

Marriage in Islam: *Definition, Significance & Purpose*

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Getting Married? Congratulations

The success and prosperity of a society greatly rely on the durability of the relation of its individual members, hence family making up the primary unit of the framework of society provides the avenue for introduction of such relationships among the individual members. Marriage as the only practice through which individuals are brought into existence can play a very important role in the formulation of a good and friendly relation between the individual at the micro level in the society, therefore, stretching it to the macro level.

Definition of Marriage

Marriage is a contract between a man and a woman, whom he can lawfully get married to, with the goals of creating a joint life and procreation. Allah the Almighty describes marriage in Quran as a "mithaq Ghalith," which means "a strong covenant": *"And We have taken a strong pledge (Mithaq Ghalith) from you?"* (Quran 4:21)

Marriage is also called 'zawaj' in Arabic, which means association and joining together. This term is used in the Holy Quran in the same sense of bringing together or of being together. In addition, the term 'nikah' ("marriage") is defined as "a purposeful contract to acquire and possess enjoyment." It also symbolizes the meaning of coming together or assembling.

Significance of Marriage in Islam

The value and importance of marriage are evident from the fact that it provides a healthy environment for the maintenance of friendly relationships between the spouses and reciprocal love between them. It assists one to preserve his/her chastity and shield him/herself against committing the prohibited acts. Similarly, it signifies a good way of reproduction, multiplication, and preservation of the family lineage. Therefore, Islam prescribes several specifications or conditions which are fundamental or important for a valid Muslim marriage, such as: offer and acceptance (ijab wa qabul), wali or a guardian for marriage, and mahr or dowry.

The institution of marriage is significantly highlighted in Islam and its importance is made crystal clear. This is obvious from this prophetic statement: *"Marriage is my practice. Whosoever avoid it is not my follower/from me."* The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said: *"The evils amongst you are those who stay single and mean are those who die in a state of staying single."*

The Purpose of Marriage

As a meaningful institution, marriage has a variety of purposes:

- I. **To ensure preservation of the human species and continuation of the human race:** In this regard, Allah the Almighty said,

"O mankind! Be mindful of your Lord, Who created you from a single soul and from it, He created its mate; and from them has spread abroad a multitude of men and women" (Quran: 4:1).

And Allah hath provided you wives of your own kind, and has given you, from your wives, descendant, and has provided you with good provision. Is it then in vanity that they believe and in the grace of Allah that they disbelieve? (16:72)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

"Get married (and reproduce) for I will boast of your large numbers in front of other nations (on Judgment Day) and do not opt to celibacy or-monasticism." (al-Baihaqi)

2. **To provide spiritual and legal foundation of the family:** Allah the Almighty said,

"And of His signs is this: He created for you mates from yourself that you might find rest in them, and He ordained between you love and mercy. Lo, therein indeed are portents for folk who reflect". (Quran 30:21)

3. **Marriage complements one's faith,** meaning that it helps one avoid looking at other women, therefore, protecting his chastity. This is obvious from the saying of the prophet (peace be upon him) pertaining to marriage.

"It saves one from looking at what one should not, or it prevent one from being involved in adultery." (Ibn Majah.)

4. **Happiness and Joy:** Marriage besides preserving the Muslim faith, achieve his worldly happiness which Islam supports. Faith and happiness are important aspects of one's personality. They can support one in his struggle of boosting his souls and getting high levels of religiousness. This is outlined by the prophet (peace be upon him)

"The entire world is-source of pleasure and the best-source of pleasure of the world is the righteous woman." (Imam Muslim)

"There are four things that bring one joy: a righteous spouse, a commodious house, a religious neighbor and a comfortable means of riding" (Imam Bayhaqi)

5. **Establishment of Family:** Marriage is the only system for establishing family life. No respectable human society could ever exist without family, the primary unit of the framework of society. Family is the avenue where close relation comes out such as parental and maternal relations, parent and child relation as well as that of sibling's relations. Together with these relations, it also inculcates an earnest sense of love and compassion, altruism, kindness, care, and cooperation in a Muslim.
6. **Improving Social Relations:** Marriage improves and strengthens social connections among the individual members of society. For, it stretches the range of family by adding new relatives to the family structure through inclusion of in-laws and children's aunts and uncles. Thus, through such extension more and more people can enjoy the emotions of love, belonging and social closeness in the society. Allah views both kinship and marriage relations to be extremely important and encourage the family members to maintain both kinship and marriage relations strongly. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

“And Allah is who has created man from water and has selected for him relation by blood and relation by marriage; for thy Lord is ever Powerful.” (Al-Furqan, 54)

7. **Sense of Responsibility:** Marriage nurtures human character by instilling a sense of responsibility in him and enabling him to bear his responsibility as a husband and a father. In the same manner, marriage inculcates in a woman the sense of responsibility as a wife and a mother. Unfortunately, some people avoid marriage due to distorted mentality and tendency of not willing to bear them responsibly. Thus, living like grown-up children without meaningful relation, house, and responsibility. They lose their worth to live a meaningful life and prove to be good for nothing. These all are due to ignorance of the significance of marriage which represents a strong commitment and a shared responsibility between a man and a woman since their first day together. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

“Men are the guardian of women because Allah has made men-some of them-to excel the other, for, they spend of their property (for the support of women). So good women are those women who are obedient and guard in secret what Allah has guarded.” (Qur’an, 4:34)

It is mentioned in a prophetic tradition that:

“Everyone is a guardian and responsible for those who are under his charge; for example, the man in his home is a guardian and responsible for his household; the woman, concerning her husband's property, is a guardian and responsible for what she is entrusted with.”

Consequently, Islam also prescribes the obligation of the husband towards his wife such as the duty of care, avoiding foul language, giving her protection, the duty of financial support and etc. Besides that, the wife also must perform her obligation towards her husband like being loving and tolerant with her husband, avoiding asking divorce without valid reason and other obligations stated in Qur'an and the tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Thus, husband and wife have to take responsibility towards all of these obligations respectively.

8. **Confidence and Assurance:** A married person is more capable of focusing fully on performing his job professionally, for, he is motivated by the fact that there is someone who cares about him and takes care of the household and his children. Thus, having peace of mind he can do his job properly and a productive and excellent manner. At the contrary, a person who is not married his mind is not focused but disintegrated. For, his mind is preoccupied with thinking about his work and home, and the burden of securing his food and clothes.

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