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Marriage Significance in Islam and Christianity: A Textual Study

ABSTRACT

This study emphasizes on the institution of family life through the contract of marriage in Islam and Christianity. The authenticity of marriage in Islam and Christianity is clearly mentioned in Quran and Bible as both scriptures call it as sacred contract. The teachings of Quran and Bible highlight the obligation of family life because it creates peace and tranquility in society. In twenty first century it is need of time to discuss the marriage in both religions as it helps in building civilized society. Righteous society is based on good family system because family itself is the sacred matrimonial connexion between husband and wife and fully depends on the awareness of the etiquettes and duties of marital life in both husband and wife mentioned in Quran and Bible. They both are complementary to each other as both of them play vital role in each other's life. Being revealed religions, the marriage is considered as the key for successful happy family.

■ Introduction

Family is an institution which is divinely-inspired and its continuation is possible with the man's creation on the basis of marriage contract, Quran has also given the contract of marriage as name of Mithaqanghalizah.

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وَكَيْفَ تَأْخُذُونَهُ وَقَدْ أَفْضَى بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ وَأَخَذْنَ مِنْكُمْ مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا (21)

“And how could you take it (back) while you have gone in unto each other, and they have taken from you a firm and strong covenant”¹

Being the social, dignified and blessed contract, marriage creates relationships and extends family life by creating rights and duties imposed on husband and wife as pair.² Human beings are born in this world to play their distinct roles. The family in Islam is unit in which both husband and wife live their lives according to the injunctions laid down by Allah Almighty.³ Islamic concept of marriage in its start was considered as civil contract and also known as devotional act (ibadat). It is an institution which legalizes physical relations between man and woman and gives preservation to human race, which promotes love and union for building a good family life. A Muslim marriage is called in Arabic Nikah and rules are laid down for it by Prophet (pbuh) and have given certain criteria for one's spouse. Marriage is considered base for the social life just to secure mental peace and security in social relationship. To run family life, both husband and wife must have mutual consent for every decision just to run smooth family affairs.⁴

Being natural religion Islam emphasizes on the principle that when man and women enter into the marital bond, they bring into existence a social unit known as family which is long-lasting relationship through principle of peace and harmony. Islam also demands both man and woman in family role to understand natural realities. This natural reality will help them to act on what are their responsibilities rather to focus more on duties. The common goal of both should be the proper maintenance of the family system.⁵ And for the proper maintenance of the family system, the marriage sermon is very beautifully quoted in Quran

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا (1)

“O Mankind, have fear of your Lord, who created you from a single soul. From that some He created its mate, and through them He scattered the earth with countless men and women and fear Allah, in whose name you claim (your rights) of one another, and of the ties of Kinship. Allah is ever watching you”⁶

Marriage has great importance as it helps in building civilized society which represents that the reason is because of the righteous society. Righteous society is based on good family system as family itself is the sacred matrimonial connexion between husband and wife which fully depends on the awareness of the etiquettes and duties of marital life in both husband and wife. Spouse’s sincerity towards observing these etiquettes e.g. treats each other with liberal heart and adopt sacrificing attitude in every matter concerning each other.⁷ Allah says “And live with them in a good manner”. Marriage is successful if husband and wife both entertain each other with good opinion with an attitude of politeness, toleration and magnanimity for the sake of amicable living with each other. If wife lacks in beauty then husband should look at her good manners, morality and other skills with generosity, liberty of mind and self-sacrifice.⁸ As Allah says

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَجِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَرثُوا النِّسَاءَ كَرَاهًا وَلَا تَعْصَلُوا هُنَّ لِيَتَّذِرُوا بَعْضَ مَا
أَتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُبَيَّنَةٍ وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَعَسَى أَنْ
تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَجَعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا (19)

“For if you hate them it may happen that you hate a thing wherein Allah has placed much good”⁹

They both should have an attitude of forgiveness and kindness. Forgetting all faults especially of wife, will help maintain peaceful marital life having patience, calmness, kindness, affection and devotion.¹⁰ As Quran says

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ مِنْ أَرْوَاجِكُمْ وَأَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا لَكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُمْ وَإِنْ تَعَفَّوْا وَتَصَفَّحُوا
وَتَعَفَّرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (14)

“O you who believe! Verily, among your wives and your children, there are enemies for you, therefore beware of them. And if you

aface and overlook and forgive, then Allah is forgiving Merciful.”¹¹

Quran also states that

إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ

“They (women) are your garments and you (men) are their garments.”¹²

1.1 Meaning of Nikah

Nikah is derived from Arabic word Nakaha. In linguistic it means sexual intercourse. One meaning of Nikah is to meet. So when the branches of trees meet with each other then it is said that trees are together or they are mix up with each other so as Majazi Mursal it means that it is also applied in Aqd (Nikah) that is base for the sexual relationship between husband and wife.¹³ Imam Shafi also defined the literal meaning of Nikah as sexual intercourse.¹⁴ According to jurists Nikah is (a contract which is productive of an exclusive right of enjoyment) i.e. this enjoyment is validating only for those women by a man who are legally not prohibited for marriage.¹⁵

The Arabic word for marriage is nikkah which originally meant aqad or uniting and had the sense of watti or carnal connection.¹⁶ Shariah has declared Nikah as desirable act. Allah ordains in the Quran

فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ

“marry of the women, who seem good to you”¹⁷

Prophet said “O young men, those among you who can support a wife should marry, for it restrains eyes from casting, and preserves one from immorality.”¹⁸

“Anas has narrated that once a companion asked the Holy Prophet that I will not marry, another companion said I will offer prayer all the night I will not sleep, and one of them said I will observe fasts all the year but will not get marry. When Holy Prophet heard all this then He said What has happened to these people that they say so and so. Whereas I pray and sleep too; I fast

and suspend observing them; I marry women also? And he who turns away from my Sunnah, has no relation with me".¹⁹

Holy Prophet has forbidden that one should not stop him from Nikah out of love for worship. All jurists also agreed that Nikah is obligatory, recommended and imperative duty.²⁰ Allah has created man and woman to live together by accompanying each other and to keep them away from living lonely lives. The demands of Islamic teachings are that women live with their husband in ups and downs of life helps her husband to run affairs of life. They both are complementary to each other as both of them play vital role in each other's life.²¹ Since the time of Adam family life is based and developed on Nikah. It is the Nikah, which builds relationships and make families. Relationships build on Nikah are forever. The importance of marriage is clear from Islamic teachings that Nikah is something which builds strong relations and which is the fulfillment for the rights and duties, has given more value rather than *naflbadat*.²²

Marriage leads towards a very beautiful relation that how men and women relate to each other and they are like body and garments, body is meaningless without garment and garment is meaningless without body. This symbolizes the two sex's closeness in both material and spiritual sense. The Quran further says that marriage is important because husband and wife are like part of each other.²³

Marriage as an important institution of human society is set by Allah to make sure the marriage as possible relation for everyone. In Islam marriage is strong tie and commitment of life to behave as a strong and respectable person of society.²⁴

1.2 Marriage Significance in Shariah

Being civil contract marriage is obligated as all other contracts have some rules and regulations to follow. It comes into being as a result of offer from one party and acceptance from the other.²⁵ Marriage is the foundation of social life as it is the effective cause of the human family and social relationship.²⁶ Marriage as a contract is acknowledged in Islam, because it is base for the tranquility, advancement and expansion of a Muslim social order.

No proper and suitable family life can be achieved without marriage and a peaceful relationship between male and female is necessary for the stable and peaceful family life in human society.²⁷

Marriage serves as an effective tool for the beneficial control of sexual behavior and functions as a shield against committing adultery.²⁸ Marriage in Islam is worship of Allah and serves as a transaction between human beings. As worship, marriage is to please Allah, on His commandments both husband and wife feel affection for each other and facilitate each other to make hard work for the continuation of the nasl and raise and look after their children to become good practicing Muslims. In its dealings, marriage is lawful contract for physical relations and for growth in race. The Islamic law has laid down rules and regulation by giving its interpretation, how to keep this institution unbreakable as its legally bind both husband and wife to avail rights and perform duties for creating good family life. This peaceful life is not only good for children but for offspring's as well.²⁹

Marriage is considered as a sacred foundation and every Muslim is recommended to observe it. It is not recommended for a person if he or she has physical and economic deficiency for enjoying this marital institution. Quran has used the word "Nikah", whereas in so many other verses the word *عُقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ* is used.³⁰ In Quran marriage contract is known by the word *Ahsan*. *Mohsan* is the person who contracts marriage with the *Mohsana* who is the woman with whom marriage is contracted. *Nikah* is the shelter, defense and shield for the woman for living a moral life.³¹ Marriage being sacred union between man and woman is considered as religious obligation and describes the love and mutual rights among couple. It is a form of worship which encourages mental and physical capacity because sexual relations are not only for procreation but connects couple by strengthening their relationship. Loyalty is expected from both husband and wife and they should be honest enough to have good sexual and emotional attachment within the boundaries of marriage.³²

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“Among His signs is that He created for you spouses from yourselves so that you might find repose with them. And He has placed between you affection and mercy. In that there are certainly signs for people who reflect.”³³

Husband and wife duty is to provide ease and complement each other. Being responsible to their duties, it automatically clarifies those different roles and tasks which are for both of them. Islam on the basis of different roles and duties does not differentiate between their positions as human beings. Still they are equal within their own roles and status and will be judged according to his or her responsibilities and duties.³⁴ Quran has also used the word *Ziwaj* which signifies pair or a mate. Whereas in manners of speaking it is known as marriage.³⁵ Marriage and family institution has vital importance in the legal system of Islam. This relationship through marriage helps husband and wife to lead a life of chastity. It provides security against immoral sexual treat. Marriage is called as a castle in the Quran because it is a protection against dishonesty and arrogance. It has frequently used the word *muhsin* for chaste, *muhsanat* for chaste women who come from the root word *hisani-e* castle and fort. The idea leads towards the conclusion that marriage safeguards and protects chastity in the same way as a fort protects the garrison within from a besieging.³⁶ Ashraf Shahid quotes that “Marriage serves as an effective tool for the beneficial control of sexual behavior and functions as a shield against committing adultery.”³⁷

1.2.1 Marriage Significance in the Quran

Marriage being social need is also given moral and religious need and focused on its establishment forcefully. Quran considers marriage as Prophet’s Sunnah. In Quran

وَأَنْكِحُوا الْأَيَامَىٰ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ إِنْ يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

“And marry such of you as are solitary and the pious of your slaves and maid-servants. If they be poor, Allah will enrich them of His bounty. Allah is of ample means, Aware”³⁸

Quran mentions man and woman’s relation of Nikah as comfort, peace and blessing of Allah. Allah says in the Quran

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقُرُونَ

“And of His signs is this: He created for you helpmeets from yourselves that you might find rest in them, and He ordained between you love and mercy.”³⁹

It means it is from the signs of Allah that he made your wives from your gender. As Allah said

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ بَنِينَ وَحَفَدَةً وَرَزَقَكُمْ

“And Allah has given you wives of your own kind, and has given you, from your wives, sons and grandsons.”⁴⁰

Another place in the Quran

فَاتَّخِذُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ

“And marry to those women to whom you like”⁴¹

Allah further says

“So wed them by permission of their folk, and give unto them their portions in kindness, they being honest, not debauched nor of loose conduct”⁴²

In Another place Allah says

وَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمْ طَوْلًا أَنْ يَنْكِحَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ فَمِنْ مَا مَلَكَتْ

“Place not difficulties in the way of their marrying their husbands if it is agreed between them in kindness.”⁴³

All the verses mentioned above shows the importance of marriage in Islam.

1.2.2 Marriage Significance in Sunnah

Holy Prophet has given clear injunctions about the importance of marriage through his sayings.

Prophet said “Nikah is my Sunnah”⁴⁴

It was narrated that ‘Alqamah said:

“I was walking with ‘Abdullah in Mina when he was met by Uthman. He stood and talked with him and Uthman said to him: ‘O Abu Abdur-Rahman shall we not marry you to a young girl who can remind you of times past? ‘Abdullah said: ‘If that is what you are telling me, (let me tell you that) the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to us: O young men, whoever among you can afford it, let him get married, for it is more effective in lowering the gaze and guarding one’s chastity. And whoever cannot afford it should fast, for it will be a shield for him.”⁴⁵

Holy Prophet has given the importance of nikah in different occasions.

“Hazrat Anas narrated that Prophet said those who want to meet Allah in good condition then He should marry free women”⁴⁶

“Abdullah b. Amr reported what Allah’s Messenger had said: The whole world is a provision, and the best wares of the world is the pious woman”⁴⁷

By prescribing the nikah Islam has forbidden unlawful ways, Islam has given the proper way to save oneself from adultery, fornication, and all other unnatural ways. In one of the Hadith that Hazrat Uthman bin Matuan asked the permission of Prophet about not having sexual organs or to abolish sexual organs, Prophet replied

“By Allah I am afraid from Allah more than you and takes care whatever I do. But I observe fasts and leave it, I offer prayer, I sleep and I become marry. So those who does not follow my Sunnah he is not from me.”⁴⁸

Abu Hurairah Narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

“ Women are married for four (reasons): For their wealth, their nobility, their beauty, and their religion. So be successful with one of religion may your hands be covered in dust!.”⁴⁹

Anas (Allah be pleased with him) reported that some of the companions of Allah’s Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be

upon him) asked his (the Prophet's) wives about the acts that he performed in private. Someone among them said: I will eat meat: and someone among them said: I will not lie down in bed. He (the Holy Prophet) praised Allah and glorified Him, and said: "What has happened to these people that they say so and so, whereas I observe prayer and sleep too; I observe fast and suspend observing them; I marry women also? And he who turns away from my Sunnah, he has no relation with me."⁵⁰

It was narrated that Abdullah said The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to us: "O you young men! Whoever among you can afford it, let him get married, for it is more effective in lowering the gaze and guarding one's chastity. And whoever cannot afford it, let him fast, for it will be a shield for him."⁵¹

Hadrat 'Ali bin Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) related: The Messenger of Allah (Allah's blessings and peace be upon him) said to him: "O 'Ali! Do not make delay in the three matters: to offer prayer when its time arrives, to bury the deceased whose funeral is ready for burial, to marry an unmarried women, when you find for her an equivalent match."⁵²

Hadrat 'Abdullah bin 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) related: The Messenger of Allah (Allah's blessings and peace be upon him) said: "Do not marry women merely on the basis of their beauty, it may be their beauty may ruin them, nor should you marry women on the basis of their property alone, it may be that may make them disobedient to you. Rather, you should marry them on the basis of their religiosity, as a dark complexioned, religious minded slave girl with perforated ears is better than the others."⁵³

1.3 Marriage in Christianity

In Christianity their belief is that family was the first institution designed by God. Man and his wife enjoy a most beautiful relationship on this planet. All acts are given by God and made family an institution. God has established family as an institution so that husband and wife live for whole life with each other with love, harmony respect and appreciate each other for all the acts done. Bible says marriage is between a male and female. From the creation of this world, God has always given the successful picture

of marriages in the world e.g. Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, etc. The first marriage mentioned by Lord Jesus Christ is in Matthew 24:38 and informed all humanity that daughters were given in marriage by all the fathers before the flood. Being important an legal act God specially made and sanctified, Jesus said,

"The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage"⁵⁴

Jesus has taken his disciples to Cana and attended the marriage. This was time when He approved it as an institution (John 2:2). God has given the meaning of the word marriage as husband and wife's relationship for whole life. They live their life till death by promising with each other that they will live a life of love, affection, harmony and faithfulness and will not be separated from each other till death approaches any of them. The marriage relationship has importance because in the law God commanded that

"If anyone violated the relationship by committing adultery, they were to be executed"⁵⁵

The guilty is given punishment because it destroys family system. The marriage is also seen as witness for salvation. Both spouse's duty is to please each other means to please Christ. The significant aspect of Christian marriage is not to seek pleasure for one own self but also for the pleasure of the spouse with whom he or she married.⁵⁶

Marriage was important for Christians as they considered it very important after the consummation and husband and wife cannot be separated as after consummation they become one and God becomes part of this marriage even they cannot break this relation. Christians especially Catholics give such an importance to marriage that if husband is ill and gives this illness to woman, he will not be considered guilty and cruel for this.⁵⁷

For Christian God has instituted the marriage contract with purpose. As marriage is contracted to prevent immoral sexual relation with each other. To harmonize the domestic affairs and to make family a secure place for upbringing of children. Genesis verse 18 Lord commanded, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."⁵⁸

Marriage and woman are made for the relationship to complete the humanity. God has shown his intention in bible that he wants to create wife for a man.

“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

“In bible two elements of marriage are given, first is to emphasize that marriage should be solemnized between man and woman as phrase of Genesis 2:24 “a man will... be united to his wife.”⁵⁹

The above mentioned verse of bible not only forbids illegal sexual relation between man and woman but it also forbids homosexuality. Human race has started with marriage among close relatives which was necessarily and was permitted by God. At time passed, and the increased in race also seen, God has forbidden cousin marriages.⁶⁰ Secondly marriage is formal commitment and covenant which is designed by God till any of the spouses dies. As it is said “by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage”⁶¹

Death is the commitment which is way of separating husband and wife who were living with each other through marriage bond.⁶²

Bible has offered many verses in which a man and woman are given guidance about their marital relationship, husbands, wives, newly married couples and even for engagements. In Bible marriage is associated with God, Jesus Christ and the Christian faith, which clarifies the importance of marriage in Christianity. In Christianity the Lord has ordained marriage as life long relationship between husband and wife which serves four purposes. The spiritual partnership and mutual edification of husband and wife in pursuing the will of the Lord.⁶³

“Wives, submit to your husband’s as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to

himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church---for we are members of his body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.⁶⁴

For successful marriage, biblical understanding is very important. Bible gives clear teachings for happy married life but Church has changed it. Bible has given clear injunctions for happy married life. Christ has given the marriage model as the sacrificial love and submission that is important to build into Christian marriage.⁶⁵

“Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers”.⁶⁶

Protection against lusts, immorality, and sexual temptations is also mentioned in Bible.

“Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams, of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone,

never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a raceful deer—may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? For a man's ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all his paths. The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast. He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own readfolly."⁶⁷

"The marriage covenant is a solemn, sacred agreement is also made under God's watchful eye. He is the witness to for keeping the obligations created by the covenant. His curses or blessings flow accordingly. These agreements are not meant to be entered into lightly. Christians understand marriage as a covenant made under God, and in the presence of the Christian family. This pledge endures, not because of the force of the law or the fear of its sanctions, but because an unconditional covenant has been made. A covenant more solemn, more binding, more permanent, than any legal contract."⁶⁸

In Garden of Eden first marriage was solemnized by God and said

"This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh" ⁶⁹

They were made in beginning the male and female and were joined together. God by himself has joined the members of opposite sex in a relationship which is natural in its own essence. God has instituted marriage so it's nothing but a ceremony. God asks that if human think that marriage is difficult and very hard to keep it till death then why one should get married. He replies by himself and says in Genesis.

"It is not good for man to be alone. I will make him a helper who approximates (or corresponds) to him."⁷⁰

God has given marriage as a solution for removing man's loneliness and also said that Adam's loneliness was not good. He recognized that Adam needs "a helper who was like him, "and she is the one who can balance him, who has similar nature like his own self.

“So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, “This is one bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man”⁷¹

Marriage is sacred contract as it establishes between the spouses the bodily, mental, rational, touching and religious health .Love is an important ingredient for marriage contract. As love in contract of marriage is found in

“Love is patient, love is kind, It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truths. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always and perseveres.”⁷²

Marriage gives and builds patience, humbleness, delight, accuracy, calm, assertion, and hope for husband and wife. To abuse marriage is not allowed. Bible does not allow to beat each other or to insult each other in marriage. Love in marriage gives peace and removes loneliness when the couple lives with each other.⁷³

God has created and established institute of marriage and ensured the protection of race. Marriage is the tie which is unbreakable for man and woman once they have contracted it. Marriage is a need as it saves family relations and provides children with unconditional love. Children learn care and good habits from their parents who caused to born them in this world. God has created man and woman in such a way so that they give full attention to each other .Marriage encourages man and woman to be in relationship where they for whole life sacrifices for each other. They live with unity so that God is also pleased. Jesus in sacred text has affirmed the marriage contract as permanent contract.⁷⁴

"What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder"⁷⁵

Till Christ time marriage was considered as civil contract between man and woman. Jesus has made this relationship an

elegant and sensitive contract which needs both man and woman consent to live with each other. And this is how marriage is known as sacrament of Matrimony among Christians. Matrimony is defined as "the sacrament by which a baptized man and a baptized woman bind themselves for life in a lawful marriage and receive the grace to discharge their duties." It is not hard to understand why Jesus made marriage a sacrament—the sacrament of Matrimony.

Marriage is a process which enables man and woman to accept each other's faults and compromise with respect and dignity for each other's nature and habits. No matter what couple has to be responsible for becoming good parents? It is not an easy task to up bring the children as per God's demands as children are entrusted by him and duties are also assigned to parents. Parents need a vision how to bring up their children. Marriage is given the title of graceful contract. In short is known as the sacramental grace of Matrimony.⁷⁶This sacramental matrimony has so many benefits as husband and wife love is completed, it also raises the mental and physical compatibility with each other, and teaches how to build love relationship with each other by avoiding illegal relations. Husband and wife are more careful about their children's future. Marriage also gives sense of responsibility to solve many problems might be faced by the family. And last but not the least, marriage is to bear each other's weakness and appreciate each other's strengths. All these can be achieved from the grace of Matrimony and they also show to God what they can get and do for the survival of their family life.⁷⁷

Lord has created woman from the rib of man and made her man's companion. The man has said "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman, ' for she was taken out of man."

1.3.1 Marriage Significance in Bible

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh"⁷⁸

“May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer-- may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love.”⁷⁹

“A wife of noble character is her husband's crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones.”⁸⁰

“He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.”⁸¹

“If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married.”⁸²

“Haven't you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh' ? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”⁸³

“Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry. But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. I say this as a concession, not as a command. I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that. Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion. To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife. To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce

her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?"⁸⁴

"Wives, submit to your husband's as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior."⁸⁵

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.⁸⁶

Report of the Roman Catholic (2004) concludes very beautifully about the importance of marriage in Christianity and says that "marriage is a union that allows humans to live out the Christian ideals of love and sacrifice." In the decades that followed, another statement spoke of marriage both as a divine vocation and a social good, intended for comradeship. In a more recent statement, the church described marriage as "a gift from God" in which the couple "...offers one another the promise of lifelong companionship, rich expressions of human affections and sexuality, and nurture for the children." Likewise, the Roman Catholic Church has for centuries taught the goodness of marriage and continues to do so right up to the present time. According to a 1940s manual for religious education, the purpose of marriage is for procreation and companionship, although the emphasis was clearly on the former. With the growth in social sciences and

increased attention to the human person in the decades that followed, the importance of friendship, love and companionship moved from the periphery to the centre. Thus the church more recently describes marriage as, first, “a partnership of the whole of life,” which is “ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring.” In the Roman Catholic tradition, marriage is celebrated as a sacrament of the church—one of seven sacred signs and instruments of God’s saving action in Christ and continued throughout time in that Body of Christ which is the church . Because it is a sacrament, the form of the rite is decided at the highest and most universal level of ecclesial authority. Several options are offered, but in its shape and action, and in most of its language, the rite is clearly the same all over the Catholic world.⁸⁷

■ Conclusion

In Islam marriage is recommended for all socio-economic class of people and Holy Prophet (peace be upon Him) has recommended to observe it. Whereas in Christianity marriage is considered sacrament and gift of God as if a man and woman have spiritual relation with Jesus Christ. Islam allows Muslim man’s marriage with Christian woman but Christianity does not allow Christian to marry Muslim women. Islam does not demand Muslim man and woman to recite Quran at the time of marriage whereas Christians has bible recitation at the time of marriage. Both religions focus on the importance of marriage and considers it religious duty.

■ Notes

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- ¹ An-Nisa:21
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- ⁹ An-Nisa:19
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- ²² Maulana Minhaj-ud-din Minai, *Islami Fiqh*,p.,285.
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