

SELECTION OF A MATE

Deciding whom to marry is, without doubt, one of the most important decisions a person has to make.

The Holy Prophet (saw) is reported to have said:

“In marrying a woman, a man’s choice of a spouse is determined by the consideration of her wealth, her family, her physical beauty and her religious piety, but you should make your life happy, prosperous and successful by **choosing a spouse on account of her religious piety**, otherwise your hands will ever remain in dust.” (*Bukhari*)

Concept of Islamic Marriage

- Taqwa (love of God and the fear of losing His love) is the basis of Islamic marriage and mentioned 5 times in the Khutba Nikāh.
- Islāmic boundaries of modesty, respect and confidentiality must be maintained throughout the marriage process (and beyond).
- There is no option of courtship/dating in Islamic marriage.
- In obedience to Allah’s commandment "O ye who believe! Fear Allah and say the straightforward word" (Holy Qur’ān 33:71), prospective marriage candidates should be honest in projecting themselves (family background, education, job, salary, etc.)
- It is going to be a commitment for life.

Role of Parents

- Parents should start praying for the blessings of a good match for children when they are born.
- Hazrat Mir Nāsir Nawab (ra) [father of Hazrat Amman Jan (ra)] said:
...“Since this daughter of mine was born, I have never missed a namaz (salat) in which I have not prayed: ‘O Allāh Almighty, whichever man is most agreeable and suitable in Your eyes, tie my daughter’s marriage knot with him’”.
- When the time is right, parents need to approach the marriage process of their children with a clear intention, fully immersed in **Taqwa** above all else. They should have absolute and unwavering trust in Almighty Allāh and then pray fervently for a good companion for their child.

- Parents should become familiar with the steps involved. They should seek guidance from family elders and/or trusted friends, preferably those who have been through the process. Rishtā Na’ata coordinators are also available for consultation.
- Parents should not assume that they know every single like or dislike of their child; ask, listen carefully, guide patiently.
- Parents should aim to present their children in an accurate, positive light, both on paper and in person – this goes for everything from moral, academic and physical qualities to life goals and interests.
- Children need to be convinced that their parents are acting in their best interest during the mate selection process.

Approaching the family for a potential marriage proposal and exchanging photos

- Once a proposal has been identified, an attempt should be made to assess “Kufw” between the families and candidates (see appendix below).
- An elder (usually mother or father) of the candidate should contact an elder of the other party on the phone and, after introductions, inquire about the proposal. If there is a positive response, further steps may be taken.
- Huzoor’s (aba) advice in this regard is that a family ought to be given personal details of a potential proposal first, and a photograph shown afterwards.
- Generally speaking, the majority of male candidates (and their mothers) prefer to see a photograph early on; men (and/or their mothers) will often reject a proposal on the basis of looks alone.
- Female candidates do request a photograph but are found to be more willing than men, in general, to look beyond physical attributes alone.
- Huzoor (aba) remarked that those who have physical appearance as an important criterion should pre-determine through photographs whether they wish to proceed or not with a match, and should avoid humiliating girls by visiting and then rejecting them on the grounds of appearance alone. Huzoor (aba) reiterated that if they gave preference to piety they would be the recipients of the Holy Prophet’s (saw) prayers. (*Friday Sermon December.24.2004*)
- The Rishta Na’ata Department prefers to allow families to handle photograph exchanges independently, assuming sufficient interest has been shown by both parties. However, the department coordinators are always available to help with this as required, within Jama’at guidelines.

Rishtā Na'ata Coordinators' Feedback

Here are some random examples of the kinds of requests/comments which Rishtā Na'ata Coordinators hear occasionally from parents and prospective candidates:

- 'We are Sayyed/Rajput/Jatt/Kakke Zai'i; we are not interested in any proposal outside of our own ethnic group'.
- 'My son is very educated; he doesn't want a girl who observes purdah (it may not fit with his professional life)'.
- 'I am looking not only for a wife who is well-educated, both of her parents must be well-educated too.'
- 'Our daughter does not want to leave this area; we do not want her to move far away from us either'.
- 'Our daughter has a new job contract which requires her to stay in this city for X months. Her husband will need to live here'.
- 'We searched this candidate online and do not like what we have seen; we do not wish to proceed with this proposal'.

Background Checks

- Remember, you will be marrying a person, not a photograph or a set of impressive data; due diligence will be needed to look into references of potential matches and their families **and this should be done prior to any meeting**.
- A trusted and reliable friend or community member, Jama'at office holder or missionary can help to verify if the person you are interested in is decent, honest and respectful.

The Meeting

- If basic information and photographs have been exchanged and the intention is to explore further, there is the option of the families and/or candidates speaking via phone or exchanging emails to get an idea of each other's personalities. Some families prefer to bypass this step and arrange to meet in person directly.
- Be assured that everyone involved during the meeting stage is equally nervous and self-conscious because *everyone* from both sides is being assessed to some degree or other...
- Keep expectations realistic and minimal. Focus on positive traits.

Is it a match?

- There is no such thing as a perfect match.
- It is unrealistic to rely on one 'perfect' pre-conceived ideal for a future spouse. It is preferable to be open to different people and not to refuse to meet or to talk to someone simply because they do not fit the mental image we may have created of the "perfect partner."
- Perhaps this person is not as tall and thin, educated, fair-complexioned or rich as you had envisioned a spouse to be? Does that really have to be a deal-breaker? There are positive

traits in everyone - focus on those and keep expectations at a moderate level, as is the Islāmic way.

- Be kind, not over-judgmental; the blessings of time and maturity can, and do, bring about self-reformation in most people.
- No one is perfect. After all, you are probably not perfect in every way either!

Advice from Hazrat Amman Jan (ra)

Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) gave the following guidance:

- “A woman’s ‘beauty’ is based upon her piety and her good household management.” She also said that “modesty is part of a woman’s beauty.”
- When seeking a husband, Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) said one should look at a man’s piety and the habits of his family. She said that a man’s employment and where he lives were less important factors to consider.

“Outer beauty fades; inner beauty is forever”

- It is wise to remind ourselves and our children that physical appearance, including their own, changes over time. This may be difficult to imagine when we are young but it’s worth mentioning nevertheless.
- If a person’s Taqwa and good moral character (qualities which are *not* known to fade with time) predominate over physical attributes, we should have faith that a real and lasting attraction can develop over time, sometimes without one even realizing it. We can grow accustomed to looks and we can come to love and cherish them indiscriminately, even if they do not fit perfectly into what we had previously considered to be ‘ideal’.

Value of Prayer

- Deciding whom to marry is not a decision that should be made in haste.
- Give yourself enough time to really engage your minds in the decision and to pray sincerely for guidance.
- Conversely, remember that taking too long to make up your mind is unfair to the other party.
- The Holy Prophet (saw) taught his Companions to seek counsel with Allāh whenever they had a decision to make - Salat-ul-Istikhara is invaluable here. By seeking Allāh’s counsel, we remind ourselves that all knowledge of what is good or bad for us resides with Him, and that we are in need of Him to guide us to and make easy for us that which is best for us. This helps us achieve a level of peace with whatever happens.
- Huzoor (aba) has stated the principle that matrimonial relations should not be decided on emotions; rather they should be decided after careful consideration and seeking the help of Allāh who is All-Embracing. Such matches are blessed by Allāh and He graces them with great scope. (*Friday Sermon , May 15,2009*)

Role of the Jama'at

- Huzoor (aba) said it is the responsibility of the entire society to pay attention to the marriage of those who are marriageable. Huzoor explained the importance of arranging marriages within the Community. He said it promotes unity and ensures that the next generation is raised in a pious environment. (*Friday Sermon, December 24, 2004*)
- Huzoor (aba) prayed: May we be enabled to arrange marriages of those who are orphaned and of widows in accordance with the Qur'anic injunction and may Allah alleviate the anxiety of those parents of marriageable girls, Ameen.
(*Friday Sermon, December 24, 2004*)

Premarital Counseling by the Jama'at

- Pre-marital counseling is offered to all couples who request it. Huzoor (aba) has recommended it and has urged all to co-operate with the Rishtā Na'ata department within the administrative system of the Community.
- In his remarks to the Rishta Na'ata Committees of the UK and Canada in 2013, Huzoor (aba) said it should be explained to people that:
- We must not destroy our future generations for the sake of any temporary gain or on account of our desires.
- We must preserve our familial ties and safeguard our future generations.
- We must make sacrifices for the sake of our children and develop steadfastness and patience.
- Though it seems a minor detail, still, everyone must be made to understand why they are Ahmadī Muslims, why they have accepted the Promised Messiah (as) and the importance our faith has in our lives. We must preserve our identity.

He also stated "During counselling sessions prospective marriage candidates should be clearly told about:

- The goal of marriage in Islam.
- Counselors ought to discuss the marital teachings of Islam and explore the candidates own feelings on the subject.
- Candidates ought to be made aware of their family background and the sacrifices of their elders Candidates should never overlook or forget the many favors which God has bestowed upon them.
- They should be told that the best way to thank God for his numerous bounties is to travel on the same path of virtue as taken by their elders and thereby preserve the dignity and honor of their family name."

APPENDIX

“Kufw” literally means being alike or equal; of the same tribe, kin and brotherhood. Muslim jurists have acknowledged the importance of the man and wife being equally matched because the real reason of being “hum-kufw” (belonging to a similar background) is to have a comfortable and harmonious married life.

Religious, spiritual and social equality is basic to the determination of “Kufw”. Other factors such as family background, education, profession, age and health may also be considered.... Of all these factors, religious equality is the most important. That is why the Holy Prophet (saw) has said:

“In marrying a woman, a man’s choice of a spouse is determined by the consideration of her wealth, her family, her physical beauty and her religious piety, but you should make your life happy, prosperous and successful by **choosing a spouse on account of her religious piety**, otherwise your hands will ever remain in dust.” *(Bukhari)*

On account of matters and disputes arising out of cultural, social and educational differences between the parties, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at does not permit an Ahmadi woman to marry a non-Ahmadi man. Such a marriage does not satisfy the test of equality (kufw) of religious faith... *(Fiqah Ahmadiyya 2004, Part II, p22)*

In light of the above, when a potential marriage proposal is being explored, personal compatibility (“kufw”) of the families and of the potential* bride and bridegroom should be assessed by both parties. The following may be considered:

*(*NOTE to reader: the word ‘potential’ is not repeated but understood before ‘bride’ and ‘bridegroom’ in these next two pages since it is the exploratory phase under discussion.)*

Level of spirituality of the potential bride and bridegroom

- Assumptions should not be made based solely on the parents’ or family’s level of spirituality or of Jama’at involvement. An attempt should be made to assess the level of spirituality/religious observance and individual involvement in Jama’at activities of the bride and bridegroom.
- Participation in financial sacrifice and regularity of Chanda payments should be considered as well.

Regularity in Salat and Qur'an

- Are the bride and bridegroom regular in Salat? Be honest to avoid future problems.
- Do they recite the Holy Qur'an daily?
- What is the general direction they wish to take their future household in? Is this alright with all parties in the long-term?

Level of purdah and modesty

- Does the bride observe purdah - how much or how little? Are the bridegroom and his family in agreement with this in the long-term? How about the bridegroom? Does he observe “Ghaz-i-Basr” (lowering of the eyes) as required?
- Due diligence in checking with the Jama’at President or Missionary is invaluable here.

Life goals

- What is the life goal of the bride and of the groom? Do they share a common purpose and similar aims or is their personal life vision incompatible?
- As an example, the bride's goal may be to attain nearness to Allah and the bridegroom may want to have little connection with the Jamā’at, or the bride may want to maintain a busy career and earn a lot of money versus the bridegroom desiring to have a large family with a stay-at-home mom, etc.

Concept of Marriage

- Are both sides familiar with each other’s personal concept of marriage? Are both parties clear on what marriage entails and do they agree to this?
- Do they know that they must remain committed and focused on one another as their main priority, above anyone else?
- Do they know that there are many sacrifices involved in marriage, such as: of time, money, extracurricular hobbies, etc.? Are they ready to share their finances, time, families, and home together? Are they ready to make every decision for two people rather than for one?
- Are they ready to be adults and deal with matters maturely and make compromises?
- Are both parties aware that this is a permanent and lifelong arrangement, and not a temporary experiment?
- Do they know that they must be devoted to maintaining their home and will be spending most of their time from now on with this one person (rather than on their own or with friends)?

Bride’s desire to work

- This matter should be clarified from the start.. Does the bride desire to work after marriage, or does she prefer to be a home-maker? Is this preference alright with her husband-to-be and in-laws? Do the in-laws-to-be have a preference? Does the husband-to-be?
- The wife should be aware that her primary responsibility of maintaining the household and caring for the home/children must not be sacrificed for the sake of her career, but if she can balance both, then she may work outside the home.

What if the bride is still studying?

- This should be discussed and agreed upon between both sides.
- If the bride is still studying, both sides need to understand how that will affect the responsibilities of the home and a compromise should be established.
- In such a situation, the bridegroom should be willing to share responsibilities of the home when the bride is away. Is he fully supportive of her and in agreement with this?

- The bride should also understand that, as far as possible, pursuing education does not shift her primary responsibility of the home.

Prior financial liabilities

- Are there any student loans taken out by the bride before marriage? Who will pay these off? What arrangements have been set up?
- Is there an expectation that the bridegroom and/or his family will have to pay them off?
- Does the bridegroom have any financial liabilities?

Lifestyle

- What does an average day look like for the bride and for the bridegroom? What are their hobbies and interests?
- Does either the bride or groom engage in activities which are undesirable to the other party (such as preferring to stay out late to spend time with friends rather than to spend evenings at home, or an extravagant hobby such as buying expensive cars or collector items, etc.)

Smoking, drinking and drug use

- Is there any present or past history of the above?
- On the other hand, there is no need to disclose each and everything that Allah has covered through His Mercy and is unlikely to surface later on.

Health issues

- This is a sensitive issue. Have both sides made each other aware of any long term health problems, such as diabetes, depression, mental illness, etc.?
- Is there a prior history of epilepsy even though it may be fully controlled now?
- Are there any surgical operations with significant surgical scars from the past? Any family health issues that the other party should be aware of (e.g., infertility, diabetes or mental illness, etc.)?
- Marriages do break down with great acrimony if such disclosures are not made candidly.

Full disclosure

- Are there any previous marriages and children from prior marriages?
- What support, if any, is being provided to brothers, sisters, parents?