



Published by  
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This has been turned into a burning topic in present times. It is necessary for us to find out what Islam says about this.

With Islam, the primary aim of marriage is to safeguard modesty, which is inherently present in every human being, regardless of sex. To safeguard this modesty, it has prohibited adultery and other things which lead to adultery such as indecency, lewd talk, relations between non-Mahram men and women and has declared them as Haraam. It has bound men and women to fulfill their natural desires in such a way that their modesty is not compromised and their dignity is made safe. For this reason, in the Holy Quran, adultery and fornication has been prohibited and marriage has been declared permissible to have sexual relations within the bounds of modesty.

### ***Staying away from things, which lead to adultery***

In the Holy Quran, Allah Ta'ala has ordered us to stay away from both adultery and things, which lead to adultery. As given in Surah Noor-

Direct the believing men to keep their eyes always lowered and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Surely Allah is Well Aware of the (works) which they are busy doing. Surah Noor (24:30)

There is a Hadith in Musnad Iman Ahmed bin Hambal:

Translation of Hadith: It has been narrated on the authority of Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (May Allah be well pleased with him) that the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) has said: Every part of the body plays its part in adultery. Eyes fornicate and their fornication is seeing. Hands fornicate and their fornication is holding and grasping. Feet fornicate and their fornication is to walk (towards adultery). Mouth fornicates and its fornication is to kiss. The heart desires and the private parts endorse it by

fornicating or belies it and stays away from adultery. (Musnad Iman Ahmed bin Hambal, Hadith No. 8572)

There is a Hadith in Mo'jam Kabeer Tabarani and Kanz Ul Ummal:

Translation of Hadith: Hadhrat Ma'aqal (May Allah be well pleased with him) narrates that the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: That a needle of iron should prick your head is better than that you touch a non-Mahram woman. (Mo'jam Kabeer Tabarani, Hadith No. 16880; Kanz Ul Ummal, Hadith No. 13065).

There is a Hadith in Mo'jam Kabeer Tabarani, Jame' Ul Ahadith, Kanz Ul Ummal:

Translation of Hadith: It has been narrated on the authority of Hadhrat Abu Umama (May Allah be well pleased with him) that the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: You surely keep your gaze down and guard your private parts otherwise Allah Ta'ala will change your faces. (Mo'jam Kabeer Tabarani, Hadith No. 7746; Jame' Ul Ahadith, Hadith No. 18309; Kanz Ul Ummal Hadith No. 13082)

The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said:

Translation of Hadith: Whoever looks at the beauty of a woman with desire, on the Day of Judgment, molten lead will be poured into his eyes. (Al Hidayah, Kitab Ul Karahiyya, Vol. 4, Pg. No. 458)

It is strictly forbidden to touch or caress a non-Mahram. The Hadith have warnings about it. There is a Hadith about in Al Hidayah:

Translation of Hadith: Whoever touches the hand of a non-Mahram woman, on the Day of Judgment, an ember will be placed on his hand. (Al Hidayah, Kitab Ul Karahiyya, Vol. 4, Pg. No. 459)

All the warnings mentioned above about a man touching a non-Mahram woman are true for woman as well who reveal their beauty before a non-Mahram man and allow them to touch/caress them.

Sexual relations between an unmarried couple, no matter in which form, is strictly impermissible and strictly forbidden. The rules of Shariah cannot be broken in the name of love or freedom. Allah Ta'ala says in the Holy Quran:

These are the limits (set) by Allah. So, do not exceed them. And those who exceed the limits prescribed by Allah, it is they who are the wrongdoers. Surah Baqarah (2:229.)

There is a Hadith in Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim:

Translation of Hadith: It has been narrated on the authority of Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (May Allah be well pleased with him) that the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: At the time when an adulterer is committing adultery, he (or she) is not a complete Momin (believer). (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith No. 2475; Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 211)

Describing how bad adultery is, the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) has declared it the worst sin after ascribing partners to Allah Ta'ala (Shirk). He (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said:

Translation of Hadith: After Shirk, there is no sin worse than casting one's seed in a womb, which was not permissible for that man. (Jame' Ul Ahadith, Hadith No. 20456)

### ***Mutual relations before marriage – The West and Islamic guidelines***

In support of consensual sexual relations before marriage, the west says that there should be mutual relations before marriage as this enables the man and the woman to understand each other.

The whole world knows the results of this approach. Many women become pregnant before marriage and have to abort out of fear of facing the society and/or their parents/guardian or for some other reasons.

As long as relationships to "understand each other" are concerned, the results of this are also obvious. However, Islam has given such a method of doing so that neither modesty is compromised nor the need is left unfulfilled.

The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) has said about seeing the face of the fiancé/fiancée before marriage:

Translation of Hadith: You see her as this seeing is a means of eternal love between you. (Jame' Tirmidhi, Vol. 1, Pg. No. 207)

For the proposal of marriage, seeing only the face and palms is mentioned in the Hadith. Seeing the face is to judge the beauty and seeing the palms is to judge the body. If more details are desired, then a reliable woman can be sent to the bride and all other details can be had. In the same way, if the girl desires to see the groom before marriage, the Shariah permits this as well. As given in Radd Ul Muhtar, Kitab Ul Hizr Wal Ibaha.

Sexual relations before marriage are such that no religion of the world permits it. They know that to permit it is to drive the society towards disaster.

As long as marriage is not done, the boy and the girl are non-Mahram for each other. Having relations with a non-Mahram woman, talking to her, seeing her, meeting her is all impermissible and Haraam. Maintaining sexual relations before marriage is such an act that rouses the wrath of Allah Ta'ala.

Things which lead to adulterous relationships before marriage

1. Lack of Islamic education.
2. Carelessness in proper upbringing of the children.
3. Company of indecent people.
4. Sex education in schools.
5. TV and films.
6. Misuse of Internet and phone.
7. Coeducation in schools/colleges.
8. Indecent literature.
9. Not practicing Islamic Purdah.
10. Delay in marriage.

The atmosphere/company has a great effect on an individual's life. If the company is pious and pure, then the whole life is spent in piety. If only bad company is gotten, then character is destroyed.

Lack of Islamic education and proper upbringing is one of the primary reasons for this problem. The atmosphere of the home is such that the whole time is spent in the misuse of TV, Internet and the phone. This effect of this kind of atmosphere is such that the individual take their first steps on the path of misguidance. The schools and colleges can place a check on this, but alas even there, sex education and coeducation have vitiated the atmosphere. Indecent literature, company of characterless people, etc. drive the individual to even more sins.

Results of sexual relations before marriage:

1. Widespread adultery.
2. Increase in suicide rate.
3. Incurable diseases.
4. Women inclining towards abortion.
5. Familial animosity.
6. Backwardness in education and other areas.

Because of this, adultery becomes rampant in the society. When women become pregnant, they either abort it or end up committing a grave sin like suicide. Then a long series of animosities and differences starts between the families. Many infants have been sacrificed at the altar of death for sins, which they have not committed.

In UK, out of 193737 abortions, 17173 are of girls who are less than 18 years old. In the whole of Europe, every 30 second a divorce occurs and every 27 seconds an abortion.

As a punishment of this sin, which is committed individually, incurable and contagious diseases are born, which destroy the society. Because of sexual relations before marriage, the world is facing new diseases. AIDS is spreading throughout world as a wrath of Allah Ta'ala and millions of people are being swept down into the abyss of death. Women are the most affected by AIDS.

The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said about fatal diseases:

Translation of Hadith: It has been narrated on the authority of Hadhrat Abdullah Bin Umar (May Allah be well pleased with them), he said that the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) came between us and said: .....when the tendency to indecency increases in a nation to the point that they start committing indecency openly, then plague and other such diseases spread among them, which were not present in the times of their forefathers. (Sunan Ibn Majah, Hadith No. 4009)

### ***Curbing illicit relationships – Islamic guidelines***

In light of Islamic guidelines, the following have been suggested to curb illicit sexual relationships:

1. Following the Sunnah in performing marriage.
2. Avoiding everything, which may lead to adultery.

Islam teaches us to be modest and instructs us to be chaste. It instructs to not even approach indecencies let alone actually committing them. Allah Ta'ala says in the Holy Quran:

Say: 'Come, I will recite to you those things which your Lord has forbidden to you: Do not set up anything as a partner with Him; be morally excellent with parents; and do not kill your children owing to poverty. We alone give you sustenance and (will provide for) them as well. And do not draw near to shameful deeds (whether) open or hidden. And do not kill the soul whose (killing) Allah has forbidden, except when it is rightful due (according to Law in self-defence, against disruption and while combating terrorism). It is these (injunctions) He has enjoined upon you so that you may apply reason. Surah An'aam (6:151)

Allah Ta'ala also says:

And do not even go near unlawful sex (adultery). Verily it is an act of lewdness and is the most evil way. Surah Isra (17:32)

Modesty is such a part of human nature that no religion and no cultured person can deny the importance and necessity of this. For this reason, Islam has declared modesty to be a part of faith, as given in this Hadith of Sahih Bukhari:

Translation: It has been narrated on the authority of Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (May Allah be well pleased with him) that the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: Iman (Faith) has more than 60 branches and modesty is also a branch of Iman.

It ought to be clear the modesty is the dividing line between humanity and beastliness.

As Islam insists upon modesty so much and declares it to be part of faith, a well-planned campaign intended to divest Muslims of this very important article of faith seems to be underway so that Muslims eventually end up losing their faith itself.

Nowadays, indecency has become so common in the society that it is being accepted in the name of liberalism and the like.

The experts are saying that the society has as a whole become complacent about sexual licentiousness. There is no embarrassment or sense of unease about any kind of sexual escapades, be it adultery, sodomy or any other unnatural sexual act. In fact, the media is moving heaven and earth to try to make virginity a source of embarrassment.

It seems to be a political and cultural ploy of the West to misguide women in the name of freedom, to bring her out in the streets and bazaars and reduce her to the status of a plaything. Women are being cheated like this. They are ending up being no more than sales girls, models or clerks.

In the name of freedom, women have been forced to work alongside men in various fields and this again leads to sexual licentiousness.