

The Secrets
of a
Prosperous Marriage

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We dedicate this book to

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad

Khalifatul Masih V

(may Allah be his Helper)

as well as

Maulana Mubarak Ahmad Nazir

who taught and inspired us

in serving the community and

remaining connected with Khilafat

وَمِنَ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ
بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

And *one* of His Signs is *this*, that He has created wives for you from among yourselves that you may find peace of mind in them, and He has put love and tenderness between you. In that surely are Signs for a people who reflect.

—The Holy Quran (30:22)

A Note on the Text

References to the Holy Quran in this book are in the format, chapter number: verse citation. For example, 13:29 means that the quoted verse is the 29th verse of the 13th chapter of the Quran. The numbering counts *Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim* (In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful) as the first verse in every chapter it appears in.

The name of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is followed by the symbol ^{sa}, which is an abbreviation for the salutation *sallallahu alayhi wa sallam* (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

The name of the Promised Messiah^{as} is followed by the symbol ^{as}, an abbreviation for *alayhis-salam* (on whom be peace).

The companions of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and the Promised Messiah^{as} are followed by the symbol ^{ra}, which is an abbreviation for the salutation *radiyallahu anhu/anha/anhum* (may Allah be pleased with him/her/them).

The names of deceased pious Muslims who are not companions of the Holy Prophet^{sa} or of the Promised Messiah^{as} are followed by the symbol ^{rh}, which is an abbreviation for *rahmatullahi alayhi/alayha/alayhim* (may Allah have mercy upon him/her/them).

The word 'Allah' is the name for God in Islam. We use both terms, Allah and God, interchangeably in this book to refer to the same One True God of Islam. The term *Khalifa* (pl. *Khulafa'*) means 'successor' and the phrase *Khalifatul Masih* means 'successor of the Messiah,' referring to those who succeeded the Promised Messiah^{as}

after his demise in 1908. The term *Musleh Mau'ud* means 'Promised Reformer' and is the honorary title of Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad^{ra}, the second successor of the Promised Messiah^{as}. It refers to the fact that the prophecy regarding the promised son for the Promised Messiah^{as} has been fulfilled in his person. The term 'Huzoor' or 'Huzoor-e-Anwar' is used to refer to the current Khalifa, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (may Allah be his Helper). For a complete list of Urdu and Arabic terms that have been used in this book, refer to the glossary at the end.

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Foreword

The moral fabric of society is crumbling before our eyes. Widespread immoralities and vices are leading humankind to ruin. Illicit relationships between men and women are a leading cause of unrest within societies.

In order to safeguard its adherents from such moral degradation, Islam enjoins upon every Muslim to marry and strive to keep society chaste. In Islam, marriage is a sacred institution and its purpose is for a man and a woman to live together in love, peace and harmony, and within the bounds of the teachings of Islam.

Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Canada is humbled to publish this book meant to serve the needs of Ahmadi Muslim youth who are nearing the age of marriage as well as their parents who are providing support in this important decision in their lives.

What is unique in this book is that the authors have tried to bring all relevant information together in one place for ease of reference and study and have gone into detail in explaining, in simple terms, some important aspects of marriage. All such aspects have also been presented in a way that a young modern reader can easily understand and grasp the idea behind various teachings on the subject of marriage.

We would like to thank the authors, Maulana Farhan Iqbal sahib, Maulana Shahrukh Rizwan Abid sahib and Maulana Sadiq Ahmed sahib for putting together this important and much needed book and for providing answers to some pertinent questions.

We also thank Allah the Almighty for enabling Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Canada to complete this humble undertaking, and we express our sincerest and heartfelt gratitude to our Beloved Imam, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) for guiding us in all our endeavours.

We pray that Allah makes this book a source of knowledge and guidance for its readers. Ameen.

Zubair Afzal

Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Canada

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I

**UNDERSTANDING MARRIAGE
IN ISLAM**

Why did we write this book? The answer is simple. The Islamic marriage is a *process* and a book was needed to explain it in its *entirety*. There are many who would claim to know what an ideal, Islamic marriage should look like and what it should entail. Even critics of Islam would claim that they know the process very well. Perhaps they have *seen* it or perceived to have experienced it by themselves.

The reality, however, may be very different. Once an in-depth conversation begins, it becomes clear that most people's knowledge of the process is incomplete and insufficient. Even those parts that they appear to know something about cannot lead them to a wholesome understanding of marriage in Islam. This is why prior to any detailed discussion of marriage in Islam, it is very important to understand the purpose as well as the step-by-step process that one has to go through in order to fulfill the requirements of an Islamic marriage.

In the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, this is vital. We do not wish to deviate from the fundamental requirements of Islam pertaining to marriage. Since the Holy Quran and the practice of the Holy Prophet^{sa} have clearly defined the purpose of marriage, Ahmadi Muslims try their utmost to attain that purpose in their lives.

The emphasis that Islam has laid on the institution of marriage and the level of integrity that a marriage should possess is a beautiful concept that has been distorted by the influence of modern-day culture and media, which often run counter to Islamic principles. Allah has advised the believers that it is essential to marry, as it has several benefits including husbands and wives nurturing the moral, spiritual, social and psychological growth of one another. In the Holy Quran, it is stated:

فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ

That is, “Marry women as may be agreeable to you” (4:4). Similarly, it is stated:

وَأَنْكِحُوا الْأَيَامَىٰ مِنْكُمْ

Meaning, “And marry widows from among you” (24:33). What is important to note is that in both of these verses, marriage is given as a commandment. That is, whoever has the capacity should ensure that he or she gets married. The Holy Prophet^{sa} emphasized the same when he said, “Marriage is part of my *sunnah*, and whoever does not follow my *sunnah* has nothing to do with me.”¹

As such, a great emphasis has been placed on marriage for Muslims because if two individuals join in the union of marriage

with the principles of Islam in mind, they can find intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual fulfillment from one another. In a marriage, the responsibilities and roles have been set by Allah. The Promised Messiah, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} states:

And among the purposes of marriage, the first purpose is that through marriage those are born who remember Him (i.e. God). The second purpose, stated by God, is that the man through his wife, and the wife through her husband, can safeguard themselves from sinful glances and sinful actions. The third purpose stated is so that through mutual love they can be safe against the sadness of loneliness. All of these verses are present in the Holy Quran.²

Elaborating on these points a little further, Hazrat Mirza Bashir Ahmad^{ra} states:

[It] should be known that there are four purposes of marriage, which are derived from the Holy Quran. Firstly, for an individual to be safeguarded from various physical, moral and spiritual ailments and from their ill consequences. This aspect is referred to as *Ihsan* in the Arabic language, which literally means to be protected within a fortress. Secondly, the continuation of human life. Thirdly, life-long companionship and peace of heart. Fourthly, the growth of relations of love and compassion.³

It is also important to understand that one of the purposes of man's creation is to connect with God Almighty. The Quran states:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٧﴾

“And I have not created the jinn and the men but that they may worship me” (51:57). The word “worship” refers to gaining nearness

to God Almighty and adopting His attributes in our own lives. Marriage in Islam is also meant to help us achieve this goal. By having a partner who is devoted to God, we are able to get the necessary support to improve our relationship with God. As humans, we have weaknesses and strengths, and a partner can help us overcome our weaknesses and build on our strengths. Islam sees spiritual progress as both an individual and a collective effort. That is why much emphasis has been laid in Islam to congregational worship. In the same spirit, having a supportive partner means that a person can progress spiritually in a much faster, sustained manner.

What is more is that the creation of God the Almighty, in whichever way or form it may exist, has a form of duality in it. This further establishes the fact that the only One Being, independent and indivisible, is the Being of God Almighty. Since humankind has been divided into the genders of man and woman, the institution of marriage was divinely established as a link between these two genders, in order to eliminate their differences and fulfill their spiritual purpose. In this regard, the Holy Quran states:

وَوَخَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا ۝

Meaning, "And We have created you in pairs" (78:9). The mate of a person is his or her partner, who is bound to the mate by love, affection, and harmony; embedded in nature, from the time of creation. This concept has been very beautifully discussed by the Promised Messiah^{as} when he writes:

We created from Adam himself his mate, who is Eve, so that Adam's link with Eve and her progeny be natural, not artificial. And this was done so that the man's relationships and sympathies

be sustained, because natural relations are unchangeable, while artificial relationships do not enjoy imperishability because they do not have that mutual attraction that a natural relationship has. In short, both types of relationships, that a man should have, with God and humanity, have been naturally created.⁴

In light of this, it is clear that the bond between a man and woman is very important and whoever has the means should ensure that he or she enters into this bond. They should not willfully avoid marriage even when they have the means to get married. The union of men and women in matrimony is the means through which the two can attain the epitome of spirituality. Any religion that keeps the two separated is denying the simplest requirement of humanity. Celibacy, as such, is forbidden in Islam. The purpose of religion is to make humans *complete* and *whole*, and any religion that is opposed to the necessity of marriage is keeping humans from fulfilling their purpose. Regarding this, Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad^{ra} writes:

To say that humanity is male or to say that humanity is female is incorrect. Humanity is something distinct. It is a single entity which has been divided into two fragments, half of which is termed male and the other half of which is termed female. Since both of these are two pieces of the same entity, then until these two are united the entity itself will remain incomplete. It will only be deemed complete when its two fragments have been brought together.⁵

In other words, marriage is necessary for the harmony of humanity.

CHASTITY

In the process of establishing nearness to God, and becoming the source of one another's spiritual enhancement, the institution of marriage serves another great purpose that is essential to establishing a modest society. That purpose is health and chastity. Chastity is generally defined as abstaining from illicit behavior and this is precisely one of the purposes of marriage in Islam. The Holy Quran emphasizes this to a great extent as it states:

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ أَزْكَىٰ لَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا

That is, "Say to the believing men that they restrain their eyes and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Surely, Allah is well aware of what they do. And say to the believing women that they restrain their eyes and guard their private parts, and that they disclose not their (natural and artificial) beauty except that which is apparent thereof..." (24:31-32). In these two verses, Allah is addressing believing men and women, and advising them to restrain their eyes, and not to gaze at the other gender unnecessarily. Marriage is an institution which helps in the fulfillment of this commandment by believing men and women. The Holy Prophet^{sa} further elaborates on this point in the following words:

Narrated by 'Alqama: While I was walking with 'Abdullah he said, "We were in the company of the Prophet^{sa} and he said, 'He

who has the strength (and capacity to marry) should get married because it will help him to lower his gaze and safeguard his private parts (from committing sins); and he who cannot afford to marry is advised to fast, as it will diminish his sexual desire’.”⁶

The Holy Prophet^{sa} says in this *hadith* that anyone who has the ability and can afford to marry, then he should not hesitate. Marriage protects a person from immoral relations.

It is stated in the Holy Quran:

وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ؕ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَ
أَحِلَّ لَكُمْ مَا وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسْفِحِينَ ۗ

That is, “And forbidden to you are married women. Except such as your right hands possess. This has Allah enjoined on you. And allowed to you are those beyond that, that you seek them by means of your property, marrying them properly and not committing fornication” (4:25). This verse clearly points out that if the Islamic teaching of marriage is not followed, a society would be formed where natural urges are given free rein to such an extent that human morality would completely vanish from the heart. Physical pleasures would become the prime purpose, and marriage would be regarded as a burdensome restraint. The Promised Messiah^{as} has made the same assessment in his book, *Arya Dharam*:

[Some Hindu critics] make allegations on Islam that Islam does not promote marriage for the purpose of progeny but rather for the purpose of fulfilling one’s carnal desires....the Quran teaches us to marry in order to safeguard ourselves from our carnal

desires and to pray for a righteous progeny, as it states ‘marrying them properly and not committing fornication’.⁷

The Promised Messiah^{as} states that people may oppose the teachings of Islam, and allege that the purpose of Islamic marriage is to fulfill one’s carnal desires. However, the truth is that their opposition is based on ignorance and rejection of many advantages of marriage that Islam sheds light on. The Islamic teachings regarding marriage have a grand purpose, and are aimed to help the married couple advance in righteousness.

PROCREATION

God the Almighty has instructed believing men to seek pious and righteous wives, who will bear children that exhibit high moral and spiritual characteristics. In this regard, He states in the Holy Quran:

نِسَاءُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ فَاتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّىٰ شِئْتُمْ ۗ وَقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ ۗ^ط
 وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ مُّلَقُّوهُ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٢٤﴾

Meaning, “Your wives are a tilth for you; so approach your tilth when and how you like and send ahead some good for yourselves; and fear Allah and know that you shall meet him; and give good tidings to those who obey” (2:224). From this verse, it can be deduced that one of the natural purposes of marriage is procreation and the continuation of the human race.

In this regard, Hazrat Musleh Mau’ud^{ra} states:

One of the primary and basic needs of humans is the continuation of progeny. Among the faculties that man has been given to gain eternal life, is the action of those organs that are linked to male

libido and female passion. These organs are not just part of the physical body but are linked to the spirit as well. Otherwise, man would not be prohibited from becoming a eunuch. And it is for this reason that God has declared that prophets also have wives and children, because these organs are necessary for spirituality. In fact, spirituality is perfected through these faculties. In actuality the true purpose of male libido or female passions is to create the desire for self-continuation. Under this desire the organs linked to male libido or female passions fulfill the secondary need of the continuation of self, meaning the continuation of progeny. The means for the creation of human progeny is one manifestation of the growth of these organs, and that vigour that is the means for the continuation of the soul has been used by Allah as a means for the continuation of the world. The progress of the soul results in the eternal life of the soul, and through progeny, physical self-continuation is attained.⁸

Huzoor^{ra} further states that it is a natural and understandable physical desire of humans to procreate and have progeny. He writes that conjugal relations are not only required for physical purposes, but they also have a spiritual implication. If conjugal relations were wrong or forbidden, then prophets would not have participated in them. Prophets married and had children because it was a means to advance spiritually and not merely a fulfillment of physical desires.

PEACE

Another important purpose of marriage is to find peace and tranquility as the Holy Quran states:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ
 بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْتَفِرُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

That is, “And *one* of His Signs is *this*, that He has created wives for you from among yourselves that you may find peace of mind in them, and He has put love and tenderness between you. In that surely are Signs for a people who reflect” (30:22). Sometimes, the relationships between men and women evolve to exclusively value physical desires, ignoring the spiritual and moral aspects. When moral values are put aside, sins such as adultery, fornication, and even homosexuality reach enormous heights. Some people run into emotional problems or even physiological ailments, which in turn leads to divorce as a common consequence. In light of all this, Islam is a religion of moderation. It does not encourage celibacy, nor does it allow unrestrained pursuit of lustful desires. Instead, it promotes a society in which people follow the middle path and avoid all the pitfalls of extremes.

God Almighty says in the Holy Quran that spouses are a source of peace and tranquility for each other. The institution of marriage in Islam has this goal in mind. It allows men and women to legitimately join into a bond, and thereby attain peace of mind. In a world riddled with vice, hardships and countless trials, human beings are in a constant state of needing support. Marriage is the ultimate institution in which people can have a continual source of support, love and affection all the while abiding by the teachings of Islam. Regardless of how difficult and tiresome one’s day might be, having the privilege to go home to someone who cares for your

needs, listens to your worries and sympathizes through every trial is a great blessing. Islamic marriage seeks to foster a relationship that is quite different from other kinds of relationships or partnerships that are common in this day and age. This is because Islamic teachings seek to bring together two people in a marriage where they have mutual feelings of love to the point where their own personal desires, personal feelings, and personal worries are secondary to that of their partners. In doing so, they build a *marital paradise* for themselves in this life.

Each gender finds rest, peace of mind, and protection in its mate, as garments protect and provide warmth to the body. Regarding this, the Holy Quran states:

هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ ط

That is, "They are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them" (2:188). Explaining the beautiful teaching contained in this verse, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) says:

It is the responsibility of both to cover each other's faults. The Holy Quran expounds the uses of garment as a source of covering nakedness, secondly as a source of embellishment and thirdly as a protection from hot and cold weather. Thus when a man and a woman commit themselves to the union of marriage in accordance with a pact, their utmost efforts should be to accept each other and also cover each other's shortcomings. Neither men nor women should become enraged over small matters. Mutual relationship of an Ahmadi married couple should enhance their

beauty and such beauty should radiate from each Ahmadi couple so that they become exemplary for others.⁹

Another aspect in this regard is very beautifully mentioned in the Holy Quran as follows:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَاءِ بَشَرًا فَجَعَلَهُ نَسَبًا وَصِهْرًا ۗ وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ قَدِيرًا ﴿٥٥﴾

Meaning, “And He it is who has created man from water, and has made for him kindred by descent and kindred by marriage; and thy Lord is All-Powerful” (25:55). Although the institution of marriage is a means to bind a man and a woman into a legal marital contract, it also serves as a way for generating relationships at a larger scale. The marriage of a man and a woman merges their hearts, their families, and their cultures, in a bond of singularity; a singularity which symbolically depicts the unity of God the Almighty. Though the progeny created through marriage grows and separates over time, the institution of marriage keeps them bonded together.

In short, marriage in Islam seeks to productively contribute to the progress of the human race, and is also a means of bonding together people in relationships of love and harmony. This concept is pointed out in the verse quoted in the beginning of this chapter, stating that men and women are created from a single soul and form one entity through the bond of marriage. Marriage ensures spiritual as well as physical health and well-being, and this is why it is encouraged in Islam.

II

THE PROCESS

Having understood the importance, purpose and philosophy of Islamic marriage, let us now turn to the *process* of marriage in Islam, as followed in the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. There are many people who are unaware of certain important *steps* that need to be taken for an Islamic marriage to be considered complete. There are others who give undue importance to certain aspects that are not that significant from an Islamic perspective. In this chapter, we will go through the steps and explain their importance. However, while we discuss the steps, it is important to remember that culture has a huge role to play when it comes to marriage. Islam does not ban cultural practices as long as they are not contrary to Islamic principles or lead to extravagance. As such, there are certain cultures which will follow the steps we discuss below to the dot, while there are other cultures where the process will be altered to some extent.

Broadly speaking, when a boy or girl reach the age of maturity, they become eligible to marry and begin seeking a suitable proposal for marriage. They are assisted in this step by their parents and other elders and members within the community. Once a proposal is agreed upon, they become engaged. This can only happen if both the

man and the woman, and the *wali* (i.e. the guardian of the woman; usually, it's the father) agree to the marriage. Once agreed, they can set a date for the next step, which is *nikah*. In the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, forms are signed by both parties before a *nikah* can be announced. This gives proof that all parties have agreed and consented to the marriage.

As per the guidance of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be His Helper), an additional step has been added prior to the announcement of *nikah* in many countries. The future husband and wife and their respective parents are invited to a counselling session conducted by a missionary or a senior member of the community. In the session, Islamic teachings related to marriage are briefly explained to them. This session helps to ensure that the marriage process runs smoothly and that all parties are on the same page, and that ultimately a solid foundation is laid for a healthy and happy marriage. A premarital counselling certificate is then issued. It should be remembered that this step is only an administrative requirement, and subject to the need of the time. In the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, the Khalifa of the time determines when and if the need arises for such sessions. The session itself is not a requirement of Islamic law.

NIKAH

After that, on the agreed date, the *nikah* is announced where the person officiating the *nikah* gives a short sermon and gets verbal affirmation from both the groom and the *wali* of the bride. The *haq mehr* is also announced at this stage. As per Islamic teachings, *haq*

mehr is an amount that the groom promises to pay his wife. This is a requirement and the Promised Messiah^{as} has emphasized that this should not just be seen as a promise and must be fulfilled. Providing guidance in this regard, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) said:

There is another issue regarding the *haq mehr* payment. Once a question was raised before the Promised Messiah^{as} that a woman would not forgo her *haq mehr* (after the wedding, the in-laws wanted her to forgo it). The Promised Messiah^{as} said, "This is a woman's right. It should be paid firstly at the time of *nikah* or afterwards. In Punjab and India, it is [considered] a benevolent act on the part of women if they forgo their *haq mehr* to their husbands before or at the time of death. This is only a custom."

Once, a companion of the Promised Messiah^{as} said, "My wife has forgiven me her *haq mehr*." The Promised Messiah^{as} asked if he had placed it in her hand. He replied, "No." The Promised Messiah^{as} said, "Go and place it in her hand and then it is acceptable if she forgives it." When the Companion returned he said, "I placed it in her hand and she refused to give it back to me." The Promised Messiah^{as} said, "This should be the way."

This is the right way, that you should place it in her hand and then ask her if she forgives it.¹

The *nikah* announcement is usually made in the mosque but it can be announced at other places like a banquet hall or a home. The minimum requirement is to have two witnesses present for the *nikah* announcement. Once the announcement has been made, the bride

and the groom become husband and wife and have rights upon one another from an Islamic perspective.

After the *nikah*, the bride formally moves into her new home with her husband. This can happen immediately after the *nikah* announcement or, if the bride's parents prefer it, they can hold a reception—called a *rukhsati* in some cultures—to celebrate the occasion. The word '*rukhsati*' means 'leaving' and celebrates the formal departure of the bride from her parents' home. The main thing that can be found in Islamic scriptures, and in the traditions of Holy Prophet^{sa}, is the emphasis on a simple marriage ceremony. The Holy Prophet^{sa} considered simple weddings to be the best, as he is reported to have said, "The *nikah* with the greatest blessing is one which has the least burden (in terms of efforts and finances)."²

Essentially, after the *nikah*, the husband and wife are allowed to live with one another. They can choose to live with the parents of one of the spouses or in a separate home. Whether this transition into an independent life happens with a special ceremony (*rukhsati*) or is done without any ceremony after the *nikah* announcement depends on the families.

WALIMAH

After the *nikah*, Islam requires that a reception—called *walimah*—is held by the groom based on his means. This is mentioned in the following narration:

عَنْ أَنَسٍ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - قَالَ رَأَى النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَلَى عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ عَوْفٍ أَثَرَ صُفْرَةٍ فَقَالَ " مَهْمٌ أَوْ " مَهْ " قَالَ تَزَوَّجْتُ امْرَأَةً عَلَى وَزْنِ نَوَاقٍ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ فَقَالَ " بَارَكَ اللَّهُ لَكَ أَوْلِيمٌ وَلَوْ بِشَاةٍ "

That is, "It is narrated by Hazrat Anas^{ra} that the Holy Prophet^{sa}, seeing a yellow mark (of perfume) on the clothes of Hazrat 'Abdur-Rahman bin 'Auf^{ra}, said, 'What about you?' Hazrat Abdur-Rahman^{ra} replied, 'I have married a woman with a *haq mehr* of gold equal to a date-stone'. The Prophet^{sa} said, 'May Allah bestow His blessing on you (in your marriage). Hold a reception (*walimah*) even with one sheep."³ What is important to note is that there is no obligation here to hold a lavish ceremony that is beyond one's means. Defining *walimah*, the Promised Messiah^{as} has said, "A *walimah* is defined as the serving of a meal after the *nikah* by the one whose *nikah* has been announced."⁴ Similarly, he said, "Walimah is *sunnah* (practice of the Holy Prophet^{sa}). So, if one does not have the capacity to hold it, it is not obligatory for him."⁵

Explaining this further, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) has given the following guidance:

The other obligatory event is the *walimah* which is the actual commandment for the groom's family to invite their near ones and to serve them a meal. In fact, in Islam this is the only wedding occasion for which the commandment to serve a meal has been given. But even that need not be on a large scale. One can invite people and serve a meal according to one's own means.⁶

As such, there is no need for a large reception which the groom or his family are not able to afford. If they can afford it, it is allowed, but if they cannot afford it, they should not proceed with a large reception just to show off or to simply follow societal customs. In fact, for a truly poor person who does not have the means to serve any meal, the requirement for a *walimah* itself is waived. However, trying to hold a large gathering that is beyond one's means would certainly be against Islamic teachings. Huzoor has also stated, "Nowadays, so much money is spent on some of these customs that in societies where these traditions are celebrated with much show and gusto, people have started to believe that perhaps these traditions are also obligations of marriage and that a marriage cannot take place without them."⁷ In light of this, it should be clear that there are only two required aspects of marriage in Islam. One, the *nikah* announcement which serves to inform the society that the bride and groom are getting married. Two, the *walimah* reception where a small meal may be served to some guests, based on one's means. These are the only two requirements in Islam.

III

ARRANGED MARRIAGE

Every year, thousands and thousands of couples tie the knot, yet no two individuals experience their relationships in the exact same way. The foundation of a successful marriage relies heavily on finding a spouse who values the importance of strengthening the bond through a variety of means such as sacrifice, developing mutual understanding, friendship, and so on. Finding a suitable spouse can undoubtedly pose a challenge, especially in a society where it is widely believed that marriage is impossible without first cohabiting or dating and getting to know one another prior to the commitment of marriage. In many cases, there is no well-defined limit on the amount of time required prior to marriage. In some of these cases, marriage may occur when the couple have already had children and they are grown up. In yet other cases, marriage is forgotten or even considered unnecessary.

Islam, on the other hand, places considerable emphasis on marriage itself. In an age where finding one's match has been deprecated to swiping right or left at an instantaneous glance, arranged marriages can be a tasteful alternative to those who are thoughtful about their future. Marriages in Islam are arranged

according to the principles laid down in the Holy Quran. Some may find some of these principles to be strict but this impression is incorrect as considerable space and freedom is given to individuals to choose whomever they find to be a suitable spouse. Effort is made in the Islamic teachings to keep a balance between sufficient freedom to learn about a potential spouse and avoiding any kind of contact that can lead to sin.

PRINCIPLES

Before proceeding further, it is important to make a clear distinction between what is defined as *arranged marriage* in Islam. There are many cultures where arranged marriage is the norm. Some of the aspects of such arrangements may be found in Islamic teachings. However, there are many aspects of such arrangements that are not Islamic at all. Even in Muslim countries, there are many cases where external influences of culture, society, and media, can cause certain families to introduce un-Islamic practices, notions, and expectations in an arranged marriage. Hence, it is very important to first understand the principles of arranged marriage in Islam. Three important principles are stated by Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih IVth as follows:

1. There is no coercion allowed in an arranged marriage. Neither the woman nor the man can be forced against their will to marry anyone. The decision rests with the person about to get married, whether it is a male or a female.¹
2. Parents can offer wisdom and insight and should be consulted in the marriage. The Holy Quran says:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا^ط

That is, “And We have enjoined on man to be good to his parents” (46:16). Disrespecting parents is sinful in Islam and doing that in order to attain some kind of freedom is wrong and can cause a lot of hurt. Moreover, this should be seen as advantageous by the youth. A young person should understand that he or she can sometimes be motivated by passions and does not have the same kind of experience that his or her parents do. Hence, seeking the parents’ advice would only be beneficial and supportive for a decision as important as one’s marriage.² This will be discussed further in chapter 4.

3. Dating and going into some form of courtship prior to marriage is not allowed.³ Islam avoids extremes by forbidding both dating as well as coercion from parents or other elders. Instead, the middle path is adopted where the man and the woman are allowed to meet one another prior to marriage in the presence of elders. If they are given too much freedom to spend as much time alone as they like, it can lead to promiscuity and sin.

Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih IVth goes on to note that in larger family structures—which is the norm in most Muslim families—the young boys and girls come to know one another through family relations and are able to tell their inclinations to their parents. Parents can assess the situation and see what is best for their children. They have to make their decision based on *taqwa* or righteousness and not be influenced by worldly inclinations. A suitable match may be found within the extended family or the help

of the community is enlisted in order to find a match from outside the family.

It should now be clear that arranged marriage in Islam is unique in the way it emphasizes the freedom of the man or the woman to choose their marriage partner and it is far removed from the general impression that such marriages are coercive and restrictive. Regardless, this does not mean that Muslim societies are all following these principles to the dot. In fact, Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih IVth once stated that there are some extreme tendencies in Muslims where they are so rigid that they do not even ask their daughters what their choice is.⁴ They believe that they have some kind of authority or power over their children and treat the daughter as a kind of property.⁵ Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) has stated, "Forced marriage is completely wrong and a grave violation of Islamic teaching."⁶ As such, when we discuss arranged marriage in Islam, it does not entail the coercive forms of marriage that are prevalent in some cultures.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community strives to go back to the pristine purity of Islamic teachings as found at the time of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} where arranged marriages were based on mutual consent and interest between the future bride and groom.⁷ We must strive to not follow the practices of those cultures where forced 'arranged' marriages take place and this practice is then wrongfully labeled as Islamic. It defames the purity and prestige of Islamic values, and the rights of the man and the woman are ignored and they are forced into unhappy marriages. What is required is for both

the son or daughter and the parents to make the decision together. Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih IVth points out that parents have a great amount of experience as compared to a young man or woman. As such, it is much more challenging for a crooked person or a cheat to deceive them. A young person can fall into a trap while parents are much harder to defraud. An example of this is that if a daughter invites a man she is inclined to marry to the home, her parents will consider and ask questions from an analytical approach because “they are not in love with him.”⁸ They can judge the person without emotional attachment. Those who dismiss the perspectives of parents entirely, they often suffer and face much sorrow and regret. Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IVth also noted that many young women wrote to him about their miseries after having dismissed their parents’ opinion.⁹ Nevertheless, both parents and their sons or daughters should approach the matchmaking period with the intention to discuss and carefully consider all aspects until mutual consent is attained. Only then can arranged marriages be successful. In general, no parents can impose their will on their sons or daughters.¹⁰

The factors that cause the failure of some arranged marriages are not the ones Islam endorses. They are instead due to low standards of morality.¹¹ A deceitful person can directly deceive a young man or woman, or even the parents, by not conveying a true picture of who he or she is and what his or her attitude is in life. Sometimes, even the parents are involved in this deception and this is essentially an issue of morality, not an issue with arranged marriage itself. The fact is that a deceitful person can cause the same kind of hurt in a

marriage that is not arranged. However, deception would be more effective in that kind of marriage. This is because when two people date without the involvement of parents, a deceitful person has to deceive only one person. They do not have to worry about the parents or their experience with judging others. Hence, deception is one factor that leads to the possible failure of a marriage. Other, more complex factors can also play a role.

It is indeed unfortunate that in a society where premarital relationships are seen as a norm, those who are not involved in such relationships are deemed backward, or even abnormal. Dr. Fred Nour, a neurologist at Johns Hopkins university, believes that the entertainment industry and movies specifically play a role in influencing the youth by convincing them that the infatuation they feel will last forever and has no expiration date.¹² This infatuation begins when individuals show off and speak highly of their family background and socioeconomic status among other factors. When the woman or the man ultimately fall into the trap, the suffering begins. The days of showing off are not long-lasting, and after a short period of time, they come to an end, and an individual's true colours begin to show. The courtesy, kindness, and patience which is initially shown during the infatuation period disappears into thin air, within a matter of a few months or even less than that.

In light of these factors, Islam prohibits men and women to live in close quarters before being married. Professor Ben-Ze'ev, a leading scholar in the study of emotions, states, "Many studies have found that premarital cohabitation is associated with increased risk of divorce, a lower quality of marriage, poorer marital

communication, and higher levels of domestic violence.”¹³ Consequently, many marriages of this type result in dissolution, where both spouses, and potentially children, are left broken and traumatized. When Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih IVth visited America in 1978, he made a similar observation about the large number of broken homes and this rings true even today.¹⁴ It shows that such trends have been around for the last 50 years. With a high number of broken homes, many men and women are forced to move back into the homes of their parents or make other arrangements. This is specially detrimental for their children who are heavily dependent on having two loving parents that form a stable family together. It serves as a significant impediment in their sociological development. The single mother will inevitably struggle to uphold the financial responsibility of the home whilst being solely responsible for the upbringing of children. Similarly, single fathers may feel out of place and struggle with finding a balance between the two roles on their own. Regardless of how excellent a single mother may be, or how excellent a single father may be, the two cannot fill the void of the other parent in the upbringing of the child.

It is true that arranged marriages do not begin with love-at-first-sight. But we question such a notion altogether. Often times, the love-at-first-sight kind of love is not true love at all. Instead, it may only be admiration of someone’s beauty, or, at the most, a temporary attraction. Nothing more. True love is attained over time. It takes nurturing and development and can make the husband and wife the best of friends over time. When a young woman and a young man are courting for an arranged marriage, they plant the seed of love.

Although the seed may be vulnerable in the beginning, it gradually grows as the couple gets to learn the little things about one another. Hence, true love is learned, developed, and nurtured through marriage, whereas ‘love before marriage’ is often infatuated and dies down quickly. We will discuss this further in chapter 5.

The discussion thus far does not intend to give the impression that the decision to marry someone is easy and simple. It can be difficult, indeed. Islam has provided us the essential teaching of adopting *taqwa* or righteousness in all decisions of life. A marriage that is arranged on the basis of *taqwa* is the truly arranged marriage in Islam. Any form of arrangement that is not based in *taqwa* cannot be deemed Islamic. The Holy Prophet^{sa} has stated:

تُنكَحُ الْمَرْأَةُ لِأَرْبَعٍ لِمَالِهَا وَلِحَسَبِهَا وَجَمَالِهَا وَلِدِينِهَا، فَاطْفَرِ بَدَاتِ الدِّينِ

That is, “A woman is married for four things: (1) for her wealth; (2) due to her family status; (3) for her beauty and (4) for her religion (or righteousness). Hence, attain success with one who is righteous.”¹⁵ In this statement, the Holy Prophet^{sa} has clearly pointed out the importance of faith and righteousness. Whereas physical beauty and other superficial elements fade over time, *deen* (faith) strengthens the marriage and lasts a lifetime.¹⁶ As such, a marriage rooted in righteousness from the beginning is the one that will be successful. If this quality is ignored, or if a potential match is rejected on the basis of being ‘too religious’, individuals will ultimately regret their decision and bear a heavy loss. This loss would not only impact individuals but also their children. Children observe their parents’ character, piety, and beliefs, and adopt them in their own lives. If

they are raised by parents who bring them close to Allah, it will surely benefit them in this life and the Hereafter.

We have the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} to learn the efficacy and endearment that can develop through arranged marriages. For instance, the Holy Prophet's^{sa} marriage with Hazrat Ayesah^{ra} was arranged and resulted in an incredibly beautiful bond of friendship. Hazrat Ayesah^{ra} narrates that, once, while she was on a journey along with the Holy Prophet^{sa}, "I had a race with him and I outstripped him on my feet. When I gained some weight, I had another race with him and he outstripped me." At that point, the Holy Prophet^{sa} said:

هَذِهِ بِتَأْتِكَ السَّبْقَةَ

"This is (revenge) for that (first) outstripping."¹⁷ Such was the beautiful relationship of the Holy Prophet^{sa} with his wife that all husbands should endeavour to follow his example. Similarly, at one point, the Holy Prophet^{sa} remarked to her, "I know when you are pleased with me or angry with me." She said, "How do you know that?" He said, "When you are pleased with me, you say, 'No, by the Lord of Muhammad', but when you are angry with me, you say, 'No, by the Lord of Abraham'." Then she said, "Yes (you are right), but by Allah, O Allah's Messenger^{sa}, I only leave your name by tongue (but my heart is still in love with you)."¹⁸

To help with arranged marriages, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has a Department of *Rishta Nata*, which was established by the Promised Messiah^{as} wherein the names of young men and women of marriageable age, and their certain traits, are entered in a

system with complete confidentiality for the purpose of finding suitable matches.¹⁹ It is similar to how individuals design their resumes to include their best qualifications and achievements and apply for several jobs before getting a call back. What is required is patience and trust. A sincere effort is made through neutral contacts in the community and when a match is found, the relevant information is conveyed to the parties. If both parties become interested, they can get information about one another through multiple sources. The woman and the man are also allowed to meet one another in the presence of family if they wish to see one another before the final decision to get married.

LACK OF INFORMATION

What we have established so far is that arranged marriage in Islam provides sufficient avenues for the man, woman, and their parents, to get all the information about each other that they need. There is no doubt that there is much anxiety when it comes to marriage as the desire to know *more* about one's future spouse is persistent. This is in fact a general notion prevalent in society in this day and age. There is no end to the desire to know more about a future spouse and this is due to the belief that dating can fulfill this desire. This is also popularized through the media and movies. The thought of spending one's entire life with a complete stranger is abhorrent to most. However, to suggest that arranged marriage is a dive into a deep unknown is incorrect and a complete misconception.

As we have discussed, Islam allows the meeting of potential spouses, albeit, in an environment where parents are present. Hazrat

Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) states:

One may find out more details about the family and their conduct at home. Permission has also been granted to see each other's appearance. Once in the time of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, a young man came for a proposal and asked if he could see the bride-to-be. Her father was outraged and said, "Who is he to ask to see my daughter?" and said that he would beat him. Yet, when the daughter learnt that the Holy Prophet^{sa} had given permission for a meeting, she immediately stepped forward. The man lowered his head. In response to this, the woman said she unconditionally accepted his proposal of marriage."²⁰

As such, there is no harm if the prospective bride and groom meet one another in the presence of family. What is not allowed is dating and completely secluded contact. The reasons for this are numerous, including the prevention of promiscuity, fornication, immoral relations, out-of-marriage relations with someone who does not intend to marry or commit to a relationship, protection of society through protection of the family unit, and so on.

Proponents of dating and pre-marriage meetings ignore the overwhelming evidence against the lack of success of such marriages. In fact, 40-50% of all marriages in the US are expected to end in a divorce.²¹ The fact is that the skills required for marriage and building a life together are not the same skills that are required for dating. So many people are willing to trust blind artificial intelligence systems on match-making applications which are designed to keep people hooked for the sake of profit. It is indeed

strange that the same value is not given to loving and caring parents who desire the best for their children.

Those who do not understand the Islamic marriage process wrongly assume that arranged marriages are done blindly without knowing much about one's future spouse. This is incorrect. Islam teaches that in accordance with the values of faith and righteousness, we should state things in a clear, truthful, and straight forward manner during engagement talks. This not only enables the parties to make an informed decision but also clears up many questions and paves the path for a healthy relationship. At the same time, an individual is granted full autonomy to conduct their own research about the family and character of a prospect within appropriate means. Moreover, Islam encourages that the two individuals should be *hum kufw* (compatible) for marriage, and the final decision lays in the hands of the individuals who are getting married. Compatibility can refer to any number of things such as educational background, family upbringing, etc. but as discussed earlier, it should never overtake the consideration of *taqwa* and righteousness.

If one desires long-term happiness, then the criteria for this must not be failed experiments in the form of dating, which is a proven method for lack of success in married life. Instead the focus should be on personal conduct and fulfilling one's duties as the husband or wife, as expounded by the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet^{sa}.

GUARDING AGAINST IMMORALITY

It should now be abundantly clear that the ultimate goal of these teachings in Islam is purity and chasteness. Seeking a partner without these protections in place can lead a person to a life of sin. Islam desires to create a harmonious, peaceful and moral society. A society where individuals can practice their faith and live a pious life without the stresses of such distractions and temptations which bring about and spread immorality and cause disturbance and lead to disorder. The teachings of Islam inspire us to lead such a life which can be termed 'heaven on earth'. And in order to create a life on this pattern, individuals and societies at large must avoid all that is immoral, corrupt and evil. This would be the ideal society. But if individuals get involved in depraved and immoral acts, the idea of a prosperous and peaceful society is jeopardized which in turn leads to corruption and disorder.

Considering the same danger, the Holy Prophet^{sa} gave a warning to his companions when he said:

لَمْ تَطْهَرِ الْفَاحِشَةَ فِي قَوْمٍ قَطُّ حَتَّى يُعْلِنُوا بِهَا إِلَّا فَشَا فِيهِمُ الطَّاعُونَ وَالْأَوْجَاعُ
الَّتِي لَمْ تَكُنْ مَصَّتْ فِي أَسْلَافِهِمُ الَّذِينَ مَضَوْا

That is, "Immorality never appears among a people to such an extent that they commit it openly, but plagues and diseases that were never known among their predecessors will spread among them."²²

The Arabic word translated as 'immorality' in this *hadith* is *fahishah* which refers to various forms of indecencies including adultery and fornication. As such, these sins can lead to destruction of such a kind that was unknown to the people before.

If one is not careful, these acts of immorality can become rampant in society. This is why the Holy Quran states:

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزَّانِيَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٧﴾

That is, “And come not near unto adultery; surely, it is a foul thing and an evil way” (17:33). Unlike the Biblical commandment, “though shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14), the Holy Quran says, “come not near unto adultery.” This is a subtle but a very big difference. The Quran is essentially advising that one should avoid all such occasions and situations that may lead one to this foul act. Any place like a pub or a gathering of people of both genders where there is no control can be a place of temptation. The Quran teaches us that it is better to stay away from such places as they have the danger—or the potential—to cause one to be tempted.

So grievous is the immoral act of fornication that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said:

لَا يَزْنِي الزَّانِي حِينَ يَزْنِي وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ وَلَا يَسْرِقُ حِينَ يَسْرِقُ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ وَلَا يَشْرَبُ الْخَمْرَ حِينَ يَشْرَبُهَا وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ وَالتَّوْبَةُ مَعْرُوضَةٌ بَعْدَ

Meaning, “A fornicator who fornicates is not a believer as long as he commits fornication, and no one who steals is a believer as long as he commits theft, and no one who drinks wine is a believer as long as he drinks it, and repentance may be accepted after that.”²³ In other words, a person ceases to be a believer for the duration in which he commits these sins. Hence, the teachings and principles in Islam for arranged marriage are meant to keep young people away from such abhorrent evils.

Emphasizing the same, the second condition of *bai'at* (allegiance) as laid out by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, the Promised Messiah and Imam Mahdi, reads, “He/She shall keep away from falsehood, fornication, adultery, trespasses of the eye, debauchery, mischief and rebellion; and will not permit himself/herself to be carried away by passions, however strong they may be.” The Promised Messiah^{as} writes:

Another direction is: Approach not adultery. This means that one should avoid all occasions that might incite one’s mind in that direction, and should eschew all the paths that might lead to this vice. He who indulges in this vice carries his viciousness to the extreme. The way of adultery is an evil way as it obstructs one’s progress towards the goal and is extremely harmful to the achievement of the purpose of life. Those who find no means of marriage should keep themselves chaste through the adoption of other means; for instance, through fasting or dieting or exercise.²⁴

One such occasion which might incite a person is pointed out by the Holy Prophet^{sa} when he said:

لَا يَخْلُونَ رَجُلٌ بِامْرَأَةٍ إِلَّا كَانَ ثَالِثَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ

Meaning, “Whenever a man is alone with a woman, the devil makes a third.”²⁵ As such, Islamic teachings have the goal to close the door to all such avenues that may lead to fornication and adultery. Chasteness will keep not only our hearts and homes pure but also society at large. As Muslims, we must create the ability within ourselves to recognize which elements, people and places are likely to breed mischief. We must create changes within ourselves which

will allow us to walk away from and even condemn such evils. It is only then that we can be on our way to building a beautiful, harmonious, Islamic society that brings peace and comfort to all its members.

Arranged marriage, therefore, is Islam's way of bringing together two people and their families into a strong bond that lasts their entire lifetimes. A bond that is based in *taqwa* and righteousness, with safeguards against immortality. Arranged marriage is also a means to bring peace and comfort to the families and grant them ever-lasting happiness through the creation of a heaven on earth. When two families come together and find peace, they are then able to spread that peace to the society.

IV

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In the previous chapter, we discussed the principles and expectations of arranged marriage in Islam. In order to benefit from this ideal form of marriage, there are three important roles that need to be understood fully: The role of the parents, children, and prayers. If each of these roles is properly understood in light of Islamic teachings and followed carefully, it can lead to happy, successful marriages.

RESPECTING PARENTS

There is no doubt that marriage is one of the most important decisions a man or a woman makes in his or her life. Arranged marriage involves the parents to an extent and it is absolutely crucial that their involvement is solely rooted in good intentions. The Holy Prophet^{sa} has said:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ

That is, "The reward of deeds depends upon the intentions."¹ In some cases, parents do not consider the rights and opinions of their children to be important when choosing a spouse for them in

arranged marriages. This may be more prevalent in the culture of the Indian subcontinent, especially when it comes to the marriage of daughters. The reason most often put forward is that parents ought to know better and children should simply accept the decision.

On the other hand, sometimes the children do not respect the choice or opinion of their parents. They seem to forget or perhaps ignore the fact that it was their parents who brought them up and looked after all of their needs, and that they would have their best interest in mind when suggesting a match for them. As such, the issues that we face with regard to marriage are not one-sided. We cannot put the entire blame on parents or their children.

When considering the role of parents, two questions are important to address:

1. What is the extent of the authority of parents?
2. What is the extent to which children have a say in their own marriage?

In Islam, the respect and obedience of parents has been given a lot of importance and has been much emphasized. The Holy Quran states:

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۗ إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ
 الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَيْهِمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا آفٌ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا
 قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا ﴿٣١﴾

That is, “Thy Lord has commanded, “Worship none but Him, and *show* kindness to parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age with thee, never say unto them any word expressive of disgust nor reproach them, but address them with excellent speech” (17:24). Hence, our parents deserve our love, affection, and

kindness. This becomes more important when our parents reach old age and when the behavior of one or both parents becomes somewhat difficult. In such a situation, Islam teaches us to not express any dislike or any display of displeasure towards our parents. Rather, they should be treated with the utmost respect.

In Islam, the obedience of parents is required in all matters and is seen as a blessing and a means to earn the pleasure of Allah. The Holy Prophet^{sa} is reported to have said to one of his companions:

فَالزَّهْمَا فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ تَحْتَ رِجْلَيْهَا

Meaning, “Stay with her (i.e. your mother), for Paradise lies beneath her feet.”² The only exception in obedience to parents is if they call their child to commit *shirk* or associate partners with Allah. The Promised Messiah^{as} states:

The Arabic word for ‘Lord,’ which is *rabb*, indicates that although it is God in reality Who cares, nurtures and brings a thing to completion, in the partial sense, by way of reflection, there are two other beings as well who are manifestations of God’s providence (*rububiyyat*)—one physically and the other spiritually. In the physical sense there are parents, and in the spiritual sense, a spiritual mentor and guide. In another instance, Allah the Exalted states in greater detail the following:

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ط

[Translation:] “Thy Lord has commanded, ‘Worship none but Him, and show kindness to parents’.” Meaning, God desires that you worship no one else and treat your parents with kindness. Truly, what a remarkable sort of providence it is that when a

human being is a child and has no power whatsoever, a mother renders invaluable service, and during this time, just observe how a father supports the efforts of the mother. It is merely out of His grace that God Almighty has created two agents to support His weak creation and has made them to reflect the light of His own love.³

Furthermore, Allah says in the Holy Quran:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ ^ع حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَى وَهْنٍ وَفِصْلُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ
 أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ ^ط إِلَى الْمَصِيرِ ﴿١٥﴾

That is, “And We have enjoined on man concerning his parents—his mother bears him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning takes two years—‘Give thanks to Me and to thy parents. Unto Me is the *final* return’” (31:15). Here, Allah the Almighty has commanded us to be thankful to Him and to our parents. We would never be able to repay our parents for the countless sacrifices they have made for us. But we can be thankful to them and one way of being thankful is to be kind, respectful and obedient to them at all times.

When we disagree with our parents on any matter, we should put aside our pride and ego and offer them our unreserved obedience. That is what the Holy Prophet^{sa} emphasized when he said:

أَفْضَلُ الْأَعْمَالِ - أَوْ الْعَمَلِ - الصَّلَاةُ لَوْ قَتَبَهَا وَبِرُّ الْوَالِدَيْنِ

“The best of deeds—or deed—is the (observance of) prayer at its proper time and kindness to parents.”⁴ Similarly, listing the major sins, he says:

الشِّرْكَ بِاللَّهِ وَعُتُوقُ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَقَتْلُ النَّفْسِ وَقَوْلُ الزُّورِ

“Associating anyone with Allah, disobedience to parents, killing a person and false utterance.”⁵

In light of these teachings of Islam, if children were to reject the desires of their parents in a rude and disrespectful manner, having shown no regard for the feelings and sentiments of their parents, they would be acting against the above mentioned verses of the Holy Quran and sayings of the Holy Prophet^{sa}. The Promised Messiah^{as} states:

I truthfully proclaim that a person who is not dutiful to their mother and father will never receive goodness and blessing. So mould yourselves with good intentions to act upon the instructions of God and His Messenger with complete obedience and loyalty; for all good lies in this, otherwise, one is free to act as they please. My duty is only to advise you.⁶

As a result, the parents’ role is to provide guidance to their children in the matter of marriage. They have a God-given responsibility to do what is best for their children. They must have the purest of intentions and root their decisions and advice in *taqwa*. This role is so important that Allah has commanded us to be obedient to them and to not rebel against them.

WHAT TO AVOID BEFORE MARRIAGE

Having understood the importance of being kind, respectful and obedient to parents, the next step is to understand the extent of the authority of parents in the matter of the marriage of their children. The Holy Quran has awarded rights to each and every person. Amongst these rights, in principle, everyone has the right to get

married according to the satisfaction of their heart. This is one of the most important decisions we make in our lives. As such, being Muslims, we must always turn to Allah and His Messenger^{sa} for all important decisions in our lives. By doing so, not only will we be guided into making the right decision but it may become a source of blessings for us and everyone involved.

The Holy Prophet^{sa} has guided us to focus on the *deen* or religious values of the potential spouse. He says:

تُنكَحُ الْمَرْأَةُ لِأَرْبَعٍ لِّمَالِهَا وَلِحَسَبِهَا وَجَمَالِهَا وَإِدِينِهَا، فَاظْفَرِ بِذَاتِ الدِّينِ

That is, “A woman is married for four things: (1) for her wealth; (2) due to her family status; (3) for her beauty and (4) for her religion (or righteousness). Hence, attain success with one who is righteous.”⁷ This saying serves as a guiding light for all Muslims. Both the man and the woman, and their parents, ought to keep this advice in view and follow it when considering marriage. Unfortunately, on some occasions, children wish to follow this advice of the Holy Prophet^{sa} but parents have other ideas and give preference to the first three things mentioned in the *hadith*. While doing so, the justification most often put forth is that ‘*parents know better*’ and their children should simply follow their instructions.

To such parents, we ask: Do you believe that you do not need the advice of the Holy Prophet^{sa} and know better? (God forbid!) Do you believe that your decision would be blessed while you knowingly ignore the advice of the Holy Prophet^{sa}? This may seem harsh but these are the questions that all such parents need to ask themselves when helping their child find a spouse.

The Holy Prophet^{sa} has stated:

" إِذَا جَاءَكُمْ مَنْ تَرْضَوْنَ دِينَهُ وَخُلُقَهُ فَأَنْكِحُوهُ إِلَّا تَفْعَلُوا تَكُنْ فِتْنَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَفَسَادٌ " . قَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَإِنْ كَانَ فِيهِ قَالَ " إِذَا جَاءَكُمْ مَنْ تَرْضَوْنَ دِينَهُ
وَخُلُقَهُ فَأَنْكِحُوهُ " . ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ

That is, "When someone with whose religion and character you are satisfied (asks to marry your daughter), arrange her marriage with him. If you do not do so, there will be trial and discord (for you) in the world." The companions asked, "O Prophet^{sa} of Allah, what if there was something about him?" He said, "When someone with whose religion and character you are satisfied (asks to marry your daughter), arrange her marriage with him." He repeated this three times.⁸ This *hadith* further clarifies this point as we have been advised to give precedence to religion and good character. If we do not keep this in view, the Holy Prophet^{sa} has also warned us of the consequences.

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) was once asked the following:

In matters relating to marriage, it has been emphasized that one should give preference to the aspect of religion in a potential spouse. However, these days, people give preference to beauty and other qualities. As a result of this, many righteous and religious young women in the Jama'at (Community) are not getting married. We would like to request your guidance in such circumstances.⁹

In response, Huzoor Anwar (may Allah be his Helper) said:

I always endeavour to explain this to the young men that the Holy Prophet^{sa} has said that when one marries someone, they look at certain qualities, be it the potential spouse's family status, her beauty or her wealth. However, a true believer should always look towards the religion of the woman... Mothers should also endeavour to morally train their children, and in particular, the boys. They should explain to them that they should marry a woman who is righteous and religious. If mothers will fulfill their responsibility in this regard, then their sons will surely marry women who are religious as well... This is a joint effort which men and women ought to carry out together. Mothers and fathers should both fulfill their respective responsibilities in this regard. I try to explain these matters and draw people's attention towards this and pray that may Allah enable everyone to act upon this.¹⁰

Furthermore, Huzoor Anwar (may Allah be his Helper) states, "Some people are still under the influence of cultural practices of Pakistan and India and are thus entangled in the issues of family clans, tribes and race. The fact is that Allah the Almighty has stated that when a proposal for marriage comes, one must pray, perform the *istikhara* prayer and give priority to faith."¹¹

When we look at the problems that certain marriages encounter, we should understand that they are suffering the consequences of ignoring the Islamic teachings and giving preference to worldly or cultural notions. Hazrat Hakeem Maulwi Nooruddin, Khalifatul Masih I^{ra} once asked a rich man to give his daughter's hand in marriage to a young man who was not that affluent. The rich man refused and asked how his daughter would survive in such a state?

To this, the response of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I^{ra} is something that all parents should think about. He said, "If your daughter is blessed with good fortune she will fill an empty house, but if she is bereft of good fortune she will make a full house empty."¹²

The lesson in the answer of Hazrat Hakeem Maulwi Nooruddin, Khalifatul Masih I^{ra} is that we must put our complete trust in Allah, the Provider. Who can say that a person who is well-off today will remain in the same position tomorrow? And who can say that a person who is considered poor today may become wealthy in the future? All of this is in the hands of Allah the Almighty, and so we should turn to Him and rely on His help and benevolence and put our trust in Him instead of putting all of our trust in a mere mortal.

The Promised Messiah^{as} states:

You still do not know the extent of God's powers. Had you known, not a single day would you have grieved over the world. Does he who owns a treasure weep, cry and become sorrowful unto death over the loss of a single coin? Had you been aware of this treasure and knew that at every time of need God is able to fulfil your requirements, why would you look to the world so restlessly? God is a **precious treasure**; appreciate Him accordingly, for He is your Helper at every step. You are nothing without Him, nor do your resources and your schemes amount to anything. Do not follow other people for they have become wholly reliant on material means. Just as a snake devours dirt, they consume the filth of inferior worldly means. They gorge themselves on carrion in the manner of vultures and dogs. They have become estranged from God. They have worshipped men,

devoured the flesh of swine and consumed wine as though it were water. They have become lifeless, for they place all their reliance on material resources and do not seek the help of God. The heavenly soul has escaped their bodies as a pigeon flies from its nest. They are afflicted with the leprosy of material worship, which has consumed their internal organs. Thus, beware of this leprosy. I do not forbid you to employ material means within moderation; only that you do not become slaves to them like other nations and that you do not forget the God who is the very Provider of these means. Had you possessed insight, you would have seen that God is everything and all else is nothing.¹³

All Ahmadi Muslim parents and all young men and women considering marriage must think about this and always keep it in view when making any decision. We must examine ourselves when undertaking any step and see if we rely on a certain person or material means instead of relying entirely on Allah and putting our trust completely in Him. Our approach will have a significant impact on our future.

Another very common and unfortunate aspect of making decisions regarding marriages of children is stubbornness on the part of the parents. Sometimes parents become so self-involved and stubborn that they completely ignore the rights of their children. In doing so, parents most often say that they have the best interest of their child in mind but in reality their decisions are overshadowed by false pride, ego and at times, personal disputes. As such, they may not be making the right decision for their child but giving preference to their own desires or trying to maintain a certain

impression among other people. In doing so, they are completely ignoring the eventual consequences it may have for their child in the future as well as entirely disregarding the teachings of Islam in this matter.

The Holy Quran states:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا
 زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ
 بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا ﴿٤٢﴾

Meaning, “O ye people! fear your Lord, Who created you from a single soul and created therefrom its mate, and from them twain spread many men and women; and fear Allah, in Whose name you appeal to one another, and *fear Him particularly respecting ties of relationship*. Verily, Allah watches over you” (4:2). When we closely examine the various issues faced by parents who are looking for a potential spouse for their daughter or son, we come to realize that the issue of double standards is more common than we would like to believe. There must be no double standards in Islam. We can also observe that double standards do not result in good outcome. In his various speeches in parliaments in different parts of the world, Huzoor Anwar (may Allah be his Helper) has mentioned that in order to have true peace and to live with one another in harmony, we need to let go of double standards.¹⁴ Along these lines, how can we expect peace at the societal or national level when we are not willing to let go of such practices at a local or domestic level and in our dealings with one another? Let us take for example, a hypothetical scenario of parents who are looking for a potential wife

for their son. Naturally, they would desire that their future daughter-in-law should have certain qualities, etiquettes and abilities. It is possible that they are expecting this set of skills from their would-be daughter-in-law all the while their own daughter of similar age may not have any such capabilities or for that matter, none at all.

There are two problems with the above mentioned scenario. One, such parents would be demanding that their future daughter in-law must possess certain qualities and expect that her parents must have brought her up in the best manner according to the teachings of Islam while not imparting the same knowledge and wisdom in the upbringing of their own daughter. Second, when the tables are turned and the time of the marriage of their own daughter arrives, such parents may become annoyed and upset when such demands are made of their own daughter at the time of her marriage. All these issues can arise when some people overlook and blatantly disregard the essential message of the Quran given at the occasion of every marriage, that is, *taqwa* or having the fear of displeasing Allah.

Sometimes parents become so stubborn and deny their children a perfectly good match for personal reasons. Addressing this issue, Huzoor states, "There are also parents who owing to egotistical tendencies do not agree on good Ahmadi marriage proposals although the young man and woman are happy." Further clarifying this point, Huzoor says, "Parents should not be adamant when young Ahmadi men and women wish to get married by making huge issues of difference of caste and letting their egos get the better of them."¹⁵ Similarly, Huzoor says, "Certain families from the man's side display extreme arrogance when visiting the woman's house

and make unpleasant remarks. They also linger over the proposal and if, in the meanwhile, they find a better proposal, they opt for that. This is a completely wrong practice.”¹⁶

While in some cases the parents force their child to get married, there are other cases where they apply pressure indirectly and in subtle ways. Both actions are equally wrong. As discussed earlier, the consent of the child is of utmost importance and should never be overlooked by parents. Such forced marriages often result in failure and years of pain and trauma. The consent given by the man and the woman should be of their own free will and without any sort of pressure from their parents or anyone else for that matter. In some cases, culture plays a big role and it is important for all parties to know the difference between religious teachings and cultural habits or customs. Much heartache can be avoided if we were to make this distinction when making decisions and choosing our faith over “cultural norms” or practices.

Another behavior or practice to be avoided is unnecessary delay after a marriage proposal has been accepted. For instance, a proposal is accepted and an engagement takes place but it is followed by an extended delay prior to the *nikah* or marriage. In such scenarios, the couple-to-be is allowed to communicate with one another in one form or the other with the objective to get to know one another. This practice has the potential to lead to much misunderstanding and the couple-to-be, and even their families, get off on the wrong foot and may end up terminating the marriage before the *nikah* even takes place. Hence, excessive delays in the marriage once the marriage proposal has been accepted should be avoided.

WHAT TO AVOID AFTER MARRIAGE

We have discussed the things to avoid prior to marriage. We have also pointed out that parents should act in the best interests of their children when finding a partner for them. However, there are some parents who continue certain bad practices even after their child has been married. The question to address is: Do parents have the right to interfere in the lives of their children who are married? If so, to what extent?

The example of Hazrat Ibrahim^{as} is worthy of note. He used to visit his son, Hazrat Isma'il^{as}, from time to time. Hazrat Isma'il^{as} was married and lived separately. On one occasion, when Hazrat Ibrahim^{as} came to visit his son, he was not home and instead Hazrat Ibrahim^{as} was greeted by his daughter-in-law. When he asked her about their life, she started complaining to him. From this encounter with his daughter-in-law and her behavior at the time, Hazrat Ibrahim^{as} did not find her to be ethical or principled. Upon leaving, Hazrat Ibrahim^{as} told his daughter-in-law that when his son returns, she should tell him to change the threshold of the door of his house. Upon his return, when he heard the advice of his father, he understood its meaning, divorced his wife and married another pious lady.¹⁷

We can learn from this story that parents can continue to advise their children even after marriage. At the same time, in all such matters, the advice should be rooted in *taqwa* and faith should be given precedence over worldly affairs. In this specific case, as explained by Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih IV^{rh}, it

should be well understood that first of all, Hazrat Ibrahim^{as} gave an advice only and not an order as it may be assumed by some people. The second point of note in relation to this specific incident is the status held by both Hazrat Ibrahim^{as} and his son, Hazrat Isma'il^{as}, as prophets of God. As such, their case is not similar to the case of ordinary people. Hazrat Isma'il^{as} viewed that advice as an advice coming from a prophet of God and, as such, considered it an order. As a result, we cannot deduce from this incident that every father has the right to give an order to their child to divorce their spouse. If anyone was to do that in view of this incident, they would be wrong. Again, a father can only advise as long as his advice is based on righteousness and for religious purposes as in the case of Hazrat Isma'il^{as}. Anyhow, it cannot be said or considered that the father has the right or permission to give an order to divorce.¹⁸

If the parents offer their advice with good intentions, assessing the situation and keeping the best interests of their child in mind, it can certainly be helpful. If the advice has the impact of changing the situation for the better and improving the relationship of their child with his or her spouse, it can be continued. However, if the advice has the opposite effect and the relationship takes a turn for the worse, then the parents should consider taking a step back and giving space to the couple to resolve their issues by themselves.

No advice should be given under the influence of selfish desires pertaining to worldly matters. Even when advice is given, it should be limited to advice *only* and not become a form of order or imposition of a decision. In Islam, the husband is primarily responsible for the welfare of his wife and children. Parents are not

responsible for the day-to-day needs of their children who are married and have families of their own. They have the right to give gifts and help whenever needed but they should not begin to interfere unnecessarily. Similarly, it is the primary responsibility of the parents—not the grandparents—to look after their children with regard to their spiritual and physical needs. If grandparents wish to stay involved, it should be with mutual understanding.

On the one hand, in light of Islamic teachings, children should listen to their parents and their advice and counsel with patience, love, and respect. On the other hand, parents should give ample space to their children in marital affairs and to resolve issues with their spouses and children and live their lives independently. Superfluous interference only leads to much hurt and trouble and spreads toxicity in relationships.

Sometimes, this interference may be caused by close relatives other than parents. At times, siblings, cousins, distant relatives and even so-called friends, sow discord in an otherwise happily married couple. Speaking on this subject, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) notes, “If someone says something against your spouse, then you should close your ears towards it and say, ‘I will not listen to this’.”¹⁹ It is possible that a relative or a person we consider very close to us from amongst the relations indicated above may say something negative about our spouse in their absence. While doing so, most often, they will request secrecy and that the information is not shared with our significant other or anyone else. This is obviously a dangerous

scenario and a person who wishes to stay in a happy relationship should be very careful in such circumstances.

First of all, couples should never entertain such people to begin with and make it clearly known that they would not listen to any gossip or negative remarks about their spouse. As a result, people will not dare say anything negative about their spouse. It is only when we entertain such people, and they know that we will be influenced by whatever they tell us, people tend to make such negative remarks. Secondly, as soon as someone tells us something negative about our spouse followed by, “you didn’t hear it from me,” we should completely ignore and disregard whatever they have said. If whatever they have said was true, they would have the courage to stand up and take responsibility for their comments. In order to determine if there is any truth to whatever a certain person has said about our spouse, we should ask them to come along, saying, “Let us discuss it together to get to the bottom of the matter at hand.” Most often, such people use the guise of a “dear friend” who is ever concerned for our well-being but when asked to be accountable for their remarks, they shy away and say, “We would rather not get involved.”

Most parents are sincere and would never knowingly behave in the manner mentioned above or purposely cause any distress to their child and see their marriage fail. However, if they interfere constantly and keep pointing out various faults in the spouse, it has the potential of causing great harm, even unintentionally. Parents ought to be very mindful of this. Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) states:

At times, the cause of discord in marriage is because the husband does not have his own house and is living with his parents. Sometimes this is because the husband may be experiencing financial difficulties or is still studying and therefore it is not possible for him to buy his own house. In such an instance, the wife should support him and live with her in-laws until he acquires the means to purchase his own house. In certain cases, the woman and her parents end the marriage and so such practices are completely wrong. If the woman cannot live with the in-laws then she should have voiced her reservation from the outset. However, there are certain men who are living at home with their parents because of their irresponsible actions and simply cite the excuse that they want to support their elderly parents.²⁰

A lot of issues arise within marriages due to the unnecessary involvement of parents in the lives of their children. Parents should refrain from interfering in the lives of their children who are married. If the children are old enough to get married, then they are certainly old enough to take care of themselves and resolve difficulties. Parents are there to play a supportive role of counselling their children and giving them good advice whenever they are requested to do so by their children. But to interfere in their daily lives, in everyday matters and in matters of little significance only causes strain in relationships and creates friction and anxiety. Parents should realize that their children who are married are now independent and have to lead their independent lives and so the role of parents should be limited to that of mentors.

PRAYERS

The teachings of Islam have placed a lot of emphasis on seeking God's help in not only making important decisions in our lives but on a regular basis. We believe that we cannot achieve anything without the help of Allah by our side at each step of the way. We have been taught many prayers. There are prayers of the prophets recorded in the Holy Quran. There are prayers of the Holy Prophet^{sa} recorded in *ahadith*. And there are prayers of the Promised Messiah^{as}. We should all use these prayers in our lives to have a better chance of our own prayers being accepted by Allah as these prayers were once accepted. We have also been taught various methods we should utilize while praying. All these things point to the important role prayers should have in our lives. Our lives—the outcome of the various decisions we make—depend on it.

When it comes to making one of the most important decisions of our lives, how much of our time, attention and focus should be devoted to prayer? This is a question we must all ask ourselves at the time of marriage. Whether we are the ones getting married or it is the beginning of the whole process of getting our children married, we must depend on the help of God in making the right choices and decisions.

The *istikhara* prayer is particularly associated with seeking guidance from God. The word *istikhara* in the Arabic language means *to seek goodness from God* or to pray to God when having to make an important decision in our lives. A decision, if not made correctly, may have dire consequences. Marriage is one of the most

important decisions in our lives and it becomes all the more important to offer the *istikhara* prayer on this occasion.

But the true concept of this specific prayer is also somewhat misunderstood when it comes to making decisions involving one's own marriage or the marriage of one's children. When it comes to decisions regarding marriage, some people tend to ignore one very important aspect of doing *istikhara*, which is simply asking God to direct their hearts towards the best decision and to place goodness in it for them. Their entire focus, instead, is placed on seeing a clear sign (such as a dream) which undoubtedly indicates the right decision. To all such people who are eager to see a clear sign and claim to have made decisions based on such signs, we ask: Have your decisions always been right? Have you never encountered any problems after the supposed decision based on a sign? For example, there are people who offered the *istikhara* prayer, then claimed to have received a clear sign, got married and then ran into various problems within their marriages. This goes to show that people have misunderstood the true concept of *istikhara* prayer and focus only on seeing some form of dream and presume it to be a 'sign' from God. Some even like to narrate their dreams proudly. This is wrong. The answer to one's *istikhara* prayer should not be sought after in worldly notions, but instead it should be sought in one's heart.

The procedure for *istikhara* prayer is that before going to bed at night, a two *rak'ah* Prayer is offered. In the first *rak'ah*, *Surah Al-Fatihah* and *Surah Al-Kafirun* are recited, and in the second *rak'ah*, *Surah Al-Fatihah* is followed by *Surah Al-Ikhlās*.²¹ During the *qa'dah*

(sitting) position, after reciting *tashahhud* and *darud* and some other prayers, the following should be recited:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْتَخِيرُكَ بِعِلْمِكَ وَأَسْتَقْدِرُكَ بِقُدْرَتِكَ وَأَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ فَضْلِكَ الْعَظِيمِ فَإِنَّكَ تَقْدِرُ وَلَا أَقْدِرُ وَتَعْلَمُ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّ هَذَا الْأَمْرَ خَيْرٌ لِي فِي دِينِي وَمَعَاشِي وَعَاقِبَةِ أَمْرِي فَاقْدُرْهُ لِي وَيَسِّرْهُ لِي ثُمَّ بَارِكْ لِي فِيهِ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّ هَذَا الْأَمْرَ شَرٌّ لِي فِي دِينِي وَمَعَاشِي وَعَاقِبَةِ أَمْرِي فَاصْرِفْهُ عَنِّي وَاصْرِفْنِي عَنْهُ وَاقْدِرْ لِي الْخَيْرَ حَيْثُ كَانَ ثُمَّ أَرْضِنِي

“O Allah, I seek good from Thee out of Thy knowledge and seek power from Thee out of Thy power and I beg of Thee out of Thy boundless Grace, for Thou hast power and I have no power, and Thou hast knowledge and I have no knowledge, and Thy Knowledge encompasses the unseen. O Allah! If it be within Thy Knowledge that this task is for my good, both materially and spiritually, and in respect of my ultimate end, then make it possible for me and bless me therein, but if it be within Thy Knowledge that it is harmful for me in my spiritual and material life and in respect of my ultimate end, then turn me away therefrom, and enable me to attain good wherever it may be and cause me to be blessed therewith.”²²

When we closely examine the actual words of the prayer, at no point does it make any mention of a clear sign to be shown in making the right decision. The person supplicating is only asking for their heart to be *inclined* towards the decision, and for blessing, if it is good for them in the Knowledge of God. Conversely, they are asking God to turn them away from the decision if it is bad for them in the

Knowledge of God. In other words, if it is good for them, they ask for things to be made easy for them to proceed and move ahead without any hurdles.

Some people depend so heavily on dreams once having done *istikhara* that it is deemed necessary that the person doing *istikhara* must have a clear dream to determine next steps. A student once asked Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper), after having done *istikhara*, how can we determine that a dream is from Satan or from Allah? To this, Huzoor replied:

If you are only undertaking *istikhara* so you may have a dream, then it is wrong. The meaning of *istikhara* is to ask Allah for goodness and betterment. Allah has the knowledge of the unseen. So one asks Allah that if this proposal of marriage is good for me, place goodness in it and grant my heart tranquility. The methods of tranquility vary; some people have good dreams which grants their hearts happiness and peace. The person considers such a dream to be an answer to their supplication of *istikhara* and I should proceed. Sometimes the person does not see any dream but still attains that peace of mind and happiness and considers a proposal to be good. So one should proceed in such cases. At times, it so happens that a person sees a dream and apparently the dream appears to be good but then (the) person becomes hesitant in deciding whether the dream is good or bad and does not attain that peace of mind even though the dream appears to be good. Some dreams appear to be good but their interpretation may be different. Therefore, one should ask for goodness from Allah and

if one does not attain that peace of mind then one should not proceed.²³

Again, clarifying the true concept of *istikhara*, Huzoor has stated:

The fact of the matter is that Allah is the Knower of the unseen and only He possess the knowledge of the unseen. He knows as to which marriage proposal is best for a particular person and that is why one should always pray before making a decision. That is why one should also do *istikhara*. One should seek goodness from Allah the Almighty and pray that 'if there is goodness and my betterment in this marriage proposal, then make the path to it easy for me. If, however, there is no goodness in this marriage proposal, then cause a hindrance in the finalization of this proposal.'²⁴

While doing *istikhara* one should not be biased and inclined towards one side. Explaining this point, Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih II^{ra} states:

Do not make any decision before praying. Rather, separate yourself from all of your opinions and judgements at the time of prayer and *istikhara*, because if you pray and perform *istikhara* after having made up your mind, it would not be blessed. Only such a prayer and *istikhara* can be beneficial which does not have any implication of your opinions and decisions.²⁵

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) has mentioned another aspect with relation to performing *istikhara* when he said, "Before offering the *istikhara* prayer, the couple should see one another. The Holy Prophet^{sa} once instructed one of his companions to look at his bride-to-be before agreeing to

the marriage.”²⁶ This is the true concept of *istikhara* and a refutation of those people who tend to associate almost magic-like attributes to the concept of *istikhara*.

By looking at the relationship of Allah with those who are close to Him, it has become a norm in certain cultures for people to associate *istikhara* with having specific dreams and receiving clear signs or signals with regard to whatever the person is praying for. This is not right. It depends on one’s relationship with God. If a person already has such a relationship with God that from time to time God informs them of various matters through dreams, revelations or signs, then such people can also expect to have a dream or a sign as a result of their *istikhara* prayer. But generally speaking, people who do not have this type of relationship with God also expect that each time they undertake *istikhara*, they must also see a dream or have concrete results. As far as such people are concerned, this would not be the right expectation.

Another way of looking at this is that some people do not usually pay much attention towards fulfilling the most fundamental commandment of the worship of Allah, that is, offering the five daily prayers with diligence, or following the other commandments of Allah with care. However, these are the same people who expect that they will have clear dreams and signs for their *istikhara* which they have done for a day or two or at the most for a few days. It is better for such people not to wait for or expect any specific dreams or signs. Rather, such people should focus on the help of Allah in removing any hurdles and bestowing a peace of mind upon them as

a result of their *istikhara* prayer. Or, if something is not right for them, Allah may create dislike or hesitancy for it in their hearts.

Another concept associated with *istikhara* is that perhaps only a select few can perform this special prayer. As such, some people turn to those whom they consider close to God and apparently righteous and ask *them* to perform *istikhara* on their behalf. This concept is also incorrect. It is reported in *ahadith* that the Holy Prophet^{sa} would teach this prayer and its method to his companions and would advise them to undertake *istikhara* by themselves when faced with making any important decision.²⁷ As far as righteous people are concerned—those who have a living relationship with God and whose prayers are often accepted—their help can be sought and they can be asked for their prayers. However, this should be an additional measure to one's own efforts of prayers and seeking blessings of God. Once a companion asked the Holy Prophet^{sa} for prayers. The Holy Prophet^{sa} accepted his request and agreed to pray for him saying that he should also help him with his own prayers.²⁸

In some societies, the practice of asking others to perform *istikhara* has even become a business. People approach those individuals whom they consider to be specialists and request them to perform *istikhara* on their behalf for monetary benefits. The fact of the matter is that the pain and earnestness with which one can pray for themselves cannot be expected from other people, especially those who are complete strangers and are even asking for money for the performance of *istikhara* prayer. We should always give preference to the true teachings of Islam rather than cultural practices which go

against our faith. Only then can we avoid such practices that have no foundation within our teachings and traditions.

In this chapter, we have discussed various aspects of the roles of parents and children. It is only when parents and children work together can they expect good results of their efforts. While children should respect and even desire the opinions of their parents which are rooted in experience, parents should give necessary space to their children to act independently. Ultimately, all decisions should be based in *taqwa* and made while giving priority to faith.

V

LOVE EXPLAINED

The idea of falling in love is a dream that we have all been told to pursue—directly or indirectly. The concept of this highly idealized love, that tosses aside all rational thought and encompasses every aspect of our lives in an all-consuming manner is what we are familiar with because it has been shown to us in mainstream media. But what is Islam’s take on love? Hazrat Musleh Mau’ud^{ra} states, “What is love? Some people think it is a thought; others think it is an emotion. But I believe that love is something else; something that is instilled in a person as soon as they are born. So is love naturally found in humans? No, rather love is the purpose for which a person has been created.”¹

HOW IS LOVE SPARKED?

All of the media that surrounds us romanticizes one grand, magical moment where, upon meeting ‘the one’, there is instantaneous magnetic chemistry that ignites the sparks of love. It is undeniable that with any new relationship, the initial stages, often coined the ‘honeymoon phase’ can feel like one is living a real-life fairytale. This is because during this period of discovery, one naturally

idealizes their partner and begins to believe that he or she can do no wrong. This phase can be based on one's infatuation with their looks, personality, or the way they feel when they spend time with them. In an age where swiping right or left on your phone is the rising means of meeting someone, it is only natural that one's physical appearance is the initial point of judgement and source of infatuation. With this in mind, Hazrat Musleh Mau'ud^{ra} writes, "We have to see how love is generated? In my opinion, love is created because of *husn* (beauty)—and maybe the whole world will agree with this—whether that beauty is physical beauty, or the beauty of one's character, or the beauty of one's achievements."²

He explains that one of the reasons a person falls in love with someone is because their eyes have set sight on something physically pleasing about the person. When two strangers meet for the first time, they can often tell within a minute or so if there is a degree of physical attraction between them. Certain features of both men and women have traditionally defined what is deemed attractive. The undeniable fact of physical attraction is also acknowledged in Islam.³

Hazrat Musleh Mau'ud^{ra} describes a second reason for falling in love and that is by the observing the beauty of character. The moral qualities and admirable attributes one possesses can be a source of genuine attraction for a person. When one emulates humility, treats others with respect and is polite in nature, the beauty of their heart is magnified and draws others to the goodness of their character. There are several instances found in the lives of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, the

Promised Messiah^{as} and the Khulafa' of Ahmadiyyat that highlights this basis of attraction.⁴

A third way of developing love for something is when a person thoroughly ponders over a task or thing and realizes that the result of this is pleasing. For example, a person feels the passion for serving humanity and they pick up a project or career to help humanity. Their passion for the end result makes them love what they do. This form of love is all encompassing because it is rooted in pursuing someone and becoming heavily infatuated with their lives together.⁵

HUSN-E-SURAT [PHYSICAL BEAUTY]

What is important to understand is that physical beauty can fade away. When someone is loved solely for their physical beauty, they should know that it is something that is very temporary and short-lived. Elaborating on this, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) states:

There is an anecdote of a very beautiful girl, with long, flowing hair, who was fair and in pristine health. A boy became deeply infatuated with her and proposed marriage. The father of the girl was fiercely against this union and told the boy, "You do not truly love my daughter; rather you only love her outward beauty and features." The boy insisted, "No, no, this is not the case; I do truly love her." And so the father decided to give his daughter a treatment that resulted in her falling very ill. Her stomach became upset and she became very frail, scrawny, and sickly. The father then cut locks from the girl's hair with scissors. In short, the girl's

physical and outer appearance fell into terrible condition. Then the father said to the boy: "Now look here, this is my daughter. Do you still love her? If you do love her, then by all means go ahead, and marry her." Upon this, the boy started to offer excuses to not proceed. Thus, the father placed all the girl's hair he had cut off into a bowl. He then said to the boy, "Now that all her hair have been cut and her apparent beauty has been removed, you say that you do not love her. So here, take this bowl with her hair and have all of these things, because these are the features that you really 'love'. So, go now, and take all of this with you."

This is an example of mere superficial love. What happens here in society is that the morals and character of a person are aspects that are demoted and ignored instead of being the focus of affection. Whereas, a poet has once written, "The material and outward features of the world are only temporary and fleeting and will fade away and love for them is short-lived. This is not real love. Therefore, one needs to develop such love which is true love."⁶

Although we can fall in love with someone for their physical beauty, it is an ulterior form of love that lasts only a limited amount of time. For example, if a young man and a young woman choose to get married because they are physically attracted to one another and no other factors are considered, they will eventually come to realize that their 'love' was superficial, especially when they come to know one another's faults. Therefore, the term 'spark' is fitting for this phase because like all things in life, the 'spark' does not last forever and eventually burns off.

HUSN-E-SEERAT [BEAUTY OF CHARACTER]

The character of a person, on the other hand, goes a long way especially in a marriage. While physical beauty fades away, a person's character does not. When a person does things for their spouse out of sincerity and for the betterment of the other's well-being, it generates love and respect in the heart of their spouse. For example, the husband or wife goes out of his or her way to ensure that their partner is taken care of, and for this purpose, they not only fulfill their obligations but take care of each other's sentiments. They keep the mindset that they have to take care of their spouse, and then a sense of gratitude starts to develop in their spouse's heart which allows them to dwell in a deeper dimension of love. Regarding this, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) states:

An elderly wife of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, [Hazrat Maimoona^{ra}], passed away 50 years after the demise of the Holy Prophet^{sa}. She had requested, before passing away, that after her death, she should be buried in the exact same spot just outside of Makkah where she had first met the Holy Prophet^{sa} [on a journey] and had been proposed to [by] him. If it were true that there was a huge difference in how he treated his elderly wives, then this elderly wife would not have reminisced about the Holy Prophet^{sa} and harboured these sentiments of deep affection for him, even after a 50-year period. Yet she truly loved the Holy Prophet^{sa}.⁷

What was the basis for this deep love and affection she had for him? It was due to the loving treatment of the Holy Prophet^{sa}

towards her. Despite being a widow and from another nation, he conferred on her status, love and respect, to such a degree, that recalling the Prophet's^{sa} love, before she passed away, she resolved that she ultimately wanted to return and be laid to rest at the exact same meeting place where she first met with the Holy Prophet^{sa}. This is true love.⁸

It is quite easy to be infatuated with someone, for it requires no sacrifice. *Husn-e-Seerat* can only be completely emulated when one values the happiness and contentment of their spouse above their own. Those who feel contentment and a sense of fulfillment when their spouse is happy are fortunate to be witness to what true love actually is. It is narrated by Hazrat Masruq that he came to meet Hazrat Ayesha^{ra} and she invited him to eat. She said, "Whenever I eat my fill of food, I want to cry and begin crying." He asked her why and she said, "I remember the circumstances under which the Messenger^{sa} of Allah parted from the world. By Allah! He would not eat his fill of bread and meat twice in a day."⁹

We find a similar example in the married life of the Promised Messiah^{as} and Hazrat Amman Jan^{ra}. They were newly married when Hazrat Amman Jan^{ra} came to learn that the Promised Messiah^{as} liked to eat sweet rice. She immediately decided to make an effort and cook this dish and this is something that she came to adopt as a habit. Whenever she learned of a dish that her husband liked, she would endeavour to cook it. On this first occasion, however, she made a mistake and added four times the amount of sugar that was required. The end result was a sugary mixture that hardly resembled rice. This obviously made her concerned and upset, and by the time

she realized her mistake, it was dinner time and a second attempt could not be made. She even felt like crying! As the Promised Messiah^{as} arrived, he ascertained her feelings and calmed her by saying, “What, are you upset about the rice? No, these are very nice. They are the kind I like.” After that, he ate the rice while smiling and spoke to her in such a cheerful manner that it made her forget about her embarrassment altogether.¹⁰

Both these narrations demonstrate that in the lives of the messengers of Allah, they and their wives valued the happiness of one another more than they cared for their own. These instances clearly depict the selfless and pure-hearted nature of these righteous individuals and illustrate the gold standard of marriage that every couple should aspire to attain.

Many argue that marriage in Islam limits one’s freedom because the traditional gender roles are heavily restrictive. However, we see from the example of those righteous followers of Allah that they did not let cultural stereotypes hinder the kind treatment of their spouses. The Promised Messiah^{as} states:

...they [i.e. members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community] should treat their wives with kindness and courtesy. Your wives are not your slaves. In point of fact, marriage is a covenant between man and woman. Try therefore not to break this covenant. God Almighty says in the Holy Quran:

وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ^٤

‘Lead a life of kindness and equity with your wives’ [4:20]. And it is mentioned in a *hadith*:

خَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِهِ

‘The best among you is he who is best towards his wife’.¹¹
Therefore, be good to your wives both spiritually and physically.
Keep praying for them and avoid divorce. A person who is hasty
in divorce is sinful in the eyes of God. Do not hasten to break like
a dirty vessel that which God has brought together.¹²

This excerpt clearly depicts the grandeur in the character of the
Promised Messiah^{as}. At a time where approaching one’s wife with a
cold shoulder was seen as being masculine, the Promised Messiah^{as}
demonstrates what true love and pure character is through the
softness in his actions.

VI

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE

As we have discussed throughout this book, one of the most essential needs of every human being is companionship. Without this, most people feel depressed, anxious, or simply, lonely. Hence, a natural desire for most people is to have a harmonious relationship with their spouse. It is indeed true that if people are able to have a great relationship with their spouse, they can experience a kind of heaven on earth. It is one of the great blessings of Allah as He says:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ
بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

That means, “And one of His Signs is this, that He has created wives for you from among yourselves that you may find peace of mind in them, and He has put love and tenderness between you. In that surely are Signs for a people who reflect” (Holy Quran, 30:22).

The “love and tenderness” that exists between a husband and wife does not happen by itself. It requires the right attitude, tolerance, cool mindedness, patience, and so on. In their *nikah*

sermons and other addresses, our Khulafa have discussed the tips that are crucial for a successful marriage. We have extracted 10 tips below that are absolutely necessary for a marriage to truly attain its purpose. It is important to note that this list is not meant to be exhaustive nor should it be read in ascending order. Each tip is important, in and of itself, and as a whole, this list covers the essential elements of a healthy, loving relationship that every person yearns for.

TIP #1: TAQWA

When we look at the verses that are recited at the time of *nikah*, a common admonition emerges: *Taqwa* or righteousness. In fact, righteousness is the biggest and most important tip for a successful marriage. Everything else is secondary. Assessing the verses recited at the occasion of *nikah*, in one of his sermons, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) discusses how the term *taqwa* appears twice in the first verse, once in the second verse, and twice again in the fourth verse. Altogether, this term appears five times in the verses recited at the occasion of *nikah*.¹ Hence, we cannot overlook the emphasis the Quran has placed on *taqwa* for leading one to a successful marriage.

It is important to understand here that many a times having *taqwa* is translated as *fear* of God. However, considering the root meaning of this term, it refers to protection or safeguarding. In religious terminology, as noted by Hazrat Musleh Mau'ud^{ra}, it refers to safeguarding oneself from sin and bad or harmful things. It is never used to refer to “fear” alone. Hence, *taqwa* refers to turning to God

for protection from all kinds of harms. This can only happen when a person has a good bond with God.²

In one of his sermons, Hazrat Musleh Mau'ud^{ra} notes that the true aim and purpose of *nikah* is *taqwa*. It is in fact the pride of Islam that all matters revolve around God Almighty. When we eat, we are taught to start with the words, "In the name of Allah." When we finish eating, we are taught to end with the words, "All praise belongs to Allah."³ When a baby is born, we recite the *adhan* in his or her ear which begins with the words, "Allah is the Greatest." When a person dies, the funeral prayer that is offered begins with the words, "Allah is the Greatest." At all occasions, Islam tells believers to turn to God Almighty.

The Holy Quran instructs believers to be God-conscious all the time:

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ

That is, believers should be "those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, and lying on their sides" (3:192). This remembrance of God is especially emphasized through the five daily prayers which are constant reminders of how important it is to stay conscious of God Almighty at all times.

Illustrating this further, Hazrat Musleh Mau'ud^{ra} writes, "The things that people seek in the world all come to end. There is only one thing which lasts and that is the *taqwa* of Allah."⁴ He gives the example of Hazrat Yusuf^{as} who was well known for his beauty and even books have been written on this topic. However, he was not beautiful in the eyes of his brothers. Similarly, we have the example of Hazrat Ibrahim^{as} who passed away thousands of years ago, yet

billions of people around the world revere him and pray for him even today. The same is the case for other prophets of God who even came before Hazrat Ibrahim^{as}. Comparatively, there have been many worldly leaders, such as great kings and monarchs, who are not remembered or revered in the same way.

This is ultimately because prophets of God had *taqwa*. They had a relationship with God. For a truly successful marriage, both the husband and wife should set this goal: *Let us improve our relationship with God*. Once the relationship with God improves, everything else falls into place. This does not mean that the husband and wife can ignore everything and spend all day offering prayers. It simply means that when the central tenet of their relationship is *taqwa*, all other things will be blessed and it would become easy to have a successful marriage.

TIP #2: LISTENING TO THE KHALIFATUL MASIH

As you have read throughout this book, we have frequently quoted guidance of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih (may Allah be his Helper). Even this list of tips is based on his guidance as noted earlier. This in turn means that if we truly want to have a successful marriage and family life, we should make it compulsory upon ourselves to listen to the *Khutbat* (Friday Sermons), *Khitabat* (speeches), question and answer sessions and classes of Huzoor-e-Anwar (may Allah be his Helper) to the best of our abilities. These can be found on most major social media platforms and are shared from time to time through official channels of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. The most important source is MTA International—the 24-hour satellite channel

run by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community—which can be accessed through its website, apps on streaming boxes, or its livestream on YouTube. Recordings of all sermons and speeches can also be found on YouTube and podcasts.

The Holy Quran states:

وَالَّذِينَ اجْتَنَبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ أَنْ يَعْبُدُوهَا وَأَنَابُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ
 فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ ﴿١٨﴾
 الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَ
 أُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩﴾

That is, “And those who shun false gods lest they worship them and turn to Allah—for them is glad tidings. So give glad tidings to My servants, who listen to the Word and follow the best thereof. It is they whom Allah has guided, and it is they who are men of understanding” (39:18-19). Hence, it is very important to listen to the Word which is taught to us by Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper).

The Promised Messiah^{as} has written, “The one who does not wish to be obedient to the *ma'mur* and *mursal* of God has partaken of arrogance.”⁵ A *ma'mur* is one appointed by God and a *mursal* is one sent by God. In this case, this is in reference to the Promised Messiah^{as} himself as he is the *ma'mur* and *mursal* for this day and age. After him, we have his successors who represent him and are also appointed by God. As such, not listening to the representative or successor of the *mursal* is also wrong.

Hence, by listening to the Imam, our Khalifa, we will continuously learn Islamic teachings and improve ourselves. On the other hand, by ignoring the Imam, we will be moving away from Islamic teachings. We will not be reminded of our duties. As humans, we are weak and forgetful. It is very important to keep listening to the Imam so that we can always refresh our knowledge and be reminded of beautiful advices in Islam for a harmonious marriage and family life.

TIP #3: TRUTHFULNESS

Sometimes, marriages are not successful because they *began* on the wrong understanding. Weaknesses are hidden because it is presumed that if the weakness is told to the other side it may cause the marriage proposal to be cancelled. There are two problems with this attitude. One, such people are not maintaining a high level of righteousness and trust in God. By lying about certain weaknesses, they feel that worldly tricks and sin can help them have a successful marriage. This is obviously wrong. Being truthful, on the other hand, may seem risky, but along with trust in God, it can actually be very helpful and lead to honesty and integrity right from the beginning of the relationship. The point is that both parties should seek God's help instead of depending on their worldly strategies.

Second, most of the time such marriages where things are initially hidden lead to much unhappiness later on. Nothing much remains hidden between a husband and wife in the long run. Once certain things are discovered, it can cause much hurt and pain, and lead to an unhappy marriage or even the breakdown of the marriage.

In fact, truthfulness is so important that the following verse of the Holy Quran, which emphasizes it, is part of the *nikah* sermon:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ﴿٧١﴾

That is, “O ye who believe! fear Allah, and say the right word” (33:71). The *qaul-e-sadeed* (right word) here points to the truth which is not mixed with lies or stated in a way that is ambiguous. Instead, it should be the plain, simple truth—that which does not lead to any misunderstanding. Elaborating this further, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (May Allah be his Helper) says:

It is stated that if one promises to always say what is clear and unambiguous and not go near lies and misinformation, Allah guarantees forgiveness of sins. One’s deeds will be reformed, and obviously when deeds are reformed and one works to gain the pleasure of Allah, then Allah also loves that person. Just as I explained by giving the example of the *hadith* of the Holy Prophet^{sa} that, if you stop telling lies, your other vices will be removed. Thus, everyone should adopt this principle.⁶

Therefore, the husband and wife should be truthful and stick to *qaul-e-sadeed* right from the beginning of the marriage process if they desire to have a successful married life.

When this truthfulness is discussed, one question is often asked: Should the husband and wife be willing to reveal *all* their weaknesses without the other side asking? The answer to this question is that Allah is *As-Sattar* (The One Who hides weaknesses). As such, one moral quality that believers should adopt is the habit of covering others’ faults and their own faults. However, this does not

mean that a person hides those weaknesses which directly impact his or her marriage. Advocating a balanced approach in this regard, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) says:

No one is perfect. There is goodness in everyone and there are bad habits in people as well. This does not mean that one should announce all of his or her bad qualities. But if there is something which can potentially cause issues later on in the relationship or break the relationship, then it is best for that weakness to be made clear to the other party beforehand. Whether there is a weakness or an illness; if a girl is unable to bear children or if there is a deficiency within a man, then that should be made clear to one another beforehand so that it does not cause issues later on.⁷

As such, if a person is suffering from a life-long illness, for instance, this should not be hidden at the time of marriage as this is going to impact him or her for the rest of their lives. A specific example of this as given by Huzoor is that the man is unable to have children and he knows this *prior* to marriage but chooses not to reveal it. It can be imagined that this can create many anxieties later on during the marriage.

Another example of this is that the woman has a lot of debt accumulated from school or some other source and she chooses not to reveal this prior to marriage. Again, it can be imagined that this would create mistrust as soon as the husband finds out this information. It should be clear from these examples that those pieces of information that will directly impact the relationship *in the future* should not be intentionally hidden *in the present*. As far as other

weaknesses are concerned that do not directly impact the relationship and have been hidden by God Almighty, there is no need to volunteer that information without even being asked about it. If God has covered some faults, that is well and good. For those, *istighfar* (seeking forgiveness from God) should continuously be recited, but those weaknesses that are known to directly impact the relationship should be volunteered. It is possible that the other side will appreciate the honesty and it may even lead to a stronger relationship. More importantly, a truthful person is helped by God Almighty.

TIP #4: ISTIGHFAR

There are times in a marriage when the husband and wife will have their differences of opinion, or they may say something that may be offensive to the other. This reality leads us to our fourth important tip for a successful marriage, that is, repentance and *istighfar*. The Holy Quran states:

وَمَنْ تَابَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَإِنَّهُ يَتُوبُ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَتَابًا ﴿٤٧﴾

That is, “And those who repent and do good *deeds*, indeed turn to Allah with *true* repentance” (25:72). When things go wrong—and it is a certainty that they will go wrong or unexpectedly change direction—it is important to turn back to God through repentance and *istighfar*. Commenting on this verse in one of his sermons, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) states, “Mere verbal repentance is not true repentance. Rather, repentance needs to be supported and upheld with good

deeds.”⁸ In other words, simply saying “I am sorry” and not following it up with good works has the potential to lead to an unhappy marriage.

Commenting on this further, Huzoor-e-Anwar says, “Real repentance means not only to reconcile with whom one is estranged from but also recant whatever harm one has caused them. When this recanting is done with repentance it will be a virtuous act and a good deed.”⁹ This advice does not simply relate to the husband and wife. Mistakes can be made by family members, the in-laws, parents, and others. In each case, we have a beautiful Islamic teaching to follow. That is, whenever a mistake is made, each one should seek forgiveness of God through *istighfar*, apologize to the person who has been wronged, and follow it up with good deeds to rectify the mistake made.

As Huzoor advises in his sermons, it is not enough to simply seek forgiveness from God and not apologize to the person who has been wronged. Even if both these steps are followed, it would still not be enough until the person who committed the mistake makes the effort to follow up their mistake with good deeds. Furthermore, all of this has to be done with sincerity. If, at any point, the desire is only to make an outward show of apology without sincerity, or there is an ulterior motive to take advantage through an insincere apology, it will not lead to the intended result.

In this regard, Allah says in the Holy Quran:

وَإِنِّي لَغَفَّارٌ لِّمَن تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَى ﴿٨٣﴾

Meaning, “But surely I am forgiving to those who repent and believe and do good deeds, and then stick to guidance” (20:83). This only re-

enforces the points made above. A sincere repentance should be followed up with good deeds and an effort to stick to the guidance from God.

A question may be asked here about the best way to offer *istighfar*. The answer is that seeking forgiveness of God can be done in the form of a prayer to God offered in any preferred language. We can also recite the following words as part of our *istighfar*:

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ رَبِّي مِنْ كُلِّ ذَنْبٍ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ

That is, “I seek forgiveness from Allah, my Lord, for all my sins and I turn towards Him.”

TIP #5: PATIENCE

As discussed above, there are times in life when mistakes happen and one must seek forgiveness from God and the person who has been wronged, and make amends. However, sometimes things can happen that are beyond the control of human beings. Trials and tribulations can increase the stress on a relationship. At the time of the writing of this book, humanity is going through a severe pandemic affecting the lives of millions of people. Among its many impacts is the increased stress on some marriages and some families.

These are the things that are beyond the control of human beings. Allah says that sometimes trials come:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ
وَالثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٦﴾

That is, “And We will try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives, and fruits; but give glad tidings to the patient” (Holy Quran, 2:156). Here, Allah is saying that it is quite certain that trials come in life. Prior to a marriage, for instance, both the husband and wife could have promising careers. However, a few months or a year or two after the marriage, a financial crisis could hit. A family situation may develop. An illness or some other difficulty could impact a member of the family.

For all such circumstances, the teaching of the Holy Quran is to be patient, and that is another key to a successful marriage. A marriage where there is contentment regardless of circumstances is truly a beautiful marriage. On the contrary, a marriage where the husband and wife are given to constant complaining despite having a high standard of living will face many challenges and difficulties. In the above verse, Allah instructs us to remain patient. Most people stop at this point and think that patience simply means a suppression of their desires. However, this is not the case, as in the next two verses, Allah says:

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾
 أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

Meaning, “Who, when a misfortune overtakes them, say, ‘Surely, to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return.’ It is these on whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy, and it is these who are rightly guided” (2:157-158). Hence, it is not that when a married couple is patient, they are abandoned by God. Instead, they are granted blessings and mercy from God Who has the power to

completely change their circumstances and turn around things completely.

When the opposite is considered, it can truly become horrible. When an impatient husband or wife face the stresses of life, like financial uncertainty for instance, things can take a truly dark turn. In one of his sermons, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) describes the situation when he says:

Such situations result in constant conflict, argument, quarrel and dispute in the household...Or there are situations where due to the unfair demands husbands lose their way and when bickering is going on, they can wrongly become violent towards their wives. Or, in order to meet the pressure of undue demands from their wives, some men take on debt, due to which the entire household comes under the grip of a vicious cycle. When the creditors demand their money back, the husband tries to make excuses and hence a series of lies ensues. When the husband is unable to pay the debts, he gets easily irritated and is harsh towards the children, in turn children feel extremely disturbed. Such a vicious cycle sets into motion when unnecessary burden is placed on a man and patience is not exercised in the face of difficult situations. What eventuates is that children from such households look for comfort outside their homes and slowly disassociate themselves from their parents.¹⁰

Here, Huzoor-e-Anwar has shared just one scenario which can lead to absolute chaos, disruption of the family life, domestic abuse, and child neglect. There can be any number of scenarios where patience

is not practised and a marriage goes on a truly dark path. Hence, patience is an important facet of a truly successful marriage.

TIP #6: POSITIVE FOCUS

One of the most important times to show patience is when things get heated and emotions are flared up. Such times have the danger of turning the paradise of our homes into hell, as Huzoor-e-Anwar (may Allah be his Helper) once described it.¹¹ One of the root causes of this is the desire to uphold one's ego. Sometimes, people get so caught up in the 'need' to keep or boost their ego that they leave behind all fairness and concern for others. Hence, one of the things that the wife and the husband have to sacrifice in order to have a successful marriage is the desire to always boost their egos.

At the same time, due regard should be given to one another's sentiments, as well as the sentiments of other members of the family. Everyone desires respect and decency, and when such things are ignored, it can turn into a disaster for marriage. What is important is to control one's anger, set aside the desire to boost the ego, and show patience. It is only then that the husband and wife will be able to focus on the positives and disregard the negatives. No one is perfect. Everyone has their flaws. When we focus on the flaws in any relationship, it can create negativity that can eat up a healthy relationship.

Addressing this issue, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) once stated, "If both sides control their emotions and have righteousness in their hearts, these problems would never arise. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings

of Allah be on him) advised such people that if they both see each other's flaws, there would also be many things they like in each other. It cannot be that they both are full of flaws. If you keep such positive attitude and adopt a sense of sacrifice, mutual love and affection will grow."¹²

It is surprising how simple this formula is. Positive feelings are always reciprocated. A tiring day at work should not mean that we take it out on our family. Just because something did not go according to our expectations does not mean that we should ruin the peace of our homes and turn a perfectly running household into chaos. We can keep a positive attitude by always turning back to God. Through righteousness, *istighfar* and patience for the sake of the pleasure of God, we can remain positive and not ruin a good family life.

An important element of this positivity is the ability to control one's anger. The positivity of a family home is most vulnerable at the time when something happens that angers the wife or the husband. It is in those times which determine whether or not the positivity can be maintained or be lost. In this regard, we have an amazing role model to follow in the person of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. He was not one quick to anger at all as attested by his wives and that is the example we should try to follow.

Hazrat Ayeshah^{ra} narrates that at one occasion, the Holy Prophet^{sa} was with his companions and she made some food for him. Hazrat Hafsa^{ra} had also made some food and presented it to the Holy Prophet^{sa} before Hazrat Ayeshah^{ra}. Hazrat Ayeshah^{ra} said to her maid-servant, "Overturn her bowl." While putting the bowl of food

in front of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, she overturned it and it broke, causing the food to scatter on the ground. She narrates, “The Holy Prophet^{sa} gathered the pieces and the food on the leather mat and they ate. Then he sent for my bowl and gave it to Hafsa^{ra}, and said, “Take this pot in place of your pot, and eat what is in it’.” Hazrat Ayeshah^{ra} ends the narration by saying:

فَمَا رَأَيْتُ ذَلِكَ فِي وَجْهِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

That is, “I did not see any expression of anger on the face of the Holy Prophet^{sa}.”¹³ We should consider for a moment: How many husbands would be able to show this kind of tolerance? How many wives would be able to show this kind of control of their anger?

The role model of the Holy Prophet^{sa} is truly amazing and if a husband and wife keep this model in front of them at all times, it will definitely lead to a successful marriage. This is because the family life of the Holy Prophet^{sa} was itself very successful. Regarding suppressing one’s anger, Allah says:

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكُظُمِينَ الْغَيْظِ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٦٣﴾

That is, “Those who spend in prosperity and adversity, and those who suppress anger and pardon men; and Allah loves those who do good” (Holy Quran 3:135).

Quoting one advice of the Holy Prophet^{sa} regarding controlling one’s anger, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (may Allah be his Helper) notes, “If an angry person is standing, he should sit down, and if he is sitting, then he should lie down and recite prayers of

istighfar and *Lahaul*, and pour cold water over himself or perform ablution.”¹⁴ *Istighfar* has been discussed earlier, and *Lahaul* is to be recited as follows:

لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

Meaning, “There is no strength to resist evil and no power to do good except through (the help of) Allah.”¹⁵

Another element of this positivity is tolerance of one another. A newly married couple are a couple after all. They are two different people with different backgrounds, childhoods, personalities, etc. There are relationships that break down after many years, and some may break down after decades. Even those unislamic relationships that are built after many years of staying together break down often. Why is that so? In many instances, this is due to the lack of tolerance or the flexibility to adapt oneself to live with another in a way that can bring harmony to the family life. The Promised Messiah^{as} summarizes the importance of tolerance in the following beautiful words of advice:

With the exception of indecency, you ought to bear with patience all the other improprieties and discourteous behaviour of your wives...I find it utterly shameful for a man to be in a state of conflict with a woman. God has made us men, and in reality, this is a completion of His favour upon us. The gratitude that we owe for this is to treat women with kindness and tenderness.¹⁶

Another element of this positivity is covering one another’s faults. This is mentioned in the following verse of the Holy Quran:

هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ ط

That is, “They are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them” (2:188). Hence, the husband and wife should cover one another’s faults if they desire to have a successful marriage. Huzoor-e-Anwar (may Allah be his Helper) advises, “They should cover up the faults and shortcomings of each other, and avoid bickering over petty little matters.”¹⁷

It should thus be remembered that a relationship does not stay perfect all the time. Challenges *will* come, and the attitude and behaviour of the husband and wife matters most at the time when the challenge appears. If each of them has a positive focus, they can expect to get past it and continue on with better mutual understanding and harmony.

TIP #7: GRATITUDE

One of the key means to having a positive focus is the habit of being content and grateful to God Almighty for all that He has granted us. When a person starts seeing the good in others and removes the focus on the negative, and starts to appreciate others more and more, it logically leads to a successful marriage. In the Holy Quran, Allah says:

لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ

It is a promise of Allah in this verse, “if you are grateful, I will, surely, bestow more favours on you” (Holy Quran 14:8).

A positive focus cannot happen by itself. It will only happen if we take the time to reflect over what God has actually granted us. Whenever something good happens in our family life—or even life

in general—it is important to stop and ponder, and be thankful to God. Some people even keep gratitude journals to note down blessings of God granted to them on a daily basis. In most relationships, when the husband and wife start reflecting—or even writing down—all the blessings received from God through their relationship, it is unlikely that they would have any resentment left over.

Hazrat No'man Bin Bashir^{ra} narrates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said from his pulpit:

He who is not grateful for small favours cannot be grateful for the bigger ones. He who cannot be thankful to men cannot render thanks for the favours of Allah. To talk about the blessings of Allah the Almighty is thankfulness; to not mention them is ingratitude.¹⁸

Hence, having an attitude of gratitude for blessings of God will make a person thankful to others, and vice versa. Those who are thankful to others will also be more thankful for the good qualities of their spouses. The important point to remember as discussed in the above *hadith* is to express it. When there is something to appreciate in the wife or husband, it is important to mention it. It should not be that when a fault is seen, the wife or the husband are very vocal about it and give long speeches of criticism. But when there is something to praise or appreciate, not a single word is uttered.

TIP #8: KINDNESS

Whereas gratitude relates to one's own self, an important facet of having a positive attitude relates to one's treatment of others. Gratitude focuses on what *we* have gained, but a completely positive focus requires us to also think of *others*. By being kind, generous, and compassionate to others, we can gain true happiness.

This is especially important in the husband-wife relationship where we should never take things for granted. We should be thankful for what we have and *show* that gratitude through reciprocity. If the wife is kind to the husband, the husband should be kind to the wife, and vice versa. In the Holy Quran, Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَاءَ كَرِهًا ط وَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ
لِتَذْهَبُوا بِبَعْضِ مَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبِينَةٍ ۚ وَ
عَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُنَّ وَهِيَ شَيْءٌ
يَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ﴿٢٠﴾

That is, "O ye who believe! it is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will; nor should you detain them wrongfully that you may take away part of that which you have given them, except that they be guilty of a flagrant evil; and consort with them in kindness; and if you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing wherein Allah has placed much good" (4:20). Similarly, the Holy Prophet^{sa} says:

خَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِيهِ وَأَنَا خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِي

That is, “The best of you is one who is best in treatment of his family; and I am the best in treatment of my family.”¹⁹

It is not possible for a marriage to be successful without this kindness. If the husband and wife are always angry, constantly screaming, and there is abuse of the wife or children, such a marriage is headed for failure. By failure here we do not just mean the breakup of a marriage. Failure here refers to all kinds of failures that include the destruction of the family peace, dissolution of family harmony, loss of the innocent childhood of the children of the family, trauma, and so on.

Furthermore, this kindness should not be limited to the husband, wife, and children only. It should extend to extended family relations and in-laws. Islamic teachings refer to this as *silah rehmi* (i.e. kindness to close familial ties) which “entails that the relatives of the wife have the same rights as the man’s own relatives.”²⁰ Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) states that if this kindness prevails in the family, it will bring an end to all kinds of arguments.²¹

TIP #9: PRAYERS AND SADAQAH

So far, the tips for a successful marriage that have been discussed pertain to things that require human effort, at least to an extent. However, human beings do not control everything. We have our limits. That is why Islam teaches us the importance of prayer. Just as prayer is required prior to marriage to help us find the best match for ourselves, it is also required after marriage to help us through every difficulty or challenge that may be faced during marriage.

For the purpose of a successful marriage, Allah the Exalted has taught the following prayer:

رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا ﴿٥٥﴾

Meaning, “Our Lord, grant us of our wives and children the delight of *our* eyes, and make us a model for the righteous” (Holy Quran 25:75). Commenting on this verse, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) notes that this prayer should be offered by both the husband and the wife. When they are both asking Allah to make the other the delight of their eyes, Huzoor says that “they will also be mindful to be kind to each other and will overlook each other’s drawbacks and will keep each other’s good qualities in view.”²² Furthermore, children growing up in such a positive environment will also benefit and they will become the delight of the eyes for their parents.²³

Furthermore, Huzoor points out that the prayer gives the husband and wife a lesson, that is, to look inward and improve their level of righteousness and to also take care of the righteousness of their children. When they pray, “make us a model for the righteous,” they are asking for God’s help in becoming great role models for their children in respect of their righteousness. Huzoor says, “Fortunate are the parents who remain engaged in the upbringing of their children and bring them close to faith and instill love of Allah the Exalted in them. They also improve themselves by adopting pious changes and adorn their life in this world as well as the Hereafter.”²⁴

The Promised Messiah^{as} used to pray for his family on a daily basis. He elaborates his example as follows:

I have made it compulsory upon myself to make certain prayers on a daily basis. Firstly, I pray for my own soul that the Merciful Lord may use me for such work by which His honour and glory is manifested, and may He enable me to act in a manner that fully pleases Him. Secondly, I pray for the members of my household that may Allah the Exalted grant me the delight of my eyes through them and that they may tread the path of His pleasure. Thirdly, I pray for my children that they may all become servants of the Faith. Fourthly, I then pray for my sincere friends by name. Then, fifthly, I pray for all those who are a part of this community, whether I know them personally or not.²⁵

What a beautiful model to follow! We should all try to make this a habit. We should pray for our families and friends on a daily basis. Only Allah has the power to resolve all difficulties and grant us a truly heavenly home.

Along with prayers, we should also develop the habit of giving *sadaqah* or alms. The Holy Quran states:

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَأْخُذُ الصَّدَقَاتِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٠٤﴾

Meaning, "Know they not that Allah is He Who accepts repentance from His servants and takes alms, and that Allah is He Who is Oft-Returning *with compassion*, and is Merciful?" (9:104). Many people believe that *sadaqah* is only to be given when some huge difficulty appears on the horizon. However, that is not the only time to give *sadaqah*. We should instead develop a habit of giving *sadaqah*. Once

we do that, Allah says that He removes our difficulties and turns towards us with compassion and mercy.

In the context of marriage, the Promised Messiah^{as} explains the importance of prayer and *sadaqah* narrating his own experience:

As for me, I once raised my voice to my wife. At the time I felt that this louder-than-normal voice of mine was mixed with sentiments of grief. Even though I had said no hurtful or harsh words, I later sought forgiveness from God continuously for a very long time. I offered voluntary Prayers with great humility and lowliness, and gave alms (*sadaqah*) as well; for I felt that the sternness I had shown to my wife was due to some unconscious weakness in my obedience to God Almighty.²⁶

Notice here that the Promised Messiah^{as} offered the prayers and gave *sadaqah* for merely raising his voice. This is how careful he was with his wife. Not only does it highlight the importance of prayer and *sadaqah* but it also shines light on the extraordinarily kind treatment the Promised Messiah^{as} meted out to his wife.

TIP #10: TIMELY MARRIAGE

A grave concern for our society nowadays is the unusual delay that marriages face. It is a trend now to wait excessively long periods of time before even considering the possibility of marriage. According to an American survey in 2011, 4.2 million adults were newly married, compared to 4.51 million who were newly married in 2008.²⁷ This is a sharp decline in keeping with modern attitudes towards marriage. Similarly, only 51% of adults were married in 2011 compared to 72% in 1960.²⁸ A more recent survey showed that

the number of adults who are choosing to stay unmarried and without a partner is increasing, with “roughly six-in-ten adults younger than 35 (61%)” not getting married.²⁹ All these statistics show that there are huge numbers of adults in their twenties nowadays who are unmarried.

A common excuse given in this regard is that marriage should be delayed so that one becomes more stable or well-established before taking on the responsibility of having a family. It is ironical that the desire to have a successful life through money and increase in material possessions is seen as one of the means to a happy married life. Nothing could be further from the truth. Wealth, status, and a six-figure income are not what automatically lead to a happier life.

Such a thought process is dangerous and can unfortunately lead to the opposite of a happy married life. Consider this: How much stability did the Holy Prophet^{sa} have before his marriage? How much stability did the Promised Messiah^{as} seek prior to his marriage? Hence, whether it is wealth, or higher education or material possessions, there is no end to our desires. Where exactly do we draw the line? What level must we achieve in order to be ‘ready’ for marriage? There is no doubt that a certain level of stability is required. However, seeking an extreme level can delay marriage for too long and make it very difficult to get married at all or have a happy married life.

As such, an important tip for a happy, successful marriage is to get married as early as possible. The Holy Prophet^{sa} was 25 years old when he got married, and the Promised Messiah^{as} was 17 years old when he got married. In one of his sermons, Hazrat Mirza Tahir

Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih IVth notes, "My experience is that if marriages are done at an early age the young man and the young woman both remain youthful for a long period of time."³⁰ This is a very beautiful statement which makes one think of the many advantages a marriage at a young age can bring. For instance, having a family at an early age means that there is going to be a smaller age gap between parents and their children. It also means that parents would have youthful energy to raise children and their responsibilities in relation to the education and other matters pertaining to their upbringing will be accomplished earlier in life.

Another major advantage of marrying early is that human beings are generally more flexible and adaptable at an earlier age. A person in his or her early twenties is more likely able to adapt to a life with their marriage partner as opposed to someone in their mid-thirties. Similarly, another great benefit of early marriage is that young Muslims growing up in the West are spending a lot of time with members of the opposite sex. Temptations abound in Western society and an early marriage for a Muslim would mean that they become safeguarded against all such dangers.

In short, a person can hope to have a successful marriage if they stick to *taqwa*, ensure to listen to the Khalifatul Masih, strive to be truthful, regular in *istighfar*, patient at the weaknesses of the spouse, maintain a positive focus, always remain grateful to God, kind to one's spouse, turn to prayers and sadaqah often and make efforts to get married early.

VII

QUESTIONS ABOUT MARRIAGE

Marriage is a path to many changes, adventures and discoveries in one's life. It is also the means to learn how to love God. Hazrat Musleh Mau'ud^{ra} points out that "from the perspective of the past, the love of the parents is a reflection of the love of God. From the perspective of the present, the love between the husband and wife is the reflection of the love of God. And in regard to the future, love of one's children is a reflection of God's love."¹ He also equates marriage to an institute for learning the love of God.²

This is pointed out in *ahadith* as well. At one occasion the Holy Prophet^{sa} is reported to have said:

وَلَسْتَ تُنْفِقُ نَفَقَةً تَبْتَغِي بِهَا وَجْهَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا أُجِرْتَ بِهَا حَتَّى اللَّقْمَةُ تَجْعَلُهَا فِي فِي امْرَأَتِكَ

Meaning, "You will not spend anything—seeking therewith the pleasure of Allah—but you will be rewarded for it, even for a morsel of food that you put in the mouth of your wife."³ In this *hadith*, it can be noted that all the actions are happening between a husband and wife but the Holy Prophet^{sa} says that even such actions lead to the love of God.

This love that exists between the husband and wife or between parents and children acts as a means for humans to learn what love

of God really is. We see the same kind of love in the life of the Holy Prophet^{sa} and that of other Prophets. Hence, it is very important to fully understand this relationship. As such, it is important to know the answers to common questions that are asked in relation to marriage. We address some of these questions in this chapter.

WHAT ARE ISLAMIC TEACHINGS ON CONSUMMATION?

Consummation of marriage is a very important aspect of a married couple's life. First, the steps of an Islamic marriage are to be completed: the terms of the marriage contract, the specifics of *haq mehr* agreed upon, and the *nikah* ceremony. After the *nikah*, the bride and the groom are lawfully regarded as husband and wife in Islam. The couple can now consummate their marriage. Engaging in conjugal relations is not just an important aspect of Islamic marriage, it is also considered a rewarding act. The Holy Prophet^{sa} is reported to have said that sexual intercourse is a form of alms-giving and leads to reward from God:

Hazrat Abu Zar^{ra} narrates that some companions said to the Holy Prophet^{sa}: "O Messenger^{sa} of Allah, the rich have taken away all the reward. They observe *salat* just as we do, and they keep fasts just as we, and they give *sadaqah* (charity) out of their surplus wealth." The Holy Prophet^{sa} replied, "Has Allah not prescribed for you (a course) following which you can also give *sadaqah*? Most certainly, every *Tasbeeh* (i.e., saying *Subhan Allah* [Holy is Allah]) is *sadaqah*. And every *Takbeer* (i.e. saying *Allahu Akbar* [Allah is the Greatest]) is *sadaqah*. And every *Tehmeed* (i.e., saying *Al-hamdulillah* [All praise belongs to Allah]) is *sadaqah*. And every

Tehleel (i.e., saying *La ilaaha il-Allah* [There is none worthy of worship except Allah]) is *sadaqah*. And enjoining of good is *sadaqah*, and forbidding evil is *sadaqah*. And sexual intercourse with your wife is *sadaqah*." The companions said, "O Messenger of Allah, is there a reward for the one who satisfies his sexual need?" The Holy Prophet^{sa} said, "Are you not aware that if a person fulfills his sexual need in an unlawful manner, would he not bear the burden of sin? In the same way, when he satisfies it in a lawful manner, there is a reward for him."⁴

This *hadith* makes it clear that sexual intercourse within the confines of Islamic marriage is a form of *sadaqah* that leads to reward. This is because it is done in a way that protects against fornication or adultery. In other words, marriage is a safeguard for a person against sinful actions. Moreover, broadly speaking, any action that is done with the right intentions, within the limits prescribed by Allah, and for the sake of Allah, is worthy of reward in Islam.

The Holy Quran teaches that intimacy within marriage can become a means for goodness and safeguarding against evil. Once a person is safeguarded against evil, they can then strive to adopt *taqwa* (righteousness) as the Quran advises:

نِسَاءُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَكُمْ ۖ فَاتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّىٰ شِئْتُمْ ۗ وَقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ ۗ^ط
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ مُلْقَوُهُ ۗ^ط وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٢٤﴾

That is, "Your wives are a tilth for you; so approach your tilth when and how you like and send ahead *some good* for yourselves; and fear Allah and know that you shall meet Him; and give good tidings to those who obey" (2:224). In commentary of this verse, the Promised

Messiah^{as} states, “The main objective of *nikah* in Islam is to provide a means for the fulfillment of sexual desires through legal means...and in this way, a person becomes chaste and righteous.”⁵

This verse has also been explained by Hazrat Musleh Mau’ud^{ra} as follows:

(1) you should go in unto your wife in a manner suited to her capacity as a tilth and in no other manner; and (2) that both of you should try to keep your hearts pure at the time of intercourse so that the offspring may also share that purity...A wise farmer selects the best soil, prepares the best tilth, secures the best seed, and chooses the best time and manner of sowing it. You should do the same, because your community’s entire future—not just your own—depends on the harvest which you are to reap in the form of offspring.⁶

Physical intimacy is something which is essential in having a prosperous and healthy life as a couple. If there is any sort of defect in this relationship it can break a family apart and may even lead to immorality. Regarding this, the Promised Messiah^{as} states:

[Just] as a mutual relation exists between man and woman, so too is the relationship of man’s servitude and divine providence. If a man and woman have a mutual understanding with one another and both are attracted to one another, then such couples are blessed and fruitful; otherwise, domestic life is ruined and the actual purpose of this relationship goes unrealized. Men ruin themselves through other relations and are struck by hundreds of illnesses. Some contract infectious diseases like syphilis and are left deprived in this very world. And if such people do happen to

have children, many future generations are left affected by this illness. On the other hand, the woman will begin to lead a life of immodesty and even after her honour and dignity have drowned completely, she is unable to attain true comfort. Therefore, when the pure relationship of husband and wife is abandoned, this gives rise to countless forms of evil and disorder... the bond of man and woman is in one way preserved by the pleasure that is derived from it.”⁷

Before getting intimate, the Holy Prophet^{sa} has taught us to seek protection against Satan in the following words:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ اللَّهُمَّ جَبِّتْنَا الشَّيْطَانَ، وَجَبِّبِ الشَّيْطَانَ مَا رَزَقْتَنَا

“In the name of Allah, O Allah, Protect us from Satan and prevent Satan from approaching our offspring which You are going to grant us.”⁸ Other than this, the couple should not neglect worship of Allah and prayers. If possible, they should offer *nawafil* (voluntary prayers)—even just two *rak’aat*—to mark the beginning of their new life together. In fact, prayers should become a part of their lives. In their prayers, they should seek Allah’s help and guidance for a life of piety and protection from evil throughout their married life. After the consummation of the marriage has taken place, the groom should hold a reception (*walima*) by inviting friends, relatives and neighbours. One purpose of this is to make people aware of the marriage, and that the husband and wife have spent time alone with one another and possibly consummated the marriage. Islam is a religion which does not forget the poor during these happy occasions which is why the groom is to invite both the rich and poor

of the family and community. The Holy Prophet^{sa} said, “The worst kind of food is that at a wedding-feast to which the rich are invited and from which the poor are left out.”⁹

After conjugal relations, an important teaching of Islam to be followed is the maintenance of purity. Muslims are taught in the Quran to purify themselves and to clean the entire body:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ وَلَا جُنُبًا إِلَّا عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ حَتَّىٰ تَغْتَسِلُوا ۗ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْرًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَايِبِ أَوْ لَمَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُورًا غَفُورًا ﴿٤٤﴾

Meaning, “O ye who believe! approach not Prayer when you are not in *full* possession of your senses, until you know what you say, nor when you are unclean, except when you are travelling along a way, until you have bathed. And if you are ill or *you are* on a journey *while unclean*, or *if* one of you comes from the privy or you have touched women and you find no water, then betake yourselves to pure dust and wipe therewith your faces and your hands. Surely, Allah is Most Indulgent, Most Forgiving” (4:44). As such, cleanliness is essential. Commenting on this, Hazrat Musleh Mau’ud^{ra} writes:

There is an additional commandment for the man and woman who have had sexual intercourse, that is, they should bathe before offering prayer. The wisdom behind this instruction is that experience tells us that conjugation can have an effect on the body, and electrifies the entire body. Hence, calming the body (through

himself or herself, and ensure that his or her children remain on the path of Islam, then they must avoid marriages with idolators.

As far as people of other faiths are concerned, there is a little bit of relaxation given to Muslim men as laid out in the following verse:

الْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ الطَّيِّبُ ط وَطَعَامُ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حِلٌّ لَكُمْ ۖ وَ
طَعَامُكُمْ حِلٌّ لَهُمْ ۗ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ
أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ إِذَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ
مُسْفِحِينَ وَلَا مُتَّخِذِي أَخْدَانٍ ط وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ حَبِطَ عَمَلُهُ
وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ؕ

Meaning, “This day all good things have been made lawful for you. And the food of the People of the Book is lawful for you, and your food is lawful for them. And *lawful for you are* chaste believing women and chaste women from among those who were given the Book before you, when you give them their dowries, contracting valid marriage and not committing fornication nor taking secret paramours. And whoever rejects the faith, his work has doubtless come to naught, and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers” (5:6).

Although the permission is given to Muslim men to marry women from among the People of the Book, that is, Jews and Christians, it is followed by the warning, “whoever rejects the faith, his work has doubtless come to naught.” The implication, therefore, is clear. Permission is given as long as the faith of the Muslim is not going to be lost due to the marriage.

In light of these verses, it must be clear that the core value in Islam is faith and attachment to God. As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, marriage is an institution to learn the love of God. If love of God is diminishing in a marriage, it is not fulfilling the correct definition of an Islamic marriage and obviously not the intent of Islamic teachings and permissions.

Where a Muslim man is given permission to a certain extent to marry a woman from the People of the Book, it is with the expectation that he will remain firm on his faith and, with his good Islamic role model, he will be able to influence his wife to also turn to the true faith. This is based on the understanding that Muslim men have a greater responsibility to remain pious and steadfast on their faith and be able to influence their wives.

Furthermore, it should be noted that this is a permission and not a commandment to be followed. Even the permission is granted only in special circumstances. If the man is able to hold on to his faith and would not be led astray, he is given the permission with this expectation. It is for this reason that there were occasions in the time of the Holy Prophet^{sa} where he did not allow some companions to marry women from the People of the Book.¹¹ In a similar way, in the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, such matters are referred to the Khalifa of the time for final decision and guidance.

A Muslim woman, on the other hand, is forbidden from marrying the People of the Book given the understanding that she does not have the same responsibility to influence her husband to change his faith. It is also meant to protect her from being swayed and to continue to keep her faith without the added burden of trying to

influence her husband to turn to Islam. It must be remembered that marriage is a sacred contract and a truly Islamic marriage is one that brings the husband and wife closer to God, and does not turn one or both away from God.

I CANNOT AFFORD TO GET MARRIED. WHAT DO I DO?

The Holy Prophet^{sa} has instructed able young men to get married as a means of achieving chastity and to control their desires. It is narrated by Hazrat ‘Abdullah^{ra} that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said:

يَا مَعْشَرَ الشَّبَابِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ مِنْكُمُ الْبَاءَةَ فَلْيَتَّخِذْ فَإِنَّهُ آغْضُ لِلْبَصْرِ وَأَحْصَنُ
لِلْفَرْجِ وَمَنْ لَا فَلْيَصُمْ فَإِنَّ الصَّوْمَ لَهُ وَجَاءٌ

That is, “O young men, whoever among you can afford it, let him get married, for it is more effective in lowering the gaze and guarding chastity, and whoever cannot then he should fast, for it will be a restraint for him.”¹²

This *hadith* teaches that individuals who are not able to get married should fast in order to guard their chastity. Hence, such a person that can afford to do so, should get married at the right time. At the same time, it should be remembered that Islam has stressed a simplistic life. One should not think that extravagant means are required for marriage. Thus, a good prospect should not be rejected simply on the basis of desiring extravagance. However, for those individuals who absolutely cannot afford to marry while having the desire and willingness to do so, we find guidance in the following *hadith*:

It is narrated by Sahl bin Sa'd: A lady came to the Prophet^{sa} and declared that she had decided to offer herself to Allah and His Prophet. The Prophet^{sa} said, "I am not in need of women." A man said (to the Prophet^{sa}), "Please marry her to me." The Prophet^{sa} said (to him), "Give her a garment." The man said, "I cannot afford it." The Prophet^{sa} said, "Give her anything, even if it were an iron ring." The man apologized again. The Prophet^{sa} then asked him, "What do you know of the Quran by heart?" He replied, "I know such and such portion of the Quran (by heart)." The Prophet^{sa} said, "Then I marry her to you for that much of the Quran which you know by heart."¹³

Therefore, affordability is very relative and not a pivotal requirement for marriage. Instead of seeking worldly 'affordability', Islam lays much more importance on searching for a partner for the sake of guarding one's chastity, and keeping one's faith, morality and religiousness. To sacrifice these aspects for worldly matters is not the right way. Moreover, Islam encourages that very simple ceremonies should be held for weddings, and to live a simple life.

The Holy Quran has clearly instructed that, firstly, one should marry, and have the desire to do so. Secondly, if one is seen as poor and unable to carry the responsibility of marriage, they should still get married with the trust that Allah will provide for them the means from His bounty.¹⁴ It is stated:

وَأَنْكِحُوا الْأَيَامَىٰ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ
يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُعْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣١﴾

The meaning is, “And arrange marriages for widows from among you, and your male slaves and female slaves who are fit *for marriage*. If they be poor, Allah will grant them means out of His bounty; and Allah is Bountiful, All-knowing” (24:33). Furthermore, with regard to those who still find themselves without means and without prospects for marriage, the next verse states:

وَلَيْسَتَعْفِيفِ الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ نِكَاحًا حَتَّىٰ يُغْنِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ط

That is, “And those who find no *means of marriage* should keep themselves chaste, until Allah grants them means out of His bounty” (24:34).

In the commentary of these verses, Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih II^{ra} states that the first verse clearly indicates that if a person rejects a prospective option on the basis of their own lack of wealth, this is not correct, because Allah the Almighty has already promised to provide means for those who marry and pray to Him in hope. However, if due to a person’s financial situation, others do not accept their proposal for marriage, then they should protect themselves from immorality and guard their chastity until Allah grants them a good option for marriage.¹⁵ Therefore, whereas one should make every effort to earn enough means for marriage and provide for the needs of the family, it does not mean that proposals and prospects may be rejected on this basis.

WHY IS A WALI REQUIRED?

One of the essential requirements of an Islamic marriage is that both the woman and her *wali* (guardian) are agreed on the marriage. That

means that if either the woman or her *wali* are not agreed to the marriage proposal, the marriage cannot take place. This requirement in Islam is based on the instructions of the Holy Prophet^{sa}:

لَا نِكَاحَ إِلَّا بِوَالِيٍّ

That is, “There is no marriage without the permission of the guardian.”¹⁶ The primary purpose of this requirement is that the rights of the woman are safeguarded. A *wali*—usually the father in most cases—is meant to provide an extra layer of protection for the woman. Contrary to what critics of Islam imagine, this is a great effort put forward by Islam to protect and safeguard women’s rights. The *wali* can oversee and ensure that the woman is not being mistreated, compelled, extorted, etc.

Whereas the Islamic teachings are beautiful and the core aim of this teaching is to provide the best support for the woman, there is no denying that some people abuse their rights or the position granted to them. There are some instances where the *wali* misuses the position granted to him and makes a decision that may not be in the best interest of the woman. In such cases, the woman has the right to ask Hazrat Khalifatul Masih (may Allah be his Helper) to intervene and protect her rights. In some cases, the Khalifa of the time may even choose to become the *wali* himself or appoint another *wali* for the woman who can better safeguard her rights.¹⁷

We see in the example of the Holy Prophet^{sa} that he never allowed any *wali* to abuse his position and always protected the rights of the woman. For instance, once a woman came to the Holy Prophet^{sa} and said, “My father married me to his brother’s son so that he might

raise his status thereby.” The Holy Prophet^{sa} gave her the choice, and she said, “I approve of what my father did, but I wanted women to know that their fathers have no right to do this.”¹⁸ Hence, it is clear that this position should never be abused by the *wali*.

ARE TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES UPHELD IN ISLAM?

An important issue related to modern living and marriage is the way gender roles are being inverted or changed. In the past, men would be seen as the sole providers of income and women would be seen as confined completely to the household. Nowadays, these ideas are considered old and patriarchal. Islam, on the other hand, has taken the middle path by upholding some of the gender roles while at the same time ensuring that there is no of discrimination or improper treatment of any of the genders.

The first point to understand in this regard is that Islam has not assigned stringent roles randomly. Instead, they are based on the natural order of things. Women have the ability to have children and this means that they have a greater responsibility for the proper upbringing of children. Men, on the other hand, have the responsibility to provide for the family. This however does not mean that there is a firm demarcation between gender roles. A wife can support her husband in order to provide for the family if needed, and a husband should assist the wife in taking care of the children. As such, the wife or mother has the *primary* role of upbringing children and she can support her husband if need be, as long as her primary role is not sacrificed or neglected. Similarly, the *primary* role of the husband or father is to provide for the family and, while

fulfilling the primary role in the best manner possible, he is also required to fully support the upbringing of his children.

This is indicated in the following verse of the Holy Quran:

وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۖ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ ط

That is, “And they (the women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them in equity; but men have a rank above them” (2:229). What does this ‘rank’ refer to? It is in reference to the man’s responsibility to provide for his wife and children, as pointed out in the following verse:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ط

Meaning, “Men are guardians over women because Allah has made some of them excel others, and because they (men) spend of their wealth” (4:35). This spending of their wealth is for their families and is also pointed out in another verse:

وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ط

That is, “And the man to whom the child belongs shall be responsible for their (the mothers’) food and clothing according to usage” (2:234). In light of these beautiful teachings of the Holy Quran, Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih IVth points out that:

...some medieval-minded *ulamas* (doctors of religion) deduce and claim the superiority of men over women whereas the verse only refers to an advantage that the breadwinner has over his dependants. As such, the guardian is better qualified to exert

moral pressure on the wards to continue to remain on the right path. As far as basic human rights are concerned, it does not in any way refer to women being unequal or to men's superiority over women.¹⁹

This makes it clear that no discrimination is being taught against the wife or the husband. What is being done is that some roles are being assigned for the harmonious progression of family life.

DOES ISLAM ALLOW DOMESTIC ABUSE?

One issue that is often conflated with Islam is that of domestic abuse. It is presumed that certain verses of the Holy Quran give encouragement or freedom for men to physically beat their wives. First of all, the station that Islam has given to women is incomparable with any other faith. Secondly, we see from the example of the Holy Prophet^{sa} that he treated his wives and daughters with the utmost kindness and never hurt any one of them. He was following the beautiful commandment in the Holy Quran laid out as follows:

وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ^ع

Meaning, "And consort with them in kindness" (4:20). Regarding his own conduct, he stated very beautifully:

خَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِيهِ، وَأَنَا خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِي

Meaning, "The best of you is the one who is best to his wife (or family), and I am the best of you to my wives (or family)."²⁰ It is inconceivable that in light of these teachings, a Muslim man presumes that he has the freedom to be violent to his wife.

It is wrongly assumed by some critics of Islam, and unfortunately some Muslims as well, that Islam gives them the permission to physically beat and harm their wives. This is drawn from Chapter 4, verse 35, of the Holy Quran where Allah says:

وَالَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاصْرَبُوهُنَّ^ع

Meaning, “And *as for* those on whose part you fear disobedience, admonish them and leave them alone in their beds, and chastise them.” At one occasion, Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih IVth discussed this issue at length and we quote it in its entirety below:

If you fear or feel that despite fulfilling the rights (of your wives), some wives do not refrain from discord and conflict, so much so that they do not even desist from becoming violent against their husbands, what should you do in such a situation? Allah did not say that if they are causing conflict, you should also pursue conflict, as it is your right. If you read ahead, there are three conditions in this verse which are not seen by critics.

If they (i.e. the wives) initiate (the conflict) by having a rebellious attitude and do not refrain from violence against their husbands, the husbands should also have the freedom to do whatever they wish. However, the Holy Quran does not grant this freedom. Instead, keeping in view the sensitivity as well as some weaknesses of women, it says:

فَعِظُوهُنَّ

“Admonish them.” Since you are powerful, and *qawwaam* (a guardian), and God Almighty has granted you advantages in

many ways, you should demonstrate forbearance and give advice. If the advice does not work, the second step is:

وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ

“And leave them alone in their beds.”

Now, it would be very foolish to presume that it is a one-sided punishment to leave a wife alone in the bed. In many cases, it is possible that the wife finds peace after having been left alone in the bed, and is thankful that she has found some relief from her husband. However, when a man is prevented from maintaining intimacy, he is in reality being given a greater punishment as compared to his wife.

Hence, the Holy Quran gives this teaching to diminish the anger of the husband and obliges him to be patient. If all these means do not lead to a sense of regret in the wife, and she continues to seek conflict and discord in her house, and initiates violence against her husband, which is what *nushooz* (disobedience) refers to, what would be the requirement of justice in this case? It would only be that the man should also chastise her to some extent in order to oblige her to turn to decency.

The permission to chastise wives has then been confined under some strict conditions. The Holy Prophet^{sa} has said that one should chastise in such a way that the wife is not slapped in the face and no mark is left on her body as a result of the chastisement.²¹ In other words, just as children are chastised in a very light way, in the same way, softness should be adopted to the extent possible. It is proven from experience that if a person’s skin is pinched severely, it can leave a mark (on the skin), and if

someone is beaten with a stick, it would leave deep scars. Hence, (through these teachings) the Holy Prophet^{sa} has ensured that both of these scenarios do not occur.²²

It is also noted in *ahadith* that on some occasions, the Holy Prophet^{sa} completely forbade beating of wives:

وَلَا تَضْرِبُوهُنَّ وَلَا تُفْتِيحُوهُنَّ

That is, “Do not beat them and do not revile them.”²³ Similarly, he is reported to have said:

لَا تَضْرِبُوا إِمَاءَ اللَّهِ

That is, “Do not beat Allah’s handmaidens.”²⁴ This further reinforces the point that initiating any kind of violence against one’s wife is not allowed in Islam. The scenario discussed in the above verse is very rare and only when the wife initiates the violence. And even in those circumstances, the requirement is that it should not leave a mark on the body which, in turn, makes this only a symbolic form of punishment.

As such, there was no occasion in the life of the Holy Prophet^{sa}—who is a role model for all Muslim men—to even lightly chastise any of his wives. Hazrat Ayesah^{ra} narrates:

قَالَتْ مَا ضَرَبَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ خَادِمًا لَهُ وَلَا امْرَأَةً وَلَا ضَرَبَ
بِيَدِهِ شَيْئًا

Meaning, “The Messenger^{sa} of Allah never beat any of his servants, or wives, and his hand never hit anything.”²⁵ What is more is that Hazrat Ibn ‘Abbas^{ra}, a great scholar of the Holy Quran, was once

asked about the kind of chastisement that is allowed for the husband in the following narration:²⁶

عن عطاء قال قلت لابن عباس: ما الضرب غير مبرح؟ قال السواك و شبيهه
يضرها به

That is, Hazrat 'Ata asked Hazrat 'Abbas, "What do the words *ghaira mubarrah* mean?" He said, "Chastising them [that is, one's wife] with *miswak* or something similar to it." The word *miswak* refers to soft twigs that were used in those days to clean one's teeth. This illustrates further that the form of chastisement allowed is extremely light and is nothing comparable to the kind of domestic abuse that some women face. *That* abuse falls into criminal behaviour and should be reported to the police.

It is for this reason that Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) has said that those men who are abusive to their wives should be reported to the police. He says:

Men who are cruel to their wives and throw them out of the home do not even consider the intensity of the weather outside. There are such cruel fathers who do not realize that the mother has a few months old baby in her arms in the intense weather. Nizam-e-Jama'at [i.e. the administration of the Community] should help these women against such people. If this means registering a case with the police, it should be done. The idea should not be that it will be sorted within the Jama'at without seeking outside help. If a decision can be reached at a later stage within the Jama'at, it should be done, [and the] case can be withdrawn. But an initial report [to the authorities] should definitely be made.²⁷

Even during the time of the Promised Messiah^{as}, he was told by God through revelation when Abdul Karim sahib had spoken harshly with his wife, as he explains:

...Maulavi 'Abdul-Karim had spoken somewhat harshly to his wife. This caused the commandment that such harsh language should not be used. Normally a believer should be gentle and courteous towards everyone though on occasion a harsh expression might be employed like a bitter medicine, but only in case of need and to the degree needed. Harshness should not become a habit.²⁸

The Promised Messiah^{as} further advises:

...there are those who treat women with such severity and harshness that it is hard to distinguish their women from animals. They are treated worse than slaves and beasts. They beat them so mercilessly as if they were lifeless objects...The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is the perfect example for us in every aspect of life. Study his life and see how he conducted himself in relation to women. In my esteem, a man who stands up against a woman is a coward and not a man. If you study the life of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) you will find that he was so gracious that, despite his station of dignity, he would stop even for an old woman and would not move on until she permitted him to do so.²⁹

Further to this, we have earlier noted the example of the Promised Messiah^{as} where he once raised his voice while speaking to his voice and felt so much grief that he sought forgiveness from God for a long time, offered prayers and gave alms.³⁰ Hence, Muslim men

should follow the examples of the Holy Prophet^{sa} and the Promised Messiah^{as} as they understood the teachings of the Holy Quran better and acted more in accordance to them as compared to others.

WHAT IS THE ISLAMIC PROCEDURE FOR DIVORCE?

In Islam, the contract of marriage is thought to be sacred and the husband and wife should try their best to make their marriage work. If the marriage does not pan out then divorce is intended to be used as a last resort. Even though divorce is permitted, it is not promoted at all and the Holy Prophet^{sa} states:

أَبْغَضُ الْحَالِ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى الطَّلَاقُ

That is, "It is the worst of all that is permitted."³¹

A divorce from the man's side is referred to as *talaaq* and it can be given in writing or by verbally telling the wife. The man does not have to mention the reason for the divorce in official correspondence, and this is meant especially to conceal any weaknesses of the wife and to protect her from shame in public. It is also preferable that the *talaaq* is given when the man is in control of his senses, and is calm and collected. However, even if the *talaaq* is given in anger, it can still be valid. Explaining this further, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) states:

As far as the *talaaq*, which is issued in a state of anger, is concerned, when a man divorces his wife, he takes this step indeed out of anger at her behaviour that he considers unbearable and futile. No man would divorce his wife while being happy

with her. Therefore, a divorce issued in such a state of indignation will also be effective.

However, if the person was raging to such an extent that he was in a state of insanity and he hastily divorced his wife without considering the consequences, but became remorseful once the state of madness subsided and he finally realized his mistake, then, for this kind of situation, the Holy Quran has said:

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا كَسَبْتُمْ قُلُوبُكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٦﴾

“Allah will not call you to account for such of your oaths as are vain, but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned. And Allah is Most Forgiving, Forbearing.” (2:226)³²

It is also recommended that the *talaaq* is given in a period of cleanliness when the woman is not menstruating but even a *talaaq* given during menstruation is valid. The *talaaq* will be in effect once the wife receives the news and that is when her waiting period will start. The proof of the *talaaq* can be a testimony from both the husband and the wife or alternatively, a witness or written proof can be used. The husband must still pay the wife the *haq mehr* since he initiated the divorce.

While giving *talaaq* once is enough for a separation in marriage but Islam has given an option for reconciliation to avoid having a permanent decision made based on a temporary feeling of anger. The husband can give *talaaq* to his wife on three occasions before they are completely separated. It is recommended that these are in fact three separate occasions without reconciliation, instead of all

three at once. The wife should preferably be in a state of cleanliness and in between each *talaaq* there should be a three month gap. The reasoning for this is that if the man has a change of heart, he can reconcile with his wife. The best form of *talaaq* prescribed is one where a man affirms his decision over three months simply by not reconciling. In Islamic terminology, this is referred to as *talaaq-e-ahsan*. At any time during the three-month period, he may use his right to reconcile if he wishes. On the other hand, *talaaq-e-hasn* refers to a *talaaq* where a man expressly communicates his wishes to be separated three times in three months while the woman has gone through three menstrual cycles. By affirming his desire to be separated three times, he fulfils his obligations and sets the woman free to marry someone else.

After the first *talaaq*, the man can reconcile with his wife within the three-month period, but if the three-month period has passed, they need to have a *nikah* in order to start living together again. If the husband gives another *talaaq*, then once again he can take his wife back within the three-month period or have a *nikah* after the three-month period. Upon the third *talaaq*, the husband and wife cannot marry each other again. The only exception for them to marry again is if the wife marries another man who either dies or divorces her for a legitimate reason. Intentionally marrying another man only to make it halal (permissible) for a marriage to take place between the original partners is wrong and sinful. This practice is referred in hadith as *halala* and it is forbidden by the Holy Prophet^{sa}.³³

When it comes to women, they can also have a divorce, but the procedure for them is to take the matter to a judge who is obliged to

listen to their grievances and issue a decree on their behalf that is known as *khula'*. Just as a woman is required to have a *wali* at the time of marriage, she needs a judge at the time of *khula'* for the divorce to be effective. This requirement exists in order to afford greater protection to the woman. The judge ensures that her rights are not being infringed upon unnecessarily or that she is not being forced into a divorce. Furthermore, the judge must decide if the irreconcilable differences brought forward by her mean that she should be told to renounce her financial benefits including *haq mehr*. On the other hand, if the man is proven to have pressured her for *khula'*, her benefits remain intact and the man is obligated to pay *haq mehr* and support any dependents. What is more is that the husband cannot force his wife to stay with him. The judge can issue the divorce regardless of the husband's wishes. It should also be noted here that the wife is not required to provide elaborate reasoning to the judge for the issuance of the divorce. Her reason for divorce can simply be dislike for the husband.

Epilogue

The pursuit of knowledge is something highly valued in Islam. The Quran teaches us the beautiful prayer:

وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

That is, “And say, ‘O my Lord, increase me in knowledge’” (20:115). Similarly, the Holy Prophet^{sa} taught us the following prayer:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ عِلْمًا نَافِعًا وَرِزْقًا طَيِّبًا وَعَمَلًا مُتَقَبَّلًا

Meaning, “O Allah! I ask You for knowledge that is beneficial, and goodly provision, and deeds that are acceptable and draw me nearer (to You).”¹ The fact that you have read this book means that you are trying to better understand marriage either as someone who is looking to get married, is already married and is hoping to improve his or her marriage, or you are a parent and want to ensure that best Islamic practices are followed while helping your child to get married. We do not claim that we have answered all your questions in this book, but we do hope that reading this book gave you the necessary guidelines towards a more fulfilling married life for yourself or your child.

The pursuit of knowledge must continue nevertheless and below we recommend some books that can help in this endeavour:

1. *Domestic Issues and Their Solutions*
2. *Garments for Each Other*
3. *Way of the Seekers*
4. *Paradise under Your Feet*
5. *Pathway to Paradise*

All of these books are available on www.alislam.org. In addition, in the two appendices of this book we present the English translation of two selected sermons that are on the topic of marriage. One is a sermon given by Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) in 2017, and the other is a *nikah* sermon given by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih II^{ra} in 1934.

Peace be on those who follow the guidance!

Appendix I

Matrimonial Alliances and Issues

We present below the translation of a very important sermon delivered by Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) on the subject of marriage. It contains advice that is absolutely crucial for a successful marriage. It was delivered on March 3, 2017, and it can be found in both audio and video formats on www.alislam.org. After reciting Surah Al-Fatiha, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) stated:

Marital conditions of young men and women and the issues that arise after marriage are such issues that can create an atmosphere of anxiety and agitation in the home. Domestic troubles arising after marriage may become a cause of concern for not only the husband and the wife, but can become a source of anxiety for both sets of parents. And when there are children involved, they add to the anxiety. And consequently, in some cases, children are negatively impacted in both religious and worldly matters, and this in turn creates even more anxiety for the parents and the wider family. And thus, this sets off a chain of anguish and anxiety. Almost every day I receive mail to this effect, or people speak of their difficulties in personal meetings with me.

On the one hand, there is the issue of marriage proposals for women. When the girl reaches the age of marriage, education is cited

as a reason for not marrying at the appropriate age. It is said that she is busy with studies, and when she eventually marries at a mature age, having completed all her studies, a lack of mutual understanding is cited as justification for distances to develop in the relationship, and for strains to manifest.

Furthermore, it has also come to light that, in some instances, friends and acquaintances of some women imbibe certain negative ideas into their hearts and minds. For instance, they say: 'You have many great rights in these countries. You should demand your rights from your husband. I do not consider you my husband and it is not necessary to listen to everything a husband says'. Sometimes, even the parents teach their daughters such things which destroy the trust between a man and a woman or a husband and wife. Doubts and uncertainties may also begin to develop.

It is sad to see that young women from Pakistan who marry and move to Western countries become influenced by the atmosphere and surroundings and then start making unreasonable demands. In fact, there have been some cases where they end the relationship even before making any effort to build a household. And this situation is not just with the women, rather the men are also doing similar things. In fact, with respect to the men, the situation is somewhat more extreme, and the reason is that many of the young men and women do not adhere to *qaul-e-sadeed*, i.e., speaking clear and transparent truth. It has a profound link with marriage. The verses of the Quran which are recited at the time of *nikah* place great emphasis on truthfulness.

All the matters are not revealed to one another. Furthermore, on some occasions, the parents of the young women force them into marriages where there is incompatibility of education and lifestyle, and it is presumed that things will be fine eventually.

Similarly, some young men are interested elsewhere but they are unable to reject the proposal offered to them by their parents resulting in them marrying in Pakistan or they are wedded amongst family friends. And then, after some time, the innocent young woman is mistreated. First, she is mistreated by her husband, and then the same in-laws or mother-in-law who brought her home with great passion begin to mistreat her. After that, the other relatives treat her unjustly. Nonetheless, whether it is the woman or the man or the in-laws of one side or the other, it is not possible to place all the blame on one side. In some cases the man is at fault and, in other instances, it is the woman.

As I have mentioned before, these domestic issues have a negative impact on the children. After having a few children together and living a comfortable life for a long time, the man suddenly decides that he is unable to cope with his wife and that he will marry again or he decides to divorce his wife completely. Alternatively, after a period of time has elapsed, the wife says that she has spent a long time with her husband in pain and cannot tolerate it any longer, and files for *khula'* (divorce filed by the wife).

Here I would also like to mention that within the Jama'at, the rate of *khula'* is higher than *talaaq* (divorce filed by the husband). This means that the number of requests for *khula'* are greater. In such circumstances, the children are greatly affected. Even from the

surveys of worldly organizations, it is proven that once a mother and father have separated, the children's psychological, moral and other capabilities are impacted—regardless of which parent they live with.

Nonetheless, irrespective of where lies the blame, these are painful realities. The men level allegations against the women, and say that due to the atmosphere of the West, the women are creating problems by focusing on their careers and are failing to fulfill their responsibilities towards their marriage. Or they say that owing to certain circumstances they wanted to live with their parents but the woman did not wish to do so. Or the cause (of the rift) may be that they have no grounding in religious knowledge. Or there are unreasonable expectations from the man. For instance, he should buy a new house immediately or that a house should belong to him.

Furthermore, in terms of the relationship between a husband and a wife, there is interference from the parents of the woman. Also, misgivings arise as a result of not being honest about one another's situation, and not being truthful. As I mentioned before, people do not speak the entire truth which is extremely important.

Similarly, women have certain perceptions about the man and his family. For example, the mother of the man, or other close relatives, constantly praise him in front of the wife saying that their son is like such and such with the intention to portray the woman as inferior in one way or another. For instance, they will say that she is short or that she is overweight or that she does not have a fair complexion, and so on. And if she has a job, even then she is taunted for working.

Then there is the interference of the family of the man in the affairs of the husband and wife. Some women have complained that the men are failing to fulfill their obligations of marriage and they do not have a sense of responsibility. Under the influence of the society, if a man of 25 or 26 [years in age] is asked that he is now of an age of marriage, he replies by saying, 'I am still young and therefore I am unable to marry at present'. Due to societal trends, this issue is present among Ahmadi youth and youth of Asian origin who say they are young and unable to bear the responsibilities of marriage. If they are young and are unable to cope with the responsibilities of marriage, then what is the use of marrying at all? Nonetheless, a chain of grievances from both sides begins and keeps increasing.

In a similar manner, as I mentioned earlier, having spent many years living together, and when children are growing up, grievances between couples begin to develop. The issues are childish and are due to impatience and bad company. If the reason for these domestic issues impacting various age groups could be stated in one line, it would be: They have moved away from religion. There is unfamiliarity of religious teachings and a lack of interest in them as well as an increase in the desire for worldly pursuits. Thus, if we wish to find a solution to all these issues, then we must search for it in light of religious teachings.

If we count ourselves to be Ahmadi and have vowed to give precedence to faith over all worldly pursuits, then we must search for remedies that we find in the religious teachings of the Holy Quran, the *ahadith* and the teachings of the Promised Messiah^{as}. We are very fortunate that we have accepted Islam and are Muslims

who have accepted the Promised Messiah^{as} in this age. He has taken a pledge from us that we will give precedence to faith over all worldly affairs, regardless of circumstances. We recite this pledge at different events but when it comes time to fulfill it, we oversee it. When it comes to the time of marriage, even those who are readily serving the faith forget this key principal even though the Holy Prophet^{sa} has given special guidance that one must give precedence to faith over all worldly matters (at the time of marriage). Having given preference to faith, if a person gains material wealth as well, then this is due to the grace of Allah the Almighty. In the terminology of worldly individuals, it can be called a 'bonus'. However, if one strives only in worldly aspirations while claiming to give precedence to the faith, then this will lead to problems because this is not true.

Thus, when searching for suitors in marriage one should always remember the teaching of the Holy Prophet^{sa} which he gave as a priority for such occasions. It was narrated on the authority of Hazrat Abu Huraira^{ra} that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said, "One marries a woman for four reasons, namely, her wealth, her family status and rank, her beauty and her piety. Therefore, you should choose a woman who is virtuous and God Almighty will make it a blessing for you." Thus, if men and their families bear this principal in mind then women and their families will align their preference with faith. When faith is given preference, many grievances and reservations harboured by both men and women, and their families, about one another will be removed.

A man who is in search for a pious woman, and is giving preference to faith, will then have to make sure that his own actions are also in accordance with the teachings of the faith. If one acts on the teachings prescribed by the faith then the trivial matters and issues that cause disorder in the home will be removed. Also, the family of the man will not attempt to create hardships for the woman.

Furthermore, Islam teaches that although one should look for piety when looking for a partner, every partnership is not compatible. Therefore, before agreeing on any proposal, one should perform *istikhara*. Goodness for the relationship should be sought from Allah the Exalted. And if in the eyes of Allah the Exalted, the marriage will not have the best outcome, Allah the Exalted may prevent it from taking place. Regarding this, at one occasion, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I^{ra} very eloquently stated, “The Holy Prophet^{sa} has been extremely benevolent towards us that he has shown us those ways which will enable us to find peace in our marriages. And the objective of marriage taught in the Quran, which is comfort and love, will be attained.” People enter into a wedlock in order to become a source of contentment for each other and so that one forms a relationship built on love and affection.

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I^{ra} further states, “The first way (for a successful marriage) is that the intention for marriage should be righteousness.” As mentioned earlier, one should look for piety (in a potential spouse). [He says:] “Desiring outstanding beauty, seeking wealth and affluence, or (pursuing) family status and rank should not be the main factors (one looks for in a marriage). The intention

should be pure first and foremost. After this, the second way is that much *istikhara* should be done prior to *nikah*.”

Thus, before the wedding ceremony if a person prays to Allah the Almighty for a life of comfort and love, and also prays that if there is comfort and goodness in it for him or her, the proposal is accepted and marriage takes place. Then, through the grace of Allah the Almighty that marriage will be successful. However, we should bear in mind that even after the marriage, Satan continues his onslaught using different methods. Therefore, one should always pray that their marriage is a source of peace, love and harmony.

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I^{ra} has explained the importance of *istikhara* prayer further. At one point, he advises, “*Nikah* is one endeavour among many important endeavours.” It is not an insignificant thing; in fact, it should be considered of great importance. [He says:] “The majority of the people think that a potential spouse should belong to a prestigious clan with a great lineage, have wealth and governance, and is young and handsome. However our Holy Prophet^{sa} has said that we should try to find someone that is righteous” (weather looking for a man or a woman). [He says:] “Since it is difficult to know one’s true intellect, moral qualities and integrity, especially in a short period of time—the guidance is that we should definitely do *istikhara*.” Some marriages break and people say that initially they thought that the person was religious, had high morals, and everything checked out, but later it turned out to be quite the contrary. All this detail cannot be known perfectly. He says, “We are unaware of our fate, but Allah the Almighty knows the unseen. Therefore, the first thing is that one

should perform the *istikhara* prayer extensively and seek help from Allah the Almighty.”

In relation to the verses recited during the *nikah* ceremony, he states that they contain the advice that relationships should be taken care of in light of *taqwa* (righteousness). Speaking clear and transparent truth should be the practice. One should always assess how they are preparing for the next life. If one wishes to attain success in life, then righteousness is essential. In this regard, when the time comes for *nikah* after *istikhara*, he says, “In that *Khutba* as well (i.e. the verses which are recited during the *nikah* sermon), our attention is drawn toward those prayers and to ponder and reflect over the consequences of our actions. Moreover, at the time of congratulating one another after the *nikah*, the Holy Prophet^{sa} taught the following prayer:

بَارِكْ اللَّهُ لَكَ وَ بَارِكْ عَلَيْكَ وَ جَمِّعْ بَيْنَكُمَا فِي الْخَيْرِ

That is, ‘May Allah the Almighty bless you and send down His blessings upon you both and enable both of you to perform good deeds.’” Thus, at every stage, prayers are offered for goodness and blessings and this results in the marriage being blessed.

However, some people are still under the influence of cultural practices of Pakistan and India and are thus entangled in the issues of family clans, tribes and race. The fact is that Allah the Almighty has stated that when a proposal for marriage comes, one must pray, perform the *istikhara* prayer and give priority to faith. To the contrary, such people completely lose sight of prayer and giving preference to faith, and instead focus on the clan and tribe.

The Promised Messiah^{as} states, “When finding a suitable match for marriage, one should only look at whether the other person is pious, righteous and not afflicted with a kind of difficulty that could potentially cause discord later on. And it must be remembered that, in Islam, one’s tribe and race is not a means of distinguishing one from the other. Rather, it is determined only by one’s level of *taqwa* and piety.” Thus, it is a fundamental principal that one should look at *taqwa*. All other considerations are innovations. The other guidance is regarding compatibility, which is very important to consider, but there should not be any rigidity.

To what extent should compatibility be considered? The Promised Messiah^{as} was asked this question by someone and we have his answer. “A friend asked the question that an Ahmadi wants to wed his daughter into a family that is not compatible with his, even though he has an option available that is compatible. What is your guidance regarding this?” The Promised Messiah^{as} said, “If a compatible match is found within the family, it is better to accept it instead of an incompatible match. But this is not obligatory” (That is, it is not required, but it is better). He says, “In such instances, everyone knows what is best for their children. If one does not find a suitable match in one’s own family, then there is no harm if he looks elsewhere for his daughter. And it would not be permissible to compel such a person to arrange his daughter’s wedding only within the family.”

Some people take great pride over their family status. A person with this belief was once held to account by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I^{ra}. On the one hand, they have great pride and, on the other hand,

their own condition is not good. Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II^{ra} narrates that a person once came to Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I^{ra} and said that he is a *sayyed* (i.e. a descendant from the lineage of the Holy Prophet^{sa}) and is looking to arrange his daughter's marriage. He asked him for help. Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I^{ra} stated, "I am ready to arrange for you the same dowry that the Holy Prophet^{sa} had gifted to his daughter, Hazrat Fatima^{ra} (for her dowry)." Hearing this, he exclaimed, "Do you intend to cause me disgrace?" This is the extent of the custom of giving lavish dowries, and this causes some problems as well. Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I^{ra} stated, "Is your prestige greater than the prestige of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}? Your prestige in fact lies in being his descendant as a *Sayyid*. Then, if giving this amount of dowry did not cause any disgrace to the Holy Prophet^{sa}, how can it be a cause of disgrace for you?" A person who is a *Sayyid* should not feel any disgrace (in following the practice of the Holy Prophet^{sa}).

Sometimes, women are taunted for bringing a small amount of dowry (for marriage). The above example should serve as a lesson for both those who cause emotional stress for women as well as for the family of the bride as they should only give in accordance with their means. They should certainly give dowry but they should not place an undue burden on themselves, and only gift what they can easily afford.

If there is a genuine interest in a particular proposal, then the parties should meet one another prior to *istikhara* prayer. It has been reported by Hazrat Abu Huraira^{ra} that he was in the company of the Holy Prophet^{sa} when a companion came to the Holy Prophet^{sa} and

said that he has sent a proposal of marriage to one of the women belonging to the *Ansaar* (i.e. those companions who originally belonged to the city of Madinah). The Holy Prophet^{sa} asked, "Have you seen that woman?" He said, "No." The Holy Prophet^{sa} said, "You should see her first, because the eyes of the *Ansaar* have something particular in them." Hence, there is no objection if the man visits the house of the woman and sees her.

However, some families of the men's side visit the homes of the women along with them, with an arrogant attitude. They say they wish to consider the proposal as *Rishta Nata* department has proposed it. But they display much arrogance as they make all sorts of unpleasant remarks. Despite the fact that they have seen the photo of the woman, and have exchanged their details with one another, they deliberately linger over the proposal, and if, in the meanwhile, they find a better proposal from a worldly perspective, they opt for it instead. This practice is completely wrong.

The majority of Ahmadi women respect their parents' wishes and they accept their suggested proposals. But as I mentioned, in certain cases, the man's family visits the woman's house and then fail to proceed with the marriage. After having seen the picture and learned the details about one another—such as height, description, etc.—then there is no need to hesitate without any reason, nor should they say things which hurt the young woman's sentiments. If one truly understands the purpose of marriage according to Islam, then they would never hurt the sentiments of women, nor would the families of men display such arrogance and play with the emotions of others.

Regarding the objectives and purpose of marriage, the Promised Messiah^{as} states:

The Holy Quran has taught us that one should get married in order to safeguard one's chastity [what is the Purpose of *nikah*? It is to safeguard one's chastity] and to pray for righteous progeny [once the marriage has taken place, one should pray for righteous progeny] just as Allah the Almighty states:

مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسْفِحِينَ

[4:25] That means that one's intention for marriage should be to enter the citadel of *taqwa* (righteousness) and chastity.

The word *muhsineen* [in the above verse] also signifies that one who does not get married will not only face spiritual afflictions, but also physical afflictions. Thus, it is evident from the Holy Quran that marriage has three purposes: [and these should be the only objectives; what are they?] To safeguard one's chastity, maintain one's physical wellbeing, and acquiring offspring.

Therefore, if these points are kept in mind, there will not be any problems at the time of arranging marriages. Also, instead of looking at worldly aspects, one should give precedence to faith and then arrange the marriage keeping the above points in mind.

At times the cause of conflict in the home is that when the woman gets married, the husband does not have a house of his own and is living with his parents. Sometimes, this is because the husband does not have an income that could afford him a house of his own, or he is still studying and has no other choice. In this case, the wife should understand that the husband's lower income or studies make it difficult for him to buy a separate house. In these circumstances, she

should patiently live with the in-laws for the time being. However, in some cases, the wife and her parents become impatient and break the relationship, even after the marriage has taken place, and they file for divorce. This is wrong. If she cannot live with the in-laws, she should make it clear from the beginning, and then not rush into marriage until the man can afford it.

On the other hand, there are certain men who live at home due to a careless attitude, or pressure from the parents, even though they can afford their own house. They make the excuse that their parents are elderly which is why it is important to stay with them, even though their other siblings live with their parents [who can support them]. Even if there are no siblings, the parents are healthy and can live on their own without any support. In such cases, it is only a stubborn demand of the parents. What does Islam say in this regard? Allah, the Exalted, states in the Holy Quran:

لَيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَى حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْأَعْرَجِ حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ حَرَجٌ وَلَا
 لَا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ آبَائِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ
 أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ

“There is no harm for the blind and there is no harm for the lame, and there is no harm for the sick and none for yourselves, that you eat from your own houses, or the houses of your fathers, or the houses of your mothers...” (24:62). This is in fact a part of a much longer verse. Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I^{ra} has given a beautiful commentary of this part of the verse. He says, “People from the Indian subcontinent often complain about disputes between the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law in the home. If they adhered

to the teachings of the Quran, such problems will never arise. See how in this verse it is commanded that the houses should be independent. The mother should have her own house. Married children should have their own houses.” The permission to eat in the homes is given because they live in separate houses. Hence, they should have their own homes, unless circumstances do not permit it. By having their own houses, it will not only cause the issues between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law as well as issues between sisters-in-law to end, it will also make the husband and wife become better aware of their responsibilities.

I would also like to add here that there are certain families on the woman’s side who ask the man whether he has a house of his own, prior to committing to the marriage. They ask whether or not he owns a house. If he does not, they refuse the proposal, and this is also completely wrong. Instead of judging by worldly standards, the woman’s side should look at the man’s level of faith. As far as houses are concerned, they are eventually obtained over time as long as there is love and affection in the home.

Similarly, I receive complaints from certain countries that certain people do not opt to wed their daughters with the missionaries simply because the missionary is a life-devotee. This is also wrong. They should consider the faith of the individual (in all circumstances).

Furthermore, Allah the Almighty has instructed men to not react quickly if the wife says something, and not treat her unjustly. They should not express displeasure at what they say. Allah the Almighty states:

وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَمَعْسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُنَّ شَيْئًا
يَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا

[Meaning:] “And consort with them in kindness; and if you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing wherein Allah has placed much good” (Holy Quran, 4:20). Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I^{ra} explains this verse by stating, “Oh dear ones! If you dislike something in your wife, even then you must treat her with kindness. Allah the Almighty states that He shall place much good and greatness in her. It is possible that something is great in reality, and you wrongly perceive it as something bad.”

There are certain husbands who are quick in divorcing their wives, or treat them unkindly or do not take care of their sentiments, or they dislike something they say and treat them harshly as a result. The above advice is for them, that is, they should treat their wives with kindness. You should not be hasty in your decisions even concerning those things which appear to be bad in your opinion. This is because it is possible that something which you perceive as negative may have a hidden quality in it, and you are deprived of it due to your hastiness and wrong treatment. Thus, Allah the Almighty has advised men in numerous ways to treat their wives kindly and men should always keep this in mind.

Another factor which causes conflicts is that men decide to marry a second wife or express the wish for a second marriage. This has resulted in quarrelling in some homes. Men should remember that if Islam allows a second marriage, it is based on some conditions and a genuine reason. It should not be that a man has a happy home with

children and yet opts for a second marriage due to societal influence or simply because he has been granted by Allah the Exalted with some affluence and wants to fulfil his desires, or that he builds an unlawful friendship [with someone] and then marries her.

The Promised Messiah^{as} has expounded this matter in detail and we should keep his guidance in mind. He says, “The law of God should not be abused, contrary to its purpose, nor should it be invoked simply to serve as a shield for self-indulgence” [that is, one should not use the laws of God as a means to fulfill one’s carnal passions]. “Remember! Doing so would be a sin. God Almighty has repeatedly admonished against yielding to carnal passions. Instead, righteousness alone should be your motive for everything.” He says, “If Shariah is used as a shield to fulfill carnal passions only, by having multiple wives, the grave consequence would be that non-Muslims would raise the allegation that Muslims have nothing to show for themselves except multiple wives.” That is, it is not permissible to marry multiple wives only to fulfil carnal desires and self-gratification. This is completely wrong and he says that people would be correct to raise the objection that Muslims have nothing else to do apart from marrying multiple times. He says, “Adultery itself is not the only sin. Instead, becoming a slave to one’s carnal passions is also a sin. One should partake very little from the pleasures of this world [that is, worldly pleasures should be limited in one’s life]. This is so that one becomes the embodiment of:

فَلْيُضْحَكُوا فَلْيَلَّاوْ لِيَكُوْا كَثِيْرًا

This means, one must become the embodiment of ‘Laugh less and cry much’. However, how will one have time to develop this state of tender-heartedness and weeping when they have worldly comforts in abundance and spend their entire time with multiple wives?” The same plight is faced by one who is steeped completely in other futile worldly pursuits. The Promised Messiah^{as} continues, “Often people succumb to a state in which they put all their energies and resources into fulfilling a materialistic desire and become far removed from the will of Allah the Almighty.

Though Allah the Almighty has deemed certain things to be permissible, it does not mean that one’s whole life is spent in their pursuit. Allah the Almighty describes the quality of His servants as:

يَبْتَئُونَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَقِيَامًا

“Those who spend the night before their Lord, prostrate and standing” (Holy Quran, 25:65). Now, one who spends all his time at night with his wives cannot spend it in worship, as Allah the Almighty wills. His marriages are a form of *shirk* (association of partners with God). The Holy Prophet^{sa} had nine wives, yet he spent all his nights in the worship of God. The Promised Messiah^{as} further writes, “Remember! The actual will of God Almighty is that you should not be entirely overcome by lustfulness, and you should only have a second wife in order to fulfill the requirements of *taqwa* (righteousness) if a genuine need arises.” That means that a second marriage should only be based on *taqwa*. Such a marriage is permissible, and it is important for those who wish to have multiple wives to consider whether their marriage is based on *taqwa* or carnal desires. The Promised Messiah^{as} further states, “It should be

remembered that one who marries multiple wives only in pursuit of lust has become distant from the true essence of Islam. He is attracting spiritual ruin for himself if he does not spend his days striving hard and cries little or not at all, and laughs much.”

At the same time, the Promised Messiah^{as} advises women and says that if the husband wishes to marry again with a genuine reason, they should not cause a storm of protest. However, he also said that they have the right to pray that Allah the Almighty never causes them to have to face such a difficulty, as he said that men should not marry simply to fulfill their (lustful) desires.

The Promised Messiah^{as} states:

In the present era certain women have also become involved in somewhat peculiar innovations in the faith. They deeply frown on the Islamic teaching of multiple marriages, as if they no longer consider it a part of faith. They are unaware that the Law of God contains every remedy. If the injunction of multiple marriages did not exist in Islam, such cases which compel men to enter a second marriage would remain unaddressed by the Shariah. Suppose a woman becomes insane or leprous or falls victim to any other disease which forever renders her disable or if such a circumstance arises where, although she is deserving of compassion, she loses her capacities. As the husband is also worthy of compassion since he is unable to live a life of celibacy, it would be cruel, in such a case, to the faculties of a man to prohibit him from entering into a second marriage. In actuality, it is in view of these factors that the divine law of God has left this door open for men. Similarly, in pressing circumstances, God has also

opened an avenue for women. If a husband becomes incapacitated, a woman may ask a judge to allow her a *khula'*, which is also a form of divorce.

Advising the women, he writes:

O women, do not despair. The book that you have been given does not require man-made amendments like the Gospel. It safeguards the rights of men just as it safeguards the rights of women. If a woman is displeased by her husband's multiple marriages, she is at liberty to seek a divorce through the authorities. If the divine law of God was ever to be considered complete, it was imperative that God furnished therein provision for all the diverse circumstances that were to confront the Muslims. O ye women, do not criticize God Almighty when your husbands intend to enter a second marriage. Rather, pray that you are protected from trials and tribulations.

That is, it is permissible to offer the prayer that if the husband wishes to marry another time, Allah protects the wife from this trial and tribulation and the husband refrains from it altogether. He says:

Undoubtedly, a husband who marries two wives and does not treat them equitably is most cruel and shall be held accountable. But you, on your part, must not disobey God and thereby invite His wrath upon yourselves. Everyone is answerable for their deeds. If you become pious in the sight of God Almighty, your husband will be made pious also. Although religious law permits multiple marriages for men in view of various exigencies, there also exists for you the law of divine decree. If the law established by the Shariah should test your resolve then turn towards the law

of divine decree through prayer. For the law of divine decree overpowers even the law of Shariah. Become righteous and do not entirely attach your heart to this world and its attractions.¹

What is the divine decree? It is to pray that God Almighty removes this desire from the husband. Though he is allowed, but he says that if you offer a heart-felt prayer, it is possible that it is accepted, you are saved from any difficulty or trial, and the second marriage never takes place.

May Allah the Exalted grant the members of the Jama'at—the male members and the female members—knowledge and ability to resolve their domestic issues through the teachings of Allah the Exalted. And they give precedence to faith over worldly desires. And they always keep *taqwa* (righteousness) in mind. May Allah the Exalted remove the difficulties in new arrangements of marriage. Many problems are occurring. May Allah the Exalted enable both men and women to understand that marriages are not meant for the fulfillment of worldly desires alone. Rather, they are meant to give precedence to faith, while preparing the next generation to adopt religious ways of life, and having righteous progeny, so that future generations are protected and grow up to serve Islam. In this way, they become recipients of the blessings of Allah the Exalted.

Appendix II

The Important Responsibilities of the Family of the Promised Messiah^{as}

We present below the translation of a nikah sermon delivered by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih II^{ra} which provides very important guidance for a successful marriage. It was delivered on July 2, 1934, at the occasion of the nikah of Sahibzada Mirza Nasir Ahmad sahib^{ra} with Sahibzadi Mansoorah Begum sahiba, daughter of Nawab Ali Khan sahib along with that of Sahibzada Mirza Mansoor Ahmad Sahib^{ra}, son of Hazrat Mirza Shareef Ahmad Sahib^{ra} with his own daughter Sahibzadi Nasirah Begum sahiba. After reciting the verses of the Quran prescribed for a nikah sermon, as practiced by the Holy Prophet^{sa}, Hazrat Khalifatfindul Masih II^{ra} stated:

Regarding the creation of humanity, Allah the Almighty says in the Holy Quran:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

It means: "I have created the man and the jinn for a purpose which is that they should become my servants; that they incorporate the Divine attributefinds within themselves and they become a complete manifestation of Myself [51:57]." That is, despite being a human, every single one of them becomes the reflection of God dwelling upon the surface of the earth. Those people who do not believe in

the existence of God ask: Where is God? Show Him to us. And many believers are astonished and ask how they should respond to this question. The fact is that if they are believers in the true sense, then they themselves should become the answer to this question. God the Almighty says that He has created every person so that they become His reflection. Hence, every true believer is the reflection of God the Almighty and is the *Khalifatullah* (the vicegerent of Allah). In his presence, no one should need to ask to see God. The question is completely meaningless in his presence.

When the sun has risen, who asks to see the sun? And when a river is flowing, who asks to see the river? Every one can see it. Hence, if any person in the world becomes a manifestation of:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

—[And I have not created the Jinn and the men but that they may worship Me (51:57)]—no one needs to ask to be shown God because that person's existence is in itself a manifestation of God Almighty's attributes. All of His attributes manifest magnificently in that person's actions. Regardless, this is the purpose for which God the Almighty has created every person.

fiThe first person made responsible for the attainment of this purpose has been given the name Adam^{as} in the Holy Quran. Hazrat Adam^{as} came and strove to his fullest in order to establish the existence of God Almighty. He was opposed by those people whose lifestyles, comfort and luxury came in danger due to the manifestation of God the Almighty. They made many attempts to cover the light which shone in the world through Hazrat Adam^{as}. But the opponents remained unsuccessful in their efforts. Hazrat

Adam^{as} made the light of God the Almighty shine as brightly as was ordained for that time.

After the time of Adam^{as} came the time of Hazrat Nuh^{as}. At that time also worldly people made every effort to somehow cover the light of God the Almighty. But they were not successful and God the Almighty re-established worship in the world through His glorious signs. Once again, true servants of God Almighty were seen in the world.

After that, Satan gained ground once again and by the time of Hazrat Ibrahim^{as}, he caused the positive impact of Hazrat Nuh^{as} to be lost—from his perspective. Then, through Hazrat Ibrahim^{as}, God caused His light to be shone again and true servants of God were seen again. However, the light that shone through Hazrat Ibrahim^{as} eventually diminished and God sent Hazrat Musa^{as} and shined His light through him.

After Hazrat Musa^{as}, God the Almighty began a continuous succession of prophets until the time of Hazrat Isa^{as}. At that time, the impact of faith in God Almighty—which had weakened over time—began to be seen again in its glory.

However, after Hazrat Isa^{as}, a weakness developed in his movement as well and the light of Allah the Almighty became dim. Satan gained dominance once again and God the Almighty sent the last light—the last source of guidance—for the reformation of humanity, that is, the blessed being of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}.

All Muslims are aware of the severity of the challenge from opponents that was faced by the Holy Prophet^{sa} and the hardships which he had to endure. Our Jama'at continues to face these

challenges in many different ways. The Holy Prophet^{sa} was the last light which was sent, and there is going to be no light to come after him which does not take its brightness from his light. Similarly, his teachings are final and there shall be no teachings that make his teachings obsolete. Regardless, it was ordained for him too that after a period of time, people become deprived of the light which he brought, and Satanic influences increase again, and misguidance spreads in the world. And a discord sets in—the likeness of which cannot be found in this world—which threatens the teachings, virtues, and faithfulness taught by the Holy Prophet^{sa}.

The Holy Prophet^{sa} himself said:

مَا يَبْنَ حَلْقِ أَدَمَ إِلَى قِيَامِ السَّاعَةِ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ أَمْرِ الدَّجَالِ

That is, the evil of the *Dajjal* (Antichrist) will spread, such that from the time of Adam to the Day of Judgment, no evil like would have been seen prior to it. The personage of the Holy Prophet^{sa} was greater than all other persons, and the teachings he brought were greater than all other teachings. In the same way, a kind of discord was going to engulf the world which was greater than any other discord of the past. On the one hand, powers of mercy were manifested to the greatest extent through the Holy Prophet^{sa}. On the other hand, the evil that was going to spread in opposition to him would manifest Satanic powers to the greatest extent. To combat this evil, it was determined by God that a person is sent from the spiritual progeny and followers of the Holy Prophet^{sa}. Through him, the evil of this *Dajjal* would be brought to an end.

We see today that there is no such evil or mischief which was not found in previous eras. Take the example of atheism, which has been found in all nations and in every time period. The Greeks, Indians, and Egyptians have disbelieved in the existence of God Almighty both in the philosophical sense and in the theological sense. In fact, in the theological sense, the existence of God has been denied by some in every nation. Some people in every country have always said that the existence of God Almighty has not been proven by religion.

People who deny the truthfulness of the Prophets, [question] the reliability of revelation of God, and are engaged in immoral behaviours, have always been found in every nation in the past. There have always been individuals who reject the Prophets and their revelation from God, and who commit all kinds of evils. There have always been those who were reluctant to accept religion, and committed immoral acts. What is it then about the evil of the *Dajjal* that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said that no evil will be greater compared to it? There must be something about it which did not exist in the world prior to it.

When we think about this deeply, we find two things which did not exist in the past. First, all kinds of discords in the past would be local. For example, a discord in India would emerge independently and not be influenced by a discord in Iran. Similarly, a discord in Iran would be independent and not impacted by a discord in Greece. An evil spreading in Egypt would not be caused by Greece or Iran. Hence, these discords and evils would not oppose religion altogether. Instead, their example can be likened to robbers looting a

country in different areas. The country's peace would be threatened by the robbers but the government would not be destroyed. A government is only destroyed by organized powers. As such, the difference between discords that emerged in the past and the discord that has emerged today is that the current discord is spreading in an organized fashion.

Though Japan is not Christian, it is under the influence of Europe. China is also not Christian but it follows Europe. Similarly, Iran, India, Turkey and Arabia are not Christian lands, and are seemingly Muslim, but they are heavily influenced by European thinking. Hence, all negative influences nowadays are connected to one another and are systematic. This has caused this evil to be much more dangerous. In the past, it used to be said, 'The Iranian or Greek philosophers say this', but now it is said, 'Every intellectual in the world says this'. In the past, if it was said to someone, 'Iranians believe this', the listener may presume that the rest of the world does not believe it. He would not be convinced immediately. This also happened in practical terms. That is, an immoral act would not spread in the whole world at the same time. The immoral behaviours in one nation would differ from the other nations. If atheism would be spreading in India, immoral behaviours would be spreading in Iran. If philosophy [opposed to religion] would be spreading in Greece, association of partners with God would be spreading in Egypt. Their opposition to religion would not be a concerted effort nor an organized scheme. However, in this day and age, all intellectual thought is progressing in one direction and in an organized fashion. Wherever an evil spreads, its objective is one and

the same, that is, to turn people away from God. This is something never seen before in the world.

The other thing which is unique is that the Satanic attacks in the past were philosophical in nature, and the entire basis of philosophy is in free thinking. However, nowadays, all attacks are based in science and science is based in observation. One can bravely respond to philosophical allegations by saying that the thoughts and ideas are frivolous and made up. However, when a question is based on observation, it becomes more difficult to respond. To say:

ایہہ جہان مٹھاتے اگلا کن ڈٹھا

That is, there is pleasure in the luxuries of this world. After one dies, who has seen what will happen? Who can tell if there will be comfort and ease there? This is a philosophical idea and a person can be impressed by it but another person can respond by pointing out that this is simply a saying. It is not based in truth. However, if a person bases his ideas on the observation of particles of the universe and makes the argument that every particle in the world has such an organization that the world operates by itself and does not need an external Being to run it, then this issue acquires a new form. This form did not exist in the previous example.

What is more is that in the past, only philosophers used to oppose belief in God. But now psychologists, mathematicians, scientists, geologists, and astronomers oppose religion. As such, all branches of knowledge take a united position and this Satanic attack is much more severe than ever before. In the past, it used to be believed that a philosopher has rejected the existence of God Almighty and it is

not known whether he is right or wrong in his opinion. However, it is now claimed that whichever perspective you have, the same conclusion will be reached that there is no God. The knowledge of astronomy leads to the conclusion that there is no God. The knowledge of life sciences, geography, psychology, mathematics and chemistry all lead to the same conclusion that God does not exist.

Hence, all fields of knowledge are progressing in one direction, which is comparable to how Allah the Exalted says in the Holy Quran that wherever you turn, your attention should be towards Makkah. In the same way, wherever disbelief spreads, it has the same ideas and philosophy, namely, the world does not need any God as we are free. All those fields of knowledge through which the existence of God was established in the past are now being used to reject His existence, and the basis of this rejection is science. For instance, visions and revelations are a proof for the existence of God Almighty. In the past, people would ask: Does God Almighty have a tongue with which He speaks? This question can be answered easily. It would also be said that dreams are nothing more than human thoughts. This allegation could also be refuted with ease. However, nowadays, so much research has been done in relation to dreams that people have become anxious. It has now been proven based on the workings of the human brain that the brain itself has the capacity to see many dreams—without any evidence of having come from God Almighty—and then those dreams are fulfilled. Hence, it is alleged that the fulfilment of dreams is not enough evidence to prove that God exists. They have established this based on observation.

In the same way, there have been efforts to disprove the existence of revelation, which is the last support for religion. As such, disbelief is spreading through all means, and in terms of quality and quantity, this is a unique Satanic attack. In the past, the number of people raising such allegations would be small and their allegations would be varied. An Iranian would make allegations in his own way and a Japanese would make allegations in another way. But now the whole world is united in attacking religion and there is only one battleground. Furthermore, past allegations were limited to philosophy, but now allegations are raised from the perspective of economics, life sciences, and psychology. All modern fields of knowledge are used as a basis to criticize religion. There is no doubt that no evil can compare to this evil.

About this evil, the Holy Prophet^{sa} was asked: O Prophet of Allah! What will be its remedy? Who would be the people who would compete against this evil and help turn the attention of people back to God Almighty? And they would re-establish faith in the world and connect people with their Creator. The Holy Prophet^{sa} put his hand on the back of Hazrat Salman Farsi^{ra} and said:

لَوْ كَانَ الْإِيمَانُ مُعَلَّقًا بِالْثَرَيَّا لَنَا لَهُ رَجُلٌ مِّنْ هَؤُلَاءِ

In some narrations, the last phrase is:

رَجَالٌ مِّنْ فَارِسٍ

This means that even if faith were to ascend to the Pleiades, even then some people from the progeny of Hazrat Salman Farsi^{ra}—meaning, from the people of Persia—would rise up and re-establish faith in the world. When the prophecy about this great evil [of the

Antichrist] was relayed to the companions, they became extremely anxious. Once the Holy Prophet^{sa} had relayed to them this prophecy, given its details, and gone home for a few hours, he saw upon his return that the companions had become pale with great distress. He asked: What has happened to you? Why are you so anxious? They said: O Prophet^{sa} of Allah! We have become very fearful due to this prophecy. We do not understand how faith will be rescued after the spread of such a great evil and discord. The Holy Prophet^{sa} said: “If the Antichrist comes while I am still alive:

أَنَا حَاجِبُهُ

I will compete with him, and if I am not alive, every believer should compete with him.”

The statement, “If I am still alive, I will compete with him” is in reality referring to the coming of the perfect *Buruz* [i.e. the person who is the spiritual manifestation] of the Holy Prophet^{sa} as prophesied in this verse of Surah Al-Jumu’ah:

وَآخَرِينَ مِنْهُمْ لَمَّا يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ ط

[“And among others from among them who have not yet joined them” (Holy Quran, 62:4)]. He meant that if a person has been sent by God at that time—who is my spiritual manifestation—he will compete with the Antichrist. Otherwise, the only scenario would be that Muslims die fighting the Antichrist.

Regarding this great evil, the Holy Prophet^{sa} has made the prophecy—or we should say that he has appealed—that some people from among the Persians will rise up to compete against this evil. They will re-establish faith in the world after having strived

through all kinds of dangers and difficulties. I believe that this is not just a prophecy. It is also a desire of the Holy Prophet^{sa}. It is a wish and a hope and the words tell us what the Messenger^{sa} of God desires from the Persians. An evil spread at the time of the Holy Prophet^{sa} as well, but it was less dangerous, and much limited in its impact, duration and effects, as compared to the evil spreading today. The example set by the companions at that time is written in books of history.

In one battle that took place after the Victory of Makkah, the Holy Prophet^{sa} also participated. Those people who accepted Islam after the Victory of Makkah and were not strong in their conviction in Islam, and some disbelievers, came to the Holy Prophet^{sa} and said: "O Prophet of Allah! Allow us to join this army which is going to defend against the *Hawazin* (tribe)." The Holy Prophet^{sa} told them not to join, but when they insisted, he gave them permission to do so. Makkah was conquered by 10,000, and these people numbered 2,000. That means that an army of 10-12 thousand went to the battleground. When they came near the *Hawazin*, there was a valley there around which the enemy tribes from *Ta'if* had setup camp, and well-trained archers were placed on both sides. The 10,000 companions were such that every one among them had fought against several disbelievers. As such, fighting the *Hawazin* was not difficult for them. However, 2,000 individuals who were weak of faith were now also part of the army. They were such among them who were arrogant and boastful. They would look at one another and think: What do these Medinites know about fighting? Then they would call out to their friends and say: "O Makkans! Today is the

day to show courage and bravery!” With this arrogant attitude, as soon as they came under the range of the archers and those skilled archers started shooting arrows at them with great ferocity, their bravery dissipated and they ran out of the battleground. This was not an ordinary occurrence as 2,000 horse riders began to run out through the lines of battle. This caused a stampede in the remaining 10,000 horse riders, causing much chaos.

Eventually, only twelve companions remained with the Holy Prophet^{sa}. The Muslim army did not retreat from the battleground at that time due to cowardice. Instead, they retreated because the stampede of 2,000 horses panicked the other horses and they could not stay in the battleground. One companion narrates that they pulled on the reins of their horses in order to make them stop, and pulled so hard that their necks would be bent, but as soon as the reins would become loose they would begin to run again. They were anxious as to what should be done. Meanwhile, the Holy Prophet^{sa} held his horse [in place] and then started to advance against the enemy. At that time, some companions took hold of the reins of his horse and suggested: “O Prophet^{sa} of Allah! This is a time of danger. It is not the right time for you to advance.” But the Holy Prophet^{sa} said, “Leave me! A Prophet does not retreat!” Then he said with a loud voice:

أَنَا النَّبِيُّ لَا كَذِبٌ أَنَا ابْنُ عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ

“I am a prophet, not a liar; I am the son of Abdul Muttalib.” Then he said, “Abbas^{ra}! Say with a loud voice: O Ansar! The Prophet^{sa} of God calls upon you.” At that time, he did not instruct that the

Makkans should be called because it was the Makkans who had turned victory to defeat in this battle. He addressed the Ansar instead and told Hazrat Abbas^{ra} to cry out to them that the Prophet^{sa} of God calls upon them. The voice of Hazrat Abbas^{ra} was very strong. He cried out with a powerful voice, “O Ansar! The Prophet^{sa} of God calls you!” Prior to this, according to the companions, they were trying to turn their horses around and they would not turn. As soon as this announcement was made, ‘O Ansar! The Prophet^{sa} of God calls you!’, the companions felt as if it was the Day of Judgment and the trumpet had been blown by *Israfeel*. Whoever could turn around their ride, they did so, and whoever could not, they cut off the necks of their horses with their swords, and began returning to the Holy Prophet^{sa}. Within a few minutes, the battleground filled up with Muslim soldiers. This was the call of the Prophet^{sa} of God. The companions honoured it in such a way that as soon as they heard it, they did not care about anything else. If they could turn around their ride, they did so, and if not, they cut off the necks of their horses and camels and hurriedly returned at the call of the Holy Prophet^{sa} within a few minutes.

1,300 years ago, in a voice of greater grandeur, a voice of greater conviction, a voice of greater honesty, a voice of greater love, a voice of greater hope, the Prophet^{sa} of God said:

لَوْ كَانَ الْإِيمَانُ مُعَلَّقًا بِالْأُتْرَاقِ لَنَا لَهُ رِجَالٌ مِّنْ أَبْنَاءِ فَارِسَ

That is, ‘When that time comes upon my Ummah, Islam will be weakened, the discord of the Antichrist will be dominant in the world, faith will be lost, people would be believers at night and

disbelievers during the day, or believers during the day and disbelievers at night. That is the time for which I hope that some people from the people of Persia will rise up and respond to my call, and will bring faith back from the Pleiades'. The word used by the Holy Prophet^{sa} is not *rajul* (one man). Rather, he said *rijaalun* (many men) which means that the propagation of Islam will not be limited to one man of Persian descent. Instead, his children will also have this responsibility. The Holy Prophet^{sa} expects the same from them which he expects from the first man of Persian descent. This is the call that was raised by the Prophet Muhammad^{sa} after having made a prophecy of gloom which had caused the companions to become anxious and their hearts were palpitating. He raised the call to calm them, and this is the high expectation and hope for those of Persian descent.

I fulfil this trust and responsibility today and convey the message of the Holy Prophet^{sa} to all the children of the Man of Persian descent. For the time of the decline of the Ummah of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, he expressed the wish:

لَنَا لَهُ رِجَالٌ مِنْ فَارِسٍ

[Men from Persia will bring back faith]. And he expressed the conviction that the children of the Promised one of Persian descent will dedicate their lives for one purpose only and abandon worldly pursuits, desires and advances. That purpose is to raise the flag of Islam in the world, to bring back faith from the Pleiades, and to bring humanity back to God. This is the hope of the Prophet^{sa} of God. I now leave it up to them to respond to this call. Whether they

are my children or the children of my brothers, they should reflect what kind of responsibilities are laid on them after having received this call.

There is no doubt that the world today is manifesting many of its beauties. And there is no doubt that attachment to God can be likened to a leper who is thrown out of the house (God forbid). Nowadays, there is no one who supports religion. The Promised Messiah^{as} says:

بیکے شد دین احمد ہیچ خویش و یار نیست
ہر کسے در کار خود بادین احمد کار نیست

*The religion of Ahmad is helpless; no one is concerned for it.
Every one is busy in their own works; they do not care for the
religion of Ahmad.*

Similarly, he says:

ہر طرف کفر است جو شاں ہچو افواج یزید
دین حق بیمار و بیکس ہچو زین العابدین

*Disbelief is spreading in all directions, just like the armies of
Yazid, and the true religion is sick and helpless just like Zainul
Aabideen*

What are their responsibilities? What should they feel? Every person can understand this based on their capacity.

I know that jealousy can develop in a person's heart if he is weak and sees someone excel, or when he sees the wealth of a rich person or the prestige of an office-bearer. He yearns to become like him. I accept that this is what happens without a doubt. But all this was

also true when the companions were facing the *Hawazin*. They had their wives and children in mind. They were aware that if they came too close to the archers of the *Hawazin*, their chests will be riddled with injuries and they will all be destroyed within a few minutes. However, despite all this, they set aside their wives and children once they heard the call of the Holy Prophet^{sa}. They had only one objective, that is, where the Prophet^{sa} of God calls us, we will go there. I do not need to paint a picture of the way the evil of the Antichrist has spread in the world today. None of the teachings of Islam are followed today. Its commandments regarding culture are not being established; its commandments regarding politics are not being established; its commandments regarding economy are not being established; and its commandments regarding individuals are not established. Everything has been changed. Hence, we cannot succeed unless we have a fervour to challenge these ways. We need to despise the immoral ways of the West so much so that we do not hate anything else more than them. The one who likes the [immorality of the] West, or is impressed by it, is not worthy of spiritual progress. Until we have destroyed all those ways which have corrupted the Islamic culture, we cannot sleep in comfort and contentment. Those who simply wish to imitate the Europeans, and are engrossed in the [immorality of the] West, can never be successful. Our entire beings should be ablaze at the sight of immorality, because a believer and immorality cannot remain together. Either the believer survives or immorality survives.

An allegation cannot be raised here that since we are friends with the British, why do I have such opinions about the West? This is

because there is a difference between the British and Western immorality. A British person is a human being just as we are all humans. As such, a British person can be guided to the right path, but Western immorality cannot be guided. It is a tool of Satan, and unless it is broken, there can be no peace in the world. If a person from among the children of the Promised Messiah^{as} has even an iota of desire to imitate the West, he cannot be considered the true son of the Promised Messiah^{as}. He did not listen to the message which the Promised Messiah^{as} was commissioned to spread. Hence, I deliver this message to them clearly, and warn each of them openly, that I am free of association with any such idea and any such person who has even an iota of desire in his heart to imitate the West, and does not wish to serve the faith, whether he is my son or the son of any of my relatives. But I have always prayed consistently that if I am not destined to have children who serve the faith, I do not need them. I pray that Allah Almighty enables me to keep offering this prayer till my last breath. We face an evil which is so great that there has never been an evil like it in the world. If we do not rise up to combat it, and do not feel the need for this in our hearts, then I do not think that we can be worthy of even a spec of dignity in the world.

At this time, dozens of ideologies stand against Islam. Until all those ideologies that oppose Islam are defeated—such as the ideology of the Trinity and the ideology of idolatry—and the message of the Oneness of God spreads in the entire world, we can never presume to have fulfilled our responsibilities. This is what I am presenting today. Even though I have discussed this in the past, but a power has compelled me in the last few days to present this

again in a clear way. God Almighty revealed to the Promised Messiah^{as}:

سَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ صَافِيْنَا وَ نَجِّيْنَا مِنَ الْعَمِّ. تَقَرَّدْنَا بِدَالِكَ. فَاتَّخِذُوا مِن مَّقَامِ
إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى

“May the peace of God Almighty be upon Ibrahim [Abraham], referring to the Promised Messiah^{as}. We purified him and delivered him from grief. We Ourselves have done this. Therefore, O followers of Abraham! Make the station of Abraham as your station.” What is that station? The Holy Quran [14:38] has clearly answered this in the words:

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ دُرِّيِّ بَوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ رَبَّنَا
لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفِيدَةً مِنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِي إِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِنْ
الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُونَ

While praying, Abraham^{as} says: Oh my Lord! I have settled my children in an uncultivable valley. Oh my Lord! I did this so that they are free of all worldly quarrels and attractions. O God! Make their hearts incline towards Your worship, and spreading Your Name in the world. But, O God! Make it so that they do not go to others as beggars. Instead, they are granted a dignified provision from Yourself so that they are thankful in their hearts. And they are able to say: We never inclined towards the world, but God Almighty inclined the world towards us. This is the Abrahamic station which God Almighty has presented to us.

Today, we are not in an uncultivable land [literally], but we are in one in the spiritual sense. What is cultivable land? It refers to a

place where people work and strive to earn their living. But when a person leaves those things which lead to worldly earning, he metaphorically goes into an uncultivable land. Hence, the Abrahamic station—upon which the Promised Messiah^{as} stood and upon which his children are expected to remain firm—is where one devotes oneself solely to spreading religion while keeping away from worldly attractions. Only then will the promise of God Almighty be fulfilled. He will then Himself pull people towards them, and provide for them Himself.

I exclude from this advice those people who take worldly jobs in order to fulfil the needs of the community. But they should demonstrate with sincerity that they are not pursuing the world for their own selves. Instead, they are only devoted to God Almighty. That is, they should always remain alert that whenever they are called for some need of the religion, they leave everything else.

It is the foolish who say that working for the British helps earn a living. The truth is that working for God is the real means to earn a living. But even if we suppose that working for our faith leads to a humiliating source of earning, have we not taken a pledge at the hands of the Prophet of God Almighty that even if we have to tolerate humiliation for the sake of our faith, we will be ready for it? In my opinion, however, earning a living through service to faith is not undignified. Rather, the lack of dignity is found in worldly jobs, not in working for God.

A Sikh resident of Kahlawan (a village near Qadian) narrated to me that the father of the Promised Messiah^{as} once told him [i.e. the Sikh individual] to advise his son, Ghulam Ahmad, to get a job.

Otherwise, after he dies, he will have to survive on scraps given to him by his elder brother. He says that he went to meet the Promised Messiah^{as} and said: 'Your father is upset. Why don't you get a job?' As soon as the Promised Messiah^{as} heard this, he laughed and said: 'My father is worried for no reason. The One whose servant I wanted to become, I have already become His servant'. The Sikh individual returned and said to the father of the Promised Messiah^{as}: 'He says that he has already become a servant of One whose servant he wanted to become'. Hearing this, despite worldly inclinations, he sighed and said: 'If he says that he has become a servant, he is right. He does not lie'.

In other words, being the progeny of Abraham^{as}, it is the responsibility of the children of the Promised Messiah^{as}, to live their lives as if they are in an uncultivable land, and to devote themselves to service of faith. But all tasks require preparation. If we wish to do what is Divine, but our ways are Satanic, how can we become successful? At this time, the world is engrossed in determining the best ways of becoming rich and powerful. The world is currently lost in formalities and impressed by Western immorality. If we incline towards this immorality, greed, and power, how can there be blessing in our ways? Satan cannot be defeated with Satanic means. Rather, divine ways need to be adopted. Hence, until a person is free of those desires which are worldly in nature, they cannot be worthy of service to faith. Islam became successful in the world by establishing love and compassion, and erasing the differences between rich and poor. In future, Islam will succeed for the same reasons. Hence, a person who only desires worldly prestige, and is

not ready to adopt a sense of service, I do not understand how they can be successful. It is true, on the other hand, that God Almighty may grant prestige to a person after they have adopted a sense of service.

Hazrat Sayyid Abdul Qadir Jailanith says that sometimes God Almighty says to me: "O Abdul Qadir! By My Being, wear the best clothes!" and I wear the best clothes accordingly. Sometimes He says: "O Abdul Qadir Jailani! By My Being, eat the best food!" and I eat it accordingly. The same station was granted to the Promised Messiah^{as}. He was also called 'Abdul Qadir' by God Almighty. In one vision, I have also been given the name 'Abdul Qadir'. This means that if God Almighty commands us to eat good food, it is our duty to eat good food, and if He commands us to wear good clothes, it is our duty to wear good clothes. In the same way, if He commands us to wear simple clothes, it would again be our duty to obey this commandment. Hence, we should completely submit to God. If He commands us to go to heaven, we will go to heaven, and if He commands us to go to the depths of the earth, we will go to the depths of the earth. We should attain the Abrahamic status as God said to him, "Submit!" and he said in response, "I submit to the Lord of the worlds." We should not worry whether we are in discomfort or ease, whether we gain respect or disrespect. Rather, we should only consider what God desires from us. Whichever state He wishes to keep us in, we should remain happy with it.

During his last days, the Promised Messiah^{as} received a revelation which I believe relates to his family:

سپر دم بتو مایه خویش را
تو دانی حساب کم و بیش را

Meaning: "Oh God! As I depart from this world, I leave my family in Your care. You may keep them in whatever state You wish. If You wish, You can keep them at a high station, and if You wish, You can keep them at a low station." It is our responsibility to always keep this in mind. Unless our children keep this objective in mind, they cannot receive the blessings which are destined for the children of the Promised Messiah^{as}. There is no doubt that biological children have a distinction, but it is only valid as long as they are firm on their faith. Once the Holy Prophet^{sa} was asked by his companions, "O Prophet^{sa} of Allah! Which tribes are the best among Arab tribes?" He said, "Those which were great while they were disbelievers are also great now, as long as they are righteous and have accepted Islam." There is no doubt that one can have prestige due to one's family, but that is conditional to virtue and righteousness. If they do not care about this, and incline towards the world like insects and dogs, they become more worthy of punishment than others.

There is no doubt that this is the work of God, and if we do not make efforts, other people will be raised to replace us. But that day will be the worst day when God says: 'The men of Persian descent have turned their backs to the propagation of faith. Come! Let us give this responsibility to others'. This is the religion of God, and it is His Grace that He has given us the opportunity to serve. Otherwise, the person who thinks he is making 'sacrifices' is a hypocrite even if he works himself to death while claiming to be a believer. This is

because he has called the blessing of God Almighty his 'sacrifice'. A person who says he is sacrificing is arrogant. The Holy Prophet^{sa} has said:

أَلَيْدُ الْعُلْيَا خَيْرٌ مِّنَ أَلَيْدِ السُّفْلَى

"The giving hand is better than the receiving hand." Hence, while serving our faith, we should never think that we are making sacrifices. Instead, we should think that it is the Grace of God Almighty that He is enabling us to serve. If you do not understand this truth; if you cannot tolerate being poor for the sake of faith; if you do not like being a beggar for the sake of faith; if you do not consider service to faith more dignified than the kingdom of seven continents, then you do not have faith even equivalent to the size of a grain of barley. People say that begging is wrong, and I also consider begging wrong, but if we have to beg for the sake of God and His religion, then this is also dignified for us.

Hence, do not think that you are making sacrifices by serving faith. It is the blessing of God that He is enabling you to serve. But I am disappointed to see some who think that they are making sacrifices. And they say: 'Let us make another sacrifice'. If someone has chicken rice, sweet rice, kebab, chicken, etc. lying in front of them, and they also have the option of eating lentil soup, would they select the chicken [to eat] and say it is a sacrifice? If someone says this, he is either deceiving or simply lost his mind. Only one who has lost his mind would say that it is a 'sacrifice' to eat chicken rice instead of lentil soup. Otherwise, only a deceiver, unaware of reality, can make such a statement. If faith is valuable and there is a God of

this world, it would not be considered a sacrifice if a person responds to the call of one who says: Come and accept the faith of God. Rather, he is receiving a blessing from the Grace and Benevolence of God Almighty. If he thinks even for a minute that he is making a sacrifice, he is a hypocrite.

If one of you thinks that he is making sacrifices by serving faith, he has lost his belief. He should change his thinking. You can only be called a true believer if you consider dignified what the world considers humiliation, and you strive at what the world considers a waste of time, and you consider it a reward while others consider it a sacrifice. Did the general who conquered Germany believe that he had made a big sacrifice by becoming a general? If a worldly general does not consider his service a 'sacrifice', how can those people whose task is to conquer hearts consider their work a 'sacrifice'? Would anyone consider it a 'sacrifice' to replace [General] Haig of the British [army] or [General] Hindenburg of the German [army]? I believe that if it were possible, every person would present half of their life in order to get the same prestige. In fact, if possible, each one would even sacrifice his wife and children just to get the same status, and would not consider it his sacrifice.

If the position of worldly generals is considered a reward in itself, can the position of the generals of God Almighty be called a sacrifice? Hence, the person who serves faith and calls it a 'sacrifice' is displeasing God, and is disrespectful to Him. It is as if God's blessing is considered inferior (God forbid), but the life of that person is considered much more valuable who leaves God's blessing and relies on his own efforts. God Almighty is giving him a reward

that is greater than the kingdom of the seven continents, but he does not care and considers his insignificant efforts a 'sacrifice'. Hence, it is not just expected that you will stay away from Western immorality, it is also expected from you that you will always make efforts to raise the flag of Islam higher. You are expected to serve humanity. You are expected to prevent arrogance and a sense of superiority to develop in you. In fact, despite all your efforts, you are expected to consider your services as nothing and a lowly contribution. You will say: I made a valueless contribution in the way of God Almighty, and He granted me immense [spiritual] wealth.

This is the call of Muhammad^{sa}, and this is also the call of the Promised Messiah^{as}, and this is even the call of God Almighty. If a person does not respond to the call of God, His Messenger, and His Messiah, his heart is dead regardless of the beautiful clothes he adorns himself with. Hazrat Buddha showed a great example. He was the only son of his father. When the yearning for God Almighty developed in his heart, he left his home and spent a long time worshipping in a barren land. Eventually, God Almighty granted him His revelation and blessed him with the status of prophethood for the reformation of the world. Based on the conditions of his time, he told his followers not to pursue the world. Rather, he taught them to spend all their time in service of faith. And when they feel hungry, they can beg for food. When his fame spread throughout India, even his father—who lived in Bihar—called for him and eventually became his follower.

When Buddha was about to leave [Bihar], his father wondered what he should do about his throne. At that time, it was the law that either the father himself sat on the throne or he would grant it to his son or grandson. There was no other way to acquire a throne. When the father of Buddha realized that he is not going to inherit the throne, he called his grandson, made him wear beggar's clothing and gave him a bowl, and then told him to go to his father and ask for his right. His intention was for him to ask his father to transfer the kingdom to him. It was the practice of Buddha that whenever someone became his follower, he would have him shave his head. When his son came to him, he asked: Have you come to me to beg? He said: Yes. He said: Whatever I have, I give it to you. After this, he called one of his students and told him to shave his son's head and to make him a *bhakshoo* [i.e. one who abandons the world]. This meant that kingdom would be taken out of their family. When his father heard this, he began to cry and took an oath from Buddha to never make another young man a *bhakshoo*.

The fact is that the services we are required to offer for the religion of God Almighty and our responsibilities are so great that I regret to say that we do not yet fully understand them. I see that those people who serve faith believe that they have made sacrifices, even though a sacrifice is always considered something greater. If serving one's faith is considered a sacrifice, it would mean that faith is something lesser and their position is greater. If this notion that we are making sacrifices by serving faith remains in our hearts even for a moment, it would certainly mean that we are faithless and spiritually blind.

As a result, I first advise those who are the addressees of the call of the Prophet^{sa} of God—regarding whom he said that ‘men of Persian descent shall bring back faith’—that they should reflect on their responsibilities and obligations. They have a huge task. The privileges and honours of the world are nothing. The greatest respect lies in servitude to God. If you pursue the world and attain all it has to offer, will your respect be greater than the servants of Muhammad^{sa}? Even those spiritually blind who lived far away [from the heart of Islam], such as Europe and America became spiritually enlightened by the Signs of truth in Islam. If those who are near do not benefit from the Light of God Almighty, how worrisome would it be? Hence, my first address is to the physical progeny of the Promised Messiah^{as}.

However, every person who sincerely pledges allegiance to the Promised Messiah^{as} and follows his teachings is part of his spiritual progeny. As such, the entire Jama’at Ahmadiyya is part of the group called ‘men of Persian descent’ [in the prophecy]. Being the spiritual progeny, I advise the whole Jama’at that they should reflect upon their responsibilities. How long will this state of ignorance last? For how long will your faces show despair? For how long will you remain silent while the faith of God Almighty is seen as insignificant and worthless? For how long will you continue to consider your services [to faith] as ‘sacrifices’? When will that day come when your hearts will be anxious for the flourishing of faith? When will that day come when you will go out into the field ready to serve the cause for which the Promised Messiah^{as} was sent to the world? I say to you as well that one call of God has been pronounced. Rise up,

and respond to it in the same way that righteous people responded to it 1300 years prior:

رَبَّنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلْإِيمَانِ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَآمَنَّا ۗ رَبَّنَا
 فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّئَاتِنَا وَتَوَقَّنَا مِنَ الْأَبْرَارِ ﴿١٩٤﴾
 رَبَّنَا وَآتِنَا مَا وَعَدْتَنَا عَلَىٰ رُسُلِكَ وَلَا تُخْزِنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ إِنَّكَ لَا
 تُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ﴿١٩٥﴾

[“Our Lord, we have heard a Crier calling *us* unto faith, ‘Believe ye in your Lord,’ and we have believed. Our Lord, forgive us, therefore, our errors and remove from us our evils, and in death number us with the righteous. Our Lord, give us what Thou hast promised to us through Thy Messengers; and disgrace us not on the Day of Resurrection. Surely, Thou breakest not Thy promise” (3:194-195)]. Learn this teaching and commit it to your heart such that every particle of your being is ready to act upon it. Then, teach it to your children and they should teach it to their children until there is no teaching that we hear except the call of God. And there is no light that we see except the Light of God. Unless we reach this state, we are like statues of clay who are claiming to do big things. Until then, we are like the rotting dead who claim to bring life to the world.

I now announce the *nikahs* for which this gathering has been arranged. It may appear that this sermon has no connection with the subject of marriage, but the reality is that it has a deep connection with marriage. This is because true companionship is only found in a connection with God Almighty. This is the reason why God Almighty specifically mentions prayer when discussing the subject

of marriage. If we are eager to find companionship in the world, there is no reason to not yearn for intoxication in the love of God and His messenger. We cannot have true happiness unless Islam spreads widely in the world. Until that time, even the happinesses of the world will cause us grief. It is narrated regarding Hazrat Ayeshah^{ra} that after the death of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, she was once eating *roti* made of wheat-flour when she began to cry. Someone asked her why she was crying and she said: "During the time of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, there were no hand-mills. We would place grains over a fire and blow them with a chaff and then knead the dough in order to make *roti*. Now the dough of wheat-flour is hard for me to swallow as I wish that if wheat-flour were available during the time of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, I would have prepared *roti* from it for him." How insignificant is *roti* made from wheat-flour! But Hazrat Ayeshah^{ra} was finding it hard to eat it because she recalled the time of the Holy Prophet^{sa}. Should it not be, then, that all the goodness of the world is hard for us to enjoy? To whom belongs the goodness and power of this world? They belong to God, His Messenger^{sa}, and his perfect servant, the Promised Messiah^{as}. Why should we not sacrifice all the goodness [of the world] for the sake of God and His Messenger?

Hazrat Ayeshah^{ra} taught the world half of religion. She was the beloved wife of the Holy Prophet^{sa}. She is a pure model for us. What love she had! She could not even eat one *roti* made of wheat-flour as the Holy Prophet^{sa} could not join her. Her eyes filled with tears when trying to eat it. Looking at the greatest rewards of this world, should our eyes not be filled with tears? Unless our state in this world becomes like that of Hazrat Ayeshah^{ra}, we will remain far

from attaining true knowledge of the Almighty. If God enables us to wear good clothes, there is no reason for us not to. If God provides us with good food, we should eat it, but there should be a pain in our hearts that the world is in the grasp of the Antichrist. If we had power, we would have dedicated all the things of this world in service to Muhammad^{sa} and his followers. There is no doubt that God is our Lord, and if He grants us good food or clothes, we should benefit from it. However, despite this, these provisions should be hard for us to use and there should be yearning in our hearts that all the manufacturers of clothes and chefs who prepare good foods become Muslim. [We should desire that] every thread that is stitched is done by a Muslim and *la ilaah il-Allah Muhammadur Rasulullah* [There is none worthy of worship except Allah, and Muhammad^{sa} is the messenger of Allah] is recited on it. Until then, we should not be able to sleep at night with comfort, tranquility and contentment.

At the time of eating these good foods and wearing these good clothes, there should be an anguish in our hearts, and a desire that [followers of] Muhammad^{sa} should hold the keys to every worldly and religious goodness. This is something that we have to develop in our hearts. If we develop this, God will bless our thinking and understanding. It is natural to have longing at times of happiness. When a believer experiences a happy time, he asks whether Muhammad^{sa} and the Promised Messiah^{as} ever experienced this [kind of] happiness. If they did, it is a source of happiness for us. But if they did not, then the happiness will in turn be a cause for increasing our grief and sorrow. A widower or widow is happy at the time of the marriage of his or her children. But they also shed

tears at the same time and wish that their spouse was alive at the time. The same is the case of a believer. When he experiences some happiness, he is also grieved. He asks whether or not Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and the Promised Messiah^{as} ever experienced the same. If they did not, he only participates in the customary festivities but does not experience true happiness.

As such, this is not a sermon that is unrelated [to the subject of marriage]. Instead, it is directly linked with the subject of marriage. After this sermon, and having clarified the true nature of this responsibility which makes all other responsibilities fall within it, I announce these *nikahs*, for which I stood here today.

[After that, Hazrat Musleh Mau'ud^{ra} announced the *nikahs* and led the congregation in a long silent prayer]

Glossary

Allah the name for God in Islam.

adhan the Islamic call to prayer.

ahadith plural of *hadith*.

Al-hamdulillah literally, 'All praise belongs to Allah'.

Bai'at pledge of allegiance taken at the hands of the Holy Prophet^{sa} or his successor, the Promised Messiah^{as}. Since their passing, this pledge of allegiance is now taken by the successor of the Promised Messiah, the Khalifatul Masih.

darud invocation of blessings upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}.

deen faith or religion.

hadith a saying or tradition of the Holy Prophet^{sa}.

halala refers to the scenario after three divorces where the wife marries another person with the prior intention to make it halal for her to marry her first husband again.

haq mehr a mandatory gift from the husband to the wife (see Holy Quran, 4:25). This sum should be proportionate to the husband's means. The dower amount is announced at the time of the marriage ceremony. It can be given all at once or in incremental payments. Once given, it is solely the property of the wife and she may do with it as she pleases. The amount should be agreeable to both parties.

Hazrat His Holiness; title of respect for eminent religious personages.

Huzoor His Holiness; referring to the current Khalifa, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (may Allah be his Helper).

istighfar literally, to cover up, protect or suppress. Refers to a prayer for seeking forgiveness of past sins and the protection of God against future errors and sins.

istikhara a prayer to seek guidance from God Almighty when one intends to embark upon any important task or project, such as a trade, journey, marriage, etc.

Khalifa successor.

Khalifatul Masih successor of the Messiah; referring to those who have succeeded the Promised Messiah^{as} since his demise in 1908.

Khitabat speeches and discourses.

Khulafa' plural of *Khalifa*.

khula' divorce initiated by the wife.

Khutbat Friday Sermons.

Lahaul short for the prayer, *la haula wa la quwwata illa billah*, meaning 'There is no strength to resist evil and no power to do good except through (the help of) Allah'.

La ilaaha il-Allah literally, 'There is none worthy of worship except Allah'. First part of the Muslim declaration of faith.

ma'mur a person who is appointed by God.

Maulavi a Muslim religious cleric.

Muhajirun the companions of the Holy Prophet^{sa} who migrated from Makkah to Madinah.

mursal a person sent by God.

Musleh Mau'ud Promised Reformer; the honorary title of Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad^{ra}, the second successor of the Promised Messiah^{as}. It refers to the fact that the prophecy

regarding the promised son for the Promised Messiah^{as} has been fulfilled in his person.

nawafil optional prayers. To voluntarily offer additional prayers to reap the benefits of Allah's favors.

nikah the public announcement of marriage in Islam, while ensuring all the Islamic rules pertaining to the marriage are being followed. The person officiating recites the *nikah* sermon which was recited by the Holy Prophet^{sa} and asks for the consent of both parties. This is followed by a silent prayer.

nushooz refers to a kind of disobedience which is extreme and results in violence.

qa'dah sitting position adopted towards the end of the second *rak'ah* in Prayer.

qaul-e-sadeed a term of the Holy Quran meaning, 'a true and straightforward statement', that is, a speech which has no tilt in any direction but in the direction of the truth.

qawwaam a term used in the Quran which means 'guardian', that is, someone who does something resolutely and keeps others upright;, one having authority over others.

Rabb one of the names of God Al-Mighty in the Holy Quran, referring to the fact that after creation, God provides everything for those whom He creates, nurtures them and brings them to completion.

rak'ah one whole series of postures which starts from standing and ends with prostration.

rak'aat plural of *rak'ah*.

Rishta Nata department responsible for matchmaking and matters related to marriage within the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

roti bread, especially a flat round bread cooked on a griddle.

rukhsati literally, 'leaving'. It refers to the marriage ceremony held in some cultures hosted by the bride's family to mark the formal occasion when she transitions from living with her parents to living with her husband.

rububiyyat refers to the manifestation of God's attribute of *rabb*.

sadaqah voluntary charity or giving alms in the way of Allah.

salat one of the pillars of Islam most commonly referring to the five obligatory daily prayers to be performed in a prescribed form.

silah rehmi refers to the Islamic injunction of ensuring that one fulfills the rights of one's relatives, and treats them with kindness, compassion and love.

Subhan Allah literally, 'Holy is Allah' meaning Allah is free from all faults or defects.

sunnah the practice of the Holy Prophet^{sa}. The Holy Quran is the Word of God Almighty and the *sunnah* refers to the deeds of the Holy Prophet^{sa}.

Surah Arabic word for 'chapter' in the Holy Quran. There are 114 chapters in the Quran.

taqwa a term commonly used in the Holy Quran referring to righteousness or being God-Conscious.

Tasbeeh a term used for the remembrance of Allah which is done through various prayers being often recited.

tashahhud a set prayer recited silently at the beginning of the *qa'dah*, or sitting position, in prayer.

Tehleel to declare the Unity of God.

Tahmeed words of praise and remembrance of God.

ulamas scholars; most commonly referring to a class of religious scholars.

wali the guardian, usually the father, who is responsible for protecting the legal, religious, social and marital rights of the bride. The bride's guardian is required to be present at the announcement of *nikah*.

walimah a reception to be held by the groom after the marriage to celebrate the consummation of the marriage. This is a mandatory part of the marriage celebration and should be on a scale according to the husband's means.

zakat obligatory payment made annually under Islamic law on certain kinds of property and accumulated wealth. It is used for charitable and religious purposes.

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