

Breaking Non-Islamic Traditions is a must to Save the Muslim Family

Many people say, "Happy societies are built by happy people" but how do people achieve peace and happiness? One can say that it's vice versa; that "happy individuals are raised in happy societies". Society consists of individuals raised in families bound by relationships and trained by religion, culture and values followed by these families. This makes the relationship of a man and woman in marriage the basis of a society. As we see, the Western family system is crumbling, and the East is having its own issues. Looking at these issues closely, we see all fingers pointing at women oppression in Islamic culture. However, in this article we'll try to take a bird's eye view of what is happening in reality to illustrate that, rather than Islam, it is non-Islamic attitudes and traditions, often originating from Hinduism, Buddhism or other non-Islamic cultures that are harming the harmony and unity of many Muslim families.

For example, in many of these polytheistic religions, women are often afforded second-class status, starting from the birth of a girl which is considered a misfortune and automatically starts a competition between brothers and sisters which leads to wars between married couples. Girls feel rejected and less important while boys grow up with a feeling of divine approval.

The birth and raising of a girl child in Islam is considered an honour bestowed upon fathers especially, and mistreatment is an alien practice for Muslims that has seeped in from China and India. According to United Nations data for 150 countries over 40 years, India and China are the only two countries in the world where female infant mortality is higher than male in the 2000s. In China there are 76 male infant deaths for every 100 female infant deaths, compared with 122 male infant deaths for every 100 female infant deaths in the developing world as a whole. The main reason for this high mortality rate is neglect in food, health and emotional wellbeing. Sadly Muslims of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan have also fallen prey to the common belief of the area that girl children are an economic and social burden. A woman can become disposable if she has only daughters. Grandmothers are often heard saying that "more daughters are going to break my son's back." Second marriage and divorce are used as sticks to beat the women on the head with even though Islam had freed women from their fear.

Meanwhile in Islam, the Messenger (saw) said, «لَا يَكُونُ لِأَحَدِكُمْ ثَلَاثُ بَنَاتٍ أَوْ ثَلَاثُ أَخَوَاتٍ فَيُحْسِنُ إِلَيْهِنَّ إِلَّا دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ» **"There is no one who has three daughters, or three sisters, and he treats them well, except that he enters paradise."**

A society based on injustice cannot produce justice. A couple raising children with blind cultural, social and economic beliefs will further build marriages based on lies and temporary personal benefits. After food and health comes education and compromises are made on that as well and this creates resentment and rebellion. The youth start idealizing the Western system where women's freedom is talked about and so they are "out of the frying pan into the fire". They try to defeat the locally adopted non-Islamic culture by adopting Western ways, forgetting that during Europe's dark ages Muslim women were playing an active role in the field of education. In the early days of Islam, the Prophet (saw) complied with women's request and appointed a particular day just for educating women. This again shows importance of women and importance of learning for both sexes for a successful life.

As the kids grow up, the time approaches to marry them off. Understanding that marriage is a huge responsibility becomes a secondary thought. Once again, a person from a society that has a basis of worshipping individualism takes it as an opportunity to achieve all his or

her unfulfilled dreams. Although it is a family occasion, everyone's demands are different. If we have a look at the collective demands, then from the boy the basic demand is continuous handsome income (through hook or crook) and he should be able to protect (unconditionally) his wife from the dramatic wrath of his family. A girl is chosen for her beauty and her net worth is also very keenly observed. "How much dowry will she bring? How much support after marriage can her family give?" This is also from the Hindu culture that a girl has to be presented in front of the groom's family and satisfy them.

Rasool Allah (saw) said: «شُكِّحُ الْمَرْأَةُ لِأَرْبَعٍ لِمَالِهَا وَلِحَسَبِهَا وَلِجَمَالِهَا وَلِدِينِهَا فَظَفَرُ بِذَاتِ الدِّينِ تَرَبَّتْ يَدَاكَ» **"A woman may be married for four reasons: for her property, her status, her beauty and her religion, so try to get one who is religious, may your hand be besmeared with dust."**

The origin of dowry is quite old, but in the Subcontinent of India, the gifts given to the bride by her family and friends turned into prerogative of the groom to make demands on the girl's family. Muslims and Hindus were ruled by the British who at that time had not granted their own women property rights. Dowry also became a guise of denying inheritance to women as they were already given crumbs in the shape of dowry so they must keep quiet. Islam not only gives women the right to inheritance but also an amount of her choice in the form of *mahr* at the time of marriage. *Mahr* is also often mistaken as dowry which is totally wrong. «وَأَتُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدُقَتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً فَإِنْ طِبَّنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِنْهُ نَفْسًا فَكُلُوهُ هَنِيئًا مَرِيئًا» **"And give the women (on marriage) their *mahr* generously."** (4:4)

Twenty-one dowry related deaths are reported across India every day. Some are burnt alive while others are forced to commit suicide. The ones who stay alive get regular beatings and suffer verbal abuse regularly. In this culture, it isn't only dowry that ruins a marriage, economic pressures chip in all different ways. Sometimes this greed for money is fed by satanic ideas like "Haq Bakhshish"(rights forgiven), where a girl is married to Quran (Nauzubillah), symbolizing that she will never be married and that is how the inheritance will stay at home. Marrying to objects and things is also taken from Hindu culture where a bride is married to a tree or she can also marry a silver or golden idol of the Hindu God Vishnu.

So marriage that was the basis of an institution turned into a strange mixture of benefit, bargain and culture. Women who were supposed to be comforters and homemakers were turned into slaves or rebels. Men who were supposed to be protectors failed terribly as they spend 90 percent of their waking time to earn to meet a standard set by this terminally ill society. Girls with a career are preferred as wives because they become helping hands in earning more, ignoring the fact the women are to be taken care of by their men, be it husband, father, brother or the son.

While the young and the energetic lot of today is spending its youth confused and building something out of nothingness, its elderly and children are being ignored.

Allah (swt) says: «الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ» **"Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their means."** (4:34)

One underlying reason for making girls used to mistreatment is to prepare them for their future married life, as marriage for Asian women is not based on joint efforts of husband and wife but on exploitation and oppression starting from dowry and *gol rotis* (round chapatis) and never ending. Once a girl is married, she becomes a property transferred in her husband's name. The transition that starts with the change in name so much affects the girl that one frequently heard comment for a newly-wed girl from her friends is "you have changed a lot", or "What happened to you?" "You used to laugh so much, now you hardly smile." Sadly most of these friends actually learn soon what happened to their friend when

they get married themselves. As soon as the daughter-in-law enters the house the in-laws stop doing their basic chores themselves and the girl like a good Hindu wife has to serve and win the hearts of everyone. A complaining session awaits the son on return from work and he reaches his wife all fueled up and a good beating is the best lesson. According to a survey in India, about 60 percent men admitted using violence to assert their dominance over their partner. Most of these incidents occur when the husband is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, which are strongly prohibited in Islam. National records figures show that every year since 1997, more than 20,000 Indian housewives have committed suicide. According to an estimate, approximately 70 to 90 percent of Pakistani women experience spousal abuse.

A young girl or woman who is constantly criticized for her performance as a wife and never appreciated, will either lose all self-worth and get used to this lifestyle and later promote it, or opt for a divorce. Men and women both need to understand that marriage is a relationship based on physical, emotional and ideological support. This bond between husband and wife needs to be nurtured with kindness, not with masterly attitude. Wife is a companion, who is there to love and care for the husband, but she also needs love and care. She is not a free servant for life for the husband and his family. Giving protection and the deserved rank to each other can stop others from interference.

Rasool Allah (saw) was loving and merciful towards his wives and he demanded it from his people. «أَكْمَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِيمَانًا أَحْسَنُهُمْ خُلُقًا وَخَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ لِنِسَائِهِمْ خُلُقًا» **“The most complete of the believers in faith is the one with the best character among them. And the best of you are those who are best to your women.”**

Allah (swt) has created man and woman for each other's comfort and different responsibilities are assigned and that what makes one superior over the other is the obedience of Allah (swt).

Money being the god in the capitalist societies will demand sacrifices on its altar and the first thing you sacrifice is your “peace” and the last is your “aakhirah” (hereafter). In the end you stand empty-handed. The only way to save yourself from disgrace here and in the Hereafter is to revert to the Muslim way of life. Follow the way of Hazrat Ibrahim (as) and break all the idols and the way of the Prophet (saw) of forming a Society whose sole purpose is of worshipping Allah (swt).

Prophet Muhammad (saw) in his last sermon at Arafat said: «أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، إِن لِّنِسَائِكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ حَقًّا، وَلَكُمْ عَلَيْهِنَّ حَقٌّ» **“O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under Allah's trust and with His permission.”**

Survival of a marriage as well as a society lies in a very simple rule. Nothing crosses the line of obedience to the Almighty, - Let us build a society where we refuse to follow the ways of Satan in big and small things as this is an ultimate success for the Muslims inshaAllah. It will be under the shade of Khilafah (Caliphate) where by living in a practicing Islamic Society instead of today's Indian cultural standards, many will be saved from the test of Iman they go through now.

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