

Marriage / Nikah In Islam

How is a marriage ceremony conducted?

Among the various religious institutions in Islam there is the Nikah ceremony also known as marriage. It is not a new one as it has been in existence since the creation of Mankind. Though it existed in different forms, the reasons behind its celebration are practically the same. There are steps to be followed when someone wants to get married or when a Nikah is to be validated.

A Muslim marriage is mainly divided into the Nikah and the Walimah. There are various conditions for a Nikah to be accepted in Islam. It was narrated from 'Aishah that the Messenger of Allah forbade celibacy.¹

Firstly, there must be the proposal and acceptance. It is imperative that both the bride-to-be and the groom must consent to marry. If any party refuses, then there is no Nikah as forced marriage is not valid in Islam. Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "A matron should not be given in marriage except after consulting her; and a virgin should not be given in marriage except after her permission." The people asked, "O Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)! How can we know her permission?" He said, "Her silence (indicates her permission)."²

Secondly, there must be an Imam to conduct the Nikah. It is Sunnah of the prophet (s.a.w) that the father of the girl should conduct the Nikah but in this present world, due to lack of formation it is more practical for the Imam. Abu Musa narrated that : the Messenger of Allah said: "There is no marriage except with a Wali."³

Thirdly, it is recommended upon the Imam to deliver a sermon to elaborate on what the Nikah is, why do we have to get married and specially to remind the couple of their duties towards Allah and towards each other. Abu Hurairah narrated that: The Messenger of Allah said: "Every Khutbah that does not have the Tashah-hud in it, then it is like a severed hand."⁴ It was narrated that 'Abdulah bin Zam'ah said: 'The Prophet delivered a sermon then he made mention of women, and exhorted (the men) concerning them.'⁵

Fourthly, the marriage contract will be done and duly signed by the respective parties. There can be different kinds of conditions and terms. For instance, allowing the girl to work or receiving no permission to have a second wife as long as the first one is alive, can be stipulated. It is said that the prophet didn't allow Ali to take another wife unless he divorced Faatima by saying 'But I would not allow them, I would not allow them, I would not allow them (and the only alternative possible is) that 'Ali should divorce my daughter (and then marry their daughter), for my daughter is part of me. He who disturbs her in fact disturbs me and he who offends her offends me.'⁶ It was narrated from 'Amr bin Shu'aib, from his father, from his grandfather, that: the Messenger of Allah, returned his daughter Zainab to Abul-As bin Rabi', with a new marriage contract.⁷

Fifthly, each one of the couple will be asked thrice whether they wish to marry. There will be two witnesses who will sign the contract as well. Being a contract, it can be terminated by either side if the conditions are not respected. Yahya related to me from Malik from Abu'z-Zubayr al-Makki that a case was brought to Umar about a marriage which had only been witnessed by one man and one woman . He said, "This is a secret

¹ Sunan an-Nasa'i 3213

² Sahih al-Bukhari 5136

³ Jami` at-Tirmidhi 1101

⁴ Jami` at-Tirmidhi 1106

⁵ Ibn Majah Vol. 3, Book 9, Hadith 1983

⁶ Sahih Muslim 2449, Sahih al-Bukhari 3110

⁷ Ibn Majah Vol. 3, Book 9, Hadith 2010

marriage and I do not permit it. Had I been the first to come upon it, I would have ordered them to be stoned."⁸

Sixthly, there must be the dowry which is a gift the groom gives to the bride. It can be any reasonable amount or wealth. Narrated Anas: `Abdur Rahman bin `Auf married a woman and gave her gold equal to the weight of a date stone (as Mahr).⁹ Az-Zuhri said: The Negus married Umm Habibah daughter of Abu Sufyan to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) for a dower of four thousand dirhams. He wrote it to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) who accepted it.¹⁰

Seventhly, the du'a and prayers will be said by the Imam for the happiness of the bride and groom. This will lead to all Muslims congratulating the groom. It was narrated that Al-Hasan said: "Aqil bin Abi Talib married a woman from Banu Jusham, and it was said to him: 'May you live in harmony and have many sons.' He said: 'Say what the Messenger of Allah said: Barak Allahu fikum, wa baraka lakum. (May Allah bless you and bestow blessings upon you.)'"¹¹

Eighthly, there will be the Walima which is the feast given a few days later after the marriage has been consummated. This is a recommended action which is wajib. Narrated Anas: The Prophet (ﷺ) offered a wedding banquet on the occasion of his marriage to Zainab, and provided a good meal for the Muslims.¹² Narrated `Abdullah bin `Umar: Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "If anyone of you is invited to a wedding banquet, he must go for it (accept the invitation)."¹³ It was narrated that `Amir bin Sa'd said: "I entered upon Qurazah bin Ka'b and Abu Mas'ud Al-Ansari during a wedding and there were some young girls singing."¹⁴

Ninthly, there must be no singing, no dancing, no show off, no wastage and no illicit or immoral activities or happenings during the Nikah or the Walimah. It is allowed, as it is found in the Hadith and Sunnah of the prophet, to beat the Daf. It was narrated that Muhammad bin Hatib said: "The Messenger of Allah said: 'What differentiates between the lawful and the unlawful is the Duff, and the voice (singing) for the wedding.'"¹⁵ `Aishah narrated that: The Messenger of Allah said: "Publicize this marriage, and hold it in the Masjid, and beat the Duff for it."¹⁶

Tenthly, in Mauritius we have several instances which are added. For example, a religious ceremony and Qur'anic recital in a gathering known as Mawlood is done before the Nikah as a means to ask du'a for the couple. On the eve of Nikah, there is another ceremony of applying the henna on the hands and feet of the bride. On the day after the Nikah there is a gathering, known as the Chawtari, of the closest relatives around a meal to thank all those who help in the Nikah.

What is the Significance of Marriage in Islam?

The institution of Nikah is very important and significant for the Muslims.

Firstly, Nikah is significant in itself by the mere fact that is a command from Allah as saying "marry those among you who are single". So, when getting married we are fulfilling the command of Allah.

⁸ Al Muwatta Book 28, Hadith 26

⁹ Sahih al-Bukhari 5148

¹⁰ Sunan Abi Dawud 2107

¹¹ Sunan an-Nasa'i 3371

¹² Sahih al-Bukhari 5154

¹³ Sahih al-Bukhari 5173

¹⁴ Sunan an-Nasa'i 3383

¹⁵ Sunan an-Nasa'i 3369

¹⁶ Jami` at-Tirmidhi 1089

Secondly, Nikah and Walimah are significant as they are Sunnah of the prophet (s.a.w) by his saying that “getting married is my sunnah, whoever does not follow my Sunnah is not one of my Ummah”. By getting married we are following the Sunnah and Hadith as part of the Islamic Law.

Thirdly, the importance of Nikah lies in a verse of the Qur’an as “and among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them and He has put love and mercy between your hearts”. So the aim of getting married is to live on earth in tranquillity having love and mercy for our partners.

Fourthly, by getting married this will help us to be free from all kinds of sins especially the sins of the eyes, thought and heart. The prophet (s.a.w) advised us saying “o you young men, whoever is able to marry should marry, for that will help him to lower his gaze and guard his modesty”.

Fifthly, the prophet said that “marriage is half of faith”. The Prophet (s.a.w) considered marriage for a Muslim as “half of his religion” because it may shield him from promiscuity, adultery, fornication, homosexuality, and the life which ultimately lead to many other crimes including slander, quarrel, homicide, loss of property and finally the disintegration of the ideal family system on which so much stress has been placed by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w).

Sixthly, it is said in the Qur’an that “Allah has made for you mates of your own nature, and made for you, out of them, sons and daughter and grandchildren, and provided for you sustenance of the best”. In this verse it is clear that Nikah is significant for procreation and the creation of families. They will act as blessings and supports for the parents during their old days.

Seventhly, based on the above verse, it is clear that when we get married, Allah will give us the best of sustenance, that is food and blessings in our daily activities and lives. It is a provision better than that of the beasts.

Eighthly, Nikah is significant due to the fact that it allows a husband a support in the wife and vice versa. Allah says that “they are clothing for you and you are clothing for them”. The word clothing connotes the idea of equality, complementarily and support of both a psychological and physical nature. Both have their roles.

Ninthly, Nikah is significant in the sense that it helps both the husband and the wife to become more responsible. As long as they were bachelors, the degree of responsibility and comprehensiveness was unstable for most people. Marriage comes as a regulator of our lives.

Tenthly, the result of Nikah is among others having children. The main aim of having children in the eyes of Allah is to populate the earth with Muslims and to spread the deen of Islam. These children may be well a means to raise the flag of Islam in their own ways. As such the pious children will be the revivers of Islam.

What do you think is meant by the Hadith ‘Marriage is half of faith’?

Marriage or Nikah is one of the religious institutions in Islam with great significance. It is important and it regulates different aspects of our lives. According to the prophet (s.a.w) “Marriage is half of faith”. This can be explained through the Qur’an and the Hadith.

Firstly, it must be noted that before the spreading of Islam women were badly treated during the pre Islamic Arabia. So when the prophet said that marriage is half of iman, he wanted to propound the view that as long as the pre Islamic Arabs didn’t change their attitude towards their wives, their iman and religion would be

never complete. He equated it to a religious duty and the value of marriage takes on special meaning when it is connected with faith.

Secondly, marriage is half of iman when the Qur'an and the Prophet speak of the rights and responsibilities of both husbands and wives towards each other. It deals with role of the husband to treat the wife with kindness, honour, patience, or free her from marital bond honourably without harm as Allah says "But consort with them in kindness".

Thirdly, by marriage is half of iman, Islam wanted to raise the status of women and at the same time show men their roles as trustees, guardians, protectors of their wives as Allah says "Men are in charge of women". The degree of superiority of men over women as Allah says in the Qur'an "men are a degree above them" is based on the responsibilities of men towards women but not as many may think of.

Fourthly, when the prophet says that marriage is half of iman it also means that both partners in a marriage are equal as Muslims in the eyes of Allah. There is no difference in between them. The only superiority recognised in Islam and reiterated by the Prophet is that of piety and good deeds as Allah says "Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct".

Fifthly, by marriage is half of iman this means that both the husband and the wife have to strive to fulfil the other half of faith, to make a good marriage and be 'a comfort to each other'. The Prophet said that 'the best of you is the one who is best towards his wife' encouraging men to change their attitude towards women.

Sixthly, the prophet said that "marriage is half of faith" as it may shield the person from promiscuity, adultery, fornication, homosexuality, and the life which ultimately lead to many other crimes including slander, quarrel, homicide, loss of property and finally the disintegration of the ideal family system on which so much stress has been placed by the Prophet (s.a.w).

Seventhly, when propounding that marriage is half of faith, it signifies that a good marriage strengthens the bonds of brotherhood between two families. There will always be sharing, good relationship and understanding.

Eighthly, relationship with the outer world towards other human beings is also part of Iman. As such, marriage is half of iman means it helps both the husband and the wife to become more responsible and intends to lead to more socialisation. Marriage comes as a regulator of our lives.

Ninthly, when we propound that marriage is half of Iman this means that the core of the family must be based on the religion and faith. As such, parents who are good Muslims and have a caring, stable relationship are able to bring up happy, well-adjusted children able to carry the torch of Islam further.

Tenthly, by marriage is half of iman means that the institution of marriage can at a certain point ensure Jannah for both the husband and the wife. According to the prophet, if at the death bed of the husband, the latter is satisfied with the wife, the latter will obtain Jannah. The other way also is true that through the wife the husband will be allowed paradise.