

A decorative paisley pattern in shades of blue and white, featuring intricate floral and geometric designs, is positioned in the top-left and bottom-left corners of the page. The pattern includes large circular motifs with radiating lines and smaller teardrop-shaped elements with internal floral details.

MARRIAGE 101

BY MUNAZA KHAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE FOUNDATION OF MARRIAGE

THE RIGHT AGE

BLESSINGS OF AHMADIYYAT

ROLE OF AN AHMADI WOMAN

CAREERS AND MARRIAGE

DATING AND ARRANGED MARRIAGES

THE QUESTION OF COMPATIBILITY

LEADERS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

TRUST

RESPECT

OBEDIENCE

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

A SECOND SET OF PARENTS

A SPIRITUAL BOND

HARMONY AT HOME

LAST THOUGHTS

THE FOUNDATION OF MARRIAGE

“THE RAIMENT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS — THAT IS THE BEST.” (7:27)

When one embarks on a journey towards acquiring a special love of Allah, he takes the utmost care to safeguard himself against every such thing that would incur His displeasure or punishment. At every step, he is fearful that he may inadvertently disappoint Allah. This is called the path of *taqwa*.

The *Nikah* (wedding) sermon has three verses, and it is interesting to note that the word “*taqwa*” is mentioned five times in the sermon. The repetition of the word signifies that *taqwa* is the foundation upon which a harmonious and prosperous marriage is built. The constant vigilance over their actions and words will enable both partners to avoid missteps that may have a negative impact upon their future, thus securing their long-term happiness and marital success.

Marriage constitutes the basic unit of society. Healthy and strong bonds between family members ensure the sanctity and preservation of the human race. Without a doubt, *taqwa* is the cornerstone of a successful marriage. It is a fact that if both partners make it their ultimate goal to achieve the special love of Allah, and safeguard their actions and behavior towards each other, such as not to disappoint or displease Allah, they will most assuredly be able to discharge their obligations in the most responsible way. Most importantly, because their intentions are pure and righteous, their actions will inevitably invite the special blessings of Allah upon them.

THE RIGHT AGE

‘WHEN ONE MARRIES, HE FULFILLS HALF OF HIS FAITH’ (HADITH)

One way to attain the special grace of Allah Almighty is to partake of the spiritual fulfillment and blessings that marriage provides. Marriage is a *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet (sa) and one aspect of fulfilling this practice is to undertake this activity at the appropriate time in one's life. Surely, there are many noble endeavors that one undertakes in the journey of life. For some, this may be pursuit of advanced knowledge, for others, fulfilling their potential by contributing to a professional field. However, it is important to note that our ultimate objective to attain the pleasure and will of Allah cannot be achieved merely through education and a successful career. Although Islam grants the individual freedom to pursue these goals, marriage should always be a priority. This has been emphasized by the Holy Prophet (sa). As one *Hadith* relates, he said, “*When one marries, he fulfills half of his faith.*” This means that marriage is a sacred institution, and it enables man to develop his spiritual relationship with God and become closer to Him.

If our goals and desires do not coincide with Islamic objectives, (ie delaying marriage due to career/pursuit of advanced education etc) we will not be able to elevate ourselves to higher spiritual degrees. If we choose to prioritize other life activities over marriage, ultimately Allah Almighty will reserve His blessings from us, as we did not trust in Him. Therefore, you should never be fearful that you may not get a chance to accomplish your personal and academic goals in life once you are married, trust in Allah and pray with utmost sincerity-surely He will do what is best in your favor.

BLESSINGS OF AHMADIYYAT

“YOU ARE THE BEST PEOPLE RAISED FOR THE GOOD OF MANKIND. “ (3:111)

It is an undeniable fact that a person’s faith defines them. Most certainly, a person’s morals and values dictate the manner in which one conducts activities of life in a fundamental way. Within the context of a marriage, it is quite reasonable to assume that if two people’s religious and moral values do not coincide, how can the rest of their lives be aligned? There are some who say that values such as humanitarian compassion, kindness and goodness are universal and it is enough to build a marriage upon such shared values. However, Islam is an actual way of life-it is not just theory. Islamic values permeate every single daily activity for Muslims, down to the most minute details. If both partners do not subscribe to and are not bound by the same religious obligations, the differences will be inevitably create discord between them.

The mission of the Promised Messiah (as) was to rejuvenate the teachings of Islam and bring Islam back to its original and pristine purity, as revealed to the Holy Prophet (sa). Over time, many customs, rituals and ideas have crept into the practices of Muslims which are contrary to the original teachings. As Ahmadis, we are duty-bound to not only establish a pure and simple way of life for ourselves but also in our homes.

This purpose can only be accomplished if we marry within the blessed *jama’at* of the Promised Messiah (as). It should be remembered that the blessings of Ahmadiyyat are unique and special for Ahmadis and no one can partake of these special blessings until unless they seek refuge under the banner of Khilafat and pledge allegiance to the Promised Messiah (as) and *Imam-e-Waqt*.

ROLE OF AN AHMADI WOMAN

“O WIVES OF THE PROPHET! YOU ARE NOT LIKE ANY OTHER WOMAN IF YOU ARE RIGHTEOUS..” (33:33)

With regards to the abovementioned verse of the Holy Qur’an, it is important to note that while the wives of the Holy Prophet (sa) are specifically being addressed, the instruction automatically extends to all believing women.

As Ahmadi Muslim women, Allah has blessed us with a very special position. It is a distinguished and esteemed status. This precious gift is not given to just any woman. However, in return, Allah expects us to also fulfill our obligations and responsibilities most solemnly. Our duties extend beyond ourselves, in that we are responsible for the spiritual reformation of future generations of humanity. We are responsible and will be held accountable for the spiritual and moral training of our children.

Therefore, it is even more incumbent upon us, as Ahmadi women, to strive to earn the special blessings of Allah Almighty, and instill in our children, a deep love of *Jama’at* of the Promised Messiah (as). If one does not have a partner who shares this common mission-then this ultimate objective will not be achieved. Furthermore, our children will not be able to carry on the message of the Promised Messiah (as), and of Islam Ahmadiyyat.

CAREERS AND MARRIAGE

"IT IS THE DUTY OF EVERY MUSLIM MAN AND WOMAN TO ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE." (HADITH)

Western culture promotes an image of a woman who is empowered, and ambitious. She knows her rights and stands up for them. She is goal-oriented and sets high standards for herself in everything she pursues. Although these are commendable qualities and undoubtedly will enable a woman to achieve success in this world, some of these values, if demonstrated disproportionately, will conflict with those that Islam has taught us.

Alhumdolillah, most Ahmadi women of the current generation have successfully pursued post-secondary education and many have obtained Baccalaureate degrees in various academic fields. Many Ahmadi women also have applied their skills and education towards noble professions and enjoy having a career. The pursuit of education by both Muslim men and women was highly encouraged by our Beloved Holy Prophet (sa). Islam also supports the idea of women contributing as productive members of society, through their talents and skills. However, it should always be born in mind that Islam has placed a higher, much tougher responsibility upon a woman-and that is to spiritually reform society. This responsibility starts with raising children with a strong moral and spiritual foundation. Therefore, a Muslim woman is permitted to pursue her career of choice as long as she continues to fulfill her primary obligations in the best manner. Additionally, an exception is made when there is a genuine need for the woman to work, so that she may assist her husband financially in maintaining the household.

However, the matter under discussion here is when a woman pursues a career by choice. Let us now look at some practical challenges of working outside the home. Many people will concur that a full time job inevitably generates a considerable level of stress on your physical, mental and emotional health. Sometimes we are not even able to balance our spiritual duties in daily life (ie offering the obligatory *salaat* on time). It will be even more difficult to balance your family's rights in addition to all the other obligations.

This doesn't mean that women are simply not allowed to go out of their house, as doing so will distract them from the *tarbiyat* of their children. It is not so. There are many noble professions and avenues women can pursue to fulfill their intellectual potential. The condition is that they have to balance it in such a way that it does not compromise the spiritual development of their home.

Given the rigorous curriculum of academic institutions these days, students have to work extremely hard to achieve academic success. Having invested so many years in their education, some women may feel that if they do not work after graduation, their education will go to waste. This is simply not true! Education opens up vast horizons for women and they can transfer so much of their knowledge and wisdom to their children. If you can pass along your knowledge to your children, and instill in them noble and pious virtues, what could possibly be a better return for the investment that you made in your education?

Another question commonly asked is with regards to what is "appropriate employment" for an Ahmadi Muslim woman. Contrary to the common misconception that Islam limits women's options, Islam actually gives you the freedom to pursue your choice, as long as you are able to guarantee the maintenance of your dignity and modesty. The topic of *purdah* and Islamic teaching of modesty for women is a vast one and is another discussion entirely, but suffice it to say that once you begin to understand and absorb the true spirit of *purdah*, the wisdom behind excluding some careers and jobs will become clear.

It must be remembered, that for every activity we choose to undertake, there are prescribed limits within which the person must stay bound in order to achieve a positive and beneficial result. In the context of a job or career, when a woman exceeds the limits of modesty and transgresses beyond the boundaries God has set for her, she loses the protection of Allah, and He deprives her of the blessings that may have resulted from that activity. So a woman is free to pursue any career she likes, and strive to accumulate all the material wealth and success, but she must understand that there will never be any blessings associated with all those achievements. Furthermore, she will not feel any peace or contentment in her life. This is all because she went against her *fitrah*, her very nature, that God had created her for.

DATING & ARRANGED MARRIAGES

"SOME PEOPLE MARRY FOR BEAUTY, OTHERS FOR RANK, AND OTHERS FOR WEALTH; BUT YOU SHOULD MARRY A GOOD AND PIOUS WOMAN." (HADITH)

Islam regards the chastity of both Muslim men and women to be sacred. The purity of the individual as well of the whole society is of paramount importance in Islam. The bond between a man and woman can only be purified through the contract of marriage, and as such, Islam does not allow dating or any sort of premarital relations. Although dating has become a norm in Western culture; it is very important to be aware of the 'dangers' associated with this social ritual. Multiple dating experiences provides ample opportunity to "screen" potential "soul mates", however, it is human nature that one will also start to compare the positives/negatives between the "potential partners". Subconsciously, one starts to pool together all the appealing personality traits from each suitor and create an imaginary "ideal" person, who will possess all the positive traits and values. Since that person only exists in your mind and no one can be perfect, one remains forever dissatisfied and is always searching for the "ideal". Consequently, you can never really be content with any partner.

In Islamic tradition, parents or elders are responsible for screening potential "matches" for their children, once they have achieved a stage of maturity and are ready for marriage. However, it is important that parents have a bond of trust and open conversation with their children well before this time, so that they are able to find the most suitable and compatible match for them. Often times, the subject of marriage has never been broached in the household, and when the time arrives for the preparations to begin, the choices and priorities of the child and parents are not aligned with each other.

In addition, parents should 'suggest' potential matches for their children, not 'dictate' their own choices. The expectation that children must submit to the final decision made by the parents seems to be a cultural practice in some families and does not bode well for the success of the marriage. In turn, youth need to realize that marriage is actually a family event! The marriage is not just between two individuals, but entire families coming together. Therefore, compatibility in a marriage extends beyond just the married couple.

THE QUESTION OF COMPATIBILITY

‘...THEY ARE A GARMENT FOR YOU, AND YOU ARE A GARMENT FOR THEM...’ (2:188).

I am asked quite often how does one achieve ‘compatibility’ with one’s partner? How do you know that you are ‘compatible’? My personal belief is that as long as you keep Allah as the ultimate reference point, and turn to Him at each moment in your life, Allah Himself will make you compatible with each other, by coordinating your thoughts, your feelings and your goals. Your hearts and minds will align and you will become a ‘team’ in the truest sense of the word.

As I mentioned earlier, the foundation of a strong and stable marriage is *taqwa*. If both partners in a marriage make worship of God their ultimate priority, and are praying constantly, infinite blessings will be showered upon them and their marriage will be extraordinarily blessed. Prayer also helps align the hearts and minds of the husband and wife, so that they begin to share common goals in their married life. In addition, praying in congregation also strengthens spiritual bonds between the couple. When both partners are prostrating before God with common intention, He inevitably feeds kindness and mutual compassion in the hearts of both.

LEADERS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

“LORD, GRANT US OF OUR SPOUSES AND OUR OFFSPRING THE DELIGHT OF OUR EYES AND MAKE US A MODEL FOR THE RIGHTEOUS.” (25:75)

As mentioned previously, Allah Almighty created women for the purpose of providing spiritual training to the next generation of mankind. He has given us the responsibility of the spiritual reformation of *society*. If we ponder over the enormity of this task, it is enough to overwhelm even the most dedicated and devoted individuals. As we all know, to change even one person’s heart and mind, to convince them to tread on the right path is such a difficult task. Sometimes we cannot even persuade our own blood relations of the most trivial things. However, as Ahmadi Muslim women, we are now responsible to reform the whole society of the all the moral and spiritual illnesses.

Albeit overwhelming, this is certainly not an insurmountable task! When Allah assigns a task to someone, He also ensures that they are capable of it. Women certainly do have this quality that they can, over time, with love and care, change people’s hearts and minds. They have a natural softness in their demeanor. In a way, women have been blessed with the opportunity to fulfill this duty, because what can be more beautiful than bringing people towards God, exhorting them towards the good so they may earn the special love of Allah? So, first and foremost, it is important for women to realize and recognize what the true and noble objective of their life is. Try as we might, we will never be able to deny that women’s entire nature is created to fulfill this very task.

In order to accomplish this duty, two conditions have to be met. First of all, the woman herself must have a strong foundation of *taqwa*. Her spirituality must be developed at a high level, and she must have a strong relationship with God. Her task of moral training starts with herself, and then extends to members of her household, ie her husband, children etc. Then, slowly but surely, the affect of a woman's training extends beyond her home and becomes visible in society.

Secondly, a lot of time must be spent on this effort, as it is not an easy accomplishment. It requires great sacrifice on a woman's part. It is extremely hard to inculcate discipline and good habits even in ourselves, so imagine how hard it is to be responsible for other people's weaknesses. Women will be held accountable in front of Allah for what they taught their children and how they raised them. This is an inevitable fact. The role of a father is also extremely important, but the primary responsibility falls on a woman. This is not because Allah wanted to oppress or limit the freedom of women; it is simply because men are not capable of what women are capable of doing. Mothers have a bond with their children that the father cannot have, try as he might. This creates special affection between the mother and child, and the child is bound to follow the mother more readily than anyone else. This is the reason why the Holy Qur'an lays a great emphasis on moral development of a woman. Great repercussions result in a society that consists of immoral women, and this trend is rapidly becoming evident in modern society.

TRUST

"AND HE WHO PUTS HIS TRUST IN ALLAH - HE IS SUFFICIENT FOR HIM. (65:4)

Trust is a critical component of team effectiveness. It is vital that both partners have a bond of profound trust between them; otherwise you will not be able to take even one step forward in your marriage. Think about it: if both partners are always questioning each other and debating and disagreeing with each other's choices or decisions, nothing will ever get resolved or decided upon in peace. Therefore, it is imperative that ultimate trust should be the foundation of the marriage.

Because both partners are new to the marriage, it may be challenging to establish this trust at first. However, one person needs to take the first step. Although, it is difficult to start believing in another person's choices and decisions, especially when they affect you in such a profound way, but here is where your prayers will benefit you. Not only will God help you to trust your partner more, but He will also guide both of you to make the right and most blessed decisions in the first place. Undoubtedly, both partners earn the special love of God through mutual cooperation and trust in each other.

RESPECT

“IF IT HAD BEEN LAWFUL TO PROSTRATE BEFORE ANYONE BESIDES ALLAH, HE WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE COMMANDED WOMEN TO PROSTRATE BEFORE THEIR HUSBANDS.” (HADITH)

When you enter into a new marriage, understanding and trust between the partners has yet to be established. During this transitional time, sometimes we inadvertently hurt each other’s feelings. This is simply because we haven’t become properly acquainted with each other’s nature yet.

A golden rule of marriage: ALWAYS RESPECT YOUR HUSBAND, NO MATTER WHAT. We all have weaknesses. Sometimes it will seem that his behavior towards you is unfair, and is undeserved. But try your best to bear it patiently. When your husband is angry, always behave in a kind and gentle manner. Never retaliate with your counter-argument at the same time when he is venting. There will be absolutely no positive outcome of such an argument.

Another point to remember is never complain about your domestic life or your husband’s weaknesses and flaws with anyone. Albeit that seems like a very difficult task, sharing such details will only harm you in the long run. I think one point that few women these days realize is that when you maintain your husband’s respect in front of others, it reflects very well on you. It not only promotes a positive image of you as a wife and partner in your husband’s eyes, but Allah Almighty is well-pleased with those women who cover the faults and shortcomings of their husbands and in-laws. As Muslims, it is our goal to reflect the attributes of God within ourselves. One of the attributes of Allah Almighty is “*As Sattar*”: the Coverer of faults and weaknesses. He covers our errors and weaknesses on a daily basis. When are we NOT in need of His protection? But still, sometimes we are quick to uncover other people’s faults and mistakes. If we are doing that, then how can we expect God to cover us? My mother always used to warn me, “*Before criticizing your in-laws, always remember that you are also not perfect. How would you feel if they were to uncover your flaws in front of people?*” These words stay with me to this day, and I am overcome with fear each time I think of them. We should surely fear God. We must always remain humble in our prayers and conscious of our own weaknesses, before we focus on others.

OBEDIENCE

“MEN ARE MADE GUARDIANS OVER WOMEN, BECAUSE ALLAH MADE SOME OF THEM EXCEL OTHERS AND BECAUSE THEY SPEND OF THEIR WEALTH.” (4:35)

Some women have a very difficult time reconciling this particular teaching with modern-day liberal ideals. However, it is imperative that we realize, as with all the teachings and commandments of the Holy Qur’an, there is profound logic and wisdom behind the abovementioned verse. God has given the husband the task of executing all the domestic affairs in a just and responsible way. He is duty-bound to provide for his wife and children, and any other family members living in his house. God has made him accountable for the maintenance of his household. If he is the one striving to provide us with comfort, security and peace, then it becomes incumbent upon us to give him his due respect and treat him with the dignity he deserves.

With the growing trend of women's liberation and freedom movements globally, most people fail to understand that, indeed, equality between men and women cannot be achieved in absolutely all spheres of life. This is simply because the nature of man and woman are not the same. We differ from each other physically, mentally, and emotionally. Furthermore, according to Islam, men and women have been created to serve different roles. The objective of the creation for women has previously been discussed. The role of the man is to procure appropriate financial means to provide for his family.

There is another Hadith of the Holy Prophet (sa) *"The best of wives is the one whose sight pleases you, and when you ask her to do a thing, she obeys you, and when you are away from the house, she guards your property and her own modesty for you."* This saying emphasizes the objective of a wife; is to always behave in a gentle and respectful manner with her husband, so that he may be pleased with her. This is why adopting a foundation of *taqwa* is so critical, because the fear of displeasing God will always keep you safe from acting irritably or disrespectfully towards anyone, not just your husband. Once you develop a high level of *taqwa*, your conscience will always safeguard you against any negative behavior or attitude.

The last point I would like to make is obedience and submission to the Will of God are the hallmarks of a Muslim. We should make every effort to inculcate the highest level of obedience. As true *qanitaat* (*obedient women*), we do not have the authority to question God. If He has deemed that the husband be shown the utmost respect and has been given superiority in some aspects, then who are we to challenge that commandment? If we love God and believe in the Holy Qur'an and the teachings of Islam, then we must believe in ALL of them, not pick and choose the ones we agree with.

A SECOND SET OF PARENTS

'MY LORD, HAVE MERCY ON THEM EVEN AS THEY NOURISHED ME WHEN I WAS A LITTLE CHILD.'
(17:25)

At the time of her marriage, every woman is told by her parents, *"Treat your in-laws as your own family. Your husband's parents are your second set of parents and his mother is your own."* Although this is a very wise instruction for new brides, I know that sometimes it is very challenging to implement.

Patience and steadfastness are the two golden virtues needed most in a new marriage. As I mentioned before, marriage in Islam is not just between two individuals- it is actually two families coming together. Family relationships are based on the rule of give and take. To accept and have one's decisions accepted is the healthy basis of strong relations. Of course, there are bound to be differences in personal perspectives, attitudes and opinions between you and your husband's family. As such, it is normal to feel nervous and encounter some difficulty in adjusting to the new family's lifestyle. However, this is a temporary period and depending on your own willingness to adjust, transitions to a new lifestyle can be made in a very smooth and successful manner.

Every family is unique and every household is run a particular way. Give your husband's family some time to get more familiar with you and give yourself some time to get comfortable with them. You may find there are some lifestyle habits that you do not completely agree with or are comfortable with. However, rather than focusing on minor differences; it is wise to keep the big picture in perspective and compromise on the smaller things. Sacrifice and compromise go hand in hand, and are the building blocks of healthy and happy

relationships. Allah is well-pleased with those who forgive and overlook small weaknesses. As women who adhere to *taqwa* at each and every step in our lives, we should remember that the sacrifices and compromises that we make for only for the sake of Allah and no one else. As we read in the Holy Qur'an, "My prayer and my sacrifice, my life and my death, are all for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds." (6:163) Therefore, once you have made the compromise, never taunt your husband or anyone else with your generosity. The true spirit of sacrifice will be nullified if we do not bear it silently and with steadfastness.

In some unfortunate circumstances, sometimes the woman suffers injustices at the hands of her husband or in-laws. In that situation, it is best if she remains steadfast and prays for herself as well as those are unfair towards her. If she bears it patiently, in return, God Almighty draws her so close to Himself, and wraps her in His love and protection. It is a tangible feeling when God is pleased with you. I can verify from personal experience that if you include those who are adverse towards you in your sincere prayers, God will inevitably put compassion and kindness for you in their hearts.

Relationships are sensitive and require much effort and care to make them strong and durable. One of the weaknesses of human nature is that we tend to expect others to treat us exactly the way we want, and thus foster unrealistic expectations. We are more focused on our rights than our responsibilities. We do things for others in the hopes of getting an acknowledgement, reward and appreciation from them. We forget that it is God Almighty who gives the ultimate reward. Thus, when our expectations are not met in a positive way, we experience disappointment and frustration and anger. These negative emotions lead to a further weakening of our faith. However, if you perform every deed and utter each word with the sole intention of pleasing God; you will never be disappointed. God Himself will communicate with you, and He will grant you immense rewards that are immeasurable compared to what the people would have been able to grant you.

We have to strive to ensure that every interaction we have with those around us, is made with the fear and love of God Almighty as a reference point. Every single thought, intention, word, deed and action should be made with the sole purpose of deriving the pleasure and acceptance of Allah Almighty. By staying close to God in our thoughts and intentions, we will safeguard ourselves from disappointment, and any entailing negativity. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, "those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, or lying on their sides." (3:191) If you follow this teaching, you will always be engaged in *dhikr* (remembrance of God).

Sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that if we behave rudely, we will extract some kind of revenge on that person. Actually, what we fail to realize is that the only person we harm is ourselves. The fire of jealousy, hatred, anger, frustration and all other negative emotions only burns you and no one else is affected. A person who is strong in *taqwa*, develops a high level of self restraint and voluntarily control's their personal feelings and opinions. Furthermore, overcoming your hurt feelings at that time and continuing to behave in a patient and kind manner will not only win the hearts of your husband and in-laws, but it will also make you more at peace in your relationship with God Almighty.

You should also keep in mind that if you behave in an unfair manner, or are unjust in your dealings with your husband and his family, then this negativity in your life will not enable your own prayers to reach God. Those who do not give the proper dues to others, do not get their own rights granted to them.

Furthermore, Khalifa Awwal (ra) said once that one should inculcate the virtue of humility to such a degree that even if you are right, you should be quick and first to apologize and plead forgiveness. This will elevate your ranks in the sight of God. Remember everything you do is to earn the pleasure of God. He is well-aware of your intentions, so there is no need to fight for your rights, when He is there to fight on your behalf.

In the context of relationships with in-laws, I often refer to this saying of the Promised Messiah (as), *“Show compassion to everyone just for the sake of God so that you may be shown mercy on the high. Let me teach you a way that your glow may overcome every other light. Relinquish all baser jealousy and vile rivalry and be a sympathiser of mankind. Drown wholly in God and be clean with Him. This is the moment when miracle happens, prayers are granted and angels descend to assist.”*

(Risala Jihad, p. 14)

As Ahmadis, our grand purpose is to call people towards Allah with gentleness and kindness. If we remain entangled in selfishness and triviality, then how are we to achieve this noble goal? If we do not display compassionate behavior in our homes, how can we possibly exemplify such noble virtues to the rest of society?

In my personal experiences, I have noticed that women spend so much of their time focusing on physical adornment and aesthetic beauty. Few women realize that if they undertake a noble endeavor to develop themselves spiritually, they will be truly “beautiful” in the eyes of Allah. If you adorn themselves with exemplary virtues and qualities, you will find that people are attracted to your company and will praise and compliment your character. This adornment will be everlasting, and will ensure you enter the gates of Paradise in the next life.

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

“REMEMBER HIM IN PROSPERITY; HE WILL REMEMBER YOU IN ADVERSITY.” (HADITH)

The first step in making a marriage a blessed one is for you to be very vigilant, conscientious, and constant in your own *ibadat*. Try to elevate your worship to such a high level that you earn the special love of Allah. If you desire that your home becomes a paradise, a piece of heaven on Earth—most surely and undoubtedly it CAN! You need to turn to Allah most resolutely and engage in prayers until they are elevated to the ranks of acceptance by Allah Almighty. As a result of the special mercy of God, you will surely start to witness blessed changes in your life.

As is the case with any journey, one also experiences highs and lows in a marriage. There are good times, bad times, happy and sad times. It is most important to realize that the only thing that will get you through all the tough times is holding fast to the rope of Allah. Regardless of the root of her troubles, if a woman is virtuous and holds the pleasure of God above everything else, she should have no fear, because God will create ease for her. He will open up such avenues of ease and mercy that she could have never imagined or conceived.

I have heard that after marriage, the two partners begin to resemble each other. Either you can become like your partner (ie pick up his habits, attitudes and opinions) or you can make him like you. When I first heard this, I wasn’t able to properly comprehend the true nature of these words, but gradually the understanding came into my mind.

It is inevitable that living together under one roof will modify each person's behavior, lifestyle, daily choices, and even attitudes in some way or another. This is just natural. However, the couple should always

strive to complement one another with their strengths and mutually work towards ridding themselves of their weaknesses.

I would like to use a personal example to demonstrate this point. In the early days of my marriage, I noticed that my husband was weak and irregular in offering his daily *salaat* with punctuality. I knew he had firm belief and utmost trust in Allah Almighty, but nevertheless, this was always a deep source of anguish for me and I tried my best to instill the love of *salaat* in his heart. However, even my best efforts were often met with reluctant “agreement”. In spite of this, I did not stop admonishing and most of the time I was at least temporarily successful in my efforts. Still I knew my objective was not accomplished yet, and my heart was not content with the current situation. For many months, I prayed and prayed. Many nights I spent offering *nawafil*, and pleading with Allah Almighty to strengthen both our *imaan*, and rid us of all the weaknesses in our faith. I prayed that He would make us worthy of higher spiritual ranks.

Then I witnessed an amazing miracle... all this time I was in prostration, all these nights and days I spent asking God to help us become even more pious, even more strong in our faith-in that time, it seems that God Himself took the task of the education and moral training of my husband in His own hands. Undoubtedly, the kind of belief that you get from the knowledge that God Himself puts in your soul-no teacher on earth can convince and teach a person in the same way. So while it could have taken me years and years to debate, argue, and persuade, God accomplished this task within seconds. Slowly but surely, I noticed that my husband became more interested not only in offering the *salaat*, but became more drawn towards prayers and his faith in Allah increased multifold. Now, my husband has surpassed me spiritually in many ways. I feel like Allah Almighty Himself has moved closer to us, and our home is the most blessed place on earth. What a wonderful blessing and an amazing miracle!!

A SPIRITUAL BOND

“AND GIVE GLAD TIDINGS TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE AND DO GOOD WORKS, THAT FOR THEM ARE GARDENS BENEATH WHICH FLOW STREAMS..AND THEY WILL HAVE THEREIN MATES PERFECTLY PURE, AND THEREIN WILL THEY ABIDE.” (2:26)

A married couple who constantly search for Allah’s favor upon them, also support each other’s spiritual development and progress. They compete with one another to attain the pleasure of Allah, following the Qur’anic teaching of “vie with one another in good works” (2:149). When both partners are vigilant in their worship and take every precaution to safeguard themselves from unfair or unjust behavior towards one another, it is natural that they will become the recipient of Divine acceptance. Their common pursuit of earning Allah Almighty’s nearness creates a spiritual bond between the couple. It is almost like they are two limbs attached to the same body. When one limb becomes sore, the entire body is inflicted and falls sick due to the pain. This bond not only serves as a foundation for a strong family unit, but is so firm that even in Paradise, they are granted the company of the same “pure mates”.

I would like to share a personal experience to illustrate this point. Once I was in a disagreement with my husband over a trivial matter. Although I am usually calm and am always careful to express my point of view in a patient manner, that particular day I was short and irritable in my behavior. As is the case with minor disagreements in a marriage, we were able to resolve the matter in a matter of hours and life went back to normal. A few days later, I noticed that it seemed my prayers were not reaching the ranks of

acceptance. I felt very frustrated because it was almost like my prayers were bouncing back to me and not really reaching God. I knew this was due to a weakness within myself and thought very hard about what the cause for this could be.

Not being able to resolve this myself, finally I spoke to my husband about it after a few days had passed. I said that for some reason I felt that my prayers were not reaching God and I was feeling a lot of restlessness and distress as a result. Almost immediately my husband replied that he knew the reason behind this. He said that it was because Allah Almighty was disappointed with the way I had behaved during that disagreement we had a few days ago. My husband was not worried about having been disrespected or insulted by any means; he was more concerned for the effect this negative behavior would have on my spirituality. His words resounded deep in my soul and I knew beyond a doubt that he spoke the truth. He immediately advised me to offer some *nawafil* and do *istighfaar*. I was quick to leap to my feet and made the intention to ask for forgiveness. I offered *nawafil* that night and pleaded with God to make me pure again; I resolved to strengthen my faith to the point where Satan would never overwhelm me and I would not give in to lowly behaviours towards anyone anymore. I fervently asked for forgiveness.

Almost as soon as I was done, I felt an enormous weight being lifted off my heart and my body. I could literally feel the burden being lifted physically and began to feel light and free. Since that time, by the sheer Grace and Mercy of Allah Almighty I have tried my utmost to safeguard my tongue and my actions so that no harm comes to anyone from them. I have never been intentionally harsh with anyone.

Thus, when *taqwa* becomes the cornerstone of a marriage, each partner strives to uplift one another spiritually and becomes equally distressed if one falters.

HARMONY AT HOME

“PARADISE LIES AT THE FEET OF MOTHERS. “ (HADITH)

As I have mentioned before, Ahmadi women have a great responsibility. The Promised Messiah (as) once said that the best treasure of this world is a virtuous woman. Truly the woman has been given the key to Paradise. If she has a strong and peaceful relationship with Allah Almighty, she can surely ensure her home is also filled with serenity and tranquility. If she chooses to, she can provide such great comfort to all the family members, so that special blessings are bestowed upon her and her children, and she earns the title, “leader of the righteous”.

As Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) said, *“It is a promise of Allah Almighty, that the children of those Ahmadi mothers who fear God and are devoted to Him are never wasted. The children of those mothers, who have developed a profound personal connection with God, are never wasted. That is why Prophet Muhammad (sa), did not say that heaven is under the feet of your fathers. He said heaven is under the feet of mothers. Hence, heaven has been placed under your feet. You have to decide if you will bestow heaven upon the next generation or throw them in hell. Because if heaven is under your feet and your children become hell-bound, then you will be held responsible twice.*

So when it is said that heaven is under the feet of mothers it does not mean that there is heaven under every mother's feet. It means that if heaven can be attained by subsequent generations, it can only be attained through mothers who themselves have become a heavenly sign and heaven has become manifest in their appearance. The progeny of such mothers is bound to belong to paradise...If you have already become mothers, then even today God has given you the capacity that you should try to color your surroundings and your environment with His love. If you have not become mothers yet then bring about those virtuous changes in you today so when you do become mothers you are already someone who loves God. Unless your personality is filled with the light of God, your children's bosoms will not be filled with that light."

(Jalsa Salana Canada 2005)

LAST THOUGHTS

Before I got married, I used to pray a lot for my future. I always used to pray that God would grant me a pious and kind partner. That is the only characteristic and only criteria I had in my mind, because I firmly believed that if both partners in a marriage have the same objective: to achieve the love of God, and to please God; then all the other aspects of our lives would be aligned automatically. *Alhumdolillah summa Alhumdolillah* Allah Almighty, in His Infinite Mercy, granted my prayers.

Since I have been married, my experiences have led me to further strengthen my belief in prayers and faith in Allah. As is the case with any journey in life, there have been highs and lows, happy times and some incredibly difficult and painful times. But without fail, each and every time, both my husband and I have found that the only remedy has been to pray. I like to think our constant prayers have brought God Himself close to us, and we enjoy His company each and every day in our home.

Allah has said in the Holy Qur'an, that a home where all members constantly engage in worship, is a house that is 'spiritually alive'. I cannot describe how many times my husband as well as other guests have commented that our abode enjoys an atmosphere of peacefulness and security. I feel that this is a direct result of our humble prayers, for Allah promises wherever there is a gathering of remembrance (*dhikr-illahi*), the Angels descend there and sit among His servants.

Today, my husband and I debate on a regular basis about whom Allah loves more! He always says that I am under the mistaken impression that God loves me more, but the truth really is that God loves my husband more (secretly). Thus, we are always in competition to see who can please God more and get more *sawab*. When one of us makes a mistake, the other tries to be the first one to apologize (regardless of who's fault it is) in an effort to fulfill the Hadith of the Holy Prophet (sa) that one who apologizes first will get more reward from God.

Over the years, I have also witnessed another miracle of prayer in my marriage. I have seen firsthand that when both partners are engaging in prayers, and turning to Allah with patience and humility, as an added mercy, Allah turns their hearts and minds towards each other. Thus, today both of us are blessed with a deep bond of love, kindness and mutual respect for each other.

In closing, I would like to relate a dream that a close friend shared with me once. The dream was about the status of marriages in the current day and age. In her dream, our Beloved Holy Prophet (sa) appeared and said, “*tell them (the women) to stay true to the seed I have sown for them. Surely, this seed will manifest for them everlasting blessings (or blessings that are everlasting).*”

Thus, my objective in writing this booklet was three-fold: to elucidate the role and responsibilities of an Ahmadi Muslim woman, discuss how to elevate our spiritual ranks by treading on the path of *taqwa*, and how to achieve harmony in marital life.

Surely, the common thread that weaves through the fabric of a successful and harmonious marriage is that of *taqwa*. I pray that every woman will become one who is truly “resigned (to the will of Allah), believing, obedient, always turning to Allah, and devout in worship.” (66:6). May He enable us all to always tread on the straight path, the path of *taqwa*, and may He grant us His special Love and Nearness and accept us. May He bestow His special mercy upon all Ahmadi Muslim women, and may He bless us with His protection. May He allow us to always stay true to our noble objective, and may He allow us to establish peace and tranquility in our lives and homes, making them true reflections of Paradise on earth. *Ameen Allahumma Ameen.*