

In the Name of Allah

The Relationship of the Spouses according to the Quran

A man and a woman unite and complete one another in marriage through a firm covenant. The Quran says,

وَأَخَذْنَ مِنْكُمْ مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا

(At the time of marriage, women) have taken from you (men) a firm covenant. (4:21)

Question

Do you think the Quran has a program for spousal relationship and a prosperous family life?

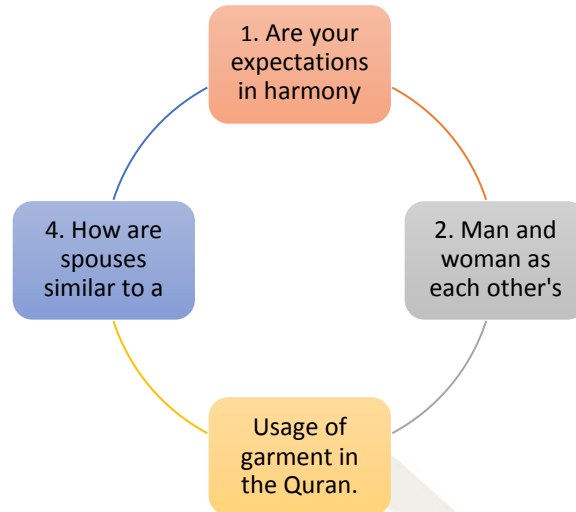
The answer

We believe that:

1. The Noble Quran has a comprehensive **plan** for the felicity and happiness of family.
2. The **rights** of each of the members of the family are explicitly specified.
3. In addition to the rights, the Quran has stated the **ethical points** to be observed in the family in the relationships of the members in order to have prosperous families in this world and a happy end in the hereafter.

Now, how close are our thoughts and **expectations** to the teachings of the Quran? Since, after all, our actions and behavior are based on our thoughts.

In this lesson, we will discuss the following issues:



Are your expectations from the family in harmony with the Quran?

- a) For instance, as a woman, I believe I have certain rights that my husband has to fulfil. Does the Quran say the same thing or does it have a different idea? It happens sometimes in different conditions of life that we believe we deserve or are entitled to certain rights yet the Quran has a different view.
- b) As we unite in marriage and form a family, certain responsibilities will be put upon our shoulders as a husband or wife. Have you referred to the Quran to see what it expects from you in the family? Have you ever researched about it?

Fix your frame of mind

Our expectations and thoughts shape our behavior.

Let's start this journey by fixing our frame of mind. See what the Quran has set for us as our plan in life.

Let's say we think to ourselves that we are entitled to a right but in reality, God has not placed such a right for us. However, since we think in a different way, we demand accordingly which in reality is not fair and right. So, if we want to lead a life based on justice, we need to think just in order to act justly. How? By familiarizing ourselves with what God says, His Quranic verses, and ethical and legal rulings. Only by being aligned with God's standards will we be able to have a balanced and satisfactory life.

Wrong expectations, oppressive behavior

If a man has the mindset that his wife has to be a totally humble and absolutely submissive person towards what he demands, and he can order her around and make her do whatever he wishes, naturally in practice he would want to implement his thoughts into actions. Islam considers this as an oppressive behavior rooted in oppressive thoughts.

Or let's say that a woman thinks that her husband is a mere servant at her service and even when he wants to make the slightest decision about his own income, he has to ask her permission. In reality, such thoughts would turn into behavior and demands which are not fair and right by Islamic standards.

Men and Women as Each Other's Garments

How is the relationship between a man and a woman in the family defined and illustrated in the Quran?

Which of the three views do we advocate? Equality? Superiority or complementarity of the two genders?

Well, among all the existing theories, like the superiority of one gender over the other or the equality of the two, Islam believes in the **complementarity** of the two. In other words, men and women are not the same in their qualities and characteristics. As a matter of fact, they have purposefully been designed to be different, to actually complete one another like the pieces of a puzzle.

What the Quran says

In Baqarah, 187 men and women have been described as each other's **garment** (لباس).

هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ

They are clothing for you and you are clothing for them.

In what sense can a man be a garment for a woman and how can a woman be a garment for a man?

Usage of garment in the Quran

The first thing to do in order to understand this analogy better is to see the application and usage of a garment. The Noble Quran, tells us of three usages of a garment, all three of which should exist in the life of a husband and wife.

A'raf, 26 talks to the children of Adam after their descent from heaven.

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ قَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُؤَارِي سَوَاتِكُمْ وَرِيشًا ۖ وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ

O children of Adam, We have bestowed upon you clothing to conceal your private parts and as adornment. But the clothing of righteousness - that is best. That is from the signs of Allah that perhaps they will remember.

Three types of clothing

God says in this verse that we have granted you three types of clothing:

1. One is to **cover your private parts**.

This is the most basic type of covering that distinguishes a human from an animal.

2. The second type of clothing is an adorning or **beautifying garment**.

Bird's feathers have been referred to as ريش making them more beautiful.

In other verses, God says to the children of Adam,

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ

'take your adornment at every mosque.' (7:31)

This means you should wear your clean clothes which honor you in the mosque; an indication that how we present ourselves sometimes does depend on the clothes we have on.

3. A third type of clothing also exists which is **the clothing of Taqwa** (piety), being the best kind.

Signs of God

Moreover, the garment of Taqwa is that which covers one's defects and makes one an honorable person. This clothing has been referred to as one of the signs of God.

A moment of contemplation:

The Quran highlights that:

- ✓ The creation of a spouse from mankind for mankind is a sign of God.
- ✓ Clothing is a sign of God.

✓ Moreover, men and women are each other's clothing.

What is the point of it? All this is in hope that people pay heed to the intricate points in these signs, so they may be reminded of their Creator and purpose.

لعلكم يذكرون

Points regarding the similitude of spouses with a garment

Point no. 1:

Women are clothing for men and men clothing for women in three ways.

1. Covering one's faults

Women should cover the shortcomings and faults of their husband if there are any and men should do the same. The shortcomings and problems remain hidden and as secret in the private domain of life.

2. Become an adornment

The second type of clothing is where the couple become an adornment for one another. The woman acts in a way that her husband becomes proud of her. Subsequently, the man also acts in a way that his wife becomes proud of having him. The beauties of every individual become manifest. How romantic!

Let's put it this way:

Sometimes you see a couple who start having an argument in front of other people, disrespecting each other and ruining one another's reputation and honor.

But then there are other times, when the exact opposite happens. For instance, the woman is in a gathering and something bad is said about her husband. However, she saves his honor by defending him and talking well about him in his absence. Or in the cases where the husband and wife might have had an argument at home but when they go to a gathering, they act as if nothing had happened and are affectionate as ever with each other in front of others.

3. Clothing of Taqwa

The third clothing which is the clothing of Taqwa is the best. This is where the couple should help one another become more God-fearing which is definitely possible. The lady of the house can act in a way that would facilitate a pious way of life for her husband. How you may ask? For instance, she can moderate her

expectations in life, have a pleasant behavior toward her husband, and help him uplift his level of Godwariness.

Let's say that a woman has certain material expectations in life such as a big house, one or two really nice overseas vacations during the holidays, private school for the kids and Many of these are not even in harmony with her husband's income. She wouldn't care though and would just pressurize her husband more to the extent that the man is forced to earn money other than the halal way.

The man too should behave in a way that would prepare the groundwork for a higher level of piety in his wife and the betterment of her relationship with God.

That is what the Quran says with regard to the man and woman being each other's clothing.

Point no. 2

Clothes might limit yet elevate you

When you come home from outside, you remove your formal clothes and wear lighter clothes like a comfortable t-shirt or get into your pajamas. In other words, often clothes limit you and make you feel uncomfortable but they give you prestige and help you achieve your aim.

Marriage and the presence of a spouse in one's life can sometimes be the same. When you get married, as a man or woman you cannot do some of the things you used to do when you were single. Or there are things you have to do now as a married person, like you have certain commitments and responsibilities toward your spouse that you did not have when you were single. However, all these can uplift you by facilitating your personal growth and helping you become a more accomplished person.

Point no. 3

Your clothes fit you, so does your spouse

Shouldn't the clothes that you wear fit you? They should be proportionate with your body parts. The color should match your face. They should look nice on you. If your clothes are too big or small for you, they wouldn't be of much use to you. So, in general, your clothes should be in harmony with you in two ways:

1. They need to match your personal taste.

For instance, the color, print and cut of the fabric should match your taste and preference;

2. They should be proportionate with your social prestige.

For instance, a person in the army has to dress in a uniform, a lawyer has to dress in suits, a doctor needs a white uniform, and so on and so forth.

The same points can be considered in a marriage where as your spouse should be in harmony with you, matching you in terms of the level of faith, piety, and ethics. Your personal taste in choosing your spouse also matters.

Point no. 4

Flexibility

Flexibility is the fourth point that we can understand in this verse. When buying clothes, what you choose has to match your needs. You need one kind of clothes for summer and another kind with more protection for winter when the weather is cold and you need to be fully covered. You need one type of clothes for inside the house and another kind for when you go to work, or a park.

In the same way, life conditions are ever evolving and a man who is the clothes of his wife accommodates her needs in different situations and conditions that she finds herself in. For instance, when she is sick, is on her period or has just given birth, is upset, has guests, is studying, or is happy. He adjusts himself with her, treats her accordingly while taking her situation into account.

Similarly, a suitable and good woman adjusts herself with the life conditions of her husband. His financial condition can sometimes be bad and sometimes good. At times things flow smoothly and at times they don't as is the quality and spirit of life. You have to stay as a companion through the ups and downs of life. You cannot be a pleasant life companion in the good times when everything is rainbows and butterflies and there is enough money for the needs of the family and when dark times come, you start complaining. A good piece of clothing is in harmony with the needs of the person, therefore, a man and a woman should be each other's clothing in the same way.