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**PRINCIPLES OF MUSLIM FAMILY SYSTEM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF  
*SUNNAH***

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**ABSTRACT**

One of the basic sources of Islamic law is the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SWS) is which is known as the Sunnah. The Holy Quran (Revealed Book) and the Sunnah are two fundamental sources of guidance for a Muslim Society and both are supplementing to each other. However, the society depends upon the characteristics of its basic unit; the individual human being. This study is an effort to analyze the structural basis of Muslim family. According to Islamic concept, the family is one of the core systems, which builds a healthy society. Therefore, it protects the progeny of human beings through institution of a strong family. A Muslim who intends to follow the Islamic values is the main beneficiary of this study which provides the basic essence of Muslim family guided from the Sunnah. The study finds that main factor among the two is woman who ultimately is responsible to run the internal affairs of the whole family and the design of future generations. Therefore, men are advised to, marry pious women, maintain justice in the family by spending on their wives, promote mutual respect, assist in domestic works, love their children and wives, and motivate with compassionate feelings to unite the family.

**Keywords: Muslim Family; Principles of Family System; Marital Life; Society; Sunnah**

## INTRODUCTION

Family system is the first and primary factor in the formation of the society which ultimately is of the world. The family is centrally important in a society which is a social association consisting of father, mother and children. The unit is traditionally consisting of two parents rearing their children.<sup>1</sup>This institution also contributes to the formation of the personality of a child and teaches him the customs, traditions, religion and various other values of life. A child, normally, follows his parents in behavior and habits. Therefore, it is one of the most important components of a traditional society. Husband and wife are the two basic members in an agreement of the family. Both of them are party to this agreement but husband is more important as he has the power of annulment in his hand. Therefore, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *SallallahualayhiWaSallam* (SWS) [2], addressed to the men for their responsibilities towards a successful marital life in the last Sermon of Hajj:

**"The Holy Prophet ordered, one should be good to his woman, though these women are confined with men yet before they come with manifest *fahishah* (evil behavior) no man holds any power over them. If they commit such misdeeds, than treat them harshly but without physical harms and distant with them to let them**

**realize their mistakes. There is no cause of action available to a man if his woman obeys him. Indeed, the man has rights over his woman and his woman has rights over him. It is the duty of a woman to avoid those persons who are disliked by husband by not allowing them to sit on the furniture or to enter into the house of her husband. And it is among the basic duties of men to treat their women well in clothing them and feeding them". [3]**

It is commonly observed that a family comes into being after a man and a woman marry to each other. Man and woman both have their vital roles to make a family successful but the woman needs to be more vigilant as she is being responsible to educate and train the next generation, the future of human society. If one agrees to this argument then a woman (wife) must be kept happy and satisfied, because the future of society depends upon her performance. Resultantly, the society will be peaceful. The question arises, whether the religion of Islam gives any directions in protection of family? This study reveals a detail configuration on the issue by studying the life of Holy Prophet SWS. Hence, the extracted characteristics for a satisfied marital life are discussed hereinafter.

### Selection of the Pious Wife

It is said earlier that a woman has a key role in the family. As a mother she is

responsible for education and training of the future generation so it is necessary for a wife to have such qualities so that she prove herself a role model for her children. The children do as they see their parents doing good or bad and these good or bad habits are rooted in themselves by following their parents. That is why Islam says that a mother should be pious, responsible, respected and respectful so that her kids should also be admirable. It is also an important way not only towards successful and peaceful society but also to open the door of Heaven. The prophet Muhammad SWS professed:

**“A woman would enter from any gate of Paradise where she wants if she prays five times a day, and she fasts her month of Ramadhan and obeys her husband or keeps her virginity before marriage”.** [4]  
**SATISFACTION BY BEAUTIFICATION**

Another principle for a peaceful marital life is that woman must beautify herself so that her looks become attractive and gorgeous. It can be named as “make-up”. Some traditional Muslims think that woman should not do make-up as they remain in the house but holy prophet urges woman to be looked charmed. Its purpose is that husband would be satisfied by her beauty. It is human nature that beauty attracts both of the man and woman. If both care for their beauty then they will remain attractive to each other. Islam holds the man responsible for the sponsorship of the

house. He works hard all the day and returns to home for bed rest. Being an attractive and shining wife, her looks can relieve her husband from any kind of distress which ultimately would result in successful marital life. The Holy Prophet SWS told that: Allah SWS said to him, "The woman whose husband becomes happy whenever he looks at her is lucky" [5].

Islamic education points out that Islam is a real religion in dealing with man, and takes care of adornment and recreation, love and feeling of beauty, but without extravagance, pride and no change to the creation of God and Islam. Islam put many specifications and conditions in the adornment and beautification of men and women, including the lack of extravagance in the adornment and non-glorification of women and non-resembling the man, until things are upright and good Islamic ethics prevail in the Muslim community. If a wife keeps on living in bad condition then she would push her husband towards other woman. That is why the Holy Prophet SWS pointed out this issue even coming back to home from war. Jabir narrated that he was with Allah's Messenger in a war, and he while riding a slow camel wanted to hurry on their return. Allah's Apostle crossed and asked him about his haste. He responded that he was newly married. The Holy Prophet asked him, "Did you marry a matron or a virgin"? Jabir replied, "A

matron". It would be better for you to marry a young girl whom you could engage in recreation and she could have fun with you, said the Prophet. He then said to everyone, while we were reaching and just entering into Medina (city), "Wait before entering your homes till the first part of night so that the ladies would have shaved their pubic hair and would comb their hair as you all are approaching them after so long" [6]. This *Hadith* [7] clearly shows that husbands should take care of their wives and wives should also keep them well-dressed so that their husbands remain pleasant with them and their marital life would be tension free. It is human nature that they don't like bad smell. Husband and wife usually come so closer in marital life that none can object. Islam also guided in this aspect. Wife and husband are asked to be clean and in a fragrant condition so that no stink could be produced which would result in being one dislikes. Therefore, he used tooth-stick first of all whenever Allah's Messenger (SWS) entered his house [8].

#### **EQUALITY FOR BASIC NECESSITIES OF LIFE**

There should be equality in necessities of life. It will also bring the happiness in family. Before Islam the woman is considered a burden but Islam says that she is not a burden but she is respectable as a mother, wife, sister and daughter. Till now

it is a common practice to keep her away from social necessities and to beat her. Islam says that it is the responsibility of husband to give her good food to eat and dress to wear. There should not be double standard in family. She should not be kicked out of the home. Narrated Muawiyah al-Qushayri that he asked the Messenger SWS, "What is one's wife's right over him"? He replied that "He should give her food when he eats, clothe her when he clothes himself, does not revile her, does not strike her on the face, or separate himself from her except in the house." [9].

#### **Spending on Wife**

If we see the marital life of the Prophet Muhammad SWS then we come to know that to spend on the wife is a way of happy marital life and a satisfied domestic life. The Prophet has urged the husband to spend on the wife because it will make her happy and it will also bring the blessings of Allah, *SubhanoWaTaala* (SWT). In these days some Muslims understand that their only responsibility is to bread and butter not to spend for her extra needs. According to a *Hadith* to spend on wife is not only admirable in this world but also will be considered a good deed in the life hereafter. The Holy Prophet SWS told His companions, "It is (kind of) almsgiving in reward for him who spends on his family with the intention to have blessings from Allah and sincerely for Allah's sake" [10].

## SOFT COMMUNICATION

Soft communication between husband and wife is also an important way to establish a happy and satisfied domestic life. The woman differs from the young man in things that reflect her feminine nature. Women and men are descended from two different types, physiological and psychological maturity. Women are soft, soft and soft, and these are things by virtue of their special structure that they like to hear. That is why Islam teaches its followers to speak soft for woman and the woman is also directed to the soft words. As Narrated by 'Aishah:

**“The Prophet received a group of Jews saying death be upon you, O' Muhammad. And upon you, the Prophet replied. Adding His reply, 'Aishah said: [Rather] death and the curse be upon you.' Here, the Prophet addressed her by saying; Allah loves gentleness, indeed, in every matter. O 'Aishah!” [11]**

The circumstances affect human nature. It is important for a happy marital life to avoid from hard talk but should keep patience if it takes place between. In the life holy Prophet it can be seen that his wife replied hardly but did not beat her. He also did not reply in hercoins but had patience. Umar said:

**“I disliked while my wife answered me back and she retorted against me and I shouted at her for that act. By Allah, the Prophet allowed His wives to answer Him back and some of them showed anger by not speaking to Him for a whole day. Why**

**are you so surprised at my answering you back? She said to me” [12]**

## PASSING SMILES

Smiling with good wishes and well feeling is also useful for the society as well as for a family. A nice and emotion base smile of a husband/wife can refresh his/her partner. Sometimes wife/husband tries to do some movements intentionally or unintentionally in order to attract him/her and makes him/her interested. But the movement which is common to all human kind is to capture the heart of the beloved by the feeling and emotions via charming smile. It is an admirable thing in Islam as Abu Dharr reported that one's smile on the face of other is charity, the Messenger of Allah said [13].

In another *Hadith* smiling of wife for husband is also admirable. In the same way it is also a good thing if husband smiles for wife. Smiling is very important in human society. It has such power that kingdom of heart is always captured by a smile. That is why Holy Prophet SWS also mentioned it and made human being notice it as Jabir reported that the Messenger of Allah asked him to marry young girl for pleasant life as with her he can relatively perform lively activities easier than an old woman [13].

## DRINKING AND EATING TOGETHER

Drinking and eating together of husband and wife is another vital and important tool which can create love, peace and

satisfaction in the family which results a well society. Unfortunately in majority of Muslim families it is a common practice that wife or mother first serves the husband or whole family and feeds her in the last. The woman with such nature is known a good lady. Though it is not prohibited in Islam and it can be called “sacrifice or love” of woman as mother or wife but being a whole family on the tables is better. Eating together and sharing parts of food is useful for family's affection. That is why there are much *Ahadiths* which lead to eating together as Ayesha told that she drank, during menstruation, and handed over (the vessel) to the Apostle of Allah and he drank from the same place. Similarly, she and the Holy Prophet ate the flesh together [14].

#### LOVE BY VARIOUS ASPECTS

The family structure depends on the existence of love, understanding and concern between the spouses since the beginning of the marital relationship, as it ensures the continuity of family ties throughout the life, and it lacks of the factors which collapse the married life gradually. A good wife in the society is the bedrock of the stable family. When she loves her husband, it is shown in her face and behavior and she treats him through some clear signs. Every one of these is a right way to reach the destination which can be named pleasant marital life. Ayesha

observed many times that she combed hair of the Messenger of Allah and He didn't enter the house, except for natural calls (to relieve Himself) during His *I'tikaf* [14] periods [15].

There are different aspects of love which must be availed by husband and wife for a pleasant marital life. Husband sacrifices his happiness for her happiness. Wife seeks to change her behavior and appearance so that husband will be impressed and satisfied with it. She shows her weakness in front of him easily and soon cries in his presence. She for the moment he comes home from work as if he had been absent for a long time. Husband endures the physical and social difficulties of life in order to serve her. Both of them must care for comfort and interests of each other and do what could earn his permanent love as the Prophet raced with Ayesha and she beat him. Ayesha said that during her menstruations, the Messenger of Allah reclined in her lap and recited the Holy Qur'an [16].

#### COOPERATION

Cooperation between life partners and the sharing of household chores are the demands of a majority among wives, especially those who become tired, and feel the injustice for their huge responsibilities. However, participation in domestic chores is unacceptable to a valuable group of oriental couples. Some do not accept them

at all, and others help their wives without publicity. It is not a shameful act but cooperation of a man in her domestic business is a phenomenon which results not only in the comfort of the female partner but also in their mutual relationship, as well as it affect the children positively. It was also habit among others of our beloved Prophet SWS. For a pleasant marital life, Muslim couples should cooperate with each other in washing, cooking, cleaning and managing home etc. Once Ayesha was asked about the family life of Prophet SWS, she replied that He was a human being who would wear His robe, milking His sheep, and serving Himself [17]. By following Him one can make ones family life pleasant and easy. It is need especially in this age of problems and disputes.

#### **APPRECIATION FOR COOKING**

The man loves the woman who shows him the satisfaction of what he does for her, and does not accuse him of being poor, as is the case with many women, and she knows that her husband collects money with effort and sweat to provide her a decent life. He struggled for food and she struggled for the best cooking. A man wants his wife to respect the meal and to prepare the best food if he returns home after a hard day of work. Sometime the cooking is not well and then husband gets angry. This situation turns the tables and relations between husband and wife go to end in smoke. This

situation is not well for a family. Islam shows the right path. Holy Prophet did not get angry with any wife because of food. Allah's Apostle never objected upon the food items served to him. He ate what he liked and left what didn't [18] It is the best policy which described in this Hadith for a better and peaceful family life.

#### **ATTRACTION OF FESTIVITIES**

There are different festivals in Islam like *Eids* etc. Islam does not forbid from any festivals if such do not contain any activity which is not permissible. No positive activity is prohibited in Islam. Man remains busy in earning outside the home and woman manages the house for necessary utilities like cooking, cleaning and washing etc. These activities make the human bored and tired. Both of them need physical and spiritual refreshment. Islam also leads to this way for a successful marital life. Aisha reported that her father Abu Bakr saw two little girls of Medina singing at her house on Eid. Abu Bakr protested saying the instruments of music belongs to *Satan* found in Allah's Apostle's house. The Prophet replied, "O' Abu Bakr, there is an Eid for every nation and today is ours!" [19]

#### **PARTICIPATION IN GAMES**

Islam teaches its followers to respect the women. Islam does not make the house a prison for them. Islam allows husbands to give chance to their wives to participate in

different games but not in crossing the limits of Islam. Holy Prophet SWS also did the same whenever he got a chance to do so. Ayesha narrated that she raced in a journey with Holy Prophet SWS and crossed Him. At that time Ayesha was light in flesh. After some time another journey took place. The Holy Prophet SWS asked Ayesha for a race once again in which He won. He did not depress her by his winning but remembered her time she won showing sportsmanship [20]. It shows that Islam offers recess for ladies also. They should not be forbidden from being part of such games and allows playing as such not in opposition of Islamic teachings. Such activities are also useful for their health and physical maintenance as well as for their refreshment.

#### **AVOIDANCE OF MISUNDERSTANDINGS**

Misunderstanding is fatal thing for any relation. A husband or wife carries out a right, constructive and positive activity but the other gets it wrong because of misunderstanding. In such case both of them must try to aware the other so that this fatal thing should not take place. Islam urges to avoid it. Muhammad bin Qais reported:

**“Ayesha narrated that when it was hennight with Allah's Messenger, He reached *Baqi'*.<sup>21</sup> She followed Him. On return she asked the Holy Prophet why he went to the graveyard by the night. The**

**Prophet replied that Gabriel came to Him for offering *dua* (prayer) for Allah's mercy upon the buried” [22].**

This hadith clearly indicates that when Holy Apostle went out, Ayesha thought Him going to any other wife. But He explained and thus her misunderstanding went out.

#### **VIOLENCE FREE ATMOSPHERE**

Islam has honored women and raised their dignity and status, and gave them their rights to the fullest. The guardianship of the man's hand does not mean that he has the right to insult or injustice, but to make them away from hardships, and to keep them safe from any kind of violence and to spend on them. Islam respects the personality of women and protects them from physical violence. Violence, in any case, is unacceptable and unjustified, whether by the State, its agents, family members or strangers, both in public and private life, in times of peace or in time of conflict... Violence against women has far-reaching consequences for Women and their children, the society and the entire larger community. And such violence should not be continued if peaceful societies are to be built to ensure stability, civil peace and community development, as mentioned by the Prophet, "Fear Allah for your woman who is under Allah's protection, feed and clothe them without any physical assault..." [23].

## COERCION FREE RELATION

Divorce is an authority which has been given in the hands of husband by Allah. Now it depends on husband that he should not use this power in wrong manner and he must not make her wife scared by this power. The wife cannot do her duties with satisfaction if she remains in uncertain condition. It is necessary for happy marital life that wife should be sure that her husband will not divorce her. Ayesha informed that one day there were eleven women describing their husband's habits on a promise not to disclose the facts about them. Someone was saying, her husband is bad and the other was describing the good qualities of her husband. One example was reported in the sequence of all comments that a husband did not use the word divorce to his lady hence she was not afraid of his behaviour. Ayesha then extended her words and said that Allah's Messenger SWS promised her that He will not divorce her as one of the example of narrated story of a husband kept good behavior with his wife [24].

## CONSOLATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

An important part of married life is that the two parties develop friendly relations and support each other morally and personally, creating a progressive environment. The supportive husband encourages his wife as the supportive wife encourages her husband

to seize life opportunities by expressing enthusiasm about the opportunity, reassures and reassures him, and talks about the potential benefits of the challenge. A successful married life depends on love, happiness, affection and understanding between the spouses, where each seeks to delight the other party in order to reach the stability of family and emotions for all members of the family. In the male dominant society, unfortunately, this idea is prevailing that the pleasure of husband is a duty of the wife. But it must be kept in mind that it is not possible to achieve family balance and happiness without considering the wife. There are so many ups and downs in the human life. The other must console and encourage if one is sad. It is a key to successful married life which was also a habit of Prophet SWS. In a journey his wife Safiyah remained back. The Holy Prophet saw her weeping and inquired why she was weeping?" She told that her camel was slow and that is why she remained back. He kissed her hand and rubbed her eyes [25].

## FUTURE PLANNING FOR WIFE AND CHILDREN

For a happy and pleasant marital life it is necessary to plan for family. Islam leads that it brings the love and security in all the family members. Sa'd bin Malik reported that, during his illness in the year of Hajjat-ul-Wada (last pilgrimage), the Holy

Prophet visited him. Sa'd asked the Prophet that he was very ill and a rich man having no child except a daughter so he wanted to give his 2/3 property in charity. The Prophet suggested him that 1/3 was enough for charity, it was better to leave his children rich instead of making them beggar before others. As Allah has great reward for the persons who spend with the intention of gaining Allah's pleasure even it is a mouthful of food he puts into mouth of his wife [26]

This narration shows that to think about economical safety for wife and children are better than charity. Sa'd was thinking to make charity but Holy Prophet SWS asked him to think about family first and charity later. It is not admirable in Islam that family remains hungry and wealth goes in charity as commonly said, charity begins at home.

### JUSTICE

Islam allows its followers to marry maximum four women at a time but with some conditions. Sometime, a man marries more than one woman because of some issues, for example fertility etc., and it is not a sinful act. Polygamy is not disgraced in Islam but there should be equality and justice among the all having wives. This is the basic condition Islam applies as the Quran says:

**“With respect to marrying widows, if you are afraid of not being able to maintain**

**justice with her children, marry another woman of your choice or two or three or four (who have no children). If you cannot maintain equality or equity with more than one wife, marry only one. This keeps you from acting against justice”.** [27]

Thus it can be said that polygamy is permissible if there is justice between the wives and the injustice prevails then to marry one woman is better. To practice with justice among the wives is another key to happy marital life in case of polygamy. It is so important that, as Abu Hurairah narrated, the Messenger of Allah said;

**“A man will come on the Day of Judgment with one side drooping if he is just between two wives”.** [28]

### TREATMENT TO THE RELATIVES OF WIFE

God made the family so that an atmosphere of affection, mercy, safety and security can be prevailed, for each husband and wife and children. Islam urged the husband to be kind and merciful for his wife. In order to settle the relationship between the spouses, it is required that each party must be respected, honored and cared by one another. A wife leaves her parents' house for the husband and her heart is broken if her parents, brother/s and sister/s are not respected by her husband. Islam urges the husband to respect all the relatives of wife. The wife is also guided to do the similar act with husband's relatives. In this situation the relationship becomes stronger. The Holy Prophet kept on respecting the friends

of his wives even after their death. Hazrat Ayesha says;

**“I was jealous of Khadijah and to none other wife of the Prophet, not because I saw her. But for the reason that whenever the Messenger of Allah would have been slaughtering a sheep, He looked for Khadijah's friends to gift them some of it and always mentioned on various occasions”. [29]**

## RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Putting the story in a net shell it can be said that a husband has a vital role to keep the marital life pleasant. The findings and recommendations are as under:

1. Insulting wife makes the marital life unpleasant so husband must not insult his wife and should not angry but apologizes to his wife if she is right.
2. Respecting other women more than wife also causes in ending married life. Husband must not compare his wife to others.
3. He should adjust in love between his wife and his parents and he should provide a comfort life for his wife.
4. Wife remains busy in household chores as well as she prepares food and expects her cooking be admired by her husband so he must avoid mentioning his wife's flaws in dress or food.
5. According to Ahadith gifts increases the love. It is also human nature that every man likes to gift and to be gifted. So husband must buy the gifts for his wife. He should encourage her to practice her hobbies as well.
6. Wife is not only a mean of physical relationship but she needs care and love also. Husband must care for her especially in times of menstruation, or in the days of pregnancy and puerperal.
7. The man should bring dresses, for his wife, which she likes the most. He should thank her and praises for preparing food or drink. He must make sure to sit and eat together on the table.
8. Insulting parents of wife also results in bad relation that ultimately moves to end. So husband should not prevent his wife from visiting her family. Her family should not be forbidden to visit her but the husband should have good relations with her family. He should praise his wife in front of her family. He must not abuse her or her parents, sister/s and brother/s.
9. Husband should look after his wife if she is sick. He should also do household chores if she gets sick. He must not beat her. He must go for visit to a pleasant place with her

for a picnic or outing. He must engage in sports with and for her.

10. Children are not the responsibility of wife only but husband as well. He must teach his children to respect their mother and must make them obey her. He should agree with his wife on the best method of bringing their children up to avoid the disputes. He must cooperate with his wife when she is bathing kids or wearing them clothes and in such similar activities.
11. Having time in these days is very hard and most of husbands do not understand its importance. Every wife wants her husband has special time for her. He must dedicate a day to his family for outing. He should communicate with her softly. He must have time to talk to her at home.

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