
ISLAMIC MARRIAGE PRINCIPLES VS. CULTURAL TRADITIONS: A CRITICAL STUDY OF UN-ISLAMIC PRACTICES IN INDIAN MUSLIM MARRIAGES

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the great difference present between Islamic marriage principles and cultural traditions performed by Muslims in India. This paper focuses deeply on such un-Islamic practices such as wedding rituals, dowry, and extravagance, and highlights the weight of disobedience to Allah ﷺ taking place unknowingly. It addresses misconceptions and variations from Islamic teachings due to culture and traditions. It examines the financial constraints and social pressure that are taking place due to these harmful and prohibited practices. Especially in the case of women, the modern generation wrongly defines feminism and places a much bigger burden on the heads of women. The objective of this research is to call for the revival of Islamic practices, mainly simplicity, equity, justice, and mutual respect in marriages, by providing practical information on marital issues regarding the Qur'an and Sunnah. This study advocates for a return to your true values of Islam in terms of marriage and promotes a balanced approach concerning Islam, culture, and gender. The main purpose and result of this

study are to serve as a blueprint for conducting the perfect Islamic wedding without any Prohibited practices taking place.

Keywords: *Indian Muslim Marriage, Culture assimilation, Un-Islamic Practices, Marital rights, Islamic weddings.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In Indian Muslim communities, marriage is more than a personal commitment; it is a deeply rooted social institution that intertwines individual lives with broader communal expectations. As a critical cultural practice, it reflects the convergence of Islamic teachings and local customs. Islamic teachings provide a clear and comprehensive framework for marriage, emphasizing core values such as simplicity, justice, mutual respect, and equitable rights and responsibilities for both spouses. These principles foster harmony, stability, and mutual support in marital relationships. However, the passage of time and the assimilation of local traditions have significantly altered how marriages are practiced in these communities, often leading to deviations from the original Islamic principles.

With a long stream running through history, the local regional traditions go on shaping Indian Muslim marriages, which owe specific dimensions to this larger culture into which they get assimilated into mainstream Hindu culture. Dowry-like systems are the intricate complexities of marriages with rituals including many practices borrowed from tradition; hence, their deep root may often not align well with the Islamic marital law norms of simple justice. These customs undermine the ethical and moral

basics of Islamic marriage and augment social and economic pressures, especially for women who usually accept these cultural expectations. (Sharma & Sharma, 2015)

1.1 Research Objectives

- a) Understanding the influence of Indian tradition and culture on Marriage.
- b) Impact of assimilating Indian Traditional rituals with Islam.
- c) Highlighting the level of disobedience of Allah ﷺ caused by adherence to certain minor and major traditions at weddings.
- d) Distinguishing between modern feminism propaganda of Islamic marital practices and its actual merits and benefits.
- e) Exploring differences in gender roles, family expectations, and social pressures within tradition and Islam.
- f) Explaining the perfect way of conducting an Islamic marriage. To outline the proper way of conducting an Islamic marriage, free from un-Islamic cultural influences, in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah.

1.2 Research Questions

- a) What are the fundamental principles of marriage according to Islamic law, and how do they compare with the cultural traditions commonly practiced in Indian Muslim marriages?
- b) Which un-Islamic practices, such as the dowry system and extravagant wedding customs, are prevalent in Indian Muslim marriages, and how do these practices deviate from Islamic teachings?

- c) What are the legal and social implications of adhering to cultural traditions over Islamic marital principles within Indian Muslim communities, particularly in relation to women's rights and economic pressures on families?
- d) What roles do gender roles, family expectations, and social pressures play in perpetuating un-Islamic practices in Indian Muslim marriages, and how do these roles differ from those prescribed in Islamic law?
- e) What is the correct and Islamic way of conducting a marriage?

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Islamic Marital Principles and Women's Rights

Islamic Marriage is fundamentally firm in rights and responsibilities mentioned in the Qur'an and Hadeeth. Marriage is considered a deep, promised covenant in the Quran, especially sending the message of its Islamic and moral significance. Allah ﷺ says in the Quran:

"And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between your affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought."

Islam has some particular rights and principles that aim towards the empowerment of women, such as the bridal gift of the Mahr. The Mahr is a compulsory gift that is to be given from the husband to the wife. In Islam, Men are made to maintain and protect their women, and women are given roles within the family to nurture and nourish them all. This understanding and responsibility that is perfectly balanced promote a mutual

connection among the spouses. Islam also recognizes the rights of the woman by requiring the proper consent for the marriage to be valid, unlike many cultural traditions where the bride does not have any idea about the man she is going to marry. Scholars such as Esposito (2001) discussed this matter in detail.

Women have been given the right to propose marriage, reject suitors, and also negotiate the terms of the Mahr and living arrangements. The Quran emphasizes that men and women have equivalent rights and responsibilities within marriage. Women get all the respect, fair treatment, and emotional support according to Islamic principles. Islam does not accept coercion or compulsion in marriage and is completely against the oppression of women, especially in matters of forced marriage, child marriage, or financial exploitation. Domestic abuse and violence against women are forbidden, and the kind treatment of wives is emphasized several times in the Quran and Sunnah. If there is any issue, then women have also been given the right to divorce through Khula, which ensures stability for women and the ability to protect themselves against injustice. Even in divorce, Islam gives clear guidance ensuring justice for all and fairness to both parties. (Esposito, 2001)

There are also other studies by Hassan that imply how the facts of Islam are being overshadowed by patriarchal structures and local customs, which completely misinterpret Islamic laws. Culture often disrupts Islamic knowledge and teachings, preferring the dominance of males over the mutual understanding and kindness portrayed towards the relationship of the spouses in terms of their partnership. Practices such as dowry demands undermine the spiritual ethos of an Islamic

marriage. This is also caused by the lack of awareness among Muslims. (Hassan, 1999)

2.2 Dowry

The dowry system is quite prevalent in India despite all other unnecessary changes. The dowry system originated in Hinduism. It is a concept of the Hindu tradition. In this tradition, the bride's family has to provide material wealth to the groom's family for accepting their daughter. This is a widespread practice and is still prevalent in Hindu culture. Unfortunately, this practice has become assimilated into Indian Muslim Marriages over time due to cultural exchanges and societal pressures. This is in complete conflict with Islamic Values. In Islam, according to the Qur'an and Sunnah, there is the obligation of the Mahr. The Mahr is a financial gift given by the groom to the bride as a sign of respect, security, and commitment. This is compulsory as per Islamic law.

The harm that the concept of dowry brings is also very significant. First and foremost, there is the enormous economic burden. The dowry system creates many serious problems, especially for families with less money. Poor families are often forced to borrow money or sell their belongings just to meet the high dowry demands. Marriage is a sacred bond; it should not be forced on such harsh terms to the bride's side. This causes big financial stress and can push them into long-term debt. Sadly, women are treated unfairly in this system. Their worth is often measured by the dowry their families give, which makes them seem like a burden. This reinforces old beliefs that women are a problem for their families instead of valuable members of society. Dowry can lead to many social issues, too. Disputes

over dowry often cause fights in marriages. In the worst cases, it leads to domestic violence or even death. Because of the pressure for dowry, many marriages are delayed, and this creates even more problems for families. The dowry system also supports patriarchal ideas, where men are seen as superior and women as less important. It goes against what Islam teaches. Islam gives women honor, dignity, and equal rights. Islam does not allow women to be treated as objects or burdens. Ending dowry is important to protect women's rights and make marriages simple and fair, just as Islam teaches us. (Waheed, 2009)

2.3 Extravagant Wedding Customs

Blibi, Mahmood, & Rizwan (2020) state in their research that the extravagant wedding customs are supposed to be the biggest celebrations, as per Hindu Indians. However, this makes marriage a complete display of wealth. Extravagant weddings have become a way for different families to compete in a duel to show and publicize who among them has the most wealth and most pride in their social standing. It has become such a norm that even society itself often judges families only based on the grandeur of the wedding functions and festivities, leading to a massive culture of competition and materialism within communities. Extravagant customs transform marriage from a spiritual union to a materialistic transaction. These practices overshadow the ethical and religious foundations of marriage in Islam, leading to a loss of its true essence. Below is an exploration of some Hindu customs that have crept into Islamic marriage in India. These are against Islamic principles

and introduce extravagance, materialism, and unnecessary complexity to the sacred institution of marriage.

2.4 Engagement Ceremony

The grand engagement ceremony is where, first, the rings are exchanged. This is an innovation (*bid'ah*) that has no basis in Islam. In this ceremony, the groom's side family visits the bride's house on a fixed date. They bring gold rings, silk clothes, and many other expensive presents. In most cases, the groom puts the ring in the bride's hands and vice versa. With this, they have fixed their alliance and have become their fiancés. This is borrowed from Hindu and Western traditions. In many Indian Muslim communities, this practice has become a norm, often celebrated with lavish gatherings, expensive gifts, celebrations, and unnecessary expenses. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) did not practice or encourage the exchange of rings or extravagant ceremonies before the nikah. There is no prescribed ritual like the exchange of rings in the Qur'an or the Sunnah. Adding such customs to Islamic marriage practices can mislead individuals into believing they are religiously required, whereas they are purely cultural additions. Islam encourages simplicity and focuses on the spiritual and ethical bond between the couple rather than symbolic or material displays. In Islam, the intention to marry is confirmed through the proposal (*ijab*) and acceptance (*qabul*), which are simple and clear steps in formalizing the marriage process. (Husain, 1976)

2.5 Mehndi Function

The mehndi ceremony, where henna is applied to the bride and female relatives, has no basis in Islam. This practice has been borrowed from Hindu traditions, where it is an important pre-wedding ritual. A small amount of henna paste is placed on a leaf, which is later placed on the palm of the bride. This practice actually symbolizes good luck and blessings for the bride's future life according to Hindu traditions. They say it represents a new phase of life and wishes for her prosperity. This would be prohibited in Islam as Muslims believe that whatever happens is by the will of Allah ﷺ and not based on any luck. It is based on the Qadr. Over time, Indian Muslim communities have adopted this custom, turning it into a large event with music, dancing, and extravagant celebrations. In Islam, there is no prescribed ceremony like the mehndi function. Marriage in Islam is meant to be a simple and spiritual union, formalized through the nikah without any additional rituals. Such events not only lack any religious foundation but also bring elements that completely go against Islamic teachings. For instance, music and dancing, which are discouraged in Islam, are common features of these gatherings. Additionally, free mixing of men and women often occurs, which is explicitly forbidden in Islam. The extravagance of these ceremonies, such as decorations, expensive attire, and lavish celebrations, places financial burdens on families, who feel pressured to conform to societal expectations. Muslims are encouraged to recognize that these practices are not part of Islamic teachings. Instead of following customs borrowed from other traditions, the focus should be on adhering to the simplicity and dignity that Islam prescribes for marriage. (D'Souza, 1976)

The tying of the *Thaali* or Mangal sutra, which is a long thread and a gold pendant that represents their Hindu Goddess, is a Hindu tradition that is now incorporated in many Muslim marriages that the researcher has witnessed in South India. In Tamil Nadu, she witnessed Indian Muslim weddings in which the groom's family was tying a *Thaali* for the bride. This is due to a lack of Islamic knowledge and assimilation of culture, that such a major shirk is being promoted on a large scale. Reception parties, which are held in a very grand manner with feasts and decorations, have also become customary. These gatherings often become a platform for flaunting wealth rather than celebrating the marriage as per Islamic guidelines of being simple. The bridal send-off has also become a big ritual, known as the *vidaai*. This ceremony gives meaning to the bride being given her final send-off from her family. The wearing of the flower garlands around the neck during celebrations, which are put around each other between the spouses, is also a Hindu tradition called *varmala*. As Muslims, people need to be far away from all this shirk. This is derived from Hindu culture. Islam views marriage as a mutual bond rather than transferring "ownership" of the bride. Some families consult astrologers for selecting auspicious wedding dates, a practice rooted in Hinduism and completely prohibited in Islam. (Lambat, 1976)

2.6 Gender Roles, Modern Feminism, and Islamic Marriages

Islam is perfected by Allah ﷺ. In Islam, the focus is on equity, not equality, and this is a major and crucial difference that makes wonders in reality. Islam distinguishes between gender roles while ensuring equity between both genders. In Islam,

Men are designated as providers and protectors, while women are guardians of the home and nurturers. That is why Allah ﷺ has also made the bodies of women and men different to make their roles easier for them. Such as men have rough skin that makes it suitable for them to work in tough conditions outside. Women are given deep emotions and the ability to handle a great amount of pain to manage childbirth and be able to nurture and nourish their families most appropriately. These roles are complementary and work systematically, balanced, and perfectly together. They interlock with each other and make the best family. While these are the roles Allah ﷺ specified for them, He has also given flexibility within this framework for ease of work and situation. Islam allows women to work, earn, and own property. This is beautifully portrayed by Khadijah (RA), the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)'s wife. In Islam, men and women are equals when it comes to the worship of Allah ﷺ. Allah ﷺ sees them as equals in this, disregarding any notion of male dominance.

2.7 Modern Feminism

However, modern feminism has increased the challenges of these roles, making many aspects very difficult in one's daily life. Modern feminism rejects the separate and distinct gender roles that Islam provides and instead advocates for a complete role exchange. This disastrous perspective fully clashes with Islamic teachings, which value role differentiation based on natural dispositions. Western critiques also portray men's role as oppressive. They claim that men take all the important roles while disregarding women. But this is not true. Allah ﷺ has given a role for each that is suitable for them. Overemphasis on male

privileges neglects the corresponding responsibilities that have been placed on men, such as financial provision and care. Similarly, feminism's great importance on independence can cause discouragement of marriage and motherhood, which are both key pillars in Islam, leading to rising individualism. Islamic marriages prioritize collective welfare and mutual support, which modern feminist ideals often undermine. Society would take a major turn towards the wrong side of modern feminism keeps promoting this idea, and more women are reluctant to get married or have children. (O.Muhibbu-din, 2019)

Cultural practices in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar disregard Islamic guidelines. Women are expected to shoulder all household duties without any male financial support. The men misuse the principles to justify false control over women rather than the provision of safety and protection. Patriarchal norms in West Bengal often prevent women from pursuing education or careers, contradicting Islamic teachings on women empowerment. In urban and developed areas the total opposite is taking place. There is a massive misuse of feminist ideas. In places such as Maharashtra and Karnataka, they are witnessing a growing trend of women rejecting traditional Islamic marital roles under the influence of Western feminist thought. This shift often leads to unrealistic expectations within marriage, causing major conflicts.

Selective criticism of Islamic laws often targets practices like polygamy, but people forget about the parts of Islamic law that protect women's rights, like Mahr and inheritance. Feminist critiques focus mainly on polygamy and say it is unfair to women. However, Islam allows polygamy only under very strict

rules and for specific reasons, like helping widows or women in need. It is not something that can be done freely or without responsibility. Sadly, many people show polygamy as something bad and oppressive without understanding the purpose behind it. (Abu-Lughod, 2013)

Feminism is creating new challenges for Muslim families in India. In Kerala, some women influenced by feminist ideas want to remove the traditional roles of husband and wife in marriage. This has caused an imbalance in family life. The teamwork and peace taught in Islam are being replaced by fights and competition. In big cities like Delhi and Mumbai, feminism's rejection of traditional roles has led to fewer or delayed marriages. As a result, people face loneliness and moral problems, which Islam tries to prevent by encouraging early and stable marriages. Feminism is also putting unnecessary pressure on men. Many feminist ideas paint all men as bad or oppressors, ignoring the good husbands and fathers who follow Islamic teachings. This unfair image creates misunderstandings and fights between men and women, making it harder to build happy marriages. In Karnataka, men are under rising stress to provide more than they can afford. They are expected to meet feminist standards of equality while still handling traditional responsibilities, which is an impossible burden. More education is needed about the complementary roles in Islamic marriage. Workshops can teach how the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his wife Khadijah (RA) supported each other as an ideal couple. In states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, awareness campaigns can help stop the wrong belief that men should dominate women. Women also need to be informed about their Islamic rights to education, work, and inheritance.

Muslim scholars can address feminist misunderstandings in public talks and highlight examples of successful Islamic marriages that balance traditional roles with modern realities. Platforms can be created for young men and women to communicate and understand each other's roles with respect. These steps can restore peace in families, especially in states like Maharashtra and Kerala, by connecting Islamic values with today's changing world.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study includes Qualitative, Exploratory, field, and Comparative forms of research. (Indeed Editorial Team, 2024)

- a) Qualitative: This study focuses on exploring cultural practice, some aspects of modernity and historical context for research. This approach opens doors for an in-depth understanding of all the topics. It studies numerous factors from sources and concludes concerning faith.
- b) Exploratory: This research investigates how these cultural traditions diverge from the true religion of Islam. Not much has been spoken about many traditions that are contrary to Islam, due to the masses accepting them and propagating them for entertainment and social normality. This study explores those hidden factors that have now become a norm but are against the core practices of Islam.
- c) Comparative: This research is comparative in the aspect that it compares the olden traditions to what has been said in Islam. People tend to assimilate both, which is not possible if one is contrary to the other.

- d) Field: This research has also been conducted in the field to observe Indian Muslim marriages in North and South India, observing and noting diverse cultures and traditions, and the involvement of certain rituals that are against Islam.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1 Primary Sources

- a) The Qur'anic verses related to marriage, women's rights, and Mahr.
- b) Hadeeth related to Islamic marital rights, hijab, and women's empowerment.
- c) Fiqh rulings about marriage, dowry, family relations, haram, and halal.
- d) Interviews and talks with Islamic scholars provide further clarification regarding the topic.
- e) Focus groups with families who have undergone Muslim marriage ceremonies in India to understand their experiences with dowry and wedding customs.
- f) Case study of real-life experiences on families following cultural traditions.

4.2 Secondary Sources

- a) Books and scholarly articles on Islamic marital law.
- b) Government reports, surveys, and NGO reports on sensitive issues such as dowry abuse.
- c) Studies and surveys have been conducted in India for Muslim marriages.
- d) Documentaries and news reports highlight crucial aspects of the present case scenario of the pressing issues with factual evidence.

- e) Historical documents, such as colonial records archival data, and rulings from the Fuqaha.
- f) Field Observation by attending or observing Muslim marriages in India to note the differences and impact of cultural traditions being conducted.
- g) Observation of community rituals to gain firsthand insight into the contradiction of rituals with Islamic practices.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Per several observations and research, the results of this study focus on the elements required to conduct a marriage while abiding by Islamic principles and laws. Marriage is considered critical in Islam. The pillar fosters mutual love, support, and true compassion between spouses. As this study states, however, the beauty of Islamic marital principles has often been overshadowed by cultural traditions and practices that have crept into Indian Muslim marriages over generations. These practices defy the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah and contradict the essence of Islamic principles. This result contains what is similar to a handbook, aiming to provide a detailed analysis as a guide to conducting a marriage that adheres strictly to Islamic principles while addressing the unique challenges faced by Indian Muslim communities. The results of this study aim to promote two aspects: to educate and to reform. First, it seeks to educate new couples, families, and all community leaders who need first-hand basic knowledge about Islamic principles regarding this authentic teaching about marriage. Individuals would be further informed about decisions taken about their marital practices upon understanding these teachings. Then, it aims to reform the existing practices that

have become normalized in society but contradict Islamic values. Because it is the need of the hour that people return to the authentic Islamic teachings. By offering practical solutions, the result of this study empowers readers to conduct marriages in a way that upholds simplicity, spirituality, and justice, in line with the guidance of the Qur'an and the example of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). (Al-Omar, 2015)

5.1 Before the Marriage

In Islam, the responsibility begins with choosing the spouse. Many people give importance to matters such as beauty, wealth, and lineage. But they miss the main factor, which is *deen*. This could also be a reason for un-Islamic practices creeping in. If the spouses do not share a bond based on *deen*, then their wedding would most likely contain un-Islamic practices. Faith is the key factor in selecting a spouse. It has to come first above all. When it comes to choosing and going ahead with the process, the people are at two extremes. (Alhakeem & Shehata, Nd)

5.1.1 Potential Spouses

Some parents do not let the bride see her husband-to-be until after their marriage. But the prophet had encouraged many companions to see their future spouse before the marriage. There is also a formal meeting between them. Not allowing this meeting to happen would be a violation of the law. At the same time, this modern generation with all the fitnah, most probably has the opposite problem. In urban and developed cities like Mumbai, Chennai, and Bangalore, the spouses go way beyond just looking at each other. They spend their time chatting or

even "dating" each other to understand their spouses before marriage. Islam only allows a man to look at her in the presence of a Mahram. But in this era, spouses hang out with each other and message each other daily. Islam prohibits all kinds of premarital affairs, including becoming each other's boyfriend or girlfriend. A man and a woman are non-Mahram for each other until their marriage. A confirmation would not allow them allowed for each other. This includes online chatting, texting, or sharing of photos. Talking between the man and woman who are considering marriage should only be done in the presence of a Mahram. It must happen in a controlled manner and be limited to what is necessary to help them decide. They are allowed to sit and discuss matters related to the wedding or their life, but it must be in the presence of a Mahram. It is a very important point in this regard. There must be no expression of love that takes place. They can converse over the phone with each other if the conversation is to discuss different issues and is done in control, and there is no room for any fitnah. (al-Jibaly, 2005)

5.1.2 Engagement

When a man finds a woman whom he likes and of good character and *deen*, his next step should be to propose to her family. If the proposal is accepted, then the engagement is complete. Note how there is no ceremony required or necessary for this step. It is simply via the approval that the engagement is over. This can be done as simply as the father speaking to the groom and saying that the proposal has been accepted. There is no requirement for any fancy parties or ceremonies. The engagement is a mutual pledge for marriage

between both parties that must not be broken without serious reasons. A widespread practice in India is to read the Fatiha while accepting the proposal in a ceremony. This is all *Bid'ah*. The spoken acceptance is more than enough for the engagement to be complete. Extending the engagement period for too long also causes more fitnah leading to sins between the couple. However, now it is a tradition and custom in India to conduct an engagement party. To do this while adhering to Islamic principles, the groom's family goes to the house of the bride to officially propose. There must be no mixing of genders or any extravagance. It must be a simple gathering where food is offered. If gifts are exchanged as per the customs, this would be permissible, but not in extravagance. There must be no music or exchange of rings, as it is a tradition of the Christians. (BH, 2023)

5.2 Understanding Dowry vs. Mahr in Islam

Islam has made it compulsory for the husband to give the Mahr so that the wife feels respected and honored. Additionally, the Mahr acts as a safeguard in times of conflict. It places responsibility on the husband, discouraging him from dissolving the marriage over trivial matters. This could be money, gold, or even something simple, as long as it is mutually accepted. Thus, the marriage remains in focus, and the woman's worth is respected in the union. The dowry or the giving of gifts from the bride to the groom on compulsion has now become a norm in India. However, this is a very evil practice that is opposite to what Allah ﷺ has ordained. It belittles the woman and does not fulfill her rights. It ruins her and places her in a position of complete dependency on her husband even for trivial matters.

This also goes against the balance and justice that Islam looks forward to establishing in relationships of marriage. This is a major contradiction to the principles of Mahr in Islam. Dowry belittles women, placing them in positions of vulnerability and financial dependency on their husbands.

It is the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to declare Mahr at the time of nikah, to avoid disputes later on. Though the husband is permitted to give the Mahr after the nikah, he is very much advised to provide it during the nikah ceremony. The scholars agree that as for the Mahr, there is no maximum amount. However, the Mahr must be given as per the norm of the people, not too less or too extravagant. It has to be balanced. A balanced Mahr should align with the norms of the community, neither too little nor excessively extravagant. The purpose of Mahr is to establish respect, security, and mutual understanding in the marriage, not to create financial burdens or unnecessary competition. (Al-Fawazan, 2012)

5.3 Guidelines of Nikah

Islamic teachings highlight the simplicity, righteousness, and modesty in marriage ceremonies. It focuses on morality and Islamic aspects rather than the materialistic displays of wealth and status in this world. Modern cultural practices are fully led by not following any of the principles. There is always an unnecessary extravagance and lavishness that leads to a major deviation from the Sunnah. This section of the study will provide a blueprint for conducting a simple wedding ceremony in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah.

5.3.1 The Nikah ceremony

The Nikah ceremony is the main aspect of an Islamic marriage, and it must, without any excuses, align with Islamic principles. The essential components of an ideal Nikah ceremony are as follows:

- a) Simplicity: The Nikah must be conducted in a very humble and modest way. It has to be conducted as per the Sunnah, which is in a mosque. If it is not possible for the wedding to be at the mosque, then the family home or community center should be perfect. Extravagant venues, over-decorations, and luxury catering are all excess and would financially burden the family.
- b) Khutbah: The Nikah must begin with the Khutbah. The sermon emphasizes the importance of marriage and speaks regarding the rights and responsibilities of the spouses and how marriage should strengthen the faith of one another.
- c) Mahr: The agreement of the Mahr must be done based on an approved amount given to the bride. The gift is a right that has been granted by Allah ﷺ. It shows the commitment of the groom and the responsibility of the wife. However, simplicity must be observed in terms of the Mahr as well.
- d) Free mixing: There must be no mixing of the genders. The Nikah gathering should maintain an Islamic standard for modesty by arranging separate spaces for men and women. Not doing so would lead to sins and prohibited acts of non-Mahram men around women.
- e) Unnecessary practices. Practices that have no basis in Islam must be forbidden. Acts such as exchanging rings or lighting candles must not take place.

5.3.2 Walimah

The *walimah*, or marriage banquet, holds a significant place in Islamic traditions as a Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). It represents gratitude to Allah for the blessing of marriage and serves as an opportunity to bring family, friends, and the community together. However, in the context of Indian Muslim marriages, the simplicity and spiritual significance of the *walimah* have been overshadowed by cultural assimilation and extravagant customs, transforming it into a platform for social competition and materialistic displays. The *walimah* is a banquet hosted by the groom after the nikah to celebrate the union and share the joy with family, friends, and the community. In Islam, the *walimah* is a Sunnah, intended to celebrate the union of two individuals within the boundaries of modesty and gratitude. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) demonstrated its simplicity by hosting modest meals and inviting guests to partake in the joyous occasion. One notable example is his marriage to Safiyyah (RA), where the *walimah* consisted of dates and barley porridge (an-Nasa'i, 3382), reflecting the essence of humility and accessibility. The primary purpose of the *walimah* is to announce the marriage and seek blessings, rather than to showcase wealth or status.

5.3.3 Cultural Practices

In Indian Muslim communities, the *walimah* has undergone a significant transformation, influenced by both Hindu and Western traditions. Extravagant feasts, lavish decorations, and over-the-top entertainment have become the norm, diverting from the simplicity prescribed by Islam. These cultural intrusions have added financial and social burdens on families,

especially those from lower-income backgrounds. For instance, in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, *walimah* ceremonies are increasingly seen as opportunities to display social status. Families often compete to host grand banquets with hundreds of dishes, luxury venues, and high-profile entertainment. Such practices contradict Islamic principles, which emphasize moderation and discourage wastefulness.

The extravagant nature of the *walimah* creates immense financial strain on families, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In some cases, families take on debts or sell valuable assets to meet societal expectations. This not only impacts their financial stability but also perpetuates a culture where marriage is seen as a burden rather than a blessing. Additionally, these practices widen the gap between social classes. Wealthier families set unrealistic standards for celebrations, leaving less affluent families feeling inadequate. This fosters resentment and undermines the communal harmony that the *walimah* is meant to promote. In many cases, the grandeur of the *walimah* is used to showcase the groom's family's dominance and financial capability, further reinforcing patriarchal norms. The bride's family is often excluded from decision-making regarding the event, contrary to the Islamic principle of mutual consultation and respect.

5.3.4 Restoring the Islamic Purpose of Walimah

To address these issues, it is essential to return to the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, which emphasize simplicity, gratitude, and inclusivity in marriage celebrations. The *walimah* should be an occasion to foster community ties and celebrate the spiritual union of the couple, rather than a display of

material wealth. The *walimah* is not merely a cultural practice but a profound act of gratitude and communal celebration in Islam. By simplifying *walimah* ceremonies and rejecting un-Islamic cultural practices, Indian Muslim communities can preserve the sanctity of marriage and alleviate unnecessary financial and social burdens. Returning to the principles of the Qur'an and Sunnah ensures that marriage remains a source of blessings, unity, and spiritual fulfillment, free from the distortions of cultural assimilation.

5.3.5 Balancing rights and duties in marriage in Islam

The beauty is that the husband and the wife have complementary roles that are designed to specifically support each other and bring a beautiful balance to the marital bond. The husband's primary duty is to provide financial security, protection, and safety. While the wife's role is centered on nurturing the entire family, nourishing, and creating a peaceful home environment. This is according to the rules of Islam, and Allah ﷺ has facilitated this in the Shari'ah, Quran, and Sunnah. However, Islam is perfect, and that is why these roles are not too rigid and strict, allowing flexibility and emphasizing mutual consultation and cooperation, which makes marital life so much easier for all people. For instance, if a wife chooses to work or pursue education. According to the principles of Islam, it must be with mutual understanding and without compromising any family obligations, such as taking care of the children or cooking for the house. If she leaves her house in a bad condition and goes out for education, then she is not obeying the rights of her husband. If she can manage her rights and responsibilities while doing other work, such as providing financial security, she has

all the rights to do so. The Quran describes the spouses as garments for each other, which symbolizes perfect protection, comfort, and mutual responsibility between the couple. However, when these principles are misunderstood, they get exploited by patriarchy. All of this must be stopped, and Islamic principles must be followed. Islamic marriage is always built on a balance of rights and responsibilities. In this marital bond, both spouses have been given unique roles that contribute to their cooperative family structure. However, misinterpretation of these roles leads to gender imbalances, which have to be addressed through the principles and eyes of Islamic teachings.

5.3.6 Challenging patriarchal practices through Islamic teachings

Patriarchy often changes how Islam teaches us. It always gives a negative presentation of Islamic teachings by emphasizing male dominance. Practices such as limiting a woman's right to education or enforcing unreasonable obedience towards the husband, which sometimes lead to emotional and physical strain towards the wife, are just cultural practices. They are not Islamic at all. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) treated his wives with great respect and also consulted them in matters of priority and always upheld their rights despite any situation. By highlighting these examples, different communities can challenge such oppressive practices that are taking place in India; women must be empowered to seek the knowledge of their rights and stand against traditions and culture. So many community leaders and scholars can advocate for practices that are rooted in authentic Islamic principles, which promote justice, fairness, and equality in marriage rather than patriarchal

practices, which are only one-sided towards the male and disregard the female. (O.Muhibbu-din, 2019)

5.3.7 Workshops and counselling

Educational initiatives targeting families and young couples can also play a huge transformative role in the change towards following Islamic principles. Workshops and seminars that talk about topics such as making Shariah-compliant marriage contracts, building a happy marriage, compatibility, and addressing cultural pressures can help considerably. These events can be conducted by inviting scholars, counsellors, or imams and also creating a platform for people to communicate freely and address issues. Regular events provide great support, which helps couples navigate challenges in their marriage and unmarried people be ready to take on any challenges that they face. Couples who are getting married should be counselled based on the principles of Islam and must be taught the Islamic rules within marital life and their roles and responsibilities before the marriage takes place so that they would be ready to handle the challenges of this new life.

6. CONCLUSION

Islamic marriage is not just a social or legal contract; it is a spiritual bond based on love, mercy, and understanding. The Qur'an and Sunnah teach us to keep marriages simple and focused on the values of humility and mutual respect. But today, in Indian Muslim marriages, cultural assimilation has taken over. Practices borrowed from Hindu and Western traditions, like dowry, baraat, and mehendi functions, have shifted the focus from simplicity to extravagance. These rituals

are not part of Islam and have caused financial burdens and emotional stress for many families.

One of the biggest problems is the dowry system, which treats women like a burden instead of honoring them as Islam teaches. The *baraat* and *mehendi* functions, which have roots in Hindu culture, add unnecessary expenses and promote wastefulness. These practices are not just un-Islamic—they go directly against the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who said the best marriages are those with the least expense. Cultural traditions have also damaged women's rights. Islam gives clear rules about how women should be respected and valued in marriage. But in many Indian Muslim families, patriarchal customs and cultural norms take over. Women are controlled unfairly, forced into dowry systems, and not given the freedom and dignity that Islam guarantees them. These practices hurt the spiritual purpose of marriage and lead to inequality and unhappiness. The only way to fix this is by going back to the Qur'an and Sunnah. Families need to stop focusing on showing off wealth and instead keep weddings simple. The *nikah* and *walimah* are the only ceremonies needed in Islam. Other rituals like *mehendi* functions and *baraat* should be replaced with acts of charity or community service. Religious leaders and scholars must step up and educate people about true Islamic practices.

Youth also have an important role. They need to learn about the Islamic way of marriage and question the un-Islamic traditions around them. Schools and communities should have programs to teach these values. Parents should also set an example by simplifying weddings in their own families. By rejecting cultural

practices that go against Islam and following the guidance of the Qur'an and Sunnah, Indian Muslims can bring back the true purpose of marriage. This change will not only help families but also strengthen the entire Muslim community. With unity, education, and effort, Muslims can end these haram practices and make marriages simple, meaningful, and blessed again.

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