

THE COHESIVE NATURE OF THE FAMILY (PART 2 OF 4): THE ROLE OF HUSBAND AND WIFE

Rating: 4.4

Description: The reasons and purpose of marriage, and the emphasis given on treating wives with kindness and ease, and how they help in maintaining harmony in the family.

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The Spouse^[1]

Marriage is a very important institution in Islam. The Quran shows that there is a clear bond between men and women. In numerous places in the Quran, God reminds humans that they are from the same original human being. It is through this bond that they are interconnected and through these bonds that some of their rights upon one another are established. God states at the opening of Chapter 4, entitled "The Women":

***"O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person, and from him He created his wife, and from them both He created many men and women and fear God through whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship)! Surely, God is Ever an All-Watcher over you."* (Quran 4:1)**

However, beyond the beginning that the two sexes have in common, God points out that the love and affection that He has created in the hearts of the spouses towards another is one of His great signs that act as portents for those people of understanding. In other words, such people can look at this aspect of creation and be reminded of the greatness of God's work and power, the perfection of His creation and the magnificent mercy God has placed in this world. God says:

***"And among His Signs is this, that He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find repose and comfort in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy. Verily, in that are indeed Signs for a people who reflect."* (Quran 30:21)**

God also says:

***"He it is who created you from a single person (Adam), and then He has created from him his wife, in order that he might enjoy the pleasure of living with her..."* (Quran 7:189)**

Thus, according to the Quran, the relationship between a man and his wife should be one of love, mercy and mutual understanding. God also commands men to treat their wives kindly in the verse:

***“...And consort with your wives in a goodly manner, for if you dislike them, it may well be that your dislike something which God might yet make a source of abundant good.”
(Quran 4:19)***

A few words about the purpose of marriage in Islam should be given. This is needed because many times people enter into marriage or desire to get married without realizing the roles and purpose of marriage itself. In turn, they do not realize the kinds of responsibilities that will be on their shoulders when they do get married. However, if the purposes of marriage are known and the responsibilities that marriage will entail are understood at the outset, once again, the probability that the marriage will be a successful marriage will be enhanced. The person will know what is expected of him, both with respect to his responsibilities and duties and his rights.

Obviously, the purpose of marriage is not simply “fun” or the release of “animal urges”. There is much more to marriage than that. Some of the goals behind marriage include [\[2\]](#): procreating, experiencing permissible physical pleasure, attainment of one’s complete maturity, mutually assisting one another in making one’s life in this world, attaining numerous psychological and physiological benefits, forming the cornerstone of a moral society, bringing up the next generation in a setting that is most conducive for moral and spiritual growth and binding peoples and families together.

The Rights of a Husband and a Wife

In order for a marriage to work best, each partner should understand fully well his or her rights, responsibilities, roles and obligations. For this reason, Islamic Law has laid down very clear rights and responsibilities for a Muslim husband and wife. At the same time, though, every married person must realize that one’s spouse is first and foremost another Muslim. He/she is one’s brother/sister in Islam. Therefore, all the rights that fall upon a Muslim due to the general brotherhood of Islam are also due to one’s spouse. There are books on the behavior of a Muslim, brotherhood and love and loyalty among Muslims, and all of those principles apply to a married person as his spouse is part of that Islamic brotherhood and community. Furthermore, the Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, also stressed this point when he stated:

“None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.” (Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim)

However, one’s spouse has even more rights upon a person due to the great and important contract that has been contracted between them.[\[3\]](#)

Therefore, when discussing the rights of the husbands and wives, this matter should not be looked at in a cold or legal fashion. The relationship between the husband and wife

must be much more than a matter of rights stated by the law that each must abide by. Instead, it should be a relationship of love, support and mutual understanding. Each spouse should take into consideration the needs and abilities of the other spouse. They should attempt to make each other happy, even if they have to compromise sometimes, and not simply be out to make sure that they are getting all of their rights in the marriage. Actually, it is usually the case that neither spouse is completely fulfilling the rights of the other and making the other happy. Hence, they both have to realize and accept their shortcomings.

The Prophet, in particular, advised the husbands to treat their wives in the best way^¾ perhaps due to their greater authority or due to their greater strength, in general. The Prophet said:

“The best of you is the one who is best to his family (wife) and I am the best of you to my family.” (Al-Tirmidhi and ibn Majah)

Footnotes:

[1] For more details on the Islamic laws of marriage, see the author’s “The Fiqh of the Family, Marriage and Divorce” (American Open University, 1997), *passim*. The discussion here is based on sections of that work.

[2] Cf., Abdul Rahman Abdul Khaaliq, *Al-Zawaaj fi Dhill al-Islam* (Kuwait: al-Daar al-Salafiyyah, 1988), pp. 21ff.

[3] God says in the Quran, “**And how could you take it [back] while you have gone in unto each other and they have taken from you a firm and strong covenant**” (Quran 4:21).

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