

Marriage

Marriage, as it was practiced in Muslim societies even recently, was fraught with “bulls of inequity.” Young women were often forced to marry whomever their families decided. This practice is dying out, and more and more young women are participating in the selection of their husbands, or making the selection by themselves.

In the West, as in the Muslim world, marriage is an important part of most women’s lives. For young girls of my generation, marriage was the natural order of things. We just assumed we would, of course, get married and raise a family of our own, as our parents had done. We spent hours staging play weddings, and setting up pretend households. Our favorite dolls were brides, all decked out in their pearls and white lace. None of us ever considered that we might be just as happy never marrying. Marriage was the accepted norm and often the stated goal.

While things have changed some in the West since I was a child, from my discussions with friends from other cultures, this still seems to be typical in most countries. It certainly is in Muslim countries.

Indeed, God encourages marriage in the Quran:

*You shall encourage those of you
who are single to get married.
They may marry the righteous among
your male and female servants, if they are poor.
God will enrich them from His grace.
God is Bounteous, Knower.
Those who cannot afford to get married
shall maintain morality until God*

*provides for them from His grace.
Those among your servants
who wish to be freed in order to marry,
you shall grant them their wish,
once you realize that they are honest.
And give them from God's money
that He has bestowed upon you....
(Quran: The Final Testament 24:32-33)*

God not only encourages marriage, but we see here that He does so to the extent of commanding that slaves be freed to marry. Thus, He encourages marriage and discourages slavery in the same verse.

Why is marriage so divinely supported? From these verses, and our common sense, we know that marriage discourages immorality and encourages morality. Thus, God validates the concept of the family, the core unit of all societies.

I believe that there is something even more important though. I think that marriage is a spiritual exercise, of the highest form.

One of the first spiritual concepts presented in the Quran is that of killing the ego, that part of us that keeps us from redemption:

*Recall that Moses said to his people,
"O my people, you have wronged your souls
by worshiping the calf.
You must repent to your Creator.
You shall kill your egos.
This is better for you in the sight of your Creator."
He did redeem you.
He is the Redeemer, Most Merciful.
(Quran: The Final Testament 2:54)*

Please note that I have taken Rashad Khalifa's translation of this verse, because it is the clearest I've found. Khalifa's footnote further clarifies: