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Guidelines for a Successful Marriage based on The Life and Teachings of Prophet Muhammad

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Introduction

The sanctity and status of marriage is great in Islam, and it is especially encouraged among the youth. Marriage is an institution that unites a man and woman in a permissible and, indeed, much encouraged relationship. The couple starts their journey together, each finding comfort in the other in straitened times, and each enjoying the other's company in prosperous and easy times. In the Quran, Allaah The Almighty calls upon us to ponder on the beautiful and sacred relationship of marriage: ***{And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your [hearts]}*** [Quran, 30:21]

Marriage creates a powerful bond which, with mutual affection and sacrifice, establishes a strong Muslim family where offspring are provided with a suitably adherent and practicing environment. Thus, the couple's children will not only be born Muslims, but will live Islam in its true spirit and develop the character and behavior of true Muslims. A Muslim society rests upon the Muslim family, and when the family's members are trained from childhood to acquire Islamic morals, compete with one another in doing good deeds and engage in productive activities, the Muslim society is strong indeed.

Furthermore, it is not unreasonable to say that the Muslim family rests upon the righteous wife and mother, who are the pillar, cornerstone and foundation of the family. One of the greatest blessings Allaah The Almighty can bestow upon a man is to give him a wife who is righteous and well-grounded in Islamic teachings. Such a wife is a source of solace, good companionship and comfort to her husband, and Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, rightly said: ***"This world is just temporary conveniences, and the best comfort in this world is a righteous woman."***[Muslim]

Islam has given the husband rights upon his wife, and the wife rights upon her husband. To achieve marital harmony and a blissful married life, both husband and wife should ensure they are fulfilling their spouse's right upon them.

Prophetic guidance for women

- Choose a good husband

In Islam, the woman has the right to choose her own husband, and it is impermissible for her parents to force her into marriage with someone she finds disagreeable. Imaam Al-Bukhaari, may Allaah have mercy upon him, reported from Al-Khansaa' bint Khidaam, may Allaah be pleased with her, that she said, *"My father married me to his nephew, and I did not like this match, so I complained to the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam. He said to me:* ***'Accept what your father has arranged.'*** *I said, 'I do not wish to accept what my father has arranged.' He said:* ***'Then this marriage is invalid, go and marry whomever you wish.'*** *I said, 'I have accepted what my father has arranged, but I wanted women to know that fathers have no right in their daughter's matters (i.e. they have no right to force a marriage on them).'"* [*Fat-hul Baari*]

Thus, we see that, in the beginning, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, told Al-Khansaa', may Allaah be pleased with her, to obey her father's wishes, as the father is certainly concerned about the well-being of his daughter. But when he, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, heard from her that she did not want that match and was unwilling to marry the man her father had chosen for her, he gave her the freedom to choose. This saying of the Prophet's, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, makes it impermissible for fathers to force their daughters into an unwanted marriage, as this is a form of oppression that Islam does not accept.

On the other hand, the daughter should accept the advice and guidance of her parents, because surely they have her best interests in mind, and they would wish for their daughter to have a happy and fulfilled life. In addition, they have greater experience of the world and of people, making them better prepared and qualified to accept and reject suitors.

Another point here is that Islam does not advocate a marriage where the woman is left with no option and no control over her own life. She cannot simply be paired off with somebody she has no affection for or whom she genuinely dislikes. The possible consequences of this would be resentment and discontent on her part, as well as indifference, aversion and insensitivity towards her husband.

A woman may ask for a divorce if she fears that she will be guilty of the sin of disobeying, neglecting and opposing the husband whom she does not love. This is another right confirmed by the report in which Jameelah, the sister of 'Abdullaah ibn Ubayy and the wife of Thaabit ibn Qays ibn Shammaas, came to the Prophet,

sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, and said, *"O Messenger of Allaah, I have nothing against Thaabit ibn Qays as to his religion or his behavior, but I hate to commit any act of Kufr when I am a Muslim."* The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"Will you give his garden back to him?"*** (Her husband had given her a garden for her *Mahr* (dowry).) She said, *"Yes."* So the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, sent word to him: ***"Take back your garden, and give her one pronouncement of divorce."*** According to a report given by Al-Bukhaari from Ibn 'Abbaas, may Allaah be pleased with him, she said, *"I do not blame Thaabit for anything with regard to his religion or his behavior, but I do not like him."*

Thus, we see how Islam gave the woman the option of choosing the partner with whom she will spend the rest of her life, thus showing her that it respects her wishes and allows her the freedom to choose the man she will spend the rest of her life with. It is unacceptable for anyone, no matter who they are, to force a woman into a marriage with a man she does not like. One account of this is the story of Bareerah, an Ethiopian slave-girl who belonged to 'Utbah ibn Abi Lahab, who forced her into marrying another slave, whose name was Mugheeth. She would never have accepted him as a husband if she had been in control of her own affairs. 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, took pity on her, so she bought her and set her free. As Bareerah was now free and in control of her own affairs, she could take a decision about her marriage. She asked her husband for a divorce. Her husband would follow her about, weeping and imploring; yet, owing to her feelings of dislike towards him, she still rejected him and remained immovable.

Al-Bukhaari, may Allaah have mercy upon him, reports this *Hadeeth* (narration) from Ibn 'Abbaas, may Allaah be pleased with him, who said,

> *"Bareerah's husband was a slave, who was known as Mugheeth. I can almost see him, running after her and crying, with tears running down onto his beard. The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said to 'Abbaas:* ***'O 'Abbaas, do you not find it strange, how much Mugeeth loves Bareerah, and how much Bareerah hates Mugheeth?'*** *The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said (to Bareerah):* ***'Why do you not go back to him?'*** *She said, 'O Messenger of Allaah, are you commanding me to do so?' He said:* ***'I am merely trying to intervene on his behalf.'*** *She said, 'I have no need of him.'"*

Here we see the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, confirming another of the rights of the Muslim woman. Certainly, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, felt touched by the deep and overwhelming love of Mugheeth for Bareerah, and he attempted to reconcile between the two of them. However, when he saw Bareerah's adamant refusal of Mugheeth and her absolute disinclination towards being united with him in matrimony, he never forced her into marrying her. In the conduct of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, is a lesson for the guardians and fathers who manipulate their own daughters and force them into marriages without first asking for their consent.

Now we come to another important question: what are the standards by which the Muslim woman judges suitors; what does she base her judgment on? Is it the level of the person's *Eemaan* (faith), his degree of righteousness, his behavior and the amount of good they can potentially do together? Or is the Muslim woman solely concerned with how good-looking her future husband is, how high his salary is, and what status he occupies in society? Islamic teaching indicates the importance of choosing spouses wisely, not on the basis of wealth, looks or lineage, but on the basis of his religiousness and character. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"If there comes to you one with whose religion and character you are satisfied, then give your daughter to him in marriage, for if you do not do so, Fitnah (trial) and mischief will become widespread on earth."***

A sensible Muslim woman will not choose a spouse only according to his looks; she will probe further into that future spouse's character and morals. The latter will be weightier, in her view, and more important than any of the aesthetical attributes that the spouse-to-be has been favored with. This should be the case with all Muslims who are intending to marry, both men and women. They should consider that it is possible for a person to appear beautiful or handsome, to have a perfect figure or a toned body, and still be shallow and empty on the inside. It is possible for tin to be coated with gold, but that will never make it equal to pure gold.

We are not trying to say here that physical appearance is entirely insignificant or that it should be dismissed completely and the woman should overlook it and endure an attractive or unseemly husband. She should marry a man for whom she has affection, and who is pleasing to her both in appearance and conduct. A woman's husband should be attractive to her in all aspects, and he should be able

to win her admiration and respect, which will elevate him in her eyes; she will then give him all her trust and support.

Moreover, it should be noted that no one is more suitable for a good, believing woman than a good, believing man, and no one is more appropriate and well-suited to a wayward, immoral woman than a wayward, immoral man, as Allaah The Almighty Says: ***{Women impure are for men impure, and men impure for women impure, and women of purity are for men of purity, and men of purity are for women of purity}*** [Quran, 24:26]

The Muslim woman recognizes and accepts that her husband is to be her protector, guardian and maintainer i.e. he will be *Qawwaam* over her. Allaah The Almighty says: ***{Men are the protectors and maintainers (Qawwaamoon) of women, because Allaah has given the one more [strength] than the other, and because they support them from their means}*** [Quran, 4:34]

Hence a husband whom a Muslim woman chooses wisely will never make her regret that she ever gave him her hand in marriage, especially if she marries him for the sake of Allaah The Almighty and not for worldly reasons. Along with her husband, she will want to establish a strong Muslim family that uphold Islamic teachings and spreads them amongst others. They will carefully and diligently nurture their children with the intention of raising a generation that is aware of its Islamic heritage before its ethnic or cultural heritage, and that treads the path that their Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, trod.

The husband and wife should not have opposing religious views and values, and should not differ in the way they want to raise their children, because lack of incompatibility can lead to tension in the family. Instead, they should co-operate with one another and be sensitive to each other's feelings. This is the way of believing men and women, who work together, each helping the other in righteousness. They will certainly reap the rewards of their good work, as Allaah The Almighty Says: ***{For Muslim men and women - for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are constant and patient, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast [and deny themselves], for men and women who guard their chastity, and for***

***men and women who engage much in Allaah's praise - for them has Allaah prepared forgiveness and great reward.*}** [Quran, 33:35]

Now we come to the question: how does one strengthen their bond with their spouse and establish a stable family life? The first thing to do is to choose a suitable spouse in the first place, as discussed above, while setting certain criteria and applying particular standards. Umm Sulaym bint Milhaan, may Allaah be pleased with her, was one worthy Muslim woman who knew what was important and discarded what was not. One of the first women of the *Ansaar* (Helpers) to embrace Islam, she was married to Maalik ibn An-Nadhar, by whom she had a son named Anas, may Allaah be pleased with him.

When this great female Companion, may Allaah be pleased with her, embraced Islam, her husband Maalik was very angry and left her, but she persisted and did not surrender in weakness to worldly desires. Shortly after this, she heard of his death. At the time, she was but a young woman, but she patiently bore it all for the sake of Allaah The Almighty, hoping to be rewarded amply for all that she had sacrificed. Instead of dwelling on the past and bemoaning her situation, she devoted herself to the care and nurturing of her ten-year-old son, Anas, may Allaah be pleased with him. She presented him to the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, so that he could serve and learn from him.

After she was widowed, Umm Sulaym, may Allaah be pleased with her, was approached by one of the most privileged and well-to-do young men of Madeenah, Abu Talhah. When he proposed for her, he believed that Umm Sulaym could not and would not turn him down, for his hand was sought by many other young women in Madeenah. He was coming to her with all his advantages and personal merits known to all and sundry; so he was astonished when she told him, *"O Abu Talhah, do you not know that your god whom you worship is just a tree that grew in the ground and was carved into shape by the slave of Banu so-and-so."* He said, *"Of course."* She said, *"Do you not feel ashamed to prostrate yourself to a piece of wood that grew in the ground and was carved by the slave of Banu so-and-so?"*

However, Abu Talhah was not willing to concede to this, nor did he want to give up the chance of marrying Umm Sulaym, may Allaah be pleased with her. He indicated to her that she would live in wealth and splendor, and enjoy all the luxuries and comforts that the wives of rich men are privy to. In spite of all he

offered her, Umm Sulaym, may Allaah be pleased with her, was not to be swayed by worldly temptations and the fleeting life of this world. She realized, as a discerning Muslim woman will, that pursuit of the world was futile, and that the Hereafter was more lasting and satisfying. Therefore, she told Abu Talhah, *"O Abu Talhah, a man like you could not be turned away, but you are a disbelieving man, and I am a Muslim woman. It is not permitted for me to marry you, but if you were to embrace Islam, that would be my dowry, and I would ask you for nothing more."*

He returned again on the morrow, but only to find her standing firm on her faith and principles, and the maturity she was displaying in answering him only enhanced her beauty in his eyes. She said to him, *"O Abu Talhah, do you not know that your god whom you worship was carved by the carpenter slave of so-and-so? If you were to set it alight, it would burn."* These words shook Abu Talhah, and he asked himself, *"Does the Lord burn?"* He was overcome by the truth and clarity of Islam's message, which is to worship one God and submit oneself to him. Upon this, Abu Talhah uttered with certainty the testimony of faith, *"I bear witness that there is no god but Allaah, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allaah."*

Umm Sulaym, may Allaah be pleased with her, was overjoyed when Abu Talhah embraced Islam. She cried, *"O Anas, marry me to Abu Talhah."* So Anas, may Allaah be pleased with him, brought witnesses and the marriage was solemnized. Abu Talhah, may Allaah be pleased with him, was so happy that he was determined to put all his wealth at Umm Sulaym's disposal, but she told him, *"O Abu Talhah, I married you for the sake of Allaah The Almighty, and I will not take any other dowry."* She, may Allaah be pleased with her, knew that when Abu Talhah, may Allaah be pleased with him, embraced Islam, she did not only win herself a worthy husband, but she also earned a reward from Allaah The Almighty that was better than owning red camels (the most highly-prized camels to the Arabs) in this world, as she had heard the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, say: ***"If Allaah were to guide one person to Islam through you, it is better for you than owning red camels."***

The story of Umm Sulaym, may Allaah be pleased with her, is one to ponder upon. Though she was a young widow, had recently become a Muslim, and had sacrificed much in the way of family ties and stability in life in the cause of her faith, Allaah The Almighty gave her something better than what she had formerly

had. Not only that, but she was the cause, after Allaah The Almighty, of Abu Talhah's, may Allaah be pleased with him, acceptance of Islam, when he saw her perseverance and steadfastness on her religion. With wisdom and careful arranging of one's priorities, one can achieve much that will do them good in this world as well as in the Hereafter. This should be the way of the intelligent Muslim woman who knows what is important and what is dispensable and unnecessary.

- Give your husband the respect that is his due, obey him and take care of him

Obedience to one's husband is an obligation on every true Muslim woman, unless it means complicity in sin. If her husband asks her to go against her religion, for example, in certain matters, then she should not obey him. A Muslim woman should also be respectful towards her husband and should keep him happy and satisfied.

Many virtuous and hard-working women in the history of Islam set an example for others to come. They served their husbands lovingly and diligently, and they would run their households with efficiency and care despite the poverty and hardships of their time. Their husbands were poor and they did not live in palaces with marbled floors and soft beds –yet they were like queens in their own right, for they were exemplary wives to their husbands.

Below are some shining examples of Muslim women at the time of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*:

Faatimah Az-Zahraa', may Allaah be pleased with her: She was the youngest daughter of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and the wife of the Companion 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib, may Allaah be pleased with him. She used to complain of the pain in her hands caused by grinding grain with the hand-mill, and she would also get tired doing household chores. Her husband 'Ali, may Allaah be pleased with him, said to her one day, *"Your father has brought some female slaves, so go and ask him for one of them to come and serve you."*

Faatimah, may Allaah be pleased with her, went to her father, but she did not find him, so mentioned her problem to 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her. When the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, returned, 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, informed him about his daughter's visit. Then the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, went to see 'Ali and Faatimah, may Allaah be

pleased with them, and said to them: ***"Shall I direct you to something better than what you have requested? When you go to bed say 'Subhaan Allaah' thirty-three times, 'Alhamdulillaah' thirty three times, and Allaahu Akbar' thirty four times, for that is better for you than a servant."*** [Al-Bukhaari]

Asmaa' bint Abi Bakr As-Siddeeq, may Allaah be pleased with them both: She served her husband Al-Zubayr ibn Al-'Awwaam, may Allaah be pleased with him, and took care of the house. Her husband had a horse, which she took care of, feeding it and exercising it. She also repaired the water-bucket, made bread, and carried dates on her head from far away. Al-Bukhaari and Muslim, may Allaah have mercy upon them both, report this in her own words,

> *"Az-Zubayr married me, and he had no wealth, no slaves, nothing except his horse. I used to feed his horse, looking after it and exercising it. I crushed date-stones to feed his camel. I used to bring water and repair the bucket, and I used to make bread but I could not bake it, so some of my Ansaari neighbors, who were kind women, used to bake it for me. I used to carry the dates from the garden that the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, had given to Az-Zubayr on my head, and this garden was two-thirds of a farsakh away. One day I was coming back with the dates on my head. I met the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, who had a group of his Companions with him. He called me, then told his camel to sit down so that I could ride behind him. I told (Az-Zubayr), 'I felt shy because I know that you are a jealous man.' He said, 'It is worse for me to see you carrying the dates on your head than to see you riding behind him.' Later, Abu Bakr sent me a servant, who relieved me of having to take care of the horse; it was as if I had been released from slavery."*

From these great *Sahaabiyaat* (female Companions), may Allaah be pleased with them, we see the commitment of true Muslim women towards their house and husband. A Muslim woman knows her husband's rights over her and fulfils them. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"…If I were to command anyone to make prostration before another I would command women to prostrate themselves before their husbands, because of the special right over them given to husbands by Allaah."*** [*Sunan Abi Daawood*]

‘Aa’ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, asked the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, *“Who has the greatest rights over a woman?”* He said: ***“Her husband.”*** She asked, *“And who has the greatest rights over a man?”* He said: ***“His mother.”***

A woman came to ask the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, about some matter, and when he had dealt with it, he asked her: ***“Do you have a husband?”*** She said, *“Yes.”* He asked her: ***“How are you with him?”*** She said, *“I never fall short in my duties, except for that which is beyond me.”* He said: ***“Pay attention to how you treat him, for he is your Paradise and your Hell.”*** [Ahmad and An-Nasaa’i]

Having heard these words from the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, how can a Muslim woman complain about having to take care of her house and husband? These two are a responsibility she has to shoulder, and instead of treating it as a cumbersome burden and a heavy load, she should remind herself that the work she is doing in her home is not in vain. Its reward is with Allaah The Almighty. It is certainly not a form of unpaid labor, nor is it an unappreciated, wasted or unacknowledged effort.

At the time of the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, Muslim brides were taught their duties towards their husband; being a good wife was an established attribute of women. Ibn Al-Jawzi, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said in his book *Ahkaam An-Nisaa’*,

> *“In the second century A.H., there was a righteous man called Shu‘ayb ibn Harb, who used to fast and spend his nights in prayer. He wanted to marry a woman, and told her humbly, ‘I am a bad-tempered man.’ She replied, tactfully and cleverly, ‘The one who makes you lose your temper is worse than you.’ He realized that there stood before him a woman who was intelligent, wise and mature. He immediately said to her, ‘You will be my wife.’”*

This is what a prudent Muslim woman is like. She understands the nature of her husband and where his pleasure and happiness lies. She knows better than to find childish satisfaction in provoking or antagonizing him, or rousing his temper for no reason. Instead, she avoids incurring his anger and displeasure and is always dutiful and agreeable in her behavior. This increases her husband’s fondness for

her, because she understands his temperament and deals with his moods accordingly. Being a good wife is a not only an admirable quality in a woman, but it is also a religious obligation for which the Muslim woman will be held accountable before Allaah The Almighty.

Here one asks: how does a Muslim woman obey her husband? The answer is, by respecting his wishes with regard to the permissible pleasures of daily life, such as social visits, food, dress, speech, etc. The more she responds to his wishes in such matters, the happier and more enjoyable the couple's life becomes, and the closer it is to the spirit and teachings of Islam. Her husband will never be discontented or unhappy with her, because she makes him feel that he is of some importance to her, and that is his permission and approval is of some consequence.

Below are some *Ahaadeeth* regarding the importance of obeying one's husband:

1. The wife's obedience to her husband is one of the things that may lead her to Paradise. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"If a woman prays her five daily prayers, fasts her month (of Ramadan), obeys her husband and guards her chastity, then it will be said to her, 'Enter Paradise by whichever of its gates you wish.'"*** [Ahmad and At-Tabaraani]
2. Umm Salamah, may Allaah be pleased with her, said, *"The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: **'Any woman who dies, and her husband is pleased with her, will enter Paradise.'**"* [Ibn Maajah] Thus, Islam multiplied the reward of obeying one's husband and made it a cause of her admittance to Paradise.
3. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"If a man calls his wife, then let her come, even if she is busy at the oven."*** [At-Tirmithi]
4. Al-Bukhaari and Muslim, may Allaah have mercy upon them both, report from Abu Hurairah, may Allaah be pleased with them, that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"If a man calls his wife to his bed and she does not come, and he goes to sleep angry with her, the angels will curse her until the morning."***
5. Imaam Muslim, may Allaah have mercy upon him, reports from Abu Hurairah, may Allaah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"By the One in Whose hand is my soul, there is no man who calls his wife to his bed, and she refuses him, but the One Who is***

in heaven will be angry with her, until the husband is pleased with her once more."

6. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, also said: ***"Allaah The Almighty will curse those procrastinating women who, when their husbands call them to their beds, say 'I will, I will…' until he falls asleep."*** Here we see that not only are rebellious women considered guilty, but also those who procrastinate.
   The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"If a man calls his wife to his bed, let her respond, even if she is riding her camel [i.e., very busy]."*** This *Hadeeth*, and the others like it that have been mentioned above, highlight the role of marriage in protecting a man's chastity and keeping him away from temptation.

   The most important than anything else that a woman can do is to respond to and satisfy her husband's needs, because the very concept of marriage is based on there being *Halaal* (lawful) relations between a man and woman. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"If anyone of you is attracted to a woman, let him go to his wife and have intercourse with her, for that will calm him down."*** [Muslim] Thus, in Islam, marriage plays a part in keeping the man from indulging in *Haraam* (unlawful) pleasures. Marriage in Islam is intended to protect the chastity of men and women alike, therefore it is the woman's duty to respond to her husband's requests for conjugal relations. She should not make excuses and try to avoid it. For this reason, several *Ahaadeeth* urge a wife to respond to her husband's needs as much as she is able, no matter how preoccupied she may be, as long as there is no urgent or unavoidable reason not to do so.
7. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, warned the woman whose husband is angry with her. He, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"There are three people whose prayers will not be accepted, neither their good works: a disobedient slave until he returns to his masters and puts his hand in theirs; a woman whose husband is angry with her, until he is pleased with her again; and the drunkard, until he becomes sober."*** [Ibn Hibbaan] Note that this *Hadeeth* refers to when the husband is in the right and the wife in the wrong. Then, it is wrong for a woman to disobey and go against her husband's wishes.

When the opposite is the case, and the husband is wrong, then his anger has no negative implications for her; in fact, Allaah The Almighty will reward the wife for her patience. But the wife is still required to obey her husband provided that no sin is involved. This is because there is no obedience to a created being if it entails disobedience to the Creator. Regarding this, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"It is not permitted for a woman who believes in Allaah The Almighty to allow anyone into her husband's house whom he dislikes; or to go out when he does not want her to; or to obey anyone else against him; or to forsake his bed; or to hit him. If he is wrong, then let her come to him until he is pleased with her, and if he accepts her then all is well, Allaah The Almighty will accept her deeds and make her position stronger, and there will be no sin on her. If he does not accept her, then at least she will have done her best and excused herself in the sight of Allaah The Almighty."***

In addition to giving the wife instructions as to how she should behave with her husband, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, gave us a description of the qualities of men's wives in Paradise in the following *Hadeeth*. He, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said to his Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them: ***"Shall I not tell you about your wives in Paradise?"*** They said, *"Of course, O Messenger of Allaah."* He said: ***"They are fertile and loving. If she becomes angry or is mistreated, or her husband becomes angry, she says, 'My hand is in your hand; I shall never sleep until you are pleased with me.'"*** [At-Tabaraani]

The wife is exempt from performing acts of worship like voluntary fasts on days other than those of *Ramadhaan* without the permission of her husband. She should also not allow anyone to enter his house without his permission, and she should not spend any of his earnings without his permission. If she spends anything without him having told her to do so, then half of the reward for that spending will be given to him.

These teachings are derived from the *Hadeeth* of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*: ***"It is not permitted for a woman to fast when her husband is present, except with his permission; or to allow anyone into his house except with his permission; or to spend any of his earnings unless he has told her to do so,***

otherwise half of the reward will be given to him." According to the report given by Muslim, he said: ***"A woman should not fast if her husband is present, except with his permission. She should not allow anyone to enter his house when he is present without his permission. Whatever she spends of his wealth without him having told her to do so, half of the reward for it will be given to him."***

The point here is that the woman should let her husband know that his approval and permission is important to her. Accordingly, if a wife gives some of his money in voluntary charity without his permission, then she will not receive any reward; on the contrary, it will be recorded as a sin on her part. If she wants to spend in his absence, and she knows that if he knew about it he would have given his permission, then she is allowed to do so, otherwise it is not permitted.

However, if the husband is a miser and spends too little on his family, then the wife is allowed to spend only as much as she needs from his wealth on herself and her children without his knowledge. Hind bint 'Utbah, the wife of Abu Sufyaan, may Allaah be pleased with him, came to the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and said, *"O Messenger of Allaah, Abu Sufyaan is a stingy man. What he gives me is not enough for me and my child, unless I take from him without his knowledge."* He, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"Take what is enough for you and your child, in moderation."*** [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim]

Thus, we see that Islam has made women responsible for running of the affairs of their household competently and efficiently. The Muslim woman understands this great responsibility that is to take care of her husband's house, wealth and children. She has been specifically reminded of this responsibility in recognition of her role, in the *Hadeeth* in which the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, made every individual in the Islamic society responsible for those under his or her authority in such a way that no-one, man or woman, may evade responsibility: ***"Each of you is a shepherd, and each is responsible for those under his care. A ruler is a shepherd; a man is the shepherd of his family; a woman is the shepherd of her husband's house and children. For each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for those under his care."*** [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim]

The true Muslim woman is always described as being loving towards her children and caring towards her husband. These are two of the most beautiful characteristics that a woman of any time or place may possess. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi*

wa sallam, praised these two characteristics, which were embodied by the women of Quraysh: ***"The best women who ride camels are the women of Quraysh. They are the most compassionate towards their children when they are small, and the most careful with regard to their husbands' wealth."*** [Muslim]

These two characteristics greatly contribute to the success of a marriage, make individuals and families happy, and help a society make progress.

It is a great honor for a woman to take care of her husband every morning and evening, and wherever he goes, treating him with gentleness and good manners which will fill his life with joy, tranquility and stability. Muslim women have a role model in 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, who used to accompany the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, on *Hajj*, surrounding him with her care, putting perfume on him with her own hands before he entered *Ihraam* (sacral state), and after he finished his *Ihraam*, before he performed *Tawaaf Al-Ifaadah*. She chose for him the best perfume that she could find.

This is stated in a number of *Saheeh* (authentic) *Ahaadeeth* reported by Al-Bukhaari and Muslim, may Allaah have mercy upon them both. An example is, *"I applied perfume to the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, with my own hands before he entered the state of Ihraam and when he concluded it before circumambulating the House,"* and, *"I applied perfume to the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, with these two hands of mine when he entered Ihraam and when he concluded it, before he performed Tawaaf,"* - and she ('Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her) spread her hands.

'Urwah said, *"I asked 'Aa'ishah, 'With what did you perfume the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, at the time when he entered Ihraam?' She said, 'With the best of perfume.'"* According to another report also given by Muslim, 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, said, *"I applied the best perfume I could find to the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, before he entered Ihraam and when he concluded it, before he performed Tawaaf Al-Ifaadah."*

When the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, was performing *I'tikaaf*, he would lean his head towards 'Aa'ishah, and she would comb and wash his hair. Al-Bukhaari and Muslim, may Allaah have mercy upon them both, report this in the authentic *Ahaadeeth* narrated from 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her,

such as, *"When the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, was in I'tikaaf, he inclined his head towards me and I combed his hair, and he did not enter the house except to answer the call of nature,"* and, *"I used to wash the Prophet's, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, head when I was menstruating."*

'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, urged women to take good care of their husbands and to recognize the rights that their husbands had over them. In her eyes, these rights were so great and important that she said a woman was barely qualified to wipe the dust from her husband's feet with her face, as she stated, *"O womenfolk, if you knew the rights that your husbands have over you, every one of you would wipe the dust from her husband's feet with her face."* 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, wanted to bring this to women's attention, so as to remove from the hearts of arrogant and stubborn women all those harsh, obstinate feelings that all too often destroy a marriage and turn it into a living hell.

Honoring and respecting one's husband is one of the characteristic attitudes of this *Ummah* (Muslim nation). It was one of the good manners known in the *Jaahiliyyah* (pre-Islamic Period of Ignorance) that were endorsed by Islam and perpetuated by the Arabs after they embraced Islam.

Our Islamic heritage is filled with texts that eloquently describe the advice given by mothers to their daughters, to care for, honor and respect their husbands; these texts may be regarded as invaluable social documents.

One of the most famous and most beautiful of these texts was recorded by 'Abdul-Malik ibn 'Umayr Al-Qurashi, may Allaah have mercy upon him, who was one of the outstanding scholars of the second century A.H. He quotes the beautiful words of advice given by Umaamah bint Al-Haarith, one of the most eloquent and learned women, who was possessed of great wisdom and maturity, to her daughter on the eve of her marriage. 'Abdul-Malik said, *"When 'Awf ibn Muhallim Ash-Shaybaani, one of the most highly respected leaders of the Arab nobility during the Jaahiliyyah, married his daughter Umm Iyaas to Al-Haarith ibn 'Amr Al-Kindi, she was made ready to be taken to the groom, then her mother Umaamah came in to her to advise her, and said,*

> *'O my daughter, if it were deemed unnecessary to give you this advice because of good manners and noble descent, then it would have been*

unnecessary for you, because you possess these qualities, but it will serve as a reminder to those who are forgetful, and will help those who are wise.

'O my daughter, if a woman were able to do without a husband by virtue of her father's wealth and her need for her father, then you of all people would be most able to do without a husband, but women were created for men just as men were created for them.

'O my daughter, you are about to leave the home in which you grew up, where you first learned to walk, to go to a place you do not know, to a companion with whom you are unfamiliar. By marrying you he has become a master over you, so be like a servant to him, and he will become like a servant to you.

'Take from me ten qualities, which will be a provision and a reminder for you. The first and second of them are: be content in his company, and listen to and obey him, for contentment brings peace of mind, and listening to and obeying one's husband pleases Allaah.

'The third and fourth of them are: make sure that you smell good and look good; he should not see anything ugly in you, and he should not smell anything but a pleasant smell from you. Kohl is the best kind of beautification to be found, and water is better than the rarest perfume.

'The fifth and the sixth of them are: prepare his food on time, and keep quiet when he is asleep, for raging hunger is like a burning flame, and disturbing his sleep will make him angry.

'The seventh and eighth of them are: take care of his servants (or employees) and children, and take care of his wealth, for taking care of his wealth shows that you appreciate him, and taking care of his children and servants shows good management.

'The ninth and tenth of them are: never disclose any of his secrets, and never disobey any of his orders, for if you disclose any of his secrets you will never feel safe from his possible betrayal, and if you disobey him, his heart will be filled with hatred towards you.

'Be careful, O my daughter, of showing joy in front of him when he is upset, and do not show sorrow in front of him when he is happy, because the former shows a lack of judgment, whilst the latter will make him unhappy.

'Show him as much honor and respect as you can, and agree with him as much as you can, so that he will enjoy your companionship and conversation.

'Know, O my daughter, that you will not achieve what you would like to until you put his pleasure before your own, and his wishes before yours, in whatever you like and dislike. And may Allaah The Almighty choose what is best for you and protect you.'"

The girl was taken to her husband and the marriage was a great success; she gave birth to kings who ruled after him.

This advice clearly included everything that one could think of as regards the good manners that a young girl needs to know about in order to treat her husband properly and be a suitable companion for him. The words of this wise mother deserve to be taken as the standard for every young girl who is about to get married.

If she is rich, the Muslim woman does not let her wealth and financial independence make her blind to the importance of respecting her husband's rights over her. She still takes care of him and honors him, no matter how rich she is or may become. She knows that she is obliged to show gratitude to Allaah The Almighty for the blessings He has bestowed upon her, so she increases her charitable giving for the sake of Allaah The Almighty.

The first person to whom she should give generously is her own husband, if he is poor; in this case she will receive two rewards, one for taking care of a family member, and another for giving charity, as the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, stated in the following *Hadeeth*, narrated by Zaynab Ath-Thaqafiyyah, may Allaah be pleased with her, the wife of 'Abdullaah ibn Mas'ood, may Allaah be pleased with him, *"The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, told us:* ***"O women, give in charity even if it is some of your jewelry."***

She said,

"I went back to 'Abdullaah ibn Mas'ood and told him, 'You are a man of little wealth, and the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, has commanded us to give charity, so go and ask him whether it is permissible for me to give you charity. If it is, I will do so; if it is not, I will give charity to someone else.' 'Abdullaah said, 'No, you go and ask.' So I went, and I found a woman of the Ansaar at the Prophet's door, who also had the [same] question. We felt too shy to go in, out of respect, so Bilaal came out and we asked him, 'Go and tell the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, that there are two women at the door asking you, is it permissible for them to give Sadaqah to their husbands and the orphans in their care? But do not tell him who we are.'

"So Bilaal went in and conveyed this message to the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, who asked, 'Who are they?' Bilaal said, 'One of the women of the Ansaar, and Zaynab.' The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, asked, 'Which Zaynab is it?' Bilaal said, 'The wife of 'Abdullaah.' The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: ***'They will have two rewards, the reward for upholding the relationship, and the reward for giving charity.'*** *"* (According to the report given by Al-Bukhaari, he, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"Your husband and your child are more deserving of your charity."***)

When life goes smoothly, the Muslim woman never forgets or neglects to thank Allaah The Almighty for the innumerable blessings He has showered upon her. On the other hand, in times of difficulty and strain, she is patient and endures without complaining incessantly, constantly turning to Allaah The Almighty to ask for His help.

On the night of *Al-Israa* (the Prophetic journey to Jerusalem) and *Al-Mi'raaj* (the Ascension), the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, was shown that most of the inhabitants of Hell were women. Therefore, he warned women from being one of them: Ibn 'Abbaas, may Allaah be pleased with him, said that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"O women, give charity, for I have surely seen that you form the majority of the inhabitants of Hell."*** They asked, *"Why is this so, O Messenger of Allaah?"* He said: ***"Because you curse too much, and are ungrateful for good treatment (on the part of your husbands)."*** [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim] According to another report given by Al-Bukhaari, may Allaah have

mercy upon him, he, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"…because they are ungrateful for good and kind treatment. Even if you treated one of them (these ungrateful women) well for an entire lifetime, then she saw one fault in you, she would say, 'I have never seen anything good from you!'"***

According to a report given by Ahmad, may Allaah have mercy upon him, a man said, *"O Messenger of Allaah, are they not our mothers and sisters and wives?"* He said: ***"Of course, but when they are treated generously they are ungrateful, and when they are tested, they do not have patience."***

These authentic *Ahaadeeth* which describe the fate of most women in the Hereafter, puts true Muslim women on the alert. They are always careful about their behavior towards their husbands, lest they fall into the sin of showing ingratitude towards her husband, or cursing at him frequently, or denying their husbands' good treatment of them, or forgetting to give thanks for times of ease, or failing to be patient at times of difficulty. It is because of this extreme vigilance and constant self-analysis and reflection that Muslim women set the highest example of respect towards one's husband and taking note of his good qualities. This attitude of loyalty towards their husbands befits the true Muslim woman who respects her husband's rights and does not ignore his many good qualities and traits.

The history of Islam is full of stories of women who were loyal to their husbands and acknowledged their husbands' good treatment of them. One of these stories is that of Asmaa' bint 'Umays, who was one of the greatest women in Islam, and one of the first women to migrate to Madeenah. She was first married to Ja'far ibn Abi Taalib, then to Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq, and then to 'Ali, may Allaah be pleased with them all.

Once, her two sons Muhammad ibn Ja'far and Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr were competing with one another, each of them saying, *"I am better than you, and my father is better than your father."* 'Ali, may Allaah be pleased with him, said to her, *"Judge between them, O Asmaa'."* She, may Allaah be pleased with her, said, *"I have never seen a young man among the Arabs who was better than Ja'far, and I have never seen a mature man who was better than Abu Bakr."* Thereupon, 'Ali, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, *"You have not left anything for me. If you had said anything other than what you have said, I would have hated you!"*

Asmaa' said, *"These are the best three, and you are one of them even if you are the least of them."*

What a clever and eloquent answer this wise woman gave! She gave each of her three husbands the respect he deserved, and pleased 'Ali, may Allaah be pleased with him, by including him among them, showing that she was not insensible of his merits. In this way, when a Muslim woman shows loyalty to her husband, she lets him know that she cares about him and that he has a special place in her heart.

- Treat your husband's mother and family with kindness and respect

One of the ways in which a wife expresses her respect towards her husband is by honoring and respecting his mother.

The Muslim woman who truly understands the teachings of her religion knows that the person who has the greatest right over a man is his mother, as we have seen in the *Hadeeth* of 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, quoted above. So she helps him to honor and respect his mother, by also honoring and respecting her. In this way she will do herself and her husband a favor, as she will be helping him to do a good deed and fear Allaah The Almighty, as commanded by the Quran. At the same time, she will be endearing herself to her husband, who will appreciate the way she honors and respects his family in general, and his mother in particular. Nothing could please a decent, righteous and respectful man more than seeing strong ties of love and respect between his wife and his family.

A Muslim wife may find herself being tested by her mother-in-law and other in-laws, if they are not of good character. If such is the case, she is obliged to treat them in the best way possible, which requires a great deal of intelligence, courtesy, diplomacy and repelling evil with that which is better. Thus she will maintain a balance between her relationship with her in-laws and her relationship with her husband, and she will protect herself and her marriage from any adverse effects that may result from the lack of such a balance.

The Muslim woman should never think that she is the only one who is required to be a good and caring companion to her spouse, and that nothing similar is required of her husband or that there is nothing wrong with him mistreating her or failing to fulfill some of the responsibilities of marriage. Islam has regulated the marital relationship by giving each partner both rights and duties. The wife's duties of honoring and taking care of her husband are balanced by the rights that she has

over him, which are that he should protect her honor and dignity from all kinds of mockery, humiliation, trials or oppression. These rights of the wife comprise the husband's duties towards her: he is obliged to honor them and fulfill them as completely as possible.

- Be eager to please your husband and endear yourself to him

The true Muslim woman is always keen to win her husband's love and to please him. Nothing should spoil his happiness or enjoyment of life. So she speaks kind words to him, and refrains from saying anything hurtful or upsetting. She brings him good news, but she keeps bad news from him as much as she can, or postpones telling it until a more suitable time when it will not upset him so much. If she finds that she has no alternative but to tell him upsetting news, she looks for the most suitable way to convey it, so that the blow will not be so hard on him. This is the wise approach and good conduct of the clever woman, but it is very difficult to attain and only a very few virtuous women ever do so.

One of those who did reach this high level was the great Muslim woman Umm Sulaym bint Milhaan, the wife of Abu Talhah Al-Ansaari, may Allaah be pleased with them both. Her son Abu 'Umayr passed away whilst Abu Talhah, may Allaah be pleased with him, was traveling; let us hear of her reaction from her other son, Anas ibn Maalik, may Allaah be pleased with him,

> *"A son of Abu Talhah by Umm Sulaym died. Umm Sulaym told her family, 'Do not tell Abu Talhah about his son until I tell him about it.' Abu Talhah came home, so she prepared dinner for him, and he ate and drank. Then she beautified herself in a way that she had never done before, and he had sexual intercourse with her. When she saw that he was satisfied, she said, 'O Abu Talhah, do you think that if a people lent something to a household, then asked for it back, do they have the right not to return it?' He said, 'No.' She said, 'Then resign yourself to the death of your son.' Abu Talhah became angry and said, 'You let me indulge myself and then you tell me about my son!' He went to the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, and told him what had happened. The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said:* ***'May Allaah bless both of you for this night!'*** *Umm Sulaym became pregnant.*

"The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, went on a journey, and she accompanied him. Whenever the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, came back from a journey, he never entered Madneeah at night. When they (the traveling-party) approached Madeenah, her labor-pains started. Abu Talhah stayed with her, and the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, went on ahead to Madeenah. Abu Talhah said, 'O Lord, You know how I love to go out with Your Messenger when he goes out, and to come back with him when he comes back, and I have been detained, as You see.' Umm Sulaym said, 'O Abu Talhah, I do not feel as much pain as I did before, so let us go on.'

"When they reached (Madeenah), her pains-pains started again, and she gave birth to a boy. My mother said to me, 'O Anas, nobody should feed him until you take him to the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, in the morning.' So when morning came, I took the baby to the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, and when I met him he was carrying an iron tool. When he saw me, he said: ***'I hope that Umm Sulaym has given birth.'*** *I said, 'Yes.' So he put down the tool and I brought the child to him and placed him in his lap. The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, called for some of the dates of Madeenah. He chewed it until it became soft, then he put it in the baby's mouth and the baby began to smack his lips. The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said:* ***'See how much the Ansaar love dates!'*** *Then he wiped the baby's face and named him 'Abdullaah."*

Observe how bravely Umm Sulaym concealed from her husband the pain she felt at losing her son! Contemplate on the strength of her faith, and the magnificence of her patience and virtue! Undoubtedly, she was grieved and severely afflicted by the death of her young son, as any mother would naturally be. Yet she withheld the news from husband, who was coming home from a journey; she spent time with him, and only when he was relaxed and replete did she break the news to him.

No doubt Allaah The Almighty knew the sincerity and strength of Umm Sulaym's, may Allaah be pleased with her, faith, and He conveyed the good news of Paradise to her via His Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"I entered Paradise, and heard footsteps. I said, 'Who is***

this?' and they told me, 'It is Al-Ghumaysaa', the daughter of Milhaan, the mother of Anas ibn Maalik.""

Another example of the ways in which a wife may endear herself to her husband is the way in which 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, spoke to the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, when he came back to his wives after he had kept away from them for a month. He had said: ***"I will not go in to them for a month,"*** because he was so angry with them. When twenty-nine days had passed, he came to 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, first. 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, said to him, *"You swore to stay away from us for a month, and only twenty-nine days have passed; I have been counting them."* The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"This month has twenty-nine days."*** That particular month had only twenty-nine days.

In this incident, where 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, told the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, that she had counted all twenty-nine days that he had been away from her, we see a clear indication of her love for her husband and of how she had waited, day by day, hour by hour, for him to come back to her. It shows how she loved and missed her husband. This approach made her even dearer and more beloved to him.

The sincere Muslim woman recognizes her husband's likes and habits, and tries to accommodate them as much as she can, in the interests of mutual understanding and marital harmony, and to protect the marriage from the boredom of routine. This is what every wise and intelligent wife does. It was narrated that the judge and scholar of *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) named Shurayh married a woman from Banu Handhalah. On their wedding night, each of them prayed two *Rak'ahs* and asked Allaah The Almighty to bless them. Then the bride turned to Shurayh and said, *"I am a stranger, and I do not know much about you. Tell me what you like, and I will do it, and tell me what you do not like, so I may avoid it."* Shurayh said, *"She stayed with me for twenty years, and I never had to tell her off for anything, except on one occasion, and I was in the wrong then."*

This is the respectful and loving wife that Islam wants women to be, responsible for her home and loyal to her husband, and always careful to maintain a good relationship between them. If anything happens to upset their marriage, she hastens to calm the situation with her sincere love and wise understanding. She does not

listen to the whispering of the Shaitaan (Satan) which calls her to do wrong, and she never hastens to ask her husband for a divorce. The marriage bond should be too strong to be undone by temporary arguments or occasional misunderstandings.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, warned women who ask their husbands for a divorce with no legitimate reason that they would be denied even the scent of Paradise: ***"Any woman who asks her husband for a divorce with no good reason will be deprived of even smelling the scent of Paradise."***

- Do not disclose your husband's secrets

The chaste Muslim woman does not disclose her husband's secrets, and does not talk to anyone about whatever secrets and other matters there may be between him and her. The serious Muslim woman is above that; she would never sink to the level of such cheap and shameless talk as goes on amongst the lowest type of people. Her time is too precious to be wasted in such vulgar behavior. She would never accept for herself to be counted as one of those people whom the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, described as one of the worst types: ***"Among the worst type of people in the sight of Allaah The Almighty on the Day of Judgment is a man who enjoys his wife's intimate company, and she enjoys his intimate company, then one of them goes and discloses the secret of the other."***

Talking about that which is private between a husband and wife is one of the most abhorrent ways of disclosing secrets. No one does such a thing but the worst type of people. There are some secrets the disclosure of which is not as bad as disclosing this secret, but in any case, telling secrets at all is disliked and is unacceptable.

Keeping secrets in itself is a worthy and virtuous deed, whilst disclosing them is a grave error and shortcoming, from which nobody can be immune except the infallible Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*. The disclosure of a secret that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, had entrusted to Hafsah, may Allaah be pleased with her, who told it to 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her. This was what led to the plotting and intrigue in his household that caused him to keep away from his wives for a whole month, because he was so upset with them. The following verse was revealed regarding this incident: ***{When the Prophet disclosed a matter of confidence to one of his consorts, and she then divulged it [to another], and Allaah made it known to him, he confirmed part thereof and***

repudiated a part. Then when he told her thereof, she said, 'Who told you this?' He said, 'He told me Who knows and is well-acquainted [with all things].} [Quran, 66:3]

'Aa'ishah and Hafsah, may Allaah be pleased with them both, are then confronted with their error and called to repent, so that they might draw closer to Allaah The Almighty after having distanced themselves by their deed. Allaah The Almighty revealed that if they did not repent, He would be the protector of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and Jibreel, may Allaah exalt his mention, and the righteous believers would also support him: {***If you two turn in repentance to Him, your hearts are indeed so inclined; but if you back up each other against him, truly Allaah is his Protector, and Gabriel, and [every] righteous one among those who believe - and furthermore, the angels - will back [him] up.***} [Quran, 66:4]

Then they are issued with a stern warning and the terrifying prospect that if they persist in their error, they may lose the honor of being the wives of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*: {***It may be, if he divorced you [all], that Allaah will give him in exchange Consorts better than you - who submit [their wills], who believe, who are devout, who turn to Allaah in repentance, who worship [in humility], who travel [for Faith] and fast – previously married or virgins.***} [Quran, 66:5]

This incident presents a valuable lesson to the Muslim woman on the importance of keeping her husband's secret, and the effect this confidentiality has on the stability of the individual and the home. One of the greatest blessings that Allaah The Almighty has bestowed on the Muslims in particular, and on mankind in general, is that he has made the public and private life of His Messenger, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, like an open book, in which all can read the teachings of this *'Aqeedah* and its practical application in real life. Nothing is secret or hidden; matters and events that people usually keep secret are discussed openly in the Quran and *Sunnah*, even unavoidable human weaknesses. All of these issues are presented in order to teach people right from wrong.

The Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, understood that the life of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, was entirely devoted to Allaah The Almighty and His message, so why should they keep secret or conceal any aspect

of his life? The stories that have been narrated about his life, his household and his wives represent a practical application of the words he preached, and for this reason, the Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, transmitted the most precise details of his life, and did not fail to record any aspect of his daily life, whether it was major or minor. This is part of the way in which Allaah The Almighty caused the life of his Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, to be recorded, including details of the precise way in which Islamic teachings were applied in his life. This is in addition to the Quranic references to the Prophet's, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, life, which form a record that will remain until heaven and earth pass away.

- Support your husband and offer him advice

One of the laws that Allaah The Almighty has decreed for this life is that men and women should work together to cultivate and populate the earth and run the affairs of life therein. Man cannot do without woman, and vice versa. Hence the laws of Islam teach men and women to co-operate in all matters. Islam encourages a man to help his wife, as much as he is able; the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, who is the example for all Muslims, used to help and serve his family until he went out to pray, as the Mother of the Believers 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, said.

Just as Islam expects a man to help his wife with housework and running household affairs, so the woman is also expected to help him in dealing with the outside world and to play her role in life by offering her opinions and advice, and supporting him in practical terms.

History tells us of Muslim women who engaged in *Jihaad* with men, bringing water to the thirsty, tending the wounded, setting broken bones, stemming the flow of blood, encouraging the soldiers, and sometimes even joining in the actual fighting, running back and forth between the swords and spears, standing firm when some of the brave men had fled. Their courageous conduct in battle was much praised by the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and many names besides those of Umm 'Ammaarah and Umm Haraam bint Milhaan, may Allaah be pleased with them both, will be forever illumined.

Muslim women's contribution to public life was not limited to the battlefield; women also stood side-by-side with men in times of peace, offering valuable

opinions and council, soothing their men's hearts in times of stress and supporting them through hardships.

The true, sincere Muslim woman understands the heavy burden that Islam has placed on her shoulders by obliging her to be a good wife to her husband, to surround him with care and meet his every need, to give him enjoyment, and to renew his energy so that he may fulfill his mission in life. So she does not withhold her advice when she sees that he needs it, and she never hesitates to stand by his side, encouraging him, supporting him and offering advice and consolation.

The first Muslim woman, Khadeejah bint Khuwaylid, may Allaah be pleased with her, is the best example one can offer of a woman who influenced her husband. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, came to her on the day of the first revelation, anxious, trembling and shaking all over with nervousness and terror from what he had just seen and heard. He told her to cover him and wrap him up, and she hastened to offer her help and support, advising him and thinking of a practical way of helping him.

Al-Bukhaari and Muslim, may Allaah have mercy upon them both, report the story told by 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, of how the revelation commenced, and the way Khadeejah, may Allaah be pleased with her, supported her beloved husband,

> *"The revelation started in the form of a dream that came true, he never saw a dream but it would clearly come to pass. Then he was made to like seclusion, so he would go and stay alone in the cave of Hiraa', praying and worshipping for many nights at a time, before coming back to his family to collect supplies for another period of seclusion. Then the truth came suddenly, when he was in the cave of Hiraa'. The angel came to him and said, 'Read!' He said:* ***'I am not a reader.'*** *[The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam,] said:* ***'The angel embraced me and squeezed me until I nearly passed out, then released me, and said, 'Read!' I said: 'I am not a reader.' The angel embraced me a second time, squeezed me until I nearly passed out, then released me and said, 'Read!' I said: 'I am not a reader.' The angel embraced me a third time and squeezed me until I nearly passed out, then released me and said: {Read! In the name of your Lord and Cherisher, who created - created man, out of a [mere] clot of congealed***

blood: Read! And your Lord is Most Bountiful - He Who taught [the use of] the Pen - taught man that which he knew not.} [Quran, 96:1-5]

"The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, came back to Khadeejah, trembling all over, and said: ***'Cover me, cover me!'*** *They covered him up until he calmed down, then he said to Khadeejah:* ***'O Khadeejah, what is wrong with me?'*** *He told her what had happened, then said:* ***'I fear for myself.'*** *Khadeejah said, 'No, rather be of good cheer, for by Allaah, Allaah would never forsake you. By Allaah, you uphold the ties of kinship, speak the truth, spend money on the needy, give money to the penniless, honor your guests and help those beset by difficulties.'*

"She took him to Waraqah ibn Nawfal ibn Asad ibn 'Abdul-'Uzza, who was her cousin, the son of her father's brother. He was a man who had become a Christian during the time of Jaahiliyyah; he could write the Arabic script and he had written as much of the Gospel in Arabic as Allaah The Almighty willed. He was an old man who had become blind.

"Khadeejah said to him, 'O Uncle, listen to your nephew.' Waraqah ibn Nawfal said, "O son of my brother, what has happened?" The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, told him what had happened, and Waraqah said to him, 'This is An-Naamoos (i.e., Jibreel), who was sent down to Moosa, upon whom be peace. I wish that I were a young man, and could be alive when your people cast you out.'

"The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, asked, "Will they really cast me out?" Waraqah said, "Yes. No man has ever come with what you have brought, but his people were hostile towards him. If I live to see that day I will give you all the support I can."

How perfectly wise, intelligent and understanding the reaction of Khadeejah, may Allaah be pleased with her, was! She, may Allaah be pleased with her, knew her husband's outstanding character, good conduct and purity of heart, and this made her certain that Allaah The Almighty would never forsake a man like Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, or permit evil to befall him.

Khadeejah, may Allaah be pleased with her, realized that behind this remarkable new event that had so overwhelmed her husband lay something great that Allaah The Almighty had prepared for him. Therefore, she gave the Prophet, *sallallaahu*

'alayhi wa sallam, her full support, encouraged him, was ever loyal towards him, and had full conviction in the truth of his Message. Her attitude buoyed him and gave him confidence.

Thus, it happened that the first Mother of the Believers, Khadeejah, may Allaah be pleased with her, was a sincere adviser and supporter of Islam, and gave many a counsel to the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*. She had already earned the great status and lasting fame of being the first person to believe in Allaah The Almighty and His Messenger, and she stood beside her husband the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, bearing along with him all the persecution and opposition of the Quraysh.

No wonder Khadeejah, may Allaah be pleased with her, earned the pleasure of Allaah The Almighty and deserved to be honored by Him. Allaah The Almighty conveyed the greeting of *Salaam* to her through His Messengers Jibreel, may Allaah exalt his mention, and Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and gave her glad tidings of a house in Paradise, all from above seven heavens! Abu Hurairah, may Allaah be pleased with him narrated, *"Jibreel came to the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallm, and said, 'O Messenger of Allaah, Khadeejah is coming to you with vessels containing food and drink. When she comes to you, convey to her the greeting of Salaam from her Lord and from me, and give her the glad tidings of a house of pearls in Paradise, in which there is no noise or hard work."* What a great honor and privilege! No one can deny that Khadeejah, may Allaah be pleased with her, well deserved the tribute.

A true Muslim woman puts her mind to good work, thinks carefully and gives advice to her husband when is most in need of it. In doing this she does a great favor for her husband.

Another of these great stories which feature correct advice given by a woman is the reaction of the Muslims to the treaty of al-Hudaybiyyah, and the reaction of Umm Salamah, may Allaah be pleased with her, which demonstrated her deep insight and great wisdom.

Umm Salamah, may Allaah be pleased with her, was one of those who were with the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, when he went to Makkah to perform *'Umrah* in 6 A.H. This journey was interrupted by the Quraysh, who prevented the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and his Companions, may Allaah be

pleased with them, from reaching the Ka'bah. The treaty of Al-Hudaybiyyah was drawn up between the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and the Quraysh. There were certain conditions in the treaty – such as if anyone from the Quraysh came to the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, without the permission of his guardian, he would be returned, but if any of the Muslims came to the Quraysh, he would not be returned – that caused tension and indignation amongst the Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them.

By virtue of his deep understanding that was derived from the guidance of Allaah The Almighty, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, understood that this treaty, which appeared to be quite unfair to the Muslims, had, in fact, something positive for them. It represented a great victory for Islam and the Muslims.

When the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, had ratified the treaty, he commanded his Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, to get up, slaughter their sacrificial animals, and shave their heads, but none of them got up. He repeated his order thrice, but not one of them responded. He, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, then went to his wife Umm Salamah, may Allaah be pleased with her, and told her what he was facing from the people. At this point the wisdom and intelligence of Umm Salamah, may Allaah be pleased with her, become quite clear: she told him, *"O Messenger of Allaah, go out and do not speak to any of them until you have sacrificed your animal and shaved your head."*

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, followed her advice, and did as she suggested. When the Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, saw this, they rushed to sacrifice their animals, pushing one another aside, and some of them began to shave one another's heads, until they were almost fighting with one another because of their distress and grief, and their regret for having disobeyed the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam.*

After that the Muslims understood the great wisdom of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, in agreeing to this treaty. The treaty was in fact was a manifest victory, because many more people entered Islam after it than had before. In *Saheeh Muslim*, it is stated that the verse: ***{Verily We have granted you a manifest victory}*** [Quran, 48:1] referred to the Treaty of Al-Hudaybiyyah.

In conclusion, do not hesitate to offer advice and support to your husband, especially as it boosts his spirits when he needs encouragement and backing the most.

- Encourage your husband to spend for the sake of Allaah The Almighty

Another way in which the Muslim woman can support her husband is by encouraging him to spend and give charity for the sake of Allaah The Almighty, and not wasting money in making extravagant purchases as so many ignorant and misguided women do nowadays.

The alert Muslim woman always wants goodness and success for her husband, so she urges him to do good deeds, to do more of them, and to do them often. She does this because she believes in doing so she will increase her honor in this world and her reward in the next.

One of the beautiful stories narrated about a woman's encouraging her husband to spend for the sake of Allaah The Almighty is the story of Ummud-Dahdaah, may Allaah be pleased with her. When her husband came to her and told her that he had given in charity the garden in which she and her children used to live, in hopes of receiving a bunch of dates in Paradise, she said, *"You have got a good deal; you have got a good deal."* The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, commented: ***"How many bunches of dates Abud-Dahdaah will have in Paradise!"*** and he repeated this several times.

- Help your husband obey Allaah The Almighty and do good deeds

One of the qualities of the good Muslim wife is that she helps her husband to obey Allaah The Almighty in different ways, especially to stay up and pray *Qiyaamul Layl* (voluntary night prayers). By doing this, she does him an immense favor, because she reminds him to do something he might otherwise forget or neglect. Thus she causes him, and herself, to be covered by the mercy of Allaah The Almighty.

What a beautiful picture the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, drew of the married couple helping one another to obey Allaah The Almighty and do good deeds, and entering into the mercy of Allaah The Almighty together. Abu Hurairah, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, *"The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said:* ***'May Allaah have mercy on the man who***

gets up at night to pray and wakes up his wife to pray, and if she refuses, he sprinkles water in her face. And may Allaah have mercy on the woman who gets up at night to pray, and wakes her husband up to pray, and if he refuses, she sprinkles water in his face."

- Fill your husband's heart with happiness and joy

The intelligent and sensitive Muslim woman does not forget that one of the greatest deeds she can do in life, after worshipping Allaah The Almighty, is to be successful in endearing herself to her husband and filling his heart with joy, so that he will feel in the depths of his heart that he is happy to be married to her, and enjoys living with her and being in her company. So she finds ways of opening his heart and filling it with joy and happiness. She understands that she is the greatest joy of a man in this world. 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr ibn Al-'Aas, may Allaah be pleased with both of them, narrated that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"This world is nothing but temporary conveniences, and the greatest joy in this world is a righteous woman."***

If she does not know how to endear herself to him, then in most cases she will be a source of unhappiness and misery to her husband. This was confirmed by the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*: ***"Three things make the son of Adam happy, and three make him miserable. Among the things that make the son of Adam happy are a good wife, a good home and a good means of transport; the things that make him miserable are a bad wife, a bad home and a bad means of transport."***

Hence, being a good wife, and endearing oneself to one's husband, are a part of the Muslim woman's religion, because this offers protection to a man by helping him remain chaste, and strengthens the foundations of the family, thus bringing happiness to her husband and children.

The Muslim woman by nature likes to endear herself to her husband; in doing so she finds a way of fulfilling her femininity and her inclinations to make herself attractive. But for the Muslim woman, the matter goes even further: in seeking to win her husband's heart, she is also seeking to earn the pleasure of Allaah The Almighty, Who decreed that being a good wife is part of religion, and an issue she will be questioned on in the Hereafter. So she does not spare any effort in her

loving treatment of her husband: she presents a pleasing appearance, speaks pleasantly and kindly, and is a clever and likeable companion.

- Beautify yourself for your husband

A Muslim woman tries to beautify and adorn herself for her husband by means of make-up, clothing, etc., so that she will appear attractive and charming, and thus make her husband happy and prevent him from looking at other women. This was the practice of the righteous women of the *Salaf* (righteous predecessors). Foremost among them were 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, and others; they used to wear fine clothes and jewelry at home and when they were traveling, in order to make themselves look beautiful for their husbands.

Bakrah bint 'Uqbah came to 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, and asked her about henna. 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, said, *"It comes from a good tree and pure water."* She asked her about removing body hair, and she said, *"If you have a husband, and you could remove your eyes and replace them with something better, then do it."*

Some women are careless and neglect their appearance in front of their husbands. Do they not realize that their beauty should be primarily for their husbands, not for their friends and peers? Women who fail to make themselves look presentable and appealing to their husbands are sinners, because they are falling short in one of the greatest duties of marriage. Their negligence may be the cause of their husbands staying away from them and looking at other women, perhaps falling into temptation and indulging in *Haraam* pleasures.

A wife whose husband sees her with unkempt hair, looking pale and wan and wearing shabby clothes, is a foolish and disobedient wife. It will be of no help to her if she rushes to beautify herself only when receiving guests or going to a women's party, but remains looking shabby most of the time in front of her husband. Muslim women who are truly guided by the teachings of Islam will have no such shortcomings, because they treat their husbands properly, and a woman who treats her husband properly is most unlikely to fail in fulfilling her duty towards him.

It is one of the teachings of Islam that a woman should make herself look beautiful for her husband, so that her husband should only see of her that which he likes. Therefore, it is forbidden for a woman to dress in mourning for more than three

days, except in the case of her husband's death, when she is permitted to mourn for four months and ten days. We find proof of this in the *Hadeeth* of Al-Bukhaari, may Allaah have mercy upon him, narrated from Zaynab the daughter of Umm Salamah, may Allaah be pleased with them both, who said, *"I came to Zaynab bint Jahsh, the wife of the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, when her brother died. She called for perfume and applied it to herself, then said, "I am not wearing perfume because I need to, but because I heard the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, say from the Minbar (pulpit):*

'It is not permitted for a woman who believes in Allaah and the Last Day to grieve for more than three days, except for her husband, (for whom she may grieve) four months and ten days.'"

- Be cheerful when you meet your husband

One of the ways in which the Muslim woman makes herself attractive to her husband is by being cheerful, friendly and in good spirits. When he comes home exhausted from his work, and she greets him with a smiling face and kind words, he feels uplifted and happy.

The wife should put her own concerns aside for a while and help her husband forget some of his worries. She appears as cheerful and serene as she can, and expresses her gratitude to him every time he does something good for her.

The true Muslim woman is fair-minded and never ungrateful to any person, because the teachings of her religion protect her from falling into the error of bad behavior and ingratitude for favors. How then could she be ungrateful to her husband, her beloved lifelong companion?

She knows well the teaching of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*: ***"He does not thank Allaah who does not thank people."***

She understands from this that every person who does good deeds and favors deserves thanks and recognition, so how could she hesitate or fail to show gratitude to her husband, especially when she hears the words of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*: ***"Allaah will not look at the woman who does not thank her husband at the time when she cannot do without him."***

- Share the joys and sorrows of your husband

Another of the ways in which a woman may endear herself to her husband is by sharing his joys and sorrows. So she joins him in some of his pastimes, and his daily work, such as reading, exercise, and attending useful talks and gatherings, and so on, so that her husband will feel that he is not alone in his enjoyment of the good things in life, but that he is sharing these pleasures with a loving, intelligent and loyal wife.

The fact that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, raced with 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, more than once indicates the fact that Islam urges both spouses to share their partner's joy and happiness in life, because this sharing will have a powerful effect in deepening their feelings for one another and strengthening the bonds between them.

Just as she shares his joys, so she also shares his worries and concerns, and comes to him with kind words of consolation, mature and sensible advice and sincere emotional support.

- Do not look at men other than your husband

The true Muslim woman avoids looking at men other than her husband; she does not stare at men who are non-*Mahrams* (marriageable). She complied with the command of Allaah The Almighty: ***{And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze}*** [Quran, 24:31]

By refraining from looking at other men, she will be one of those chaste women who restrain their glances, which is a quality that men like in women, because it is indicative of their purity, decency and fidelity. This is one of the most beautiful characteristics of the chaste, decent, pure Muslim woman, and this was referred to in the Quran when it speaks of the women of Paradise and their qualities that are loved by men: ***{In them will be [Maidens] chaste, restraining their glances, whom no man or jinn before them has touched.}*** [Quran, 55:56]

- Do not describe other women to your husband

Another of the characteristics of the intelligent Muslim woman is that she does not describe any of her female friends or acquaintances to her husband, as this is forbidden according to the words of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*: ***"No woman should talk about another woman, or describe her to her husband [so that it is] as if he sees her."***

Islam wants people's hearts to be at peace, and to prevent provocative thoughts and overactive imaginations, so that people may live their lives in a decent and calm fashion, free from discontent and thoughts of infidelity and unfaithfulness. No man should let his mind be occupied with cheap thoughts of the contrast between his wife and the woman she describes, or provide embellishments from his own imagination that may add to the object's supposed beauty.

- Create an atmosphere of peace and tranquility for your husband

The Muslim woman does not only make herself beautiful for her husband and share his work and pastimes but also tries to create an atmosphere of peace and tranquility in the home. So she tries to keep a clean and tidy home, in which he will see order and good taste, and clean, well-mannered children, and where good meals are prepared regularly.

The adroit wife also does whatever else she can based on her knowledge and good taste. All of this is part of being a good Muslim wife as enjoined by Islam. Furthermore, the true Muslim woman does not forget that according to Islam marriage is one of the signs of Allaah The Almighty. Islam has made the wife a source of tranquility, rest and consolation for her husband: ***{And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between you [your hearts]}*** [Quran, 30:21]

The wife is a source of refuge, security and rest for her husband in a marital home that is filled with sincere love and compassionate mercy. The truly-guided Muslim woman is the best one to understand this lofty meaning and to translate it into a pleasant and cheerful reality.

- Be tolerant of your husband and forgive his faults

The Muslim woman is tolerant and forgiving, overlooking any errors on the part of her husband. She does not bear a grudge against him for such errors or remind him about them repeatedly. There is no quality that will endear her to her husband like the quality of tolerance and forgiveness, and there is nothing that will turn her husband against her like resentment, counting his faults and continuously reminding him about his mistakes.

The Muslim woman who is following the guidance of Islam obeys the command of Allaah The Almighty: ***{Let them forgive and overlook, do you not wish that Allaah should forgive you?}*** [Quran, 24:22]

- Develop a strong, assertive character and deal with situations wisely

Among the most prominent characteristics of the Muslim woman are her strength of character, mature way of thinking, and serious conduct. These are qualities which the Muslim woman possesses both before and after marriage, because they are the result of her understanding of Islam and her awareness of her mission in life.

She exhibits this strength of character when she is choosing a husband. She does not give way to her father's whims if he has deviated from the right way and is seeking to force her into a marriage that she does not want. Neither does she give in to the man who comes to seek her hand in marriage, no matter how rich or powerful he may be, if he does not have the qualities of a true Muslim husband.

There are many instances where Muslim women chose to assert themselves, such as Umm Sulaym bint Milhaan, may Allaah be pleased with her, who insisted on adhering to Islam along with her son Anas, may Allaah be pleased with him, although her husband Maalik ibn al-Nadhar remained a polytheist, opposed to his wife being Muslim; and Umm Habeebah bint Abi Sufyaan, may Allaah be pleased with them both, who remained steadfast in her Islam when her husband 'Ubaydullaah ibn Jahsh Al-Asadi became an apostate and joined the religion of the Abyssinians; and Bareerah, may Allaah be pleased with her, who was determined to separate from her husband whom she did not love, even though the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, tried to intervene on his behalf; and the wife of Thaabit ibn Qays ibn Shammaas, who demanded a divorce from her husband whom she did not love either, and the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, accepted her request.

The primary motive of these women in taking up such a strong stance was their concern to adhere to Islam, to keep their belief pure, and ultimately to please Allaah The Almighty.

Each of them was seeking what is *Halaal* in her married life, and feared committing any *Haraam* deed, either because she was married to a man who did not share her religious beliefs, or she was falling short in her duties towards a

husband whom she did not love or could not live with. If it were not for their strength of character and feelings of pride in themselves and their faith, they would have followed the commands of the misguided husbands and would have found themselves going astray, choking on the misery of living with a husband they could not truly accept. The courage of these women shows how the true Muslim women should be, no matter where or when she lives.

But the Muslim woman's strength of character should not make her forget that she is required to obey her husband, treating him with honor and respect. Her strength of character should make her strike a wise balance in the way she speaks and acts towards him, with no inconsistency or carelessness. Even in those moments of anger which are unavoidable in marred life, she should control herself and restrain her tongue, lest she say anything that could hurt her husband's feelings. This is the quality of a strong, balanced character.

'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, represents the highest example of this good quality, and every Muslim woman should follow her example. The way she swore an oath when she was happy with her husband, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, was different from the way she spoke when upset with him. This is an example of good manners and respect. It was something that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, noticed, as she narrated that he said: ***"I know when you are happy with me and when you are upset with me."*** She said, *"How do you know that?"* He said: ***"When you are happy with me, you say, 'No, by the Lord of Muhammad,' and when you are upset with me, you say, 'No, by the Lord of Ibrahim.'"*** She said, *"Yes, that is right. By Allaah, O Messenger of Allaah, I only keep away from your name."*[Muslim]

What refined manners and sincere love!

'A'ishah's strength of character became even more prominent when she was tried with the incident of *Al-Ifk* (the Slander) which Allaah The Almighty made a test for His Messenger, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and for all the *Ummah*, raising the status of some and lowering that of others, increasing the faith of those who were guided and increasing the loss of those who went astray. Her strength of character and deep faith in Allaah The Almighty became apparent, and her trust in Him alone to prove her innocence was quite clear. Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said,

"The test was so severe that the Revelation ceased for a month because of it, and nothing at all concerning this issue was revealed to the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, during that time, so that the wisdom behind what had happened might become completely apparent and the sincere believers might be increased in faith and adherence to justice and might think well of Allaah The Almighty, His Messenger, the Messenger's family and those believers who spoke the truth. The Hypocrites, meanwhile, would be increased only in sins and hypocrisy, and their true nature would be exposed to the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, and the believers.

"'Aa'ishah, the one who had spoken the truth, and her parents would be shown to be true servants of Allaah The Almighty, who had received His full blessing. Their needs for Allaah The Almighty and their desire to draw closer to Him would increase; they would feel humble before Him and would put their hope and trust in Him, instead of hoping for the support of other people. 'Aa'ishah would despair of receiving help from any created being, and she passed this most difficult test when her father said, 'Get up and thank him,' after Allaah The Almighty had sent down a Revelation confirming her innocence. She said, 'By Allaah, I will not get up and thank him; I will only give thanks to Allaah The Almighty Who has revealed my innocence.'

"Another aspect of the wisdom behind the Revelation being suspended for a month was that people would focus solely on this issue and examine it closely; the believers would wait with eager anticipation to hear what Allaah The Almighty would reveal to His Messenger concerning this matter. The Revelation came like rain on parched land, when it was most needed by the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, and his family, by Abu Bakr and his family, by the Companions and by the believers, and it brought them great relief and joy. If Allaah The Almighty had revealed the truth of the matter from the first instant, then the wisdom behind this event would have been obscured and a great lesson would have been lost.

"Allaah The Almighty wanted to demonstrate the status of His Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, and his family in His sight, and the honor which He had bestowed upon them. He Himself was to defend His Messenger and rebuke his enemies, in such a way that the Prophet,

sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, had nothing to do with it. Allaah The Almighty alone would avenge His Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, and his family.

"The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, was the target of this slander, and the one who was accused was his wife. It was not appropriate for him to declare her innocence, although he knew that she was indeed innocent, and never thought otherwise.

"When he asked people to avenge him of those who had spread the slander, he said: ***'Who could blame me if I were to punish those who slandered my family? By Allaah, I have never known anything but good from my family, and they have told me about a man from whom I have never known anything but good, and he never came in my house except with me.'*** *He had more proof than the believers did of 'Aa'ishah's innocence, but because of his high level of patience, perseverance and deep trust in Allaah The Almighty, he acted in the appropriate manner until the Revelation came that made his heart rejoice and raised his status, showing to his Ummah that Allaah The Almighty was taking care of him.*

"Whoever examines 'Aa'ishah's response, when her father told her to get up and thank the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, and she said, 'No, I will give thanks only to Allaah The Almighty,' will realize the extent of her knowledge and the depth of her faith. She attributed this blessing to Allaah The Almighty alone, and gave thanks only to Him. She had a sound grasp of Tawheed (Islamic monotheism), and demonstrated great strength of character and confidence in her innocence.

"She was not curious or anxious about the outcome when she spoke thus, because she was sure that she had done nothing wrong. Because of her faith in the Prophet's, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, love for her, she said what she said. She became even dearer to him when she said, 'I will not give thanks except to Allaah The Almighty, for He is the One Who has revealed my innocence.' She displayed remarkable maturity and steadfastness when her dearly beloved husband, whom she could not bear to be apart from, kept away from her for a month; then, when the matter was resolved and he wished to come back to her, she did not rush to him, despite her great love

for him. This is the highest level of steadfastness and strength of character." [*Zaad Al-Ma'aad*]

It is indeed the highest level of maturity and strength of character. The true Muslim woman is humble, kind, loving and obedient towards her husband, but she does not allow her character to weaken before him, even if he is the most beloved of all people towards her, and the most noble and honorable of all human beings, so long as she is in the right and is adhering to the way of Allaah The Almighty. 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, set the highest example of the strength of character of the Muslim woman who is proud of her religion and understands what it is to be a true servant of Allaah The Almighty alone.

What we learn from the attitude of 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, is that Islam esteems and honors woman as long as they adhere to the laws and teachings of Islam. This is what gives women's character strength, pride, honor and wisdom.

Islam gives women rights and recognition which are envied by Western women when they hear about women's rights in Islam. This has been freely admitted by women's liberation activists in Arab countries as well. Many of them have retracted their claims that Muslim women need to be liberated. One such activist is Dr. Nawaal As-Sa'daawi, who was interviewed for the Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Watan (mid-August 1989).

Dr. As-Sa'daawi was asked, *"Do you think that the European women are an example to be copied?"* She replied, *"No, not at all. European women have advanced in some fields, but are backward in others. The marriage laws in Europe oppress women, and this is what led to the development of women's liberation movements in those countries and in America, where this movement is very strong and is even at times quite vicious."*

Then she remarked, *"Our Islamic religion has given women more rights than any other religion has, and has guaranteed her honor and pride, but what has happened is that men have sometimes used certain aspects of this religion to create a patriarchal class system in which males dominate females."*

Clearly, this patriarchal oppression mentioned by Dr. As-Sa'daawi which has led to the oppression of women has been caused by ignorance of the true teachings of Islam.

Prophetic guidance for men

- Understand the importance of marrying and choose a good wife who is likely to be an excellent mother and caregiver to your children.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, endorsed marriage among young people; Anas ibn Maalik, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated,

> "*A group of three men came to the houses of the wives of the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, asking how the Prophet worshipped (Allaah), and when they were informed about that, they considered their worship insufficient and said, 'Where are we from the Prophet, as his past and future sins have been forgiven.' Then one of them said, 'I will offer the prayer throughout the night forever.' The other said, 'I will fast throughout the year and will not break my fast.' The third said, 'I will keep away from the women and will not marry forever.' The Messenger of Allaah came to them and said:* ***'Are you the same people who said so-and-so? By Allaah, I am more submissive to Allaah and more afraid of Him than you; yet I fast and break my fast, I do sleep and I also marry women. So he who does not follow my tradition in religion, is not from me (not one of my followers).***"' [Al-Bukhaari]

In both men and women, there are certain qualities that are seen as good and desirable. These are the qualities that will determine who you choose to be your lifelong partner and companion.

A sensible Muslim man should look for certain important qualities in his future wife. The first of these is that she should be a pious woman, who would conscientiously raise a generation of righteous and hard-working Muslims. This was the advice of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*: ***"A women may be sought for her wealth, her birth, her beauty or he religious character. But do look for the religious women. And if you do it for any other consideration, your hands be rubbed in dirt!"*** [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim]

The Muslim man will not be attracted to, or even wish to marry, pretty girls who have not had a good Islamic upbringing, or who have not been well-grounded in Islamic teachings, or who have not been raised in a good environment. The character and behavior of his future wife is important and is always considered by the Muslim man. Also, commitment to serving Islam and worshipping Allaah The Almighty correctly, and eagerness to live by the Quran and *Sunnah* is an indispensible quality. The Muslim man will then look for other characteristics that are desirable according to him or his family, such as good looks, wealth, etc.

While looking for good attributes in his future wife, the Muslim man must not neglect to improve and constantly check his own character. He must not forget that, just as he is looking for certain things in his future bride, that future bride also has demands to make on his personality and traits. Thus, Muslim men should work to increase their piety and moral standards, as these will make them qualified to shoulder the responsibility that will soon be thrust upon them: the responsibility of taking charge of a family. Women do apparently want their men folk to lead and not be led by them; weakness is not considered very characteristic of men. Leadership has to be deserved and qualified by all the other qualities such as piety, truthfulness, fairness, kindness, consultation, good manners, good morals and so on.

In addition, it is helpful to turn over in one's mind the qualities that were recommended by the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*. Any man who wants to make a success of his marriage cannot go wrong if he takes as his model and example the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, who, in his own words, was the best of all men to their women and families: ***"The best of you is the best to his family and I am the best of you to my family."*** [Narrated by At-Tirmithi and others]

- Show respect towards your wife, esteem her and do not undervalue or be insensitive towards her

Some writers demonstrate the respect that women are given in the West, giving examples of male chivalry and courtesy, like a husband opening the door to the car for his wife. However, anyone can see that in many aspects of Western society

there is an inherent disregard for women, where women are treated as cheap merchandise out to be displayed before all and sundry. This is all seen by the West and their admirers as empowerment and liberation of women.

Mutual respect is a must in Islam, and the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, is the best example in this. Once, during his *'Itikaaf* in the last ten days of *Ramadhaan*, his wife Safiyyah, may Allaah be pleased with her, came to visit him and spoke with him for some time, then went to the door. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, led her to the door to bid her farewell. In another narration, he told her: ***"Do not hurry to leave till I come with you."*** Her house was at Usaamah's and he, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, left with her. Respect is the source of continual love and stability in a family. Husbands should be sensitive towards their wives and show how much they esteem them by being courteous and affectionate towards them. Indeed, if all couples treated each other in such way, a marriage would be a beautiful experience for both husband and wife.

Today, many husbands think it unmanly to show love and tenderness towards their wives. However, if we read about the life of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, we will see many instances where he showed graciousness and gallantry particularly towards his wives and to all women in general. Therefore, a Muslim man should not treat his wife contemptuously, or use sarcastic and hurtful language when speaking to her. Likewise, if a man is easy-going and treats his wife pleasantly, she should reciprocate and be careful not to repel him.

- Be kind and gentle towards your wife; do not be harsh, overly critical of her, or unpleasant in your behavior or manner.

To enjoy a happy and peaceful marital life, both spouses need to behave pleasantly and lovingly towards one another. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, guided his *Ummah* to keep good company with their wives by word and deed, and in many instances of the life of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, this is demonstrated:

1. Al-Bukhaari and Muslim, may Allaah have mercy upon them both, narrated that Abu Hurairah, may Allaah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"Treat women kindly, they were created from a rib, and the most crooked part of the rib is the highest***

part thereof; so, if you tried to rectify the rib it will be broken and if you left the rib as it is, it will remain crooked, and women are like this; therefore treat them kindly."

(There is another narration by Muslim, may Allaah have mercy upon him, in which the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, stated: ***"Women have been created from a rib. She will never be straightened up in the way you wish. If you enjoyed her companionship, then do it with that crookedness, as If you tried to rectify her she will be broken and breaking her means divorcing her."***

Thus, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, not only directed men to treat women kindly, but also demonstrated their reality to convince men to accept his precious advise, because if the men realized that women are crooked by nature, then they would be patient with women; insisting on "straightening" women is futile.

2. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, repeated this commandment to men on several occasions. He, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, did not neglect to advise men regarding their womenfolk in the *Khutbah* (sermon) he delivered on the Farewell Pilgrimage. He, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"Treat women kindly, they are captives in your houses, you have no way except to treat them kindly unless they commit a clear-cut abomination, in which case, desert them in the bed, if not feasible, strike them gently but do not cause them any harm, thereafter, if they obeyed you, do not wrong them. You have a right on your wives and your wives have a right on you; your right on them is that they should keep your honor and do not allow any person to enter your houses if you do not like them to enter, and their right on you is to treat them kindly and provide them with clothing and food."*** [Muslim]
3. The nature of women cannot be tolerated by some men who are unable to control themselves when angry. Their intolerance of the crookedness of women leads them to divorce them; consequently, they lose their wives and scatter their families. Therefore, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, guided Muslim husbands in another *Hadeeth* to the right way of dealing with their families by saying: ***"The faithful husband should not hate his faithful***

wife, because if he hates a certain manner in her character, then he should not forget the other good manners in her character."

- Do not belittle or undervalue your wife's advice, for the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, himself used to consult his wives

In the history of Islam are many great Muslim men who used to seek and follow the advice of their wives, foremost among whom is the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, himself, who sometimes followed the advice of Khadeejah, Umm Salamah, 'Aa'ishah, and others among his wives, may Allaah be pleased with them all.

The great Companion 'Abdullaah ibn Az-Zubayr, may Allaah be pleased with him and his father, used to follow the advice of his mother Asmaa', may Allaah be pleased with her; Al-Waleed ibn 'Abdul-Malik used to follow the advice of his wife Ummul-Baneen bint 'Abdul-'Azeez ibn Marwaan, and Haroon Ar-Rasheed, may Allaah have mercy upon him, used to follow the advice of his wife Zubaydah. These are not the only examples; there are more.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, taught his *Ummah* the way to treat their wives through his own relationships with his wives. He, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, would discuss matters with his wives as he would with friends of his. Note here, that he did not really need their opinion on these matters, for he was directed by what Allaah The Almighty revealed to him. However, he wanted to teach his nation that Muslim men were to give women every consideration. This was quite a radical idea in his time, as it is today in many parts of the world. In the *Jaahiliyyah*, not many men thought of their wives as having sound opinions or whether they were even entitled to any. The behavior of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, with his wives contrasted with this.

When the conditions were laid down in the Treaty of Al-Hudaybiyyah, many of the Companions of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, were severely disappointed and angered. They believed the treaty contained unfair stipulations, and that it apparently in favor of the disbelievers of the Quraysh. After the treaty was ratified, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, ordered the Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, to slaughter their sacrificial animals and take off their pilgrim attire. They hesitated, hoping that he would change his mind. He

repeated his order, but they continued to hesitate. They did not oppose him; rather, they still hoped he might change his mind, for they had set out with the intention of pilgrimage and did not want to stop half way. So they did not carry out his instructions.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, returned to his tent and asked his wife Umm Salamah, may Allaah be pleased with her, who was accompanying him what she thought of the situation. Umm Salamh, may Allaah be pleased with her, told him to proceed with the slaughter and removal of *Ihraam*, as the Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, would see that this was his final decision, and would be sure to follow his example. This was indeed what happened.

Counsel and consultation, like every good deed, were practiced by the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, first within his own family and then in the wider community. In asking his wife for advice, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, taught Muslim men an important lesson in having a successful marital relationship: that there is nothing wrong with exchanging ideas with women on matters, whether they are important or otherwise. Even if you are not going to go by what your wife suggests, at least you will have let her know that her opinion matters to you; thus, you will make her feel valued and loved.

- Deal with your wife's anger or jealousy with wisdom and patience

It was reported that 'Umar ibn Al-Khattaab, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, *"We, the tribe of Quraysh, used to overpower our wives. When we were encountered by the Ansaar (Helpers), we found out that the women overpowered the men. So our wives started to learn from the women of the Ansaar their ethics."*

'Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, also said that once, his wife shouted at him and disagreed with him about something, and he disapproved of this. She asked him why he disapproved, for the wives of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, sometimes disagreed with him and even abandoned him for a whole day. 'Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, was dismayed at this, and told her that whoever did that did it to her own loss. Then he went to his daughter Hafsah, may Allaah be pleased with her, who was one of the wives of the Prophet,

sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam. He said, *“O Hafsah, do any of you stay angry with the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, a whole day?”* She replied, *"Yes"*. He said, *"You are in loss; do you not fear Allaah’s anger because of the Prophet’s, that you will be doomed?”*.[Al-Bukhaari]
Note how ‘Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, got angry because of a simple disagreement with his wife, while the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, displayed great leniency and tolerance towards his own wives.

Moreover, the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, would treat his wives with great kindness and there were instances of gentle humor on his part and theirs. ‘Aa’ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, said, *"The Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, told me: **‘I can tell when you are pleased with me and when you are not.’** I said, ‘How can you tell?’ He said: **‘If you are pleased with me you swear saying, ‘No, by Muhammad's Lord’ and if you are not, you swear saying, ‘No, by Abraham's Lord.’** I said, "Yes by Allaah, O Prophet of Allaah. I can only abandon your name.’"* [Al-Bukhaari]

Anas, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, *"The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, was with one of his wives then another wife sent him a plate of food. The one that the Prophet was at her home hit the hand of the servant who was carrying the plate. It fell down and broke into two pieces. The Prophet collected the broken pieces and the food and said: **"Your mother [His wife] is jealous."** He then kept the servant until he brought a new plate from the wife who broke the plate to give it to the other wife and kept the broken one at the home of the one who broke it."* [Al-Bukhaari]

Thus, the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, overlooked all the doings of his wives, forgave them and was ever patient, even though he was capable of leaving them. Allaah The Almighty would have compensated him with better worshipping, Muslim, believing women, virgins and non virgins as promised in case he divorced them: ***{It may be if he divorced you (all) that his Lord will give him instead of you, wives better than you, Muslims (who submit to Allaah), believers, obedient to Allaah, turning to Allaah in repentance, worshipping Allaah sincerely, fasting or emigrants (for Allaah's sake), previously married and virgins.}*** [Quran, 66:5]

But he, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, was merciful and the more he had to bear from his wives, the more enduring and forgiving he was.

- Shower love, care and attention on your wife

The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, was fair and dealt justly with his wives, loved them, fondled them and showed care and affection towards them. His actions sprang from a feeling of responsibility and because Allaah The Almighty has created him righteous and equitable by nature.

A man's nature dictates him a certain way of expressing his feelings and it is different from a woman's. A woman expresses her love with words, whereas a man expresses love in action and production and seldom with words. If a man wants to tell his wife that he loves her he buys her something she wants or brings some food and drinks or furniture to the house. This is how men are accustomed to expressing themselves.

The generous Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, overcame this negative trait in the nature of men. He used to describe his love and passion verbally for ‘Aa’ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, treated her kindly, pampered her, and let his others wives hear what they wished for from their beloved husband. Talking to people are expressing yourself verbally is an important aspect in a relationship. Ibn ‘Asaakir, may Allaah have mercy upon him, narrated that ‘Aa’ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, said that the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, told her: ***"I could not care less to die knowing that you are not my wife in heaven."*** Imagine the emotions of ‘Aa’isha, may Allaah be pleased with her, at having heard these words from the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*. Do you not think she felt valued, loved, and secure?

- If you are in a polygamous marriage, treat all your wives equally and do not withhold your affection from one wife and bestow it excessively on another.

Each wife of the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, was personally cared for and loved by him. Because of his generosity and kindness towards each, each of his wives thought she was his most beloved. The idea that any man could show

complete equality and fairness in his relationships with nine women would seem fairly impossible to us. For this reason, the Messenger of Allaah frequently asked Allaah The Almighty for forgiveness for any unintentional leanings on his part. He, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, would pray: ***"I may have unintentionally shown more love to one of them than the others, and this would be injustice. So, O Lord, I take refuge in Your grace for those things beyond my power."*** [At-Tirmithi]

His gentleness penetrated his wives' souls so deeply that his departure led to what they must have felt to be an unbridgeable separation. They did not commit suicide, as Islam forbids it, but their lives now became full of endless sorrow and ceaseless tears.

The Messenger was kind and gentle to all women, and advised all other men to follow him in this regard. Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas, may Allaah be pleased with him, described his kindness, saying,

> *“’Umar said, ‘One day I went to the Prophet and saw him smiling. "May Allaah make you smile forever, O Messenger of Allaah," I said, and asked why he was smiling.* ***"I smile at those women. They were chatting in front of me before you came. When they heard your voice, they all vanished,"*** *he answered, still smiling. On hearing this answer, I raised my voice and told them, ‘O enemies of your own selves, you are scared of me, but you are not scared of the Messenger of Allaah, and you do not show respect to him.’ They replied, "You are hard-hearted and strict."* [Al-Bukhaari]

‘Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, said that the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, never preferred one wife over the others and he used to see them all in their apartments daily, although he used to spend the night with one only.

Treating all his wives equally never changed with changes in the circumstances of the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*. When he wanted to travel, he used to pick without personal preference (for example, by drawing straws) which wife was to accompany him.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, used to gather his wives everyday in the house of the one he was to spend the night with. He ate dinner with them sometimes, then each one of them went to her own apartment.

Conclusion

In our Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, we have the best example of how to deal with one another and how to live as married couples. Therefore, we should live by his teachings and use the Quran and *Sunnah* as the best references when dealing with our spouses, for that is the reason for leading a truly blessed, peaceful and fulfilled married life.

