**Marriage in Islam**

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| ALL parents desire to see the marriages of their children in their lifetime. Therefore, when their child (son or daughter) becomes an adult and reaches a marriageable age, they start thinkingin this direction.  In our society, parents play a major role in selecting a spouse for their children. They have their own dreams, wishes and aspirations. Often they develop an imaginative ideal of what a spouse for their son or daughter should be like.  They use their good ofhces, contacts and influence to approach relevant quarters, including marriage bureaus, to help them find a match for their son or daughter.  Choosing a right partner for a son or daughter entails a lot of homework, forethought, social connections and public relations.  As marriage is the single most important event in anybody`s life, it needs serious thought before a final decision is taken. But once it is taken, then all the hard work would be worth it with a reward of lifetime happiness.  Half a century ago, life was much simpler and devoid of ostentation. When one`s offspring entered adulthood, developed a sense of responsibility and ability to manage his or her affairs, the family arranged his or her marriage. Arranged marriage a marital union where the bride and groom are selected by elders of the family was the order of the day. It was prevalent more widely in society with the exception of a few where the parties themselves selected their match.  Nowadays the situation has changed; the demands and aspirations from both sides appear difficult and sometime initial contacts and meetings between candidates leave negative imprints on either side.  Recently, a family that was in search of a life partner for their son of marriageable age visited many households in search of prospective brides but no girl met their standard. They rejected all of them due to their facial colour, or height, or the age factor etc. This can leave a bad impression, particularly on girls. Previously, it was the sole prerogative of the elders to decide what is best in favour of their offspring but today the situationis different.  Generally, parents want the prospective match to be educated, a good earner, good looking, slim, qualified and a lot more.  Some even show a great desire for dowry in the shape of material goods such as jewellery, car or home and home appliances etc.  These are transitory things. Therefore, instead of demanding material goods, one needs to look for something deeper. This includes faith, good morals, understanding, habits, education, health and a capacity to adjust in all circumstances with patienceand fortitude. These are essentialfeatures for a successful marriage.  Here, one must refer to Islamic teachings about marriage. Islam considers marriage a social contract where two individuals of their free will form a union for a lifelong partnership. They commit themselves to live as husband and wife within the limits that have been prescribed by Allah. It requires mutual commitment to share responsibilities. Therefore, they need to enter into marriage with respect, belief and conviction that they will fulfil their part of the contract fully.  No party should enter into this contract in a hasty, haphazard or non-serious manner.  This will result in the breakdown of marriage and then af ter a few years, regret over why the marriage ever took place. This will bring a lot of unhappiness and create fissures in society.  Marriage may also be exemplified by two wheels of a vehicle whose alignment is a must for smooth running. They requirebeing supportive of and sustaining each other over the long journey of life which is not always smooth. They may have difficulties and their ups and downs in their journey together.  But both wheels need to be support-ive, strongly connected and interdependent. This will bring happiness in life and satisfaction during the journey. Such a marriage is enviable and the Holy Quran reminds us to invoke `...Our Lord! Bestow on us from our spouses and our offspring the comfort of our eyes, and make us leaders of the pious` (25: 74).  Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is reported to have said: `Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock. The ruler is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock. A man is the shepherd of his family and is responsible for his flock. A woman is the shepherd of her husband`s household and is responsible for her flock`.  Therefore, finding a right partner or spouse means finding a life partner that can be a strong associate and supportive in all stages of life down the line. It is a lifelong partnership with commitment to each other to remain firm, reliable, supportive and responsive to each other`s needs. The writer is an educationist with an interest in religion.  valianiamin@gmail.com |