I was impressed to find out that **the Holy Quran had only one author, that being Allah – God Himself!** At the beginning of every chapter, except for one, it boldly states, **IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL**, unlike the Bible which states in the Old Testament: *The Book of . . .*, or in the New Testament which states: *the Gospel according to . . .* (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John). By the way, according to Biblical scholars, Matthew, Mark and Luke were not the disciples of Jesus. They were disciples of Peter and Paul. *Mark* is the first gospel written around 68 AD. Many Biblical scholars feel that Matthew plagiarized from Mark and that Mark had gotten some of his information from another source called “*Q*”. Luke states in both his gospel and the *book of Acts* that his accounts are only second-hand. John's gospel was written about 100 AD. Like I said, unless you are studying theology, you don't find these things out. It should likewise be pointed out that the Holy Quran is written in only one language, and that is Arabic, because that was the language in which it descended upon the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) from Allah.

Another thing that impressed me is the fact that the Holy Quran has remained unchanged for the last fourteen hundred years!! **What is read today is exactly verbatim as it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).** Those who are reading the translation of the meaning of the Holy Quran will usually find the Arabic next to it. It must be remembered: a translation is not a transliteration. In every language, there will be variations in grammatical style and

structure, as well as phrases that cannot be translated exactly. Therefore, translation is accomplished through finding the closest meaning of what is said as well as the exact words that are used. This is why every Muslim is encouraged to learn the Arabic of the Quran. Not only are our prayers said in the original language, but this also means that Muslims are the only people on earth who are drawn together by a common language! For instance, if a Chinese Muslim came to the United States and could not speak English and the American Muslim could not speak Chinese; they could communicate by using the Arabic of the Quran.

Although, I did not embrace Islam that week, I started to attend the Islamic lectures. Again, I sat there stunned by what I was learning. Everything I had learned about Islam while studying for my Master's degree was refuted in these classes. As a Christian we never knew that the Muslims believe in the virgin birth of Jesus. We didn't even think that they believed in Jesus at all! But if a Muslim does not believe in the virgin birth of Jesus, he/she is not a Muslim. I was also surprised to know that Muslims believe that Jesus was taken into heaven and will come again! Mary, the mother of Jesus, has a whole chapter in the Holy Quran named after her, yet the Muslims don't worship her or pray to her as the Catholics do! The Catholic and Protestant Bibles have only a small paragraph devoted to her, "The *Magnificat*". The Holy Quran has a whole chapter named after her called *Surah Maryam* (Mary the mother of Jesus). Mary, the mother of Jesus is mentioned many times throughout the Holy Quran.

I would go home from these classes and meditate, contemplating what I was learning. Christianity had raised a lot of questions in my mind, yet Islam was giving me the answers! Everyday I attended the lectures and every night I read the Bible and every night I prayed, "God, show me if this (Islam) is true." Somewhere along the line I had stopped saying Jesus, stopped saying Holy Spirit, and stopped saying "father". I was just saying **"GOD WHOEVER YOU ARE SHOW ME IF THIS IS TRUE."** When you ask the Omniscient God to show you the truth, will He play a joke on you? It is not easy to change your religion. I didn't want to lose my salvation, but what if there was no salvation to lose? One night, about two months from the first time I had gone to the Islamic center, I had prayed this prayer as I had been doing every night and went to bed. *Somewhere between the state of wakefulness and sleep I physically felt something come into my heart. Immediately being fully conscious, I sat up on my bed and spoke out loud, "Allah, I believe that you are ONE GOD AND ONE GOD ONLY."* This was the first time I had used the name of Allah. Although I heard others use it, I never had spoken it myself until that time. After saying that, there immediately descended upon me a peace that has never left me to this day.

My decision was not to be without repercussion. The Christians who profess the love of Jesus and who so readily accuse others of persecuting people for becoming Christian were the very ones to perpetrate persecution on me. Of course, the first thing to go was my job. I would no longer be able to teach in the Christian Colleges. You can have a Christian

teach about Islam, but you can't have a Muslim teach about Christianity. I had already been a widow for seven years at the time I embraced Islam. That meant I must support myself. I still had three children out of nine I was financially responsible for.

The second thing to occur was that my husband's family disowned me. My husband came from a very prominent family. His grandfather is in the history books as a recognized hero, and his father had at one time been governor. Although all three of them were dead, I had a close relationship with his family, so much so that I was actually closer to them than to my own family. After becoming a Muslim, I was told (in no uncertain terms) that I was no longer a part of the family and not to join in any of the family gatherings. There were members of the family still in politics, and it was certainly not to their advantage to have a Muslim in the family. I felt very hurt by this, as for many years I had a close relationship with them. It was not on the basis of my being a Christian, but because I was part of the family. When my husband died, it was his family that I counted on for help raising my children, only now to be turned away. I cried for three days, but whenever I made *salah* (obligatory prayer) I had the peace of knowing I had made the right decision.

My own children were to be another source of contention. At this point, all of my children, except for one son who was with me, were in the United States. As I was attending the Islamic Center, I was sharing with them through letters what I was learning. After I embraced Islam, my oldest daughter (who

happened to work for the headquarters of the church I was affiliated with for 18 years) wrote me a letter and said, "Don't you know that Islam is one of the most Satanic religions?" I responded by sending her some booklets and she wrote back and said, "DON'T TRY TO CONVERT ME!" I explained to her that it was forbidden for us by Allah to force our religion on anyone, but that I had thought she might like to read them to see what it was I believed in.

As a parent, when you are experiencing some difficulty with one of your wayward children, you usually call a meeting of the close relatives [grandmother, aunt, cousin] who might have some influence over the situation. Well, I found out later that my children had a meeting about me! Mother is the problem and Islam is the culprit! Like most big families, there is a dividing line among sets of children. The three oldest are the bosses, the three middle ones are the fighters and the younger ones have no say. While the discussion was in hot pursuit, the oldest ones were vehemently opposed to the whole situation, the middle ones said, "This is our mother and it is her decision. She is not forcing it on us. We want to continue to be close to her and we want her also to be close to her grandchildren." When I finally went to the States, the older ones wanted to argue and had put up a wall that prevented any discussion. On the other hand, the middle ones were open and full of questions. Our conversations were just that – meaningful conversations that took place in the course of natural conversation. One daughter even made a statement that I was nicer as a Muslim than when I was a Christian! This

surprised me because, as a Christian, I had always tried to exemplify what I believed.

After seven years, the older ones finally accepted me as being a Muslim and, by the Will of Allah, would not change back to Christianity. They accepted, not approved. The others said that they saw Islam as a way of life unlike Christianity where you go to church, then go ahead and do anything you like. In other words, it calls for a change of lifestyle.

My son, who had been living with me when I embraced Islam, was not interested in religion, Christianity or Islam. He had his own band and at this time his music was being played on the radio. He was 18 and religion was not a part of his lifestyle. Sometime after I had lost my teaching position, I was asked to start and manage a women's section at the Islamic Center. Every week, I would bring home books and neatly put them on the dining table and every day they were still there. Periodically, I would change them, hoping that he would read them and ask me some questions. He never did. Several times that year, I had some of the Muslims from the Islamic Center come and talk to him. He was always polite, but uninterested. After some time, I had them come to talk to him and this time we read to him from the Holy Quran. As we were reading you could see a spirit of conviction come on his face, he asked me, "Why didn't you tell me this before?" I was stunned and mentioned that I had left the books there, hoping he would read them and ask me questions. He then told me that when I would leave the house, he and his friends would read them and then put them back! His name is now Omar.



I have never regretted becoming a Muslim and pray that Allah will give me the *Iman* (faith) of the *Sahaba* [companions of the Prophet, (peace be upon him)].

**Say: Indeed my Lord has guided me to a straight path – a correct religion, the way of Abraham, inclining toward truth. And he was not among those who associated others with Allah. Say: Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds. No partner has He. And this I have been commanded, and I am the first (among you) of the Muslims. (Holy Quran 6:161-163)**

THE DRESS OF THE  
MUSLIM WOMAN  
COURTSHIP  
MARRIAGE  
POLYGAMY  
DIVORCE

## **THE DRESS OF THE MUSLIM WOMAN**

One of the most asked about and least understood aspects of Islam pertains to the Muslim women's dress. This seems to be one of the areas of Islam that infuriates the non-Muslim the most outside of polygamy, which will also be addressed later.

One of the reasons for this emotional response is based on the misunderstanding and ignorance on the part of the non-Muslim. The non-Muslim feels that this is degrading to the women and that it only reinforces in subjugating the woman into a subservient role in order to enhance the male ego and in keeping women as a second-class citizen. There could be nothing farther from the truth.

Islam is not only concerned with the spiritual aspects of its religion but also with the respect of human rights and dignity. Why is it that a Muslim woman covers herself and to what degree is this carried out? Is it necessary for her to cover her face? What if she is living in a non-Muslim country or is only visiting there, is she still required to cover herself? Why would a religion impose this on a woman?

### **Veiling before Islam**

Veiling itself is not unique only to Islam. We find that 500 years before the birth of Christ, women had been veiling themselves and there had been a separation of sexes. This was done in order that the men could distinguish who were the respectable women and who were the women or prostitutes

that they could approach. In the Bible women were admonished by Paul to cover their head while praying or prophesying (I Corinthians 11:5). Both of these were cultural practices; however, it is only in the Holy Quran that we see a direct command from God for the women to do this as part of their religious practice.

### **Act of obedience – Dress regulations**

First and foremost this is **not** a regulation from men. It is **not** a command of men to women to keep them from being seen by other men. *It is the command of Allah to the believing women:*

**And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts) and not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils all over *Juyubihinna* (i.e. their bodies, faces, neck and bosoms) and not to reveal their adornment except to their husband, or their fathers, or their husband's father, or their sons, or their husband's son or their brothers (the women's brother) or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or other women, or the (female) slaves whom their right hands possess, or old male servants who lack vigor, or small children who have no sense of sex. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And all of you beg Allah to forgive you all, O believers, that you may be successful.** (Holy Quran 24:31)

The preceding text is the dress code for all Muslim women. To do so is an **act of obedience** and she should cover those parts

of her body that are most attractive to men. The neck, arms, breast, thighs and legs should be covered. The dress or blouse should also not have a plunging neckline and should have long or three-quarter-length sleeves. And the dress or skirt should come down to her ankles. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, that the dress of the women should not outline her body. In other words, this eliminates tight-fitting clothing and jeans. Even if the dress or skirt were long enough, if it were tight-fitting, it would not measure up to the standards set down for us. The Prophet further said, "The only part of the woman that should be showing is her face and hands!" This means also that the feet should have stocking (not nylons) or socks, since they are not the hands or face. The material that the clothes are made from should not be of a see-through material. He (Peace be upon him) said, "That in the last days the women would be dressed but undressed." This is exactly what we see today when the fashion industry shows dresses made of see-through and lacy material and the women do not put on underwear for the purpose of showing their private parts. This is the regulation for the clothes to be worn in front of marriageable males. In front of family and male relatives mentioned in the verse and in front of other women she may be more relaxed as long as her clothing is modest and along with this there is no need to wear *hijab* or scarf. With her husband the woman may wear whatever is pleasing and attractive to her husband, and her husband only not other men. The woman is always encouraged to look her best for her husband by applying make-up, fixing her hair, and wearing perfume. The woman would not wear make-up or perfume when going outside in order not to draw attention to herself.

Women are also not to wear perfume when attending the mosque. The Prophet said, " When a woman goes to the mosque wearing perfume her prayers are not accepted." Why? Because the smell of the perfume could be distracting to the men.

She is also instructed to put an outer covering over her clothes when going outside.

**O Prophet! Tell your wives and daughters and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons. That is most convenient, that they should be known and not molested. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful.** (Holy Quran 33:59)

This outer covering would consist of a headscarf or veiling to cover her hair and neck and some type of coating, *pardah*, *burka*<sup>2</sup>, or *abaya* to cover the clothes that she is wearing indoors. Since **80% of the Muslims in the world do not live in Arab countries**, there is a variety of color and style while still conforming to the dress code.

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<sup>2</sup> Covering commonly used by Asian Muslim women.

## **Violence against women**

Perhaps there are those of you who feel that this is too strict, why would any religion impose this upon a woman? Let us first look at some facts and figures before passing judgment.

**In the United States every 90 seconds a woman is abused, raped or molested! More than 2000 women are raped every week!** These are only the ones reported or are forced to seek medical attention! What about those who are too embarrassed, ashamed or have been too psychologically manipulated to seek help?

What is the one thing that would cause a woman to be violated and raped? When convicts in prison for rape were asked this question they answered, "Because of the way the women were dressed." When asked what they looked for in choosing their victim, they all answered "accessibility". The dresses today are inches away from the private parts. Many times when a woman is boarding a bus, climbing the stairs or bending over, she is exposing her private parts. If she is wearing bikini or thong underwear, she is asking for trouble. In this survey the prisoners also mentioned looking for women who had backpacks and long hair, as this made it easier to pull the woman to the ground. No woman wants to be violated in this way. College students should also be aware because campus rape is the number one crime on college and university campuses across the United States! All of these causes are avoided when the Muslim woman is properly dressed and following the command of Allah. The Muslim woman who insists to remove this part of her clothing is removing the protection of Allah from her.

While non-Muslims look upon the Islamic dress as some harsh restriction, we as Muslims can see the wisdom behind this in that Allah is protecting the Muslim woman. It is also a mark of respect and dignity for the woman. The first time I was in the States after having embraced Islam, I was walking with my adult daughter who was not a Muslim and she made a profound statement. She said, " Mom, I can tell when a Muslim man is looking at you!" I was shocked by this statement because first of all, I was not looking at men and secondly, it is difficult at most times to distinguish a Muslim male, because they do not wear middle eastern or Pakistani clothing and for the most part do not even wear beards, so I found this to be a remarkable statement. I asked her how she ascertained this and she told me, "Because when they look at you they look at you differently, they look at you with respect!"

The inappropriate remarks made by perfect strangers, the touching of a woman on the bus or street, along with sexual harassment in the job setting are all too common at the work place in the Western society. If given the choice between a Muslim woman who is covered and a non-Muslim in short "modern" clothing, who has the less chance of being raped?

### **The face covering**

Let's discuss now about the face covering that some Muslim women wear, is this a requirement?

The scholars are divided on this issue, some say yes and some say no because it is not explicit in the Quran like that of covering the rest of the body, although some scholars interpret this to mean the complete covering from the head including



the face on down to the feet. This is why we see some countries like Afghanistan, parts of Africa, Pakistan, Philippines, and Saudi Arabia among other countries where women are with complete covering. However, all agree that the woman must cover her head (*hijab*/scarf) and body. But when it comes to the face they are not in agreement, although this does not mean they are in disagreement when it comes to the *hijab* and outer covering. Those women who wish to do it may do so, and those who don't will not encounter any penalty or sin for not doing so.

It is interesting that many women who embrace Islam in the West choose to cover their face. Many of us who embrace Islam and have been born, raised and lived our lives in the West, experiencing the sleaziness of the so-called "freedom and women's liberation" cherish and value the modesty and protection that Islam offers us by wearing our *hijabs*, *abayas* and *nikabs* (face veil) proudly. However, it is not without repercussions. Many times and without provocation we are harassed by the ignorant non-Muslim with unkind remarks about wearing a "tent, towel" or sometimes called "*ninjas*."

Catholic nuns used to wear long dresses, sleeves and habits<sup>3</sup> or long veils, a counterpart to the *hijab*. Of course, this was before the mid-60's when their habit was updated, and skirts just below the knees, short sleeves and a short kerchief tied at the back of the neck were allowed and came into vogue. Moreover, some nuns do not even wear anything to

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<sup>3</sup> Dress that nuns wear...

distinguish them from the public except a small cross. Since the discarding of the nun's unique dress, many nuns have been subject to violation and rape because there was not enough clothing to distinguish them from the ordinary people!! In other words their previous way of dress was a protection, just as the Muslim woman's wearing of *hijab* and *abaya* is an **act of protection** for the Muslim women

I lived in the Philippines where Filipinos pride themselves in being a "Christian" nation. And like many other Christian countries it is common to see pictures and statues of Mary in the most unlikely places and sometimes next to pictures of porno girls. This particular incident took place in a public transportation. A small child around five or six years of age got in with his mother, and the child, being observant, was staring at me, I being the only Muslim in the jeepney<sup>4</sup> and also the only one with head cover. The child then spotted the picture of Mary, the mother of Jesus and was looking at the picture and then looking at me, looking at the picture then looking at me again. Suddenly, in a child's loud shrill voice, much to the embarrassment of the mother, the child excitedly started calling out while pointing at me, "Mama Mary, Mama Mary!!", as this is what Mary the mother of Jesus is called in the Philippines. I smiled and told the child I was not Mama Mary but I was a Muslim, that we respected and loved Mary and that our dress did resemble how she dressed.

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<sup>4</sup> Custom-made vehicles resembling stretched jeeps. Most common form of transportation in the Philippines.

## **Prayer covering**

The dress is also an important part of **worship**, since during the act of prayer the Muslim woman must be completely covered except for her hands and face. Usually she wears another piece of cloth or dress made especially for prayer or she may wear her *hijab* and *abaya*.

## **When traveling-studying abroad**

This brings us also to the question: Is it necessary for the Muslim woman to cover herself when going to a non-Muslim country? Many Muslim women travel abroad for vacation or studies, would she be allowed to discard her covering for that period of time? The answer is **NO!!** She must continue to wear her *hijab* (scarf) and outer covering (*abaya*, *pardah* etc) because this is a command of Allah directly to the Muslim woman. This is not a costume or national dress that can be discarded at whim; this is a direct command to the believing women.

Many times I have experienced perfect strangers come up to me on the street to ask where I am from. When I tell them here, meaning the States, they proceed to raise their voices and speak very slowly again asking me where I am from, as though I do not speak English. I answer them that I was born and raised in Ohio and as far as I knew it was still part of the United States. Then they are very shocked and ask: "Why are you dressed like this?" I then explain to them that I am a Muslim and it is the command of Allah for the Muslim woman to dress in this modest fashion. Many have revealed to me at this point that they, too, are Muslims. When I ask them why

they are dressed the way they are in western fashion, they are embarrassed as they tell me in a weak and lowly voice, "Because we live here in the States, or my children or husband do not like me to wear that." Imagine, a husband has no shame that he likes his wife to be exposed to the violating eyes and crude remarks of men, as though it is a compliment to him! This is a man who has no fear of Allah!! Or the woman herself wants to appear Americanized! These people are so willing to please others but what will be their answer before Allah on the Day of Judgment?

At times while traveling, I have observed Muslim women in a Muslim country board the plane properly covered, but when disembarking they have removed their *hijab* and *abaya*. One of the reasons for this is that the Muslim women feel if they wear the proper covering, people will think that they are ignorant and illiterate. This is not true, many Muslim women have Bachelor's, Master's and Doctorate degrees. It is interesting to note that in the United States alone, the women who embrace Islam have more degrees than the men who do! Why are they made to feel this way? Because this is the projection that the Western media has given. Or another excuse is from the women themselves when they tell me that they are "modern Muslims" and there is no need to cover. There is no such thing as "modern Islam", Allah says in the Holy Quran, **"This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion."** (Holy Quran 5:3)

What has been perfected does not have need of improving. It is a matter of the women themselves who do not wish to obey

Allah. They have more fear of what a non-believer will say than what Allah says, and on the Day of Judgment they will have to answer as to why they have disobeyed Him. If the woman feels insecure about traveling or studying in non-Islamic countries, especially after 9-11, know that it is not necessary for her to do so, especially if she is going without *maharam* (non-marriageable male relative) unless under very special circumstances.

## **THE WOMEN'S ROLE IN COURTSHIP, MARRIAGE, POLYGAMY AND DIVORCE**

In this section we will cover those areas most important to women: Courtship, Marriage, Polygamy and Divorce. We will be looking at them from a strictly Islamic point of view. Today when we look at these issues we unfortunately see that in many Islamic countries there is a confusion between what Islam teaches and what customs the people practice within the country, until you cannot differentiate between the two. We are taking only from the Quran and Sunnah or the way Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) has shown us.

### **Courtship**

Because of the uniqueness of the separation of the sexes in Islam, one might ask; how can a man and a woman meet each other in order to get married? We do not have boyfriend-girlfriend relationships. These kinds of relationships are harmful and degrading to women. It is the responsibility of the father to look for a husband for the daughter; if the father is

dead or not around then it is the responsibility of the uncle, brothers or grandfather. Many times a man will hear that the person has a female relative and may inquire on his own from the male members of the family if she is available for marriage.

Many Westerners are uncomfortable with the idea of an arranged marriage and will be surprised to find that **60% of marriages in the world are arranged!!!!** This is not only exclusive to Islam, however; with arranged marriages there are also surprisingly found to be far less divorce!! Love is a relationship developed by both parties because it comes after the marriage and with that comes respect. The Western concept is love first or should we say ...lust?

Food, sleep and sex are the most powerful drives in human nature; unlike in animals; these drives can be controlled by the human species. However, we must realize that these are God-given by Allah, but we are the ones to take the responsibility for control over them. We do not ignore them nor pretend that they do not exist or will just go away. Unlike in other religions, in this aspect we do not resort to celibacy, asceticism or castration.

The rampant gratification of sexual desires will be the beginning of the downfall of any civilization. We saw this with the greatest civilizations in the world, namely the Greek and Roman empires, and we see already the signs of the shaking of the "Modern Empires" of the West. We are not talking of only adultery and fornication but the things that go

hand in hand with the loss of moral values, and these are homosexuality, abortion and sexually-transmitted diseases.

### **Homosexuality**

Homosexuality is not a newly-discovered activity and has been around since the time of Abraham and Lot. Those who are familiar with the Bible know the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. The wrath of Allah being poured out on mankind is where the Dead Sea exists today. There is no third sex; you are either a male or a female. The purpose of sex is the continuation or procreation of mankind, if all were homosexual and by this I include lesbians, there would be no mankind. Homosexuality is an affront against the human species and against our Creator.

### **Abortion**

Abortion is also not a new device and is spoken out by Allah in the Holy Quran: "**And when the female (infant) buried alive is questioned: For what sin was she killed?**" (Holy Quran 81:8-9). While devices for abortion or the act itself is not new, it is the first time in the history of mankind that it has been acceptable to kill one's offspring.

Since the discovery of contraception in the 1960's the liberated woman need only to think of herself as having "control over her own body." She is now able to have the same sexual activity as the man without the consequence. The fear of pregnancy which was a deterrent before has now been removed and she can succumb to her animal instinct and be "equal" to her male counterpart. The man as we know has

never been responsible for his liberated sexual activities. Not only can pregnancy be controlled but easily disposed of; there abound clinics and doctors who have no moral values except money. Don't kid yourself, abortion is **BIG Mega Bucks**. Those who are pro-life are scoffed at as being demented and old-fashioned. Abortion is now so much accepted that you can schedule your appointment for abortion between your going to the grocery store and the shopping mall. Whereas in the beginning some type of regulation was put on abortion that would only allow it to take place within the first trimester or first three months of pregnancy, it has soon become apparent that completely- formed live babies up to seven months are killed inter-uterus so as to make the abortion legal.

### **Planned Parenthood**

If we look back to know how this got started, we find that the Planned Parenthood was fully established by the early 1960's, this was supposedly to limit the size of your family so that children would not be a burden to you. It soon became apparent that it was a way to eliminate the family. This is only a stepping-stone to control world population, since the idea proposed to Third World countries is that you are a burden to the rest of the world and you are poor only because you have too many children. Of course, who is the number one proponent of this idea? The United States. who has the largest population outside of China and India? The United States!! Ask yourself: If the United States has such a large population and is still the most prosperous nation in the world, is this a true reason for poverty or is it because First World countries are imposing poverty on these nations for their own selfish



benefits? This hypocritical concern is nothing but a lie in order to manipulate Third World countries. If all of the countries would take what they spend in military arms for one week and one week only, it would wipe out world poverty!!! Population has nothing to do with world poverty, Allah has bestowed on each country in the world enough natural resources to provide for the entire population, even with today's growing population. But unfortunately for mankind, the wealth of each country is in the hands of a few, usually less than 10%, which is not used for the good of the people.

### **Separation of sexes**

These ills of society are guarded against when we follow Islam in its true sense. The mixing of men and women is the first precaution to be taken. Not because men are animals or afraid of their own sexuality but because the very nature of man and woman is an attraction with the goal of procreation. While all relationships start out as platonic, sooner or later they may move into the area of intimacy. The workplace is number one setting for illicit relations to develop. The coffee chat, the homeward ride, the bar or chance meetings, all innocent occasions that unfortunately make room for development of deeper relations more often times than not lead to adultery, fornication, pregnancy, abortion, guilt, divorce or deep distrust in a marriage that may never heal even if it is forgiven.

Adolescents mixing together in school or social settings, even in church-related ones, give opportunity for relationships that often get out of hand. What starts out innocently in middle

school is many times a full-blown sexual relation in high school. Just at a time when young girls should be taught to guard their virginity and young men are dealing with their hormones, instead of being given guidance, good advice and role models, they are encouraged to socialize. It is wrongly instilled in them that they will not be popular or ever have a boyfriend or girlfriend or that there is a need to acquire social skills or it is alright because everyone is doing it. Unfortunately, in the very homes where they should be given good teaching and examples their very parent or parents are oftentimes embedded in illicit relationships before the very eyes of their children.

### **Teaching our children**

In Islam it is the responsibility of the parents and community to guard against these ills. The separation of sexes begins at adolescence. Even before this, at the age of ten brothers and sisters should have their own separate sleeping rooms. The Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) admonishes the parents to teach their children to pray by the age of seven and to separate their sleeping quarters by the age of ten. They are also taught to respect the privacy of their parents by learning not to barge into their parent's bedroom but to knock and seek permission before entering. Brothers and sisters after this age should also not be dressing and undressing in front of each other nor be bathing together. These things are done to instill a sense of modesty at a young age. Making fun or teasing them about their body parts is forbidden, so as not to make them feel ashamed or embarrassed. Boys should be taught not to tease or harass their sisters and to respect their mothers and

other women at an early age. Until the age of adolescence the boys are permitted to move freely among the women's gatherings but after that age they are no longer allowed to be with women whom they are not *maharam*<sup>5</sup> to. For boys who have reached this age, to find the women whom they have previously freely moved about suddenly evicted from their midst is a rite of passage into manhood. They realize that they can no longer have the same relationship with girls their age or women that they experienced in the past, that they are now young men.

### **Seeking a spouse**

When a young man reaches an age when he would wish to marry or feels a sexual drive so strongly, even if he is still a teenager, then his mother and other female adults should seek out a woman of preferable age for him to marry, because marriage is preferable to fornication and sexually-transmitted diseases. The Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) admonishes a man, young or old who is not married, to first of all fast, for fasting acts as a deterrent to these feelings. But if in spite of fasting one feels the need strongly, then there is nothing wrong in marrying. If the man is young then it is the duty of the parents to help him establish a home, either with them or on their own. This is better for the young man and better for society in general, for marriage is the established institution in which sex is permitted and recognized by all societies.

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<sup>5</sup> Blood-related non-marriageable male relative.

A woman may also be the one to seek out marriage by asking her parents or in case she has embraced Islam, then by asking other godly Muslim women or the *Imam* of her mosque or center to assist her in finding a religious and responsible person.

### **Process of courtship**

The introduction of the man and woman in the process of courtship for those who are born Muslims, will be done only in the presence of her male relatives and in the case of a woman who has embraced Islam and has no male Muslim relatives, the presence of three or more male Muslims would suffice. It is not allowed for a man and a woman to be alone. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said. "When a man and a woman are alone Satan is the third one present with them." In other words, temptation will always be there. It is also not allowed for them to touch or have any physical contact, even shaking hands, since a physical contact can induce sexual feelings or ideas. This may seem strict, but it is for the protection of both the man and the woman.

The part of the woman that the man may view at this meeting is what is normally seen, her face and hands, because this is all that a man needs to see if he feels attracted to her and she to him. The character and personality is in the face and the size of her body more or less can be determined by the slimness or stoutness of her hands. You may both look at each other's face, as a matter of fact, the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said to look at each other so that you see that there are no defects or that the face will not repulse you. The lady may wear loose fitting clothing at this meeting.

Before I became a Muslim I had been a professor in a Christian college and often heard the complaint from young women that the men were not interested in what they thought or what they had in their minds but only how they looked. Obviously, the men were distracted by the dress the girls were wearing or by the mixed signals they were receiving. In Islam, the dignity of a woman is upheld in these matters, the emphasis is not on the sexual parts of the body which all look the same and work the same, but the emphasis is to find out what you have in common and to see that you will be compatible.

#### **Four Reasons a man marries**

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said that a man will marry a woman for four reasons, and here he is talking about men in general, not just Muslims: 1. Beauty 2. Wealth 3 Status 4. Religion, **and he said that a man should marry the one who is religious.**

If we look at these four reasons we will see the wisdom behind this statement. If the man marries a woman only because she is beautiful, it may be that later he finds out that her character is not so pretty, she is a nagger or always flirting or looking for attention from other men. Or she has an accident and something mars that beauty, maybe after she has had a baby or two and her body has put on weight. Sometimes beauty just grows tiresome and the man starts looking for another beauty. If we look at wealth and the man marries her for that reason, what happens when the money runs out or there is a drastic change in the economy? Or maybe the money you thought she

has isn't really hers; it might be tied up in the bank or handled by the family or trustee. If that is your purpose for marrying her, then it is very flimsy. If you marry for status, this is also changing. I know men who have married women because they thought they would be able to go to the country of the woman or that he could become a citizen of that country. But in fact the woman and her family were never interested to return on a permanent basis to live there or the laws of that country did not permit the marriage or if permitted had a clause that the spouse could not become a citizen. Or maybe she is from a political family or one in high standing. What happens when her family loses the election, gets kicked out of power or is involved in a scandal? All of these reasons can quickly change and so the reason you married the woman is no longer there and then what is to become of the woman and the marriage, which may by this time include children? This is why Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said that men should marry women who are religious. If she is religious, you don't have to worry that she is overly concerned about her looks or that she is running around with another man behind your back. Your marriage is not contingent on money or status; rather it will have a solid foundation that will see you through good times and bad. You and your house will have peace, and you can be assured that your children will be raised in a righteous atmosphere and that they will learn that life is not just money and beauty. Beauty will diminish, wealth can be depleted, status may degrade, but her love for God and her religion will stay with her until the end.

## **Courtship period**

The courtship period is the time to ask questions: many ladies and men are embarrassed and thereby miss the opportunity to get to know something about the other person. This is not just a time to look at physical attributes, but a possible lifetime partnership you are entering into. Men wouldn't even think of buying a car just by looking at it without asking questions about its performance first. The first few minutes are usually the awkward ones so it might help to have thought of some questions beforehand. An introduction by the third party of the man is always an easy start and then to say something like "he is interested in a possible marriage." Maybe this would be followed by other information such as his age if this is appropriate, his job status, etc. The woman should always ask if he is presently working or has his own business. There is no sense in marrying someone without a job and you will end up supporting him since in Islam it is the obligation and responsibility of the man to support the woman. The woman might also like to know if he already has a wife or wives. She should ask if he has children and what their ages are so as to gauge his financial responsibilities and inquire about other interests that she might share.

It must be pointed out that neither the man nor the woman is obliged to enter into marriage; this is only a meeting or interview. The woman also is not forced to accept this offer if she does not like it, nor is the man forced to marry her just because he saw her. There is nothing embarrassing if it is not agreeable to both parties. A man might meet many women and the woman many men before they find the one that is suitable.

Also the man and woman should make *istikhara*<sup>6</sup> to see if this person is the will of Allah for him/her. It is also not allowed to force the girl or woman to marry anyone she does not willingly want to marry. One lady came to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings be upon him) about such a matter. She complained that her father had forced her into the marriage. He (Peace and Blessings be upon him) gave her permission to divorce him, however, she said she did not wish to divorce him but was satisfied to find out that it was not allowed. The Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said that daughters should not be forced into a marriage that they did not agree upon.

### **How many times should you meet?**

There is no prescribed number; it may be once, several or many times, until you feel comfortable and sure of your decision. I suggest at least twice because it is not unusual for both parties to feel nervous and on best behavior at the first meeting. After that you start to feel more relaxed and comfortable to talk to each other. It is also good to point out here that it is not allowed to be talking to each other on the phone or meeting outside even if it is in a public place without your *maharam*. I caution the ladies not to be pressured by the man for a decision; some men meet you once and start to put pressure on you for an answer before you are ready or have had time to make *istikhara*. When you are pressured into a

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<sup>6</sup> An offering of two prayer units seeking Allah's guidance in a difficult decision.



decision whether for marriage or otherwise, it is usually the wrong decision. If this is the will of Allah for you, it can wait. In case the man is leaving the country or is traveling for some reason or other and he is pressuring you to give him an answer right then and there, my advice to you is to say no if he can't wait. I have personally known many girls that this has happened to and who only regretted after it was too late. May I also add that it is not embarrassing for the *maharam* of the girl to check on references and the place of employment of the man; actually this is his duty in securing the best for his daughter or female relative who is seeking marriage and is often done before the meetings take place so that the prospective bride is informed of the findings. Having said all of these, assuming that both parties agree to marriage, the next step is the marriage itself.

## **MARRIAGE**

### **Introduction**

Marriage is not to be entered into lightly; both parties must know what will be the expectations on them and their areas of responsibility. Islam is so definitive in this area as to set the parameters while at the same time provide variants within the areas themselves.

### **The Man**

The man's responsibility is to provide food, clothing and shelter. He is required to provide for her only two changes of clothes per season, cosmetics and toiletries which are normal

for cleanliness; any extra is her responsibility. Her shelter and clothing must be at least in keeping with her status before marriage. Her food should be the same as what he provides for himself. It is not for a man to marry and then see how cheap he can be with his wife as he has a reward from Allah for every bite he puts into his wife's mouth.

### **The Woman**

The woman, on the other hand, has more responsibilities to the man. First and foremost, she must be obedient to her husband unless he asks her to do something that goes counter to the command of Allah. Whenever a husband desires to make love to his wife she must be accommodating even if she is busy with other things; she must stop what she is doing. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "When a woman refuses to come to her husband's bed, she is cursed by the angels the whole night." The woman also has a right to the man's body, and he is not to withhold sex from her either. He must also not have sexual relation with his wife at the time of her menstruation or through her anus, as this is forbidden in Islam.

She must also not allow any man in her house when her husband is not at home even if she knows him and he is her husband's brother or best friend. Some of you might be surprised why I mentioned the brother (your brother-in-law) because the brother is a close family member, but the familiarity and closeness of the brother to the wife has been known to cause problems. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "The brother-in-law is like death."

It doesn't mean that we are afraid of him, but that we should take all precautions not to give Satan a chance. The wife must also guard the husband's property and not loan out anything of his without his permission, such as his tools or personal items to neighbors or family.

**Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient (to Allah and to their husbands) and guard in the husband's absence what Allah orders them to guard (e.g. their chastity, their husband's property)..... (Holy Quran 4:34)**

If the wife has women friends that he does not like, she is required to drop their acquaintance. Many times I have seen other women destroy an otherwise good marriage by allowing women of negative influence to be in their homes or monopolize their time on the phone. A woman who has difficulty in her own marriage may point out to you defects in yours that you otherwise would not have noticed nor would it have bothered you. Some women are not happy with their marriage and are jealous of other women who have a good marriage, thereby causing discontent, arguments and suspicion.

The woman is also responsible in raising his children and taking care of the house. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said, “ Surely everyone of you is a guardian and is responsible for his charges: The ruler of the

people is a guardian and responsible for his subjects: a man is responsible for his family (household): a woman is the guardian of her husband's home and of his children and is responsible for them...Surely everyone of you is a guardian and responsible for his charges."

While all of this might seem one-sided and that she has more responsibility than he, it must be remembered that he is the one who must go out to work and provide for her and the family. The woman in Islam is not required to work outside of the home. If she works, that money is hers, not for the purpose of paying the rent or paying the bills. But she must have the permission of her husband to work outside. He is permitted to ask for a portion of her money if this is distracting her from her responsibilities at home such as taking care of his children and cooking. If it requires a housekeeper or babysitter, then he has a right to ask her to pay for this. This does not mean that if there are difficult circumstances that the husband is going through and the wife wishes to help him out by working, that is not permitted.

## **Career**

Today we find women who have careers before marriage who do not want or are unwilling to give them up. We must remember that Prophet Muhammad said, "The best place for a woman is in her home." Who can best look after her children and home than the mother? Contrary to popular belief, this does not relegate the women to second-class citizenship as the Western media would have us believe. The mother is highly respected in Islam. The companions of the Prophet came to

him and asked him. Who after Allah should we respect? "And he answered, "Your mother." They asked him again and he answered, "Your mother." They asked him a third time and he answered, "Your mother, then your father." **Imagine, the respect for your mother comes only second to Allah!**

Before the 1960's most married women in the United States stayed at home instead of working, even those who had graduated from college! Then suddenly we heard about the **SUPER MOM**, the one who not only worked but was a wife and mother. This was played up by the media until women were made to feel like parasites on society if she didn't work outside the home!! Often answering in a meek mousy voice when asked what she does, her answer was, "I am only a housewife." For centuries preceding this, it had been a mark of respect and dignity; the woman had been protected and respected for the contribution that she had made to society as a wife and mother. In the past many businessmen, presidents and prime ministers (Abraham Lincoln, along with Winston Churchill) gave credit for their success to their mothers and wives. Today, the woman is competing with the man and liking it less. This campaign to get women into the work force started in the 1800's as a cheap source of labor, nothing much has changed. It is a little known fact that in the American society the working woman is making less for the same job than the man in exactly the same position with the same qualification. A woman holding an executive position can expect to be paid **49% less** than the man for the same position even though she holds the same degrees and possesses the same skills! Even a nurse will earn 40 cents less on the dollar

than the male nurse. For the lower end of the working scale there is a minimum wage law in the United States. However, with the various deductions such as social security, health insurance, federal tax, state taxes, etc., the actual take-home pay is very little, and one is left to wonder if slavery has really been abolished!

### **Home and Family**

And after working eight to 12 hours a day the woman is expected to go home, cook, clean and see to the husband and children; her home responsibilities have not lessened. The man will go home and expect dinner, which as a husband is his right. And oh yes, the fallacy about American men sharing the house work is just that, a fallacy, very very few men in actuality are helping their wives in this respect.

There is a saying, "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world", who is rocking the cradle nowadays? Women are forced to leave their babies and small children with complete strangers either with a babysitter, day-care center or nursery. It is not uncommon to find to the horror of the parents that their child has been abused or molested!! Many parents are resorting to installing hidden cameras to assure themselves of what goes on in their home with their children while they are away. Along with this, unfortunately, many children, even very young children, are left alone without any supervision. Too many children come home from school to find no one home until after working hours, which means children can be left alone as long as four hours or more before a parent gets home from work. It is estimated that there are **Five million**

'Latch Key' children in the United States! This name was given to them because the children carry their house keys on a string or necklace around their necks so as not to lose them. Many of these children are left to their own devices and are prime targets for pedophiles. They have the internet or satellite dish that exposes them to so-called "adult" programs, chat lines, drugs, and gangs. Not only were these things not available in the past but with mother in the home, it was less likely for the child to get involved. "...**More children in the U.S live in poverty, are neglected, abused, or killed, become pregnant, commit suicide, lack health care, drop out of school, and are imprisoned than in any other industrialized western nation.**"<sup>7</sup>

Many women who are working would love to stay home and look after their home and family but have become caught into a work syndrome that does not allow them to quit. What might have been originally thought of to be for a short time in order to pay off a debt or to be able to buy a house has become a vice of destruction, not only for the children, but oftentimes the marriage itself. When we look around at businesses and offices we see them full of working women. Where are the men? Could it be that these women are actually replacing the men in society and reversing the role of men as the provider and making the woman as provider instead of nurturer?

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<sup>7</sup> Child Welfare League of America, Washington, D.C.

## **Maiden Name**

When entering a marriage the Muslim woman brings to it her name and properties which continue to be hers. Upon marriage the Muslim woman does not surrender her family name. She continues to carry her father's name.

Let us ask ourselves where this name change got started. It goes back to the Roman Empire; during that time in order to identify to whom the woman belonged, she was given the last name of her husband. It allowed people to know who she was owned by, as women were looked upon as property. Even nowadays in the United States many women are opting to keep their father's name as a show of independence. There are also other countries where the woman keeps her family name, such as Korea, Burma and China to name a few. In Islam, however, we do this because Allah has told us to, not because of culture.

## **Inheritance and Properties**

Any inheritance that the woman has, belongs to her and the husband is not entitled to any part of it. It was the custom in Western society in the past that whatever inheritance or properties that the woman had, automatically went to the man when she entered marriage! So as a result many men were looking to marry women who could give a substantial income.



The Encyclopedia Britannica tells us:

In Roman law a woman was, even in historic times, completely dependent. If married, she and her property passed into the power of her husband...the wife was the purchased property of her husband and like a slave was acquired only for his benefit. ...A woman could not exercise any civil or public office...could not be a witness, surety, tutor, or curator: she could not adopt or be adopted or make will or contract. <sup>8</sup>

The English law according to the Encyclopedia Americana has this to say:

...all real property which a wife held at the time of a marriage became a possession of her husband. He was entitled to the rent from the land and to any profit which might be made from operating the estate during the joint life of the spouses. As time passed, the English courts devised means to forbid a husband's transferring real property without the consent of his wife, but he still retained the right to manage it and to receive the money which it produced. As to a wife's personal property, the husband's power was complete. He had the right to spend it as he saw fit. <sup>9</sup>

**It was only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1870) that we saw changes come about for women in Western societies, but as we can see, women had been provided with dignity and respect in**

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<sup>8</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. vol. 28, pg.782, 1911

<sup>9</sup> Encyclopedia Americana International edition, volume 29,pg. 108

**Islam over 1,400 years before the rest of civilization could recognize the value of women!!**

### **Requirements for Marriage**

The requirements are very simple, the man must be a Muslim, there must be two male Muslim witnesses, the man must give the *mahr* (bridal gift), all or part of it at this time, the *maharam* (non-marriageable male relative) of the woman must be present and the woman must indicate her consent to the marriage. Along with this, both parties must be mentally competent. The signing of the marriage contract must be done in front of the Iman or someone authorized to validate its legality. And there must be a *Walima* (marriage reception or marriage feast) either before or after the consummation.

### **Marrying a Non-Muslim**

A Muslim man may marry a Christian or Jew; he may not marry a Hindu, Buddhist, or pagan. The Christians and Jews have received the same revelation of the Oneness of Allah as has the Muslim because they were revealed by the same God, Allah.

The Muslim woman, on the other hand, may be married only to a Muslim. Since in Islam the husband is the head of the house and the woman must be obedient, if the husband were not Muslim, it is very possible he would want her to do things that go against her religion. For instance, maybe he would ask her to buy alcoholic drink which is forbidden in Islam to drink, buy, sell, or service. Or he might like ham or pork chops, which is also forbidden. Then there is the question of

holidays in which Islam recognizes only two. *Eid Al Fitr*, the celebration after the month of Ramadan and *Eid Al Adha*, which is the celebration of sacrifice in Hajj; other than these we are not allowed to participate in other celebrations such as Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day or other pagan holidays. Then there is always the question as to what religion your children will be raised in, yours or mine? The children must be raised as Muslims, even if the man is married to a Christian or Jew.

One might ask what if the non-Muslim man were willing to allow the Muslim woman to practice her religion and to raise the children as Muslims, would she then be allowed to marry him? The answer is **No**, because once he is married, he might change his mind.

Allah admonishes us in the Holy Quran not to marry unbelievers; **“Let no man guilty of adultery or fornication marry any but a woman similarly guilty or an unbeliever. Nor let any but such a man or an unbeliever marry such a woman. To the Believer such a thing is forbidden.”** (Holy Quran 24:3)

He further states in chapter 33:35 the kind of Muslim one should take for a spouse., **“For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who guard their chastity and for men and women who engage much in**

**Allah’s praise, for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward.”**

### **The *Mahr***

The *Mahr*<sup>10</sup> is the dowry which is given to the woman at the time of marriage. This is a command from Allah: “**And give to the women their *Mahr* with a good heart...**” (Holy Quran 4:4). This is mentioned many times in the Holy Quran. It is the dowry given by the man which may be money, property, jewelry or whatever is agreed upon by the woman. But it must be given in whole or part at the time of the signing of the marriage contract, without it the marriage is not validated. If the whole amount is not given at the time of marriage, part of it must be given and the rest at a later time. This money etc. is for the woman only to do with it what she likes. She is not required to give it to her family nor does her family or husband have any right to ask her for any part of it. It is not fair for the man to give it to her and then later when she is in need of something for the house for him to say that he already gave her money and she is to use that. **No, that is not allowed.**

### **How much should be given?**

This is a good question because nowadays it is usually expensive and many times even a deterrent to get married! There is nothing in the Quran or Ahadith<sup>11</sup> that states how much you have to give; it simply states you should give. This

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<sup>10</sup> Bridal gift given to the girl upon marriage.

<sup>11</sup> The way, sayings, explanations and examples. of the Prophet, (p.b.u.h.)

is to make it easy for those who have little income to be able to marry.

We would also like to mention here that there is nothing in the Holy Quran or Ahadith that states a woman has the right to ask for a certain amount. Nowadays we see women asking for excessive amounts of money that sometimes equal the price of a new car!! Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him) admonishes the people that the less that is asked for, the more blessings they will receive. One young man came to him who was very poor and had nothing to give; the Prophet asked him if he had memorized any of the Quran. The man assured him that he had, and with only this knowledge the Prophet considered this as her *mahr* which the man would teach to his wife. At the same time, this must also not be looked upon to see how cheap the man could be.

It must be mentioned here that the *mahr*/dowry is not the price of a bride. Some people who are ignorant about Islam think Muslims are buying their bride, this is a misconception on their part and nothing is farther from the truth.

### **Other Cultures**

You will also notice here it is the man who gives to the woman, not the woman giving the *mahr*/dowry to the man. In some countries among non-Muslims, it is the woman who gives the *mahr*/dowry, but in Islam, regardless of what country you are from, it is a command from Allah that the man must give this to the woman. It is known that in India the woman's family must give the dowry to the man vast exorbitant

amounts of money or goods, whatever the family of the man asks. It is also not uncommon that after the marriage they will ask for an increase. Many times the wife has been murdered by the husband or family of the man because she would not or could not meet these additional demands.

In the United States it used to be the custom up until after World War II, that the woman or family of the bride would give the bridal gift or dowry and pay for the whole cost of the wedding, the man got off free! Times have changed and so have the customs; nowadays it is common that the bride and groom both share the expenses of the wedding and in some countries the family of the groom will pay for all of the wedding.

Islam is not bound by time and customs, only by the Word of Allah in regards to the respect and dignity of the woman

### **Marriage Contract**

The marriage contract is a validly-recognized agreement between the two parties getting married. It will contain their names, the names of the witnesses, what *Mahr* (bridal gift) the man is giving to the woman, the date, the one presiding over the marriage and any other stipulations that the woman wants.

### **Woman's Right**

The woman may stipulate any conditions on the marriage contract that she likes such as continuing her studies, not moving out of the country, etc. **She may not put any stipulation requiring the man to divorce any wives that he**

**may have nor is she allowed to put any stipulation regarding not taking any wives after her. Why? Because Allah has allowed the man to have up to four wives, so what she desires does not supersede what Allah has allowed,** (Holy Quran 4:3) Nor may she stipulate anything else that Allah has forbidden. The condition on the contract is only an option for her, it is not something that she has to do.

Once the marriage contract has been agreed upon and signed by both parties, it is a legally-binding contract. Either party breaking the contract entitles the other party to nullify the contract through a divorce.

It is interesting to note that this prenuptial agreement has been allowed to the Muslim woman for the last **fourteen hundred years**, whereas only as recently as the 1980's have we started to see non-Muslims, such as movie stars and people of wealth signing a prenuptial agreement concerning their wealth. However, as we note in Islam, it is not about money but the dignity of the woman.

### **Precautions in Non-Islamic Societies**

People getting married in a non-Muslim society must usually register their Islamic marriage with the proper justices or courts of that country. This is also true with some Islamic countries where foreigners must marry in the court in front of an Islamic judge in order to receive the proper papers, although these are regulations pertaining to the country and not Islam itself.

**Marriages taking place in courts, embassies or churches are not recognized as valid Islamic marriages.** An exception would be getting married in an Embassy of an Islamic country where the marriage would follow the Islamic code. Getting married by only a civil or secular ceremony is not allowed, as you will not be considered married and any children you would have would be considered illegitimate, this would also interfere with the inheritance due to you as the legal wife and children. Getting married in a church or other religious ceremony other than Islam is completely forbidden. Even getting married in an Islamic way and then having another religious ceremony other than Islam to satisfy the bride or her family or relatives is also completely forbidden. In some countries it may be necessary to get married in an Islamic way and then have a civil ceremony. The Islamic marriage always has precedence over the civil marriage.

It is encouraged for those couples who have embraced Islam while already married to re-establish their marriage through an Islamic marriage contract. Even if they have been married for many years they will find that this has added meaning to their marriage and validates the marriage Islamically. This does not mean that you had not been married before, if you were a Christian, Jew, Pagan or Atheist; it was a civil marriage, but now that you are a Muslim it is the marriage of the Believer. In many cases even the children are excited to see their parents marry in an Islamic way.



## Temporary Marriage

Temporary marriage known as *Nikah Al-Mut'a*<sup>12</sup> was allowed in the early days of Islam in cases of necessity, but the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) **finally prohibited it totally**. This was a marriage agreed upon by the woman for only a short period of time usually for a few days. Today temporary marriages are not recognized and are forbidden.

## The *Walima*

Simply put, the *Walima* is the wedding reception. The purpose of the *Walima* is to allow your family and friends to know that you have gotten married and not just living with someone. The reception should be simple and kept within Islamic boundaries. The *walima* is obligatory and the Prophet said, "... give a wedding banquet, even if it is one sheep".

This is the area in which most weddings get out of hand. The reception should be kept with the same dignity as the signing of the marriage contract. Again, simplicity should be the key word. Since alcohol is forbidden in Islam there will be no alcoholic drinks served and therefore, no drunks or people getting out of hand because they can't hold their liquor. A large percentage of the cost of the reception is deferred because most restaurants and wedding halls count on the consumption of alcohol to make money. Music should also be kept to that which is Islamic. There is Islamic wedding music available whether by cassette or live, which would consist of tambourine, *duff*<sup>13</sup> and singing without musical instruments.

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<sup>12</sup> Temporary or short-term marriage

<sup>13</sup> A drum with skin on one side only.

Men and women should likewise be separated, women entertaining women and men entertaining men. The bride and groom should not be appearing or parading together among their guests. At no time should the bride appear in front of the men or the groom in front of the women; strict decorum should be observed. Likewise, wedding pictures and videos are prohibited, besides, when you have the real person with you, there is no need for pictures, you will not forget that you are married.

Maybe many of you are disappointed to hear this, but we should remember these are the practices of the non-Believers and there is no need to imitate these things. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him) said “Those who imitate the people of Hell-Fire are like one of them.” All of these things are very costly, why start the marriage out in debt, even if you can afford this? Remember, we want the Blessing of Allah for the marriage, so why will we do things that go against our religion?

### **The Way of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him)**

Before exploring culture and customs of wedding ceremonies, we need to look at the best example of Islamic weddings, and the best example we have is that of the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) and of his companions.

Narrated Anas: (this was a companion of the Prophet) The Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) did not give a better wedding banquet on the occasion of marrying any of his

wives than the one he gave on marrying Zainab, and that banquet consisted of one sheep.

Narrated Anas: Allah's Apostle (Peace and blessings be upon him) manumitted (freed) Safiyya and then married her, and her *Mahr* was the manumission, and gave a wedding banquet with *Hais*.<sup>14</sup>

Narrated Safiyya bint Shaiba: The Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) gave a banquet of barley on marrying some of his wives.

Narrated Nafi: Abdullah bin Umar said; "Allah's Apostle (Peace and blessings be upon him) said, "Accept the marriage invitation if you are invited to it."

Narrated Abu Huraira: The worst food is that of a wedding banquet to which only the rich are invited while the poor are not. And he who refuses an invitation disobeys Allah and His Apostle.

By only observing these few related sayings and actions of the Prophet, we see that the giving and attending of the *walima* are both obligatory. We also see that when the Prophet married, he gave only the simplest of receptions, without expense or fanfare. If our Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) did this as an example for us, why are we so anxious to go beyond our means even going into debt to

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<sup>14</sup> A sort of sweet dish made from butter, cheese and dates

impress others? To say that this is a special occasion to impress others or to keep up with tradition is inexcusable. The people attending go home with a full stomach and the bride and groom go home with a debt to be paid for the next year. This is not the Islamic way, even if one were able to afford it. The very closest of friends and family are the only ones who really need to be invited.

The late Sheik Abdulaziz Abdullah ibn Baz, the grand *Mufti*<sup>15</sup> of Makkah, had issued a *fatwa*<sup>16</sup> concerning extravagant wedding receptions:

The parties that are held in hotels have many things wrong about them and may be criticized for many reasons. First, they are usually done extravagantly and beyond what is needed. Second, this leads to the extra financial burden of having wedding parties in hotels and the presence of people for whom there is no need. Third, it may lead to mixing between the men and women of the hotel and others. This mixing is a disgraceful evil. This is why the leading scholars issued a decree and gave it to the King advising him not to allow parties and wedding parties to be held in hotels. Instead, they said, the wedding parties should be held in the houses and hotels should not be hired, as such wedding parties lead to lots of evil. Similar is the case with the halls that are rented for a great deal of money. This advice was all concluded out of concern for the people, economic considerations, avoiding of extravagance and luxury. Also, this will allow those who are of the middle class to be able to afford to get married and will

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<sup>15</sup> One who issues rulings according to the Quran and Hadith.

<sup>16</sup> A ruling or judgment according to Quran and Hadith.

not be a burden upon them. If they see their cousin or relative getting married in an expensive hotel party, he must compete with him or do something similar. This will drive him to borrow money. Otherwise, he may have to delay his marriage out of fear of such heavy expenses.

My advice to all Muslim brethren is that they should not hold their wedding parties in such hotels nor in the expensive halls that are rented for that purpose. They should hold them in inexpensive halls or not hold them in the halls at all. To hold them in the houses is preferred anyway. Or one could hold them in his relatives' house if that is possible<sup>17</sup>.

Sheik Abdulaziz Abdullah ibn Baz  
(May Allah have mercy on him)

### **Cultures and Customs**

*Alhamdulillah*, Allah has made Islam grow all over the world in every nation among every people. Along with this we have a diversity of languages, customs and cultures. It is just this diversity that makes Islam interesting, and marriage customs are just as diverse. What is done in one country would seem quite strange in another. What is acceptable in one would be forbidden in another. For this reason, we need to know what Islam teaches us concerning all things including marriage. Even in Islamic countries we need to make sure that the customs we are following do not have hidden religious rites

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<sup>17</sup> Islamic *Fatawa* Regarding Women, page 175.

that have nothing to do with Islam and may even be of a pagan ritual or origin or a carry-over from pre-Islamic times.

Many countries are divided into different languages and even different tribes within the same language groups, and so there is a variance from tribe to tribe or one area to another. In many countries, especially those that have an Islamic area while the country as a whole may be Christian, Chinese, Indian or other, there has been a synchronization of customs so much so that even the Muslims among them are participating in ceremonies that are contrary to Islam. They are even unaware that what they are doing is wrong and that they may be committing *shirk*<sup>18</sup>. Such countries as the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, India and Pakistan among others who have also at one time may have been under colonial powers might find that the country itself is celebrating religious holidays and that it is even being taught in school. Perhaps their minds have been corrupted into thinking that as long as they can celebrate their own two holidays as Muslims, then there is no harm in joining the celebration of the non-Muslims. When it comes to the marriage ceremony we see many Muslims imitating or synchronizing the non-Islamic customs in their marriage such as the wearing of white wedding dresses, the exchanging of rings, the taking of vows, the singing of popular love songs and the parading of the couple or their sitting together before a mixed hall of guests. None of these things are Islamic and no Muslim should be found doing them or participating in them. As mentioned above, the Islamic marriage is the signing of the

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<sup>18</sup> Associating partners in worship with Allah.

contract, the giving of the *mahr* and a simple *walima* or reception.

## **POLYGAMY**

### **Introduction**

Having said the above, we move on to another least understood and most hated aspect of Islam by the Western unbelievers, and that is the permissibility of polygamy.

Why does Islam allow Polygamy, and how does it differ from other types of polygamy as practiced by other people or religions?

Before jumping to conclusions, let us look at the Biblical background of polygamy as practiced by the children of Israel and the early Christians.

### **Biblical Polygamy**

By looking at Genesis 25:1, “Then again Abraham took a wife and her name was Keturah.” No Muslim, Christian, or Jew would say that Abraham, known as “the friend of God” was immoral. Yet he had two wives at the same time, Sarah and Hagar, and after the death of Sarah he took Keturah, so he had two wives at one time, Hagar and Keturah. He had altogether eight sons, including his firstborn by Hagar, Ishmael, his second son Isaac by Sarah and many other children by Keturah.

Jacob had two wives, Leah and Rachel, as did many of the Judges, Prophets and Kings. King David and Solomon both

had many wives, Solomon, at least according to Song of Solomon 6:8, had 60 Queens, 80 concubines and maids without number. Some even estimate that he had as many as 700 wives and 300 concubines.

The Encyclopedia Biblica states that the Talmudist could have as many as he could afford, the ordinary Jew four and the Kings 18.

By the 11<sup>th</sup> century, 500 years after the revelation of Islam, polygamy was expressly prohibited in Judaism.

At the time of Jesus, polygamy was sanctioned and Jesus himself never ruled against it! *I Timothy* 3:2 states “An Overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife.....” *Timothy* was written some time after Jesus was taken into heaven and having two or more wives was still common among Christians. An Overseer was equivalent to a bishop today and we see there was no other stipulation to the church leaders other than the Overseer in this regard.

### **Church History of Polygamy**

Some church Fathers accused the Jewish rabbis of sensuality, yet not a single church council in the early centuries opposed polygamy nor was any obstacle placed in the way of its practice. In fact, St. Augustine declared openly that he did not condemn it. Luther, on occasion, spoke of it with considerable toleration and was known to have approved the bigamous status of Philip of Hesse. In 1531, the Anabaptists openly preached that a true Christian must have several wives. There



was even a time in 1650 when some of the Christian leaders resolved that every man should be allowed to marry two women. It is also recorded that the German reformers even as late as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, admitted the validity of a second and third marriage **contemporaneously** with the first in default of issue and other similar causes. In fact, it was only after Christianity was revised according to Pauline doctrines that concepts of monogamy were introduced into Christian philosophy in order for it to conform to Greco-Roman culture. Greece and Rome had evolved an institutionalized form of monogamy in societies where the majority of the populace were slaves who could be used freely. Hence, what was termed monogamy in theory was in fact unrestricted polygamy.<sup>19</sup>

### **Modern-Day Polygamy in Secular Societies**

The Mormon Church, known as Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, continues to practice polygamy although it is out-ruled by the law of the land. It is not sanctioned as such, however, if no one openly complains about it, it is not condemned by the church.

In societies where monogamous marriages are an accepted fact, their practice is quite contradictory. It is quite common in these countries, for the most part Christian, to see men practicing bigamy or having one or more common-law marriages. This comes about without laying any responsibility on the man's part for the care and protection of the woman or

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<sup>19</sup> *Polygamy in Islam* pp. 2,3.

the children they beget. When he tires of her or of his responsibilities to her, he merely leaves her going on to his next conquest. In some countries this is looked upon as being *Macho*. But what about the plight of the mother who is now singly responsible for the welfare of her children, the children who may never see or get to know their father again? The woman's chances of finding a legitimate husband who will care for her and her children by a previous man are now very slim. Chances are she will again enter into another similar relationship and repeat the process. This is not to lay all of the blame on men as the woman is also responsible for her own morality.

### **Reasons for Polygamy in Islam**

Since food, sleep and sex are the strongest drives in mankind, do we have any control over these? Allah has created us with sexual desires, yet we ourselves are responsible to control them, otherwise we are no better than animals which only satisfy their sexual urges. Certainly polygamy would be an answer for this, but this is not the only reason for polygamy. If we just look at the population today we see that the ratio of men to women is one to seven!! In other words **for every seven women there is only one man**. If monogamy were the answer, what would happen to the other six women? If we were to ask the other six women if they want to get married, most likely they would say yes. If we ask the other six women if they want children, most likely they will answer in the affirmative. This is also not taking into account women who are divorced or widowed, what about their needs? What if the woman is chronically ill and can no longer fulfill her sexual

part of marriage, does this mean that her husband must also become celibate? What if the woman is barren and the man would like to have children? Should he then divorce someone he loves and who loves him just to marry someone who could bear a child? And while we are at it, yes it is a medical fact that men have a stronger sex drive than women.

What about the wars and the genocides we have seen and continue to see in Palestine, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kashmir and other places not yet brought to our attention? What will happen to these women and orphans? Polygamy can and does answer all of these questions. Allah the Creator of mankind anticipated all of these scenarios and has given us an answer.

### **Rules and Regulations**

However, as with everything that He gives us, He requires us to fulfill our duties according to His rules and regulations. He allows polygamy but does not force it upon us. He says in the Holy Quran: “...**then marry women of your choice two, three, or four: but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one.** (Holy Quran 4:3)

First of all, there is a limit, four. Before Islam and in many parts of the world a man may take as many wives as he wishes, but Allah has set a limit to four. And you must deal with them in a fair and just way. The man must divide his time equally between his wives, for each day he spends with one he must likewise give the same amount of time to the others. He is not to show favoritism to one over the other, even if he feels in his heart more love to one than the other. He is not allowed

to touch or express his desire or love of one in front of the others. If he gives a gift to one he is obliged to give the same or money equal to that amount to the others. Their housing must be in accordance to what is appropriate for the family size they have and may not be substandard to the others. Or they may live in one house **but must have separate bedrooms.** The financial responsibilities, of course, will depend on the number of children each wife has. Of course, if one has five children and another none or less than the other, then it is only fair to the man to realize that there is more financial obligation to the larger family. If there is a need in one house and not in another, say for instance, one needs a new refrigerator, then he is not obliged to buy a new one for each family. In other issues, common sense prevails. It must be stated here that the man is financially responsible for each wife and family. The wife or wives are not expected to support themselves or their co-wives and their families even if the wife is working and does not have children of her own. **This is the whole responsibility of the man since one of the requirements of polygamy is that he can afford more than one wife. Again, polygamy is an option, not an obligation.** Most men who practice polygamy today take only two wives.

In all honesty, we must mention here that jealousy is common among women from time to time. But it need not get out of control; many men are themselves responsible for the jealousy that occurs because they themselves are not fair and just. For this reason, the man should never discuss his likes and dislikes of any of his wives with any other of his wives or to compliment one in front of the other or to the others. The man

is likewise responsible not to discuss with other men his sex life or their married life with outsiders that might get back to any of his wives thereby causing jealousy or a scandal. Even the best of wives, at times become jealous and we saw this from time to time even among the wives of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings be upon him), and we know that they were the best of wives and the best of Muslims. While it may not be natural for co-wives to be best friends, (I have had an opportunity to see them as best friends), the wives should do their best to get along and teach their children the same. The children of multiple marriages seem to get along as well as any brothers and sisters and don't seem to lack for love or attention.

While many Westerners are feeling sorry for a woman that has one or several co-wives, I can assure you it is not necessary. First of all, the woman has agreed before marriage to a multiple marriage. The man must inform the woman he wishes to marry as to the number of wives he already has, failure to do so is ground for divorce, since he would have married her under a fraudulent condition. **On the other hand, he is not obligated to ask permission from the other wife or wives before taking another wife.** Likewise a woman may not divorce a man for the reason that he has taken another wife, because her wishes do not supersede what Allah has allowed. Some Islamic countries that are practicing a form of secular Islam have been influenced by colonial powers and have a law of the land that the man must ask permission from the first wife before taking another wife. This is not Shari'ah and

therefore goes against what Allah has stated in the Holy Quran and should not be followed.

## DIVORCE

### Introduction

Allah, knowing the nature of man, has allowed divorce but it should be the very last recourse and after all mediation has been tried. Allah says in the Holy Quran, **“If you fear a breach between them (the man and his wife), appoint (two) arbitrators, one from his family and the other from hers: if they both wish for peace, Allah will cause their reconciliation. Indeed Allah is Ever All-Knower, Well-Acquainted with all things.”** (Holy Quran 4:35)

First and foremost, reconciliation should be tried and the ones to bring this about should be family members, one from each side. This is not looked upon in Islam as interference, rather a way to bring about peace and harmony. Divorce is not to be entered into lightly just as marriage is not entered into lightly. Along with this, every means to hold this marriage together should be exhausted before one goes through with divorce. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) relates from Allah in *Ahadith Qudsi*<sup>20</sup> that, “Among that which is allowed in Islam, divorce is the most hateful of things in the sight of Allah.”

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<sup>20</sup> *Ahadith Qudsi* are the sayings given to Prophet Muhammad by Allah whereby Prophet Muhammad was allowed to put them in his own words. These differ from those of the Quran where the words are **ONLY** the words of Allah and **Not** allowed to be changed.

## **Modern-day Divorce**

**Today in Western society one in every two marriages ends in divorce!!** Marriage and divorce can both be obtained in a matter of hours. In the past, marriage was entered into as a lifetime commitment, “Until death do us part.” To see a married couple entertain their silver wedding anniversary is indeed a rare occurrence.

Today the word ‘commitment’ is held very loosely; perhaps it is the lifestyle, the fluency of a society on the move that has brought about this change. We see it not only in marriage but in other aspects of life. The 60’s brought about restlessness in people. The new job situations called for many people to leave their hometown for that bigger, better offer in another part of the country. Living in your hometown or community has both advantages and disadvantages. People will generally know more about your private life and what you are doing. In the past this acted as a deterrent from entering into less desirable or even prohibited things in life. But it also had its positive side. When you needed help, you knew who to turn to; parents and family along with close friends were always there when you needed advice or just someone to hear you out. With the new status of moving away, we left behind anyone who was really concerned about our welfare; usually our new co-workers were struggling with the same problems we were. Finding ourselves and relying on our own, took on a different meaning. Problem with adjusting to the change of moving, many times to an area of the country we were not familiar with; and although it might be in the same country with the same language, many times the mindset is different; even the

meaning for some words may have a different connotation, along with new rules of society to adjust to. Perhaps it was to a part of the country that was more restrictive, more conservative. Or like many in the 60's "California, here we come" a life style that was and is much more loose with an 'anything goes' attitude.

While the husband may have been the one with the job, it affected the wife and children as well, who were going through their own adjustments: kids adjusting to new schools and surroundings, wives without friends, lonely and vulnerable. The area in which you moved to may not have been a good choice and your family was put in danger because you didn't know what area to move into, maybe this was closer to your work. Many things contribute to a breakdown of a marriage and with no one around to seek advice from before the divorce button is pushed.

The very first reason for the breakdown in any marriage will be that of communication or the lack of it. Keeping that open-line of communication is of number-one importance, when that breaks down, the marriage breaks down. And if it is not repaired quickly, it leads to a permanent loss. Communication is a two-way street; it takes both people to talk.

Marriage is not easy; it is two people usually not previously known to each other and maybe even from different cultures. Marriage is give-and-take, learning to adjust with each other. This does not mean that it is one-sided or one of the partners must always give in to the wishes of the other. However, it means adjusting and being willing to give up some of what



you want. It helps to look into and list down the characteristics you like in that person e.g. nice personality, funny (but don't overdo this), charming, considerate, gets along with your parents, kind, (you make your own list). When you start to focus on the positive instead of the negative, you'll find yourself loving the person more.

It is interesting to note that in the past, marriage courts borrowed from Islam the process of mediation and even went through an extended period before pronouncing divorce; however, that is all in the past. Secular divorces ended up being a complicated, mudslinging battle which ended in a no-win situation and only the children were the real victims. And to avoid this very kind of thing, Allah has exhorted us to seek family members, one from each side to help settle the situation. **"...and if they both wish for peace, Allah will cause their reconciliation. Allah is Ever All-Knower, Well-Acquainted with all things."** (Holy Quran 4:35)

However, taking into consideration that not all things work out and after all other avenues have been exhausted, then divorce is permitted but must follow the guidelines sent down by Allah.

Allah has sent down guidelines that are actually in favor of the woman; in *Surah Talaq* (chapter 65 called *Divorce*) men are admonished not to divorce their wives while she is on her period. **"O Prophet! When you divorce women, divorce them at their *Iddah* (prescribed waiting period) and count their *Iddah*. And fear Allah your Lord...."** (Holy Quran 65:1)

Because a woman can be emotional and sensitive during her period, she may be upset and say or do things she doesn't normally do at any other time of the month. This is caused by the hormonal change in her body which might cause her to experience spells of crying, shouting or indifference, some women experience this even several days before the onset of her menstruation. The medical term for this is P.M.S, (pre-menstrual syndrome) which can also be carried over into the menstruation period. Allah has taken this into consideration and forbids the man to divorce his wife during this time.

Narrated Abdullah bin Umar that he had divorced his wife while she was menstruating during the lifetime of Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him). Umar bin Al-Khattab, (his father) asked Allah's Messenger about that. Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "Order him to take her back and keep her till she is clean from her menses and then to wait till she gets her next period and becomes clean again, whereupon if he wishes to keep her, he can do so and if he wishes to divorce her, he can divorce her before having sexual intercourse with her and that is the *Iddah*<sup>21</sup> which Allah has fixed for the women meant to be divorced."

So the ruling is that the woman must have her menstruation or period, and not have any sexual relation with her husband during that time before he divorces her. If she is having her period or has had sexual relation with her after her

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<sup>21</sup> Prescribed waiting period before the divorce is final.

menstruation, then this will invalidate the divorce; then he must wait until she has had her next menstruation again, has finished that and has not touched her, only then can he divorce her.

The chapter continues (Holy Quran 65:1), “**...And turn them not out of their (husband’s) homes nor shall they (themselves) leave, except in case they are guilty of some open illegal sexual intercourse. And those are the set limits of Allah. And whosoever transgresses the set limits of Allah, then indeed he has wronged himself. You (the one who divorces his wife) know not it may be that Allah will afterward bring some new thing to pass. (i.e. to return her back to you).**”

Again we see that Allah has given the right of the woman to stay in her husband’s home and not to be turned out. Actually she is commanded to stay unless she has committed adultery. So by this we see that the woman is not forced to leave in the middle of the night, wondering where she is going to stay or if someone or some shelter can take her in.

The woman is allowed to stay for three months in the husband’s home or if she is pregnant until the baby is born. Because Allah has said in the Holy Quran, “**And those of your women as have passed the age of monthly courses, for them the Iddah (prescribed waiting period), if you have doubt is three months: and for those who have no courses their Iddah is three months likewise, And for those who are pregnant their Iddah is until they lay down their burden:**

**and whosoever fears Allah and keeps his duty to Him, He will make his matter easy for him,”** (*Surah 65:4*)

Three months is the prescribed time period for the *Iddah* or waiting period. If the woman is post-menopausal, she will count according to the calendar, and if she is having her periods she must count from menstruation to menstruation, until three have been completed. On the other hand, if she is pregnant, her divorce will not be completed until she gives birth, whether at the time of the pronouncement of the divorce is in which she is two months pregnant, in that case she must complete her pregnancy, or if she is eight or nine months in which case as soon as she delivers, she has completed her *Iddah*. Even if the baby is premature or she miscarries, the focal point here is the delivery.

Allah further goes on to say, **“Lodge them (the divorced women) where you dwell, according to your means, and do not harm them so as to straighten them (that they are obliged to leave your house). And if they are pregnant, then spend on them till they lay down their burden, Then if they give suck (breastfeeding) to the children for you then give them their due payment and let each of you accept the advice of the other in a just way. But if you make difficulties for one another, then some other woman may give suck for him.”** (Holy Quran 65:6)

The men **are commanded by Allah** that the women should be allowed to stay peacefully without harassment in their home. During this time he is not allowed to abuse her by words or

actions nor is his family, **this is her right.** If he is physically abusing her then she should leave for her and her children's (if she has any) safety. During this time he must continue to support her with food and living expenses. If she is breastfeeding he must provide her with nourishing food. Since in the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) all women either breastfed or paid a wet nurse (one who would breastfeed the child for you) the verse also says that he must pay for the wet nurse, since they were hired to breastfeed his infant.

Allah continues, **“Let the rich man spend according to his means; and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what Allah has given him, Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. Allah will grant after hardship ease.”** (Holy Quran 65:7)

Because they are in the process of divorce this does not give the man the right to go cheap on the support of the woman and family at this time. The man, if he is poor, still has no excuse and must continue to support her on whatever level he did prior to the pronouncement of divorce. The woman likewise is not allowed to ask for more than that which is due to her.

You might be asking yourself why the woman would be asked by Allah to stay in the house of the man during this time. Allah has prescribed this in order that we have a cooling-off period. Many times in the moment of anger we say and do things that are irrational. When two people continue to live in

the same house this may give an opportunity for forgiveness and reconciliation. Perhaps the problem really isn't the marriage at all but some outside influence, such as the husband experiencing pressure and stress at his work place, worries over finances or health problems. Or maybe the wife herself is experiencing poor health, problems with the children or teens or other family issues. Instead of divorce they need to sit down and talk to each other and discuss, not argue about the situation, discuss about their expectation of one another and maybe come to some compromise. It might even be wise at this time to see a marriage counselor, someone who can help both of them see each other's side which may lead to self-discovery of what the real problem is. Marriage counselors don't give the answer but help people find their own answer.

It is difficult to stay in a house and not have some communication, more so if there are children. After some reconsideration, perhaps *Insha Allah*, (God Willing) sweet and tender words will pass back and forth and intimacy will follow. At any point during the three months this comes about and sexual intercourse is resumed, the divorce becomes invalid and the couple's marriage status is as before.

However, this is not always the case, and so if at the end of three months the man is commanded to let her go. Allah continues, **“Then when they are about to attain their term appointed, either take them back in a good manner or part with them in a good manner.”** (Holy Quran 65:2) It must be

stated here that it is *haram*<sup>22</sup> for the man to hold or detain the woman against her will or out of pure meanness.

### **Revocable or Irrevocable Divorce**

Because of the many varied reasons that might have brought up the divorce, which might have been spoken out irrationally, Allah has put in safety measures to help save this marriage. One of these is called the revocable divorce, meaning that any time before the *Iddah* is completed, there is still time to bring about reconciliation. As we have seen from the above, sexual intercourse will invalidate the divorce. And since this is one of the main purposes of marriage, it is difficult for a husband and wife to be in the same house for long without this coming about naturally. However, if the underlying cause for the divorce in the first place has not been resolved, then physical intimacy alone will not be enough to hold the marriage together. After some time has elapsed and things happen again, the man may again seek a divorce for the second time. And again they resolve their differences and become intimate; this is called the **REVOCABLE** divorce.

If again he will pronounce divorce for the **third time**, he is not permitted to resolve the matter again and this is called **IRREVOCABLE** divorce. In this case, the divorce will go through the woman's *Iddah* and is final. After this, if he wishes to marry her, she must first be married to another, divorced by this man and only then may the first husband remarry her with a valid marriage contract and *walima*. As

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<sup>22</sup> That which is forbidden in Islam.

Allah states: **“And if he has divorced her (the third time), then she is not lawful unto him thereafter until she has married another husband. Then, if the other husband divorces her, it is no sin on both of them that they reunite, provided they feel that they can keep the limits ordained by Allah. These are the limits of Allah, which He makes plain for the people who have knowledge.”** (Holy Quran 2:230)

The first husband may not make an arrangement for a man to marry his divorced wife with the intention of getting around this procedure because every marriage must be entered into with the good intention of making it a lasting marriage. And while you may be able to fool the woman or perhaps the woman is even involved in this deceit, and you may be able to fool the court and other people, you can never fool Allah and you will be made to answer for this action on the Day of Judgment. These are the limitations set by Allah.

### **Pronouncement of Divorce**

The pronouncement of divorce by the man must be made in the presence of two witnesses as Allah says in the Holy Quran, **“...And take as witness two just persons from among you (Muslims) And establish the testimony for Allah.”** (*Surah 65: 2*) **A pronouncement of divorce can not be only to the woman when you are alone.** Nowadays this is also done in the Shar'iah court in the presence of the woman's *mahram*. Although it can take place outside of the court, it is for the protection of the woman that she would have papers to prove the legality for any legal means that might arise later on.



For those living outside of a Muslim country, it might be advisable to seek a mosque or Islamic center that can direct you in this matter. It is also deemed wise to get a secular divorce along with this as some non-Islamic countries may not recognize this type of divorce for purposes of child support or getting married again.

The divorce may be final after one pronouncement if the couples upon the completion of the woman's *Iddah* go their separate ways. The man may also make a pronouncement of three divorces at one time, but Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) did not like this as this gives no future chance for reconciliation.

### **Reasons for Divorce**

Reasons for divorce vary and each marriage should be judged individually so we will mention only a few, there are more and Allah knows best.

- 1. Religious duties:** If one of the couple habitually fails to perform religious duties, such as obligatory prayer and fasting in Ramadan, in spite of being counseled by other Muslims.
- 2. Cruelty:** Physical or mental abuse which would include derogatory language.
- 3. Abandonment:** Abandonment or loss of complete contact for a period of four years or in the case of war, missing in action for a period of one year.

**4. Prolonged separation:** Prolonged separation for more than four months without the consent and agreement of the spouse.

**5. Polygamy:** In the case of the polygamous man, not being fair or just.

**6. Impotency:** The husband's impotency: The woman has a right to her husband's body just as her husband has a right to hers. While it is possible for the man to be physical with an indifferent woman, it is not possible for the woman if the man is incapable. Also it is the right of the woman to have children just as it is his right to have children.

**7. Adultery:** Because Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing be upon him) said that our religion is founded on high moral values and because Allah speaks out strongly about adultery; it is looked upon as a deep and grievous sin with severe consequences. When adultery is allowed to be practiced rampantly as we see in the West and other countries, the whole of society is affected. We witness the breakdown of the marriage and family values, the rise in the number of cases of abortion, HIV and other sexually-transmitted diseases, along with the acceptance of homosexuality, which is an affront to God. Adultery has not only become rampant but practiced by women, as well as men. It is so accepted today and its practice knows no barriers, no racial or social distinction. It was even publicly played out in the highest office of the land, that of the Presidency. And should we be so shocked at the publicity when it is played out by common people as well? It was the

humiliation of the discovery, not the act itself that was condemned.

The punishment in Islam for the fornicator, (sex between couples where one or both are not married) man or woman, is 100 flogs for each. This, as stated in Chapter 24:2-4 of the Holy Quran, sets down the guidelines for judgment: There must be four witnesses to the act, the pregnancy of the women by other than her husband, or the admission of the act itself by the man or woman. Along with this the Muslim man or woman is forbidden to marry any fornicator or adulterer.

### **Types of Divorce**

**Regular:** This is the divorce mentioned above where the man will divorce the woman.

***Khul:*** In Islam, it is not only the man who is given the right to divorce the woman, but the woman is also given the right to divorce the man. This is called ***Khul***. In this case the woman seeking the divorce will be required to return all or part of the dowry. This is the right of the woman granted to her in Islam for the over the past 1400 years!

***Lian:*** In this case one or both have accused each other of adultery without being able to produce the four witnesses as required by Allah. (Quran Chapter 24:6-9) which clearly states: **“And for those who accuse their wives, but have no witnesses except themselves, let the testimony of one of them be four testimonies (i.e. testifies four times) by Allah that he is one of those who speak the truth. And the fifth**

**(testimony should be) the invoking of the Curse of Allah on him if he be of those who tell a lie (against her) But this shall avert the punishment (of stoning to death) from her, if she bears witness four times by Allah, that he ( her husband) is telling a lie, And the fifth (testimony) should be that the Wrath of Allah be upon her if he (her husband) speaks the truth.”**

In order to clarify this, let me explain more fully. You have both husband and wife claiming that the other person has committed adultery. However, neither one of them can produce the four witnesses as required. In this case both of them will take an oath swearing by Allah that the other one has committed adultery. For instance, the husband would say, “I swear by Allah that she has committed adultery, I swear by Allah that she has committed adultery, I swear by Allah that she has committed adultery, I swear by Allah that she has committed adultery.” Now the fifth time he would say, “I swear by Allah that she has committed adultery and if I am the one lying may the Curse of Allah be upon me.” Then the woman would also repeat this if she is accusing her husband. Each one must repeat this four times and then on the fifth time they will invoke the Curse of Allah upon themselves if they are the one who is lying. They repeat this four times in lieu of the four witnesses required in the case of proven adultery. In this case only Allah knows who is telling the truth and who is lying. It will remain to the Day of Judgment when they will answer before Allah. In this case there will be no stoning to death, the divorce is final at that moment without a waiting

period (*Iddah*) for the woman and they are never allowed to marry each other again.

### **Custody of the Children:**

The custody of the children goes to the mother provided she is mentally fit, is of high moral standing and is a practicing Muslim. The children will stay with her until the child reaches the age of 7 at which time the custody reverts to the father. However, the girl will stay with her mother until she reaches the age of puberty, then she will go to her father.

If at any time it is feared that the mother would bring the child up as a non-Muslim, teach or expose him/her to a religion other than Islam, feed him/her food prohibited by Allah or speak in a derogatory way about Islam and its Prophet, then her right to custody is forfeited. If she remarries she also loses the right to the child, unless the father of the child agrees for her to keep the child or children.

If the mother remarries or dies the custody of the child goes to her mother or grandmother if they are Muslims. If neither is available then the custody is given to the father.

**These are the rights in Islam accorded to the woman for divorce for the over the past 1400 years!! Unfortunately for the non-Muslim woman, her right to seek a divorce has only been made available to her within the last 100 years!** Prior to this time only the man could divorce the woman, along with divorce came a social stigma. *Alhamdulillah*, (Praise be to Allah) this has never been the case in Islam.

## CONCLUSION

The forgoing has only begun to touch on the different aspects of Islam. One book is not enough to delve into the greater part of the religion of Islam. I have written on those subjects and information that are not commonly known among non-Muslims as a help to clear up the misunderstandings that prevail and to help the Muslim who is not well-informed about his religion. I have addressed the subjects pertaining in particular to the Muslim woman: Courtship, Marriage, Polygamy and Divorce, because when I was a non-Muslim and Christian woman I was misinformed as most Westerners are concerning the status of woman in Islam.

I have presented the topics on Islamic Dress, Courtship, Marriage, Polygamy and Divorce as they come directly to us from Allah and His book the Holy Quran, along with the *Sunnah* or way of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) as he presented them to us. Any discrepancies or deviations in the actual practices and what has been said or taught by Allah and His messenger Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) lie entirely in the fault of the Muslims themselves.

Since Islam is a way of life and not just prayer, worship incorporates all that we do, *Insha Allah*, we hope to present in the future other books and pamphlets covering other aspects of Islam such as ecology, fasting, prayer manners, and children, as well as other concerns of Muslims living in a non-Islamic society. May Allah bless this endeavor.

## Appendix

### WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN ISLAM

These are some of the rights handed down to women for the last fourteen hundred years.

*1. The Muslim woman has a right to choose if she wants to marry or not and if she approves of the man she is to marry. A Muslim woman cannot be forced into a marriage that she does not agree to. Forcing a woman to marry, without her consent, is a violation of Islamic law and transgresses the teachings of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) when he said, “A matron should not be given in marriage except after consulting her: and a virgin should not be given in marriage without taking her permission.”*

2. The woman cannot be married without the man giving her *Mahr* (bridal gift). This is a wedding gift given to the bride by the husband which may be in money or in kind (jewelry, property, clothes etc.). It is not the woman giving this to the man as we find in some cultures; rather it is the man giving to the woman, without which the marriage is invalid. The Statement of Allah in the Holy Quran, “**And give the women (on marriage) their *Mahr* as a gift.**” (Holy Quran 4:4) likewise in chapter 4:20 “**If you**

**had given the latter a *cantar* (of gold ..i.e. a great amount) take not the least bit of it back...**” One who is poor may even teach or recite the Holy Quran to his wife as a *mahr*.

3. The Muslim woman also has a right to stipulate anything that she wishes on the marriage contract as long as it does not go against what Allah has allowed. The marriage contract is a written agreement by both parties and the woman has a right to make stipulations to that agreement which is not given to the man. This is a right bestowed upon her for more than **fourteen hundred years** and has only been picked up and incorporated into non-Muslim marriages since the early **1980’s**. They call this a prenuptial agreement usually in regards to personal wealth. However, in Islam it is an option of the woman in regards to other conditions e.g....she would like to continue her studies; she doesn’t wish to live in a certain area of the country, etc. It does not pertain to her money because....

4. Her money is her own! The Muslim woman may work outside of the home but is not forced to. Whatever money she makes belongs to her and she is not required to give this to her husband, unless she willingly agrees to. Allah says in the Holy Quran, “**Men are the protectors and maintainers of women..**’ (Holy Quran 4:34)



5. A wife does not change her basic identity; she retains her maiden name, as Allah says in the Holy Quran, **“Call them by their father’s name...”** (Holy Quran 33:5)
  
6. The Muslim woman has a right to inheritance: **“There is a share for men and a share for women from what is left by parents and those nearest related, whether the property be small or large.”** (Holy Quran 4:7) What the woman inherits, the man whether husband or male blood relative does not have any right to. Again this right for the woman was stipulated over fourteen hundred years ago; in contrast, this was designated to non-Muslim women only in the last 200 years.
  
7. A Muslim woman has a right to seek knowledge. Prophet Muhammad, (peace and blessings be upon him) say, “Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.” Knowledge is not just for men it is also for women and a lifetime pursuit. Both religious and secular knowledge is included in this statement. There are many kinds of knowledge but that which is beneficial to one’s religion, self, family and mankind is best. Useless or trivia knowledge is a waste of time, Prophet Muhammad, (peace and blessings be upon him) taught us this prayer: **“Allah, keep me from knowledge which is useless, a heart that is satiated and prayers that are not answered.”**

8. Divorce is allowed in Islam but is not to be taken lightly. The situation is addressed in the Holy Quran in Chapter 2:229, 33:49 among others, and one complete chapter (65) is called *Talaq* (Divorce). Prophet Muhammad, (peace and blessings be upon him) said." Divorce is allowed but it is one of the most hated things in the sight of Allah." The woman has had this right in Islam to seek divorce for over the past 1400 years; this right was not allowed to the non-Muslim women in the secular society until only this last century. Before that in the secular societies it was only the right of the man to seek divorce. In Islam the right of the woman seeking this type of divorce is called *Khul*. In this type of divorce she is usually required to return all or part of the *Mahr* (bridal gift) given at the time of signing the marriage contract. It must be said here that divorce is not to be done arbitrarily but must follow rules and regulations set down by Allah as found in the Holy Quran.

9. A woman may also act as a witness to a contract as Allah says in the Holy Quran, **“And, get two witnesses out of your own men. And if there are not two men, then a man and two women....”** (Holy Quran 2:282).

10. A Muslim woman also has the same spiritual responsibilities and rewards as men. **“The true**

**believers, both men and women, are friends to each other. They enjoin what is just and forbid what is evil: they attend to their prayers and pay the alms-tax and obey Allah and His Apostle (Prophet Muhammad) On these Allah will have mercy. He is the Mighty, the Wise.” (Holy Quran 9:71)**

**“The believers who do good works, whether men or women, shall enter Paradise. They shall not suffer the least injustice.” (Holy Quran 4:124)**

**“Be they men or women, those that embrace the faith and do what is right We will surely grant a happy life: We shall reward them according to their actions.” (Holy Quran 16:97)**

## **PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S LAST SERMON**

This sermon was delivered on the ninth day of Dhul Hijja 10 A.H. (around the year 623 Christian era) in the valley of Mount Arafat, Makkah.

After praising and thanking Allah (the One God) he (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Oh People lend me an attentive ear, for I know not whether after this year I shall ever be amongst you again. Therefore listen to what I am saying to you very carefully and **TAKE THESE WORDS TO THOSE WHO COULD NOT BE PRESENT HERE TODAY.**"

Oh People, just as you regard this month, this day as Sacred, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as sacred trust. Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners. Harm no one so that no one may harm you. Remember that you will indeed meet your Lord, and that He will indeed reckon your deeds. Allah has forbidden you to take usury (interest), therefore all interest obligations shall henceforth be waived. Your capital however, is yours to keep. You will neither inflict nor suffer inequality. Allah has judged that there shall be no interest and that all the interest due to Abbas ibn Abd'al Mutallib shall henceforth be waived.

Beware of Satan, for the safety of your religion, He lost all hope that he will ever be able to lead you astray in big things, so beware of following him in small things.

Oh People, it is true that you have certain rights with regards to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under Allah's trust and with His permission. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. And it is your right that they do not make friends with any one of whom you do not approve, as well as never to be unchaste.

Oh people listen to me in earnest, worship Allah, perform your five daily prayers (*Salah*), fast during the month of Ramadan, and give of your wealth to the poor due (*Zakat*), Perform Hajj (Pilgrimage) if you can afford to.

All mankind is from Adam and an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab: also a white has no superiority over black nor a black has any superiority over a white, except by piety and good action. Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood. Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim which belongs to a fellow Muslim unless it was given freely and willingly. Do not therefore, do injustice to yourselves.

Remember, one day you will appear before Allah and answer for your deeds, so beware, and do not sway from the path of righteousness after I am gone.

Oh People, no prophet or apostle will come after me and no new faith will be born. Reason well therefore Oh People, and understand the words which I convey to you. I leave behind me two things, the Quran and my example (the *Sunnah*) and if you follow these you will never go astray.

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# L. F. H. Bible College

*Upon recommendation of the Faculty, L. F. H. Bible College,  
by virtue of the authority granted it by the State of California has awarded*

Mary Sue Alabar  
*the*

Standard Ministerial Diploma

*with all rights, privileges, and honors thereto appertaining.*

Given at Los Angeles, this sixth day of June, nineteen hundred eighty-six



*Ray Anderson*  
Corporation President

*Jack E. Hamilton*  
College President



Church of the Foursquare Gospel in the Philippines



Certificate of Ordination

We it know that Rev. Mary Sue Malvar was publicly set apart to the Ministry of the Foursquare Gospel with appropriate religious services, prayers and the laying on of hands according to the provisions of the Church of the Foursquare Gospel in the Philippines;

And is hereby recognized as a Minister of the Gospel and is authorized to administer the ordinances of the Church so long as in fellowship with said Organization and while maintaining a Godly life and spiritual standard of teaching in accordance with its Declaration of Faith.

Given in Cebu City this 17th day of April 1958



*Jeanyne*  
NATIONAL PRESIDENT

*Julie*  
NATIONAL SECRETARY

*[Signature]*  
GENERAL SUPERVISOR



# Foursquare-Bible-College

Church of the Foursquare Gospel  
in the Philippines

**Sue W. Mayne**

This certifies that \_\_\_\_\_  
has completed and creditably sustained an examination in the course of study  
established by Foursquare Bible College, Quezon City, Philippines and is  
hereby declared a Graduate of this Institution and entitled to this Degree of

**Bachelor of Theology**

Dated this 31st day of March, 1993

*Mansueti*  
REGISTRAR

*A. J. ...*  
DIRECTOR

# Asian Theological Seminary



*By Authority of the Board of Trustees, and upon recommendation of the Faculty, hereby confers upon*

**Mary Sue Malvar**  
*the degree of*

**Master of Divinity**

*in recognition of the fulfillment of the academic and other requirements prescribed by the Seminary.*

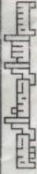
**In witness whereof** the signatures of the duly authorized officers of the Seminary are herewith affixed at **Acto Manila, Philippines** this **2nd** day of **April** nineteen hundred and ninety **three**.



  
Chairman, Board of Trustees

  
Dean of the Seminary

  
President



الدراسات الإسلامية و الدعوة و الإرشاد بالفلبين  
**ISLAMIC STUDIES, CALL & GUIDANCE**  
**Certificate of Declaration of ISLAM**

I Mary Sue Vda de Masbar the undersigned,  
 hereby affirms my acceptance and adoption of ISLAM as my religion and faith from  
 this 23 th day of October, 1993 and hereby declares;

ASH-HADU-AN-LA-ILAHA-ILL-ALLAH, WA-ASH-HADU-ANNA-MUHAMMADAR-RASULULLAH,  
 I bear witness that there is no god but ALLAH, & I bear witness that Muhammad is  
 the messenger of ALLAH. I do take this oath from heart and in my own free will to  
 follow as my guide the tenets of Islam as based on the Holy Qur'an and the example  
 (Sunnah) set by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) and I adopt  
**Khadijjah** as my Muslim name.

*Mary Sue Vda de Masbar*  
**Khadijjah Watson**

This is to certify that the declarant Khadijjah Watson DECLARANT  
 His/Her oath of allegiance to the universal faith of ISLAM May ALLAH, the Most  
 High, guide and keep him/her in the Straight Path.

Cert # 0076  
 S.L.C # 182967  
 NOTE: Any alteration or addition is not valid.  
 G.P. Alhambra Building, 6035 Aurora Boulevard, Cebu, Quezon City, Philippines 7011030 P#115311

*Mary Sue Vda de Masbar*  
**Allen A.R. Anigo**

WITNESS

*Mary Sue Vda de Masbar*  
**Almad Gelpase**

ADMINISTERING OFFICER



*Mary Sue Vda de Masbar*  
**Abdul Karim P.**

WITNESS