

Finding someone for Marriage ***a Quest for perfection or a Search for happiness?***

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Finding someone for marriage is one of the most discussed topics among single people and specifically among our Muslim youth today since relationships between males and females in Islam are not considered right except through Nikah ties. For many who have chosen to abide with the laws and principles of Islam and hold on to chastity and patience, marriage discussions are so fascinating, promising and one of the best outlets of relief. The impetus for many who are struggling, dreaming and continuously fantasizing for that one they have in mind or that one they hope they will soon find and keep in mind is the creation of countless possibilities, hope and positive outlook and more importantly trust in God's help.

Today's culture and environment have indeed opened many ways and options of communication between people but they have also taken away at the same time the simplicity of life and the contentment which helps us focus, set life priorities and first and foremost understand that no one is perfect and therefore reasonable adjustments are always necessary to be made. The more sophisticated we become the more we demand and expect from the others. Eyes and minds are constantly bombarded with images and thoughts which bring new considerations and efface old ones. Universal literatures, movies and songs have been very successful in stressing that, "happiness in marriage must start with a love story." Thus, falling in Love has become the "standard" for starting a married life. Consequently, the focus of many becomes the search for love, or the click – *coup de foudre* - when people, who by nature never like to fall, make the sole exception to willingly fall in the ocean of love. Many want to experience what the poets have been talking about, what the stories and novels have been relating to us, and what the artists have been illustrating and playing to the world. Thus, falling in love in the romantic language means experiencing perfection by tasting the ultimate sweetness that this earthly world could offer and transcending to the best uplifting the spirit could experience.

Then the question which comes to mind is: are those looking to get married on a quest for the perfect partner or on a search for a compatible partnership leading to happiness? We definitely cannot expect what we cannot give and since no one is perfect then why would someone expect perfection to be realized through a partnership made of imperfect ones. It's that illusion in mind that the other will be perfect and hence will make me happy and content. But in reality, no one will make me happy and content except myself when I accept the fact that I cannot expect others to be perfect in my judgement while it is a fact that I am not perfect. God Almighty says, "**Lo! Allah does not change the condition of a folk until they (first) change by themselves that which is in their hearts;**" (Chap. 13 V.11)

Once we get out of that figment of imagination, then we start our quest towards happiness which means contentment. The latter means also satisfaction, which also means fulfilment and this also, means accomplishment and achievement. Therefore, if I achieve my goals then I should be happy. The

Holy Qur'an did state the goals of marriage in the following verse, **"And among His signs is this: He created for you mates from yourselves that you might find rest and peace in them, and He ordained between you love and mercy. Lo! Herein indeed are portents for folk who reflect."** (Chap. 30 V. 31)

The goals here are rest, tranquility, peace of the mind and peace of the soul. That is why the signal of a sense of peace and harmony creates that first acceptance of the other and allows the exchange of inexpressible signals that could start from basic acceptance and grows to become *Mawaddah*, or spiritual love. The latter accepts to cultivate over time like a fruit bearing tree due to the spiritual attachment cemented by the spiritual enrichment and appreciation unlike infatuation and biochemical love driven by hormones and chemical reactions which eventually decrease over time.

Having said all of this, Islam does recognize the fact that there should be a reasonable compatibility between a man and a woman at some important levels related to different aspects of life. It is mainly about two things; personality and faith. The components of a compatible personality are education, manners, physical appearance to a certain extent, perceptions, and social upbringing. As for ethnicity, race, culture, tribalism they have nothing to do with compatibility since they tend to counter the message of equality, uniformity and human brotherhood stressed by the Qur'an and the Prophet (P.b.u.h.). As a matter of fact, these elements have always been the causes of division, conflicts and even wars.

However, even this marriage compatibility has evolved in our days beyond character, reasonable education, etiquette, abilities and reasonable material establishment. Due to today's economic pressures, compatibility for a large number of those on marriage quest means the full package, i.e., a love story experience secured with a wealthy partner -or at least a person with "stable" income - and wrapped up in a very good looking "prince charming" or "miss beauty for eternity" image. This has led to raising the standards very high and far above acceptance and reasonable chemistry, hard work, sense of responsibility and physical compatibility. Compatibility is replaced by high expectations and low preparation. This, according to many recent statistics, is one of the main causes of today's high rates of divorce which have surpassed any historical records from before. The Prophet (P.b.u.h.) put it in a very nice and concise manner by saying: **"If someone with good character comes to you to propose for marriage and you feel pleased and satisfied with his religious beliefs and practices as well as his character (manners and personality), then you should marry him, otherwise there will be *fitnah* (tribulation and great evil) and big corruption on earth"** Reported by Imam Tirmidhi and others.

He also said, **"Women are asked for marriage for four things, i.e., wealth, family status, beauty and the practice of faith. So you should marry the one with faith, otherwise you will lose more than you gain."** Reported by Imam Bukhari and others.

How to look for a future spouse?

1. Look for a person from whom you will get the feeling of peace, the mood of tranquility and the sense of security. This is what matters the most and the rest is ice on cake.

2. For every man there is the right woman and for every woman there is the right man. You only need to look in the right place, the right way at the right time.
3. Seek the help of God by praying. Even Prophet Musa (Moses) prayed for personal peace and security and God immediately answered him when he said, **“My Lord! I am needy of whatever good You send down for me.”** (Chap 28 V.24)
4. Seek the help with experience and more exposure. People do help people. Put your trust in Allah and in some people, who care about you and would love to see you happy.
5. You may attend various Islamic gatherings at Islamic centers or in mosques and you may engage in business like conversation with the members of the opposite sex, without being isolated with them.
6. You may do some kind of correspondence with candidates who have advertised their names in the Islamic magazines and websites. The means have changed and there is nothing wrong with that as long as the principle is the same.
7. In the time of the *Sahabah* (Prophet’s Companions), they used to meet people sometimes in the presence of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), and sometimes in other circumstances. For instance, on a number of occasions women used to come offering themselves as candidates for marriage. Accordingly, some men would accept to get married to them. This shows that the *Sahabah* were very simple and undemanding about choosing their partners so long as they had the basic religious and character requirements. In this society, generally speaking, we tend to put so many conditions and requirements that are not essentials from an Islamic perspective. In Islam, the basic thing we should consider in marriage is religion and character. All other requirements we can compromise.

All in all, many people have to stop chasing the dream for the perfect one and start looking for the peaceful one. Islam is about peace and is based on peace and Allah constantly calls to the house of Peace. There is no one to blame for not finding a partner but oneself. The Prophet (P.b.u.h) said, **“Allah has taken it as a duty upon Himself to help the one who seeks Nikah.”**

And Allah knows best!