

***SEXUALITY IN
ISLAM***

***A DISSERTATION PRESENTED FOR THE PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF PH.D. IN CLINICAL SEXOLOGY***

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PREFACE

Despite the sexual relationship is highly sacred and highly recommended religiously (so long as it is inside the bond of marriage), it was for long long time that just mentioning sex was considered shameful and even sinful; this resulted in nothing but considerable lost concerning this issue.

Here comes the role of professionals in promoting or restoring sexual health, and from the clarification of this role come the recommendations to attain maximal pleasure from that highly valuable gift of GOD; that is ... SEX.

There are three basic elements for better sexual life and health:

- 1- Courage to diagnose and admit a present sexual dysfunction.
- 2- A capacity to enjoy and control sexual behavior in accordance with a social and personal ethic
- 3- Freedom from fear, shame, guilt, false beliefs, and other psychological factors inhibiting sexual response and impairing sexual relationships
- 4- Freedom from organic disorders, diseases, and deficiencies that interfere with sexual functions.

It is to be known that magnificent sexual life is a completely attainable goal for just about everyone, especially if it is running guided by God's orders and regulations, and we don't have to be astonished reading these words, as God has created us, so he is the best to know what is beneficial and what is not for us, and overall, what is best for his beloved creatures, these are...human beings.

This message of God (Allah) came clear in his final divine religion: Islam, which surprisingly declared very profound details of a best sexual life between a husband and a wife, either frankly, or symbolically.

Islam has set legal, psychological, and social rules to control one's natural instincts particularly when he has not the means of marriage. The basic tenet is

to respond to the Quran's call to hold tight to virtue and chastity as Allah, the Exalted, says:

“..and let those who find not the financial means for marriage keep themselves chaste, until Allah gives them means out of His grace...” (23:33)

It is strongly remarkable that there is a strong continuity between Quran (book of Islam) and the “agony columns” of specialized magazines for example, both in the problems that arise, which almost the same since very early times, and in the positions defended.

Of course in a totalizing society nowadays, the impact of Islam could not fail to be worldwide. Islamic ethics are certainly at the center of discussion. Rediscovering the meaning of things also involves questioning the functions attributed to the sacred and the sexual within the human nature. It is no so much a question that the sexual is in essence sacral or that the sacred is sexual in origin as of establishing the ways and means by which the human well being may profit both from the majesty of the sacred and from the power of the libido.

Actually the problem is bigger for women the vast majority of whom do not have satisfying sex lives. Women want sexual fulfillment but are sometimes unsure about how to express their needs or improve their sex lives. This also promotes a climate of honesty, caring and awareness that deepens the connection between men and women.

Also, for a balanced society produces a balanced sexuality and not the reverse, here the Islamic model is offered as a harmonious synthesis and a permanent adjustment of sexual satisfaction and religious commitment.

Islam is no way tries to depreciate the sill less to deny the power of the sexual; on the contrary, it attributes a sublime significance to the power of sexuality and invests it with such a transcendental quality that any trace of guilt is removed from it. Taken up in this way, sexuality flows freely and joyfully, in other words, sexuality is the reference and its contents is a full positivity, taking

these facts, Islamic life becomes an alteration and complementarity of the invocation of the divine Word and the exercise of the physical love.

The fact of “being” and the dialogue between people about sex punctuate our daily lives; this becomes a permanent attempt to integrate the religious and the sexual.

Actually the only measures that do not undergo changing according to any circumstances or any inputs are the religious rules, so, I think it is time now to bypass the conflicts of the different principles given by humans and to get back to resting on the ground given by the creator of these humans; taking in consideration that no rules ever last but God ones.

For these above-mentioned extremely important goals to be achieved, this research work was accomplished to prove that original Islam, represented in Quran, and Sunnah, was the first to put a ground for sex and sexuality rules to be taken over in the right way which does not at all negate, on the contrary it actually confirmed what modern science came with and proved.

The aim of this work is to throw light both for Muslims and non-Muslims on that Islam is the oldest source of the view of life in which sexuality enjoys a privileged status, and based the harmony of sexual ecstasy and religious faith that is accessible and not hard to be achieved.

This work was built by a different literatures devoted to the subject of sexuality, whether these sources are Arabic or western ones, this is to localize the place of Islamic sexuality in different cultures, and to prove that this is not controversial with any of them, on the contrary, Islamic culture is so progressist, and liberal.

Hoping this work would be of benefit in uncovering the true identity of Islam as a divine religion, as knowing that God created us, so, it is then logic that his own words and regulations represented by Quran and Sunnah

(statements and behavior of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)) are the best ways to be followed

I. INTRODUCTION

The traditional non-Islamic moralists regarded sex and love as if these were manifestations of an obnoxious evil to be shunned. In contrast, the modernistic societies tended to consider free love as not only desirable but respectable. No doubt, the free love concept began to receive every preferential treatment and encouragement for its worldwide growth.

***What do we mean by Sexuality?**

Sexuality refers in its broadest sense to the quality of being sexual. The term sexuality is also used in plural, i.e. 'sexualities', to reflect the diversity of sexuality. The main aspects of sexuality are [sex](#), [biological or physiological sex](#), [gender](#), [gender identity](#), [gender roles](#) and [sexual orientation](#). [Sexual orientation](#) refers to emotional, romantic, sexual and/or affectional attraction from one person to another person or persons. Someone's sexual orientation is categorized according to the [gender\(s\)](#) or [biological sex](#) of the people he/she has these feelings for, that is, it describes whether a person is attracted primarily toward people of the same or the opposite sex, or to both. [Sexual orientation](#) exists along a scale that ranges from exclusive [homosexuality](#) to exclusive [heterosexuality](#) and includes various forms of [bisexuality](#). Sexual orientation is an important part of a person's total self-identity: how we see ourselves and how others see us. A person's experience and understanding of her/his sexual orientation can vary during their life. Sexual orientation is different from [sexual behavior](#) because it refers to feelings and to self-identity, rather than only actions. Persons may or may not express their sexual orientation in their behaviors.

***What do we mean by Islam?**

Islam can mean many different things to different people. Sometimes people talk

about 'Islam' when referring to the culture or traditions from a particular country or from a specific group of people. Sometimes people use the word 'Islam' to refer to the practice of religious rituals and or to spirituality. People also use the term 'Islam' to talk about a political viewpoint and sometimes they are referring to what is known as 'Islamic law' or '[shari'ah](#)'. This body of rules, norms and laws is itself made up of several schools of thought and differing individual opinions of Muslim scholars. The Safra Project (one of the projects interested in religious studies) uses the term '[Muslim laws](#)' to refer to both [shari'ah](#) as well as to modern state laws claiming to be based on it.

This variety in understandings and meanings of the word 'Islam' and what can be said to 'be Islamic' or 'according to Islam' demonstrates the diversity in how Muslims experience and view Islam. When discussing, researching and informing ourselves about the issue of [gender](#), [sexuality](#) and Islam, we need to be aware of the various understandings people may have of the term 'Islam'. It is also important to clarify to ourselves, and others, what exactly we mean when we refer to 'Islam': Are we talking about [Muslim laws](#), a particular culture, religious dogma, a particular spirituality or a combination of these.

In this section of the Safra Project website, they refer to the work of scholars focusing mostly on the Quran working towards [frameworks for progressive Islam](#), rather than on [shari'ah](#) or any other understanding of what might constitute Islam.

***Glossary of Key Terms:**

Biological sex / Physiological sex: the biological classification of physiological bodies as male or female usually determined by external sex organs, internal sex and reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormones and secondary sexual development at puberty. Bodies with an ambiguous biological sex, i.e. with both male and female characteristics are sometimes characterized as hermaphrodite or intersex. A person's biological sex usually – but not always - corresponds with her/his gender identity.

Bisexual(ity): a category of sexual orientation, referring to person who can experience emotional, romantic, sexual and/or affectional attraction to persons of both their own sex and the opposite sex. There are various forms of bisexuality, varying from being primarily attracted to persons of the same-sex and only occasionally to persons of the opposite sex (and vice versa) to being equally attracted to persons from the same sex and the opposite sex.

Feminists (Feminism): the Safra Project defines feminists as scholars and activists challenging gender bias and/or working towards gender equality.

Gay: A term used as a synonym to homosexual. The term ‘gay’ is usually preferred to the term ‘homosexual’ when describing a person’s sexual orientation, i.e. she or he “is gay”. Sometimes the term gay is used to describe only male ‘homosexuals’ (see also [gay man](#)).

Gay man: a man who experiences emotional, romantic, sexual and/or affectional attraction only, or primarily, to another man or other men. His sexual orientation is categorized as homosexual.

Gender: refers to the social and cultural codes used to distinguish between what a particular society considers ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ qualities, characteristics, attributes or behaviors. The definition of gender varies widely and is often the subject of exhaustive debates, although most agree that gender is largely socially and culturally determined. People are attributed a social and cultural gender that usually corresponds to their (assumed) biological sex and they are then expected to behave in accordance with gender roles as defined by their social and cultural context. Gender can be expressed in physical appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social behaviors and interactions. The attribution of gender to a person by others is a (unconscious)

categorization of a person as being a man or a woman. A person's own gender identity, i.e. their deeply felt (or psychological) sense of being male or female (or both, neither or other), usually - but not always - corresponds to their biological sex and to how they express their gender. (See also [transgender](#), [transsexual](#) and [gender dysphoria](#)).

Gender dysphoria: a medical term referring to people who have a compelling sense that their gender identity is not in conformity with the physiological or biological sex they are born with. In other words, persons who feel that they are born in the 'wrong body', i.e. biological women who feel they should have been born as men and vice versa. These persons are generally referred to as transsexual or transgender.

Gender equality: refers to people receiving equal opportunities to realize their full human potential according to their wish, irrespective of gender. This can for example include equality in opportunities to take part in social, economic, cultural and political developments and benefiting equally from the results. It can also refer to the equality in protection of (human) rights. Gender equality does not necessarily mean 'identical conditions' or 'identical rights' as these conditions and rights may in themselves already be gendered. To achieve gender equality, recognition is needed that current social, economic, cultural, and political systems are gendered (i.e. constructed according to gender roles) which lead to women being disadvantaged in all areas of life (gender bias). This pattern is further affected by other factors of oppression and inequality such as race, ethnicity, culture, immigration status, class, age, disability, sexuality, gender identity and/or other status. Gender equality requires the empowerment of women in their particular contexts, taking their experiences and perspectives into account.

Gender identity: is a person's deeply felt (or psychological) sense of being male or female (or both, neither or other). A person's gender identity is the gender to which a person feels she/he belongs. This usually corresponds to a person's biological sex and to how they express their gender. However, some people have a compelling sense that their gender identity is not in conformity with their physiological or biological sex or feel and/or express a gender identity that is other than simply 'male' or 'female'. These people are usually referred to as transsexual or transgender (see also [gender dysphoria](#)). Gay men, lesbians and bisexual people are usually content with their gender identity and/or their biological sex, including those who are not content with their gender roles. For example those who dress or behave similar to what is socially and culturally perceived as the opposite gender, such as a woman who behaves or dresses according to what is perceived to be a 'masculine' manner.

Gender roles: Gender affects how people perceive themselves and others and how they expect themselves and others to behave, that is, either in a 'masculine' or 'feminine' manner. These gender roles are learned and culturally and socially determined. They are also affected by factors such as education and economics. Therefore, gender roles can evolve over time. Gender roles and expectations are often identified as factors hindering gender equality. In practice gender roles usually affect women adversely in relation to many aspects of their life, such as family, socio-economic status, health, life expectation, independence, freedom and rights (gender bias).

Heterosexual(ity): a category of sexual orientation, referring to a person who experiences emotional, romantic, sexual and/or affectional attraction only, or primarily, to (a) person(s) of the opposite sex. This is also called 'being straight'.

Homophobia: an irrational fear of, or hatred against, lesbian, gay and bisexual people and homosexuality.

Homosexual(ity): a category of sexual orientation, referring to a person who experiences emotional, romantic, sexual and/or affectional attraction only, or primarily, to (a) person(s) of the same sex. Persons with a homosexual orientation are also referred to as gay (both men and women) or as lesbian (women only). Referring to a person as (a) ‘homosexual’ is usually avoided as this can be considered inappropriate or even offensive. The reasons for this are diverse and include the previous derogatory usage of the term, its medical association and the fact that ‘homosexual’ and ‘homosexuality’ in most Muslim societies and cultures refers to certain specific sexual behavior not resembling the contemporary ‘Western’ understanding of homosexuality as a category of sexual orientation. Instead the Safra Project prefers using the term ‘same-sex sexuality’. In addition, the term homosexual does not express the diversity of sexualities as it ignores bisexuality nor is it gender specific. When referring to persons, preference is given to the statement that someone is ‘lesbian’, ‘gay’ or ‘bisexual’ or that someone is ‘a lesbian’, ‘a gay man’ or ‘a bisexual person’.

Islam: Islam can mean many different things to different people. Sometimes people talk about 'Islam' when referring to the culture or traditions from a particular country or from a specific group of people. Sometimes people use the word ‘Islam’ to refer to the practice of religious rituals and/or to spirituality. People also use the term 'Islam' to talk about a political viewpoint and sometimes they are referring to what is known as 'Islamic law' or shari’ah. This body of rules, norms and laws is itself made up of several schools of thought and differing individual opinions of Muslim scholars. The Safra Project

uses the term ‘Muslim laws’ to refer to both shari’ah as well as to modern state laws said to be based on it.

Lesbian: a woman who experiences emotional, romantic, sexual and/or affectional attraction only, or primarily, to another woman or other women. Her sexual orientation is categorized as homosexual.

LGBT(Q) (people): is the acronym of lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender (and/or queer) (people). It is an inclusive term for identities sometimes also associated together as ‘sexual minorities’.

Polyamory: This is a new term that has emerged in the debates about non-monogamy in recent years. It literally translates into ‘many loves’. Polyamory circumscribes a particular relationship philosophy that assumes that it is possible (and indeed desirable) to love many people and to maintain multiple relationships. Within polyamory there is a strong emphasis on love, intimacy, commitment and honesty. Some have defined polyamory as ‘responsible non-monogamy’. Polyfidelity is a concept closely related to polyamory. Polyfidelity is based on the understanding that the partners in a multiple relationship will be faithful towards each other, an assumption that is not clearly spelled out or implied in polyamory. While for some polyfidelity marks a very specific approach to polyamory (or even one distinct from it), others tend to equate both concepts.

Reformists: scholars who have sought to challenge classical or fundamentalist interpretations of the Quran and other sources of Muslim law.

Same-sex sexuality (& Same-sex relationships): a category of sexual orientation, referring to a person who experiences emotional, romantic, sexual and/or affectional attraction only, or primarily, to (a) person(s) of the same sex.

Same-sex relationships are emotional, romantic, sexual and/or affectional consenting relationship(s) between people of the same sex, that is, between two women or two men. Same-sex sexuality is sometimes used as a synonym for homosexuality. However, the Safra Project normally uses the term ‘same-sex sexuality’ instead of, and/or distinguished from, ‘homosexuality’ as the notions of homosexuality that exist within most Muslim societies and cultures do not resemble the contemporary ‘Western’ understanding of homosexuality. In most Muslim societies and cultures, ‘homosexuality’ refers to certain specific sexual behavior rather than to a category of sexual orientation that includes a wider scope of (sexual) behaviors, feelings and self-identity.

Sex: can refer to certain forms of sexual behavior, i.e. ‘having sex’. It can also refer to a person’s biological sex, i.e. someone is from the male sex or the female sex. The term sex is sometimes confused with the term gender, just like the term biological sex is sometimes confused with gender identity. The term sex can be distinguished from sexuality and sexual orientation.

Sexual behavior: the factual behavior of a person in relation to her/his sexuality, either publicly or privately, including - but not limited to – having intercourse. Sexual behavior is different to sexual orientation as sexual behavior refers to actions whereas sexual orientation (also) refers to feelings and to self-identity. Persons may or may not express their sexual orientation in their sexual behaviors.

Sexual orientation: refers to emotional, romantic, sexual and/or affectional attraction from one person to another person or persons. Someone’s sexual orientation is categorized according to the gender(s) or biological sex of the people he/she has these feelings for, that is, it describes whether a person is attracted primarily toward people of the same or the opposite sex, or to both.

Sexual orientation exists along a continuum that ranges from exclusive homosexuality to exclusive heterosexuality and includes various forms of bisexuality. Sexual orientation is an important part of a person's total self-identity: how we see ourselves and how others see us. A person's experience and understanding of her/his sexual orientation can vary during their life. Sexual orientation is different from sexual behavior because it refers to feelings and to self-identity, rather than mere actions. Persons may or may not express their sexual orientation in their behaviors. Sexual orientation can be distinguished from other aspects of sexuality such as biological sex, gender identity and gender roles.

Sexuality (Sexualities, Sexual diversity): Sexuality refers in its broadest sense to the quality of being sexual. The term sexuality is also used in plural, i.e. 'sexualities', to reflect the diversity of sexuality, also known as 'sexual diversity'. The main aspects of sexuality are sex, biological or physiological sex, gender, gender identity, gender roles and sexual orientation.

Shari'ah: An Arabic term meaning: a body of rules, norms and laws according to which Muslims (are supposed to) live their lives. These rules, norms and laws are found in, and derived from two main sources: the Quran and practices and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (hadith). The Quran and hadith are known as the primary sources of Muslim law.

Shar'iah was formulated between the eighth and the fourteenth century AD. In the eight and ninth century AD several Muslim schools of thought (madahibs) emerged in different geographical locations, deriving legal and religious rules from the Quran and hadith. These schools also formulated (legal) opinions known as jurisprudence (fiqh), including the assessment of the reliability of hadith. For situations that were not explicitly mentioned in the Quran or hadith,

the schools used certain methods of legal reasoning to formulate rules. These methods include the formulation of a consensus opinion (ijma), drawing an analogy (qiyas) from an existing rule or law or making a decision on the basis of (principles of) social justice (maslaha). Differing opinions between the schools as well as between individual scholars, combined with influences of local customs and regional differences, caused variations in the rules, norms and laws within and between the schools. This body of rules, opinions and laws, is referred to as ‘classical Muslim law’ or shari’ah. Four Sunni schools (Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki and Shafi’i) and one Shi’a (Jafari) school remain dominant today.

The process of understanding and formulating legal and religious opinions from the Quran and hadith is known as interpretation (ijtihad). It is believed by traditional Muslim scholars that somewhere between the tenth and the fourteenth century ‘the gate of ijtihad’ was closed, preventing new interpretations of the Quran being recognized as shari’ah. Ijtihad was then replaced by the doctrine of taqlid or imitation of the rules, norms and laws that already existed. The idea of taqlid has made it difficult for reformists to challenge the shari’ah and formulate new interpretations of the Quran.

Many countries with significant Muslim populations have developed so-called ‘shari’ah laws’ as state law, particularly in the area of ‘personal status’ or family laws. These are either based on, or are variations of, the jurisprudence of one or more of the five schools of thought.

Some Projects uses the term ‘Muslim laws’ to refer to both shari’ah as well as current state laws that are said to be based on shari’ah.

Transgender (Transgender people): Some use transgender/transgender people as a synonym for transsexual(s) or to refer to persons medically diagnosed with gender dysphoria. Others use the term ‘transgender’ more

widely to refer to all expressions of gender identity other than simply 'male' or 'female'. Transgender can vary from a surgical change to someone's biological sex (transsexual(ity)) to occasionally dressing in the clothing of the 'opposite' gender (transvestite). A transgender person can also transition - sometimes with the help of hormone therapy and/or cosmetic surgery - to live in the gender role of choice, without undergoing or wishing to undergo (complete) surgery. The term transgender can also include those who identify and/or express themselves as neither male nor female and/or those born with an ambiguous biological sex. The International Foundation for Gender Education defines a transgender person as "someone whose gender display at least sometimes runs contrary to what other people from the same culture would normally expect"..Female to male (FTM) transgender people are born with female bodies but have a predominantly male gender identity, male to female (MTF) transgender people were born with male bodies but have a predominantly female gender identity. The Safra Project uses the widest possible definition of transgender and includes those who feel not able to express or display the gender identity of their choice, for example for fear of negative reactions.

Transphobia: an irrational fear of, or hatred against, transgender people.

Transsexual(ity): refers to people who have a compelling sense that their gender identity is not in conformity with the physiological or biological sex they are born with (see also: [gender dysphoria](#)). This may lead some to seek gender (or sex) reassignment surgery to make her/his biological or physiological sex correspond to her/his gender identity. Some people include under the term transsexual only persons who have already undergone (complete) gender (or sex) reassignment surgery; others include those who wish to undergo gender (or sex) reassignment surgery. Some also define the term more widely and use it

partially or completely as a synonym for transgender. As the Safra Project uses the term transgender in the widest possible sense, it usually refers only to those having undergone gender (or sex) reassignment surgery when using the term transsexual but respects the rights of others to self-identify as transsexual.

Transvestite ('Crossdresser'): a person who dresses in the clothing of the 'opposite' gender, either occasionally or always. Generally, these persons do not wish to alter the biological (or physiological) sex of their body.

Queer: a term often used as a slur in English to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) persons. The term has been reclaimed by many LGBTQ people, often in an activist or political context, as an expression of pride in sexual diversity and variations of gender identity. The word queer has now become a commonly used term in social science studies and many universities offer for example courses in Queer Studies.

The Quran is the divine word, the universal logos, and pure idea. The Sunnah of the prophet is the practical model, the ideal behavior that conforms to the sacred word; behavior embodied in a living being, of course, but which, though historical, is nevertheless the privileged echo of transcendence.

A view of the world based on bivalence and dual relations emerges from the Quran: opposition of the contraries, alternation of the various, the coming into being of all things, love, causality, surrection and resurrection, order and call, and, in last analysis; prayer. One cannot be struck by the central place given to human love. Sexual relations that are correlative to it are mediators in this universal process that begins with opposition, continues through alternation and becoming, and culminates in prayer. It is no accident that the Quranic text is placed under the sign of the Sign and that the word *aya* should recur in it so frequently. This is because all signs (*aya*) taken together sing the praise of the

Lord by describing the miracle of opposition and virtue of the central, universal position that it occupies in this process of the renewal of the creation, is a sign of signs, an *ayat-al-ayat*.

Everything is centered on the notion of “pairing”, which assumes considerable importance. The “Lisan-al-arab” (which is a greatly known book about the Arab and Islamic traditions) emphasizes the fact that the duality included in the concept refers both to the parity and the opposition of the sexes. Pairs (*azwaj*) is the unity of that which has a “*qarin*” who is the mate of the opposite sex.

“Your Lord created you of a single soul and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them scattered abroad many men and women” (4:1)

“They are a vestment for you and you are a vestment for them” (2:183)

“..So now lie with them, and seek what Allah has prescribed for you” (2:187)

The need to refine and condition the raw natural instincts and desires of individuals in a benign manner is a basic one. Harmonious personal growth is conducive to wholesome interaction with fellowmen, which in turn leads to a salutary impact on the humanity at large.

Psychosomatically balanced persons are emotionally stable and competent to achieve harmony and peace.

On the other hand, any unduly inhibited or imbalanced growth of an individual personality is quite undesirable. So are any adverse external influences or pressures and strains of a negative kind. For, negatively conditioned people become susceptible to causing excesses, untold miseries and cruelties not only to themselves, but also to others.

We are actually talking about the last divine religion which was represented in the last divine book; the Quran, which was explained and simplified by the statements, behavior, and makings of prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

With regard to Islamic morals, these can be properly understood with reference to the following points:

- a. Islamic morals and their compatibility with the objective requirements of natural growth of sexuality as part of inborn human instincts and potentialities;
- b. Suppression of human evil concerning the prohibited acts
- c. Modernistic sexual permissiveness as a major cause of sexual or sex-oriented aberrations or deviations of human behavior, preventing healthy development of the sexual template of an individual;
- d. Sexual morality, as compared to general ethical conduct in the economic and political fields;
- e. Availability of love partners and their behavior towards the love affair
- f. Love and harmonious growth of human personality.

The fact that natural human instincts should be nurtured, and not suppressed, is to be recognized. At the same time, it is necessary to conceptualize beyond any simplistic determination in terms of good and bad. This fact is quite logic as God is the one who created this instinct in the human being and it could not be real that the inventor of the thing is not totally aware of every single detail about it.

Here are some Quranic verses mentioning sexual leaning between both sexes:

“Made tempting to people is the love of lusts, women and children, heaped up hoards of gold and silver, choicest horses, cattle and crops. Such enjoyment of the life of this world, but he everlasting and best abode is with God” (3:14)

“And there is no blame on you if you make indirect proposal of marriage to widowed women during their waiting term, or keep it concealed in your hearts; for Allah knows that you will think of them, but do not make any secret engagement with them, except to speak of righteousness, and do not intend the marriage until the waiting term expires. And beware that Allah knows what is in your hearts, so beware of HIM and beware that Allah is all-forgiver most-forgiving. (2:235)

And theses verses telling about a part of prophet Joseph’s story with his mistress Zulaikha:

“And the woman of the house he was living in, began to tempt him and carefully locked the doors on them and she said: ‘come take me’, so he said: I seek refuge in Allah; he is my lord who has given me a good abode, indeed the wrongdoers never prosper” (23) And she moved towards him, and he would have moved towards her, had he not seen a sign from his Lord (Go), thus did we turn away from him the evil and indecency, indeed he was one of our sincere worshippers (24) (12:23&24)

“And the women in the city said ‘the governor’s wife has been soliciting her slave, her heart is stuck with love, we see her in an evident error (30) So when she heard about their sly talk, she sent for them and prepared a banquet for them, and she gave each one of them a knife and she said: ‘come forth Joseph before them’ so when they saw him, they were so carried away in

admiration for him that they cut their hands unknowingly and they said: 'Allah forbid! This cannot be human, he must be an honorable angel (31) She said: 'This is he for whom you blamed me and I already solicited him, but resisted forcibly, and unless he does what I ordered him, he shall be imprisoned and be one of the abject (32) (12:31 &32)

The Islamic approach takes into consideration the overall need for promoting a healthy growth of human personality as a prior requirement, but... based on religious rules. The premises recognized in Islam include the factual position that every constituent part of the human body has a specific purpose or function. The biological purposes and functions are sustained by a person's will even beyond the instinctive motivations.

We could well imagine a situation where no traditional evolution of morality is allowed. This would mean that the inborn human potentialities are either harmoniously cultivated or prevented from such development. In any case, it stands to reason that human faculty to discern things and to comprehend their natural order would have induced the necessary process of harmonization.

A naturally harmonious and spiritually balanced human growth should include the training of the sex instinct in particular.

In the above context, Islam offers the most appropriate guidance. This position is to be clarified and established in the discussion that follows.

At the outset, we must stipulate that any preconceived or ill-conceived notion concerning Islamic ethics must be avoided.

For instance, some people appear to harbor the notion that Islamic morality inhibits, rather than promotes, any free growth of human faculties.

They wrongly believe that the Islamic explanations carry no intrinsic significance in the matter of refining and improving the natural human instincts.

Actually, the Holy Quran is full with instances of emphasis on human refinement, such as when it asserts that a cautiously just person is one who has been able to refine, discipline and purify his natural instincts and desires.

This quotation further implies that human conscience is liable to pollution. At the same time, it suggests that human beings can improve their individual meticulousness by overcoming any polluted state affecting the same. Above all, the Holy Quran considers pollution-free conscience to be indispensable for attaining decency and happiness.

There can be no denying the intrinsic meaning and significance of the moral values taught by the Glorious Quran. The abovementioned teaching and its explanation pinpoint a thorough approach to the problem of human refinement. No school of thought or moral procedure rules out human susceptibility to pollution of the conscience or psyche and the consequent need to purifying and ameliorating the undesirable condition. Human psyche is vulnerable to prurient desires, moral aberrations and psychopathies, just as the human body or organs are liable to diseases.

II- ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES

ON SEX AND SEXUALITY

In general, it is very natural to be slightly embarrassed or uncomfortable in the face of this issue but we have to admit that sex is a natural part of our existence as well as one of our five main instincts.

Since the purpose of marriage is to be a mutual source of comfort, peace, and enjoyment for each other, like a garment that protects and covers, the sexual aspect of marriage is an extension of this. The husband is asked to be gentle, considerate and loving with his wife, and to try to satisfy her needs.

The wife must reserve herself exclusively for her husband, and make efforts to be attractive, as well as making herself available to him whenever he is in need of her. This latter obligation also applies to the husband.

Any negative representation of man's basic nature as a source of evil and wickedness is not implied in the Quranic philosophy, then, one may as well ask two more questions:

Firstly, what can be the particular circumstances or specific causes, which lead human beings toward becoming wicked and corrupt?

Secondly, how can the depraved and corrupt be rendered harmless and brought back to the righteous path of sanity and moderation?

Answers to the above questions require a comprehensive and positive understanding of the relevant Quranic teachings. For, they lie beyond any wrong and narrow-minded interpretations, such as arising from any literally isolated or absolute or negative understanding of the Quranic description of human self as *commander* of evil. Actually, according to the Holy Quran, the self can be not

only a commander of evil, but also a conscientious reprover. Elsewhere, the Quran refers to the self also as an abode of human peace and excellence.

The Holy Quran significantly reveals and pinpoints various aspects of human personality development. Identification of the negative tendencies of human nature is meant for emphasizing the positive aspects that can lead to an excellent flowering of human personality.

This distinction is important, in that human beings are made aware of their predominantly raw instinctiveness which, unless refined and trained, is naturally forceful enough to overwhelm any humanely cultivated qualities, conducive to spiritual enhancement. This seems to be an aspect yet to be fully identified by modern psychologists.

With regard to suppressing human prohibited requirements, Islam does not envisage them in any way. This is true for other instincts, too. Then, what is meant by suppression of a desire? Does it mean elimination of causes leading to it?

In the Islamic context, it signifies effective and moderate coping with the human concupiscence. This is emphasized also in many scholarly explanations of Islamic morality. Islam teaches human beings to overcome the natural predisposition of the bodily sensuality to rule over any sensibility of the mind. In other words, an individual must not be led by his natural instincts, but manage the same in a wholesome manner. As mentioned earlier, Islam does not preach any ascetic suppression of concupiscence or natural desires.

To elaborate on the above point, it may be noted that, when a person is commanded by his instincts, he or she evidences a disorderly manifestation of human physiology, a disruptive and overwhelming influence capable of

affecting human conscience. Not allowing instincts to sway one's conscience necessarily implies pacifying and quenching the natural outpourings of carnal desire, or offsetting the palpability to temptation, emotional disorders or even sexual promiscuity.

On the other hand, what is required, is it to eliminate the internal causes and tendencies? This is necessary to avoid malignant development of the libido. Vulnerability to any undesirable external influences is also overcome in the process. A wholesome development of human instincts is a process requiring either a salutary compliance or a moral inhibition of their negative upsurge depending on their nature and content.

Incidentally, it is notable that the phrase: *killing the carnal desire*, does not occur in any specific teaching of Islam. Any reference to it is only by way of explaining the need for a salubrious growth of personality.

Towards satisfying natural instincts and desires, any one-sided approach entails shortcomings, which are not often removable subsequently. Since the last century, sex-oriented psychological research achievements concentrated on proving that suppression of the natural instincts and desires was fraught with many adverse consequences to individuals. For one thing, traditional thinking to the effect that the more the basic instincts are suppressed the greater the scope for enhancing the higher faculties (such as the intellectual) has become valid. There is growing realization that extraordinary and far-reaching consequences, affecting individuals and their society both, underlie suppressed or unsatisfied instincts and desires, which are often hidden from the conscious mind.

Psychosomatic integrity in human personality development has been emphasized since the beginning of recorded history. Islam, too, has significantly

pointed its need. Traditional moralists, as well as behavioral scientists, have always tried to reflect the cumulative knowledge and wisdom evolved in the past in one way or the other. Human beings are prone to seize every opportunity towards self satisfaction. They unceasingly avail every occasion to advance their own interests. This is equally true in matters of acquiring wealth, economics, politics and government, as well as in seeking to dominate others or to intensify sexuality.

To suggest that relieving the sex urge is like attending to one's call of nature, such as urination or defecation, is quite misleading, too. Any question of evacuating from one's self his or her own moral scruples or conditions, in the process of obtaining instant sexual relief, does not arise. Conversely, safeguarding one's morality cannot mean the same as accumulating urine. For, unlike moral continence, retention of urine is bound to cause bodily comfort and disease.

Some modernistic people assume that all human inclinations, irrespective of whether or not these concern sex, aggression, domination or mammon worship, should be freely allowed to be satisfied. This is supposed to be capable of eliminating human deprivation, frustration or dissatisfaction, in the process of satisfying one's desires. Their reasoning is based on a false assumption. For, as pointed out earlier, complete gratification of all human desires is not possible.

Human capacity to seek gratification of the natural and acquired desires is not instinctively limited, as in the case of animals. Had this not been the case, there would have been no need for any human regulation of not only the sexual intercourse, but health, socioeconomic and political interactions, as well. Even moral restraints would have been unnecessary where natural constraints made it impossible for anyone to seek excessive satisfaction, or indulge in excesses. The

very limitation of natural capacity (to commit any excesses) would have served the purpose, as in the case of animals. However, ethical limits and procedural regulations are necessary for promoting just practices and fair transactions in the socioeconomic and political fields. Likewise, limitation on, and regulation of, sexual behavior and the related activities, consistent with the needs of chastity and rectitude, should also be acceptable to everyone.

*Hereafter are verses in holy Quran mentioning sexual organs and subjects related: ***“And O Adam, dwell you and your wife in the paradise and you may eat from anywhere you desire, but do not even approach this tree, or you would be of the evildoers (19) But Satan whispered to them so that he might lead them to see their ‘shameful parts’ which had been hidden for them, and said to them: ‘your Lord has only forbidden you to approach this tree lest you become monarchs everlasting and immortals (20) Then Satan swore to them, truly I am for you a sincere advisor (21) Thus he caused them to fall by delusion, and when they tasted the tree, their shameful parts appeared to them and they hurried to cover themselves with leaves from the paradise and their Lord called to them: ‘Did I not forbid you from that tree and say that Satan is an evident enemy to you? (22) (7:19-22).***

We notice here that God described the sex organs hereabove as shameful parts being exposed publicly, so Allah, this behavior is so depreciated and humiliated by Allah having been done out of the right situation it has to be taken over into, that is Marriage. On the other hand, let us carefully notice mentioning of the same parts in believers and followers and let us admire choosing the decent words defining them:

“Say to the believing men that they cast down their glances (gazes) and guard their chastity, that is more pure for them. Indeed Allah is well aware of what

they do (30) And say to the believing women to cast down their glances and guard their chastity and reveal not their adornment except that which must appear, and let them draw their veils around their garments over their chests and not reveal their adornment except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, or believing women, or what their right hands possess of women, or male servants (eunuch) proven free of sexual desire, or young children who have no sense of the private parts...(31) (24:30&31)

Hereabove as we can see, there is a very precise limitation of whom women could be non-veiled in their presence, as God, being their creator, knows that these forbidden relationship denies the sense of sexual arousal between interrelated persons, preconditioned of course that these have to be emotionally balanced personalities

“....and guard their chastity(5) Except for their spouses and whom their right hands possess (whom they own as slaves) for that they are not to be blamed (6) And whoever goes beyond that, those are the transgressors (7) (23:5-7)

This right for Muslims to practice sex with slaves used to be devoted to men, as the woman is the one who gets pregnant and then there has to be one man in order to facilitate the identification of the father, second point to be mentioned here is about owning persons as slaves, this act was widely present at the time of establishment of Prophet Mohammad's message and the time before since ever, but this was prohibited religiously a bit later, but whom who had slaves beforewards, have the right to keep them but they are extremely rewarded by Allah if they set them free.

“.. and those men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who remember Allah oftenly, for them, Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward...” (33:35)

“And Mary the daughter of Imran, who guarded her chastity, so we breathed into her of our spirit, and she believed in the words of her Lord and His Books, and she was of the obedient” (66:12)

In Islam, any sexual relations are reserved EXCLUSIVELY for the confines of marriage. Both husband and wife are also obligated to honor the privacy of the intimate relations between them, and should not speak of them to anyone

Imam Muhammad ibn Zakariyya (one of the biggest Islamic knowers) once said the coming statement aged several hundreds of years:
 "Abstaining from sexual intercourse for an extended period weakens one's nervous system, can cause obstruction of the urethra, and shrinks the penis."

!!! Hold on.... Only Lawful Sex!!!

Other benefits of lawful sexual intercourse include protecting one's eyes from looking at what is unlawful, preserving one's chastity, controlling one's desire and lust against what is unlawful, and providing the same for his or her spouse. This will certainly provide the believing man and woman with innumerable benefits in this world and in the hereafter. Imam Ahmad alluding to abstention from sex, once said:

"I exercise patience when fasting from food and drink, though it is still difficult."

He also reported in his collection of correct prophetic traditions that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) encouraged the believers to get married, saying:

"Get married, and conceive children for I shall take pride in your number on the Day of Judgment."

Ibn Abbass (RA) narrated that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said:

"I get married, eat meat, sleep, stand up in night prayers, fast, and break my fast. Whoever disdains from my traditions (Sunnah) is not one of my followers."

He (PBUH) also said:

"O young men whoever among you has the means to establish a family, he should get married, for marriage preserves the chastity of one's eyes and sexual organ, and whoever cannot afford to establish a family, he must fast from desiring sex, for abstention in that case will protect him from sin."

Ibn Abbass (RA) once narrated that Allah messenger (PBUH) said:

"We recognize that marriage is the best solution for two people who are in love."

Medical researchers prove that sexual intercourse yields essential health benefits; Galen attributes semen to the elements of fire and air and describes its humors as hot and moist. This is because semen is rich in prostaglandins, which are hormones, formed of fatty acids and phospholipids found throughout the body and particularly in semen. Prostaglandins are primary nutrients that affect essential body processes, including blood pressure, metabolism, and body

temperature among others. Hence, understanding the value of this most unmitigated and purest form of blood and its preciousness require great consideration in discharging it.

This means to wisely value the reasons behind dispensing of this precious “water of life” for emitting it through lawful sexual intercourse upon congestion (inside the bond of marriage) whether simply for the joy of sex or for conceiving a child.

In fact, congestion and prevalence of semen for an extended period of time can cause its corruption and produces the well known medical problems of pelvic congestion, however, sometimes a spontaneous and involuntary emission carries on getting rid of excess semen usually during sleep without sexual intercourse.

Congestion also can cause various illnesses and infirmities including obsession, habitude, and sometimes, psychological disturbances. Whereas, engaging in lawful and regular sexual intercourses, may aid in the recovery from such illnesses.

In the purpose of being moderate in everything as Islam always advises, some learned predecessors have concluded that the human being should pledge:

1-To walk a certain minimum distance everyday

2-To free his stomach at regular intervals and not to extend fasting from food beyond the religious requirements

3-Not to abstain from having a lawful sexual intercourse, for the extra quantity of semen, as well as for its drainage and renewal to be regular.

III-ISLAM-GUIDED SEX EDUCATION

***Origin of sexuality in early life:**

The very first step in understanding the issue of sexuality is to know how the sex organs were created and how they do look like, also admiring God omnipotence noticing the same bud for sex organs in both males and females. The reproductive organs in men and women have the very same origin. The sex of every child is determined at conception, but it cannot be discerned until the end of eighth week after conception, or the tenth week after the mother's last menstrual period.

A small bud develops on the groin area of the fetus. If the child is to be a girl, this bud will form into the clitoris, likewise, the bud will become a penis if the child is to be a boy. The tissues surrounding this bud fold back into the labia in girls while they form the scrotum in boys.

This tissue, which is called the genital tubercle, begins to develop five weeks after conception. The bud appears first as a phallus-like organ; but it is still too early to determine the sex of the fetus.

About the internal sex organs, the source is the same as well; although the sex of the embryo is determined genetically at the time of fertilization, the gonads do not acquire male or female characteristics until seventh or eighth week of development, this is described as follows:

I- Development of the gonadal blastoma:

1- In the fourth week of development, a pair of longitudinal elevations "the gonadal ridges" form on each side of dorsal mesentery; just medial to the developing future kidneys.

2- In the sixth week; the gonadal cells are invaded by primordial germ cells (future procedures of ova in females and of sperms in male) coming from yolk sac.

3- Primordial germ cells have inductive influence on gonadal ridge formation.

4- Before arrival of germ cells, celomic epithelium of gonadal ridge proliferative to form primitive sex cords.

5- Ovaries and testicles are not morphologically recognized till tenth week.

Until that time, development is the same for both sexes; meaningly both sexes' organs have the same origin, same histological structure, and same nerve supply. Yet, genotypically, things are different, this is because of the presence of Y-chromosome in male fetus.

***Notes about Y-chromosome:**

1-Y-chromosome is a potent sex determining effects of medulla of indifferent gonads

2-Y-chromosome regulates production of H-Y antigen (testis determining factor (TDF)), which stimulates testicular differentiation.

3-If Y-chromosome is absent; ovaries develop.

In males, due to presence of Y-chromosome and subsequently of T-D-F; the cells of medullary sex cords differentiate into "Sertoli cells" and secrete anti-mullerian-hormone (AMH) whereas the cells of cortical sex cords degenerate; these cells continue to develop in females due to absence of Y-chromosome and subsequently of AMH and also due to the presence of estrogen derived from maternal circulation as well as from the placenta.

4-AMH is also the primary cause of that mesenchymal cells in the gonadal ridge differentiate into "Leydig cells" which secrete both testosterone and testosterone derivative dihydrotestosterone, and also induces degeneration of mullerian ducts.

5-About the roles of hormones secreted by "Leydig cells"

***Testosterone:**

During the fetal life, testosterone induces the male differentiation of many structures including the whole genital duct systems.

The testosterone rise at puberty causes the seminiferous tubules to canalize and commence spermatogenesis and induces other pubertal changes in primary and secondary sexual characteristics.

***Dihydrotestosterone (DHT):**

During intra uterine life, DHT causes different external genitals to differentiate into a penis and scrotum, and also induces the development of some other male structures such as the prostate (which differentiates into uterine cervix in females).

The idea of the above-mentioned facts is to prove the common source and basics of both male and female sex organs including the same sexual axis; i.e. hypothalamus-pituitary-gonads, and subsequently the same nerve supply; the following is homologous sex organs table:

| MALE | FEMALE |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Testes | Ovaries |
| Glans Penis | Glans Clitoris |
| Penle shaft | Central shaft |
| Foreskin | Clitoralhood |
| Scrotum | Labia Majora |
| Seminal vesicles | Uterus |
| Prostate | Uterine cervix |
| Corpora cavernosa | Labia minora |
| Cowper's glands | Bartholin's glands |
| Vas deferens | Fallopian tubes |

It is really interesting to understand this fact of both sexes organs being that identical in structure and subsequently the function.

Surprisingly this was mentioned earlier, actually much earlier in Islamic statements admitting the equality in the rights and obligations in both sexes, this was stated in the following script:

"Women shall have rights similar to the rights upon them; according to what is equitable and just." (2:216)

***Sex Education:**

IS THERE SEX EDUCATION IS ISLAM?

Islam comprises a total way of life. Each part of it needs to be seen in the total context. Thus it is hard to take any major issue in life in isolation. Thus sexual life cannot be conceived of without marital and family life and these are all to be considered in relation to other Islamic teachings that regulate and control Muslim behavior.

Ibn al-Quyem in his book, **“Prophetic Medicine”**, assigned a full chapter to discussing the Islamic attitude to sexual and marital life, the interaction between the spouses, and the permissions and prohibitions concerning sexual intercourse between spouses. Mohammad Kotb in his book, **“Islam the Misunderstood Religion”**, discussed the subject in two chapters, one On Islam and Woman and the other, On Islam and Sexual Repression. Reading through the Quran and the Traditions of the Prophet there are many verses and Traditions about the creation of human life, cleanliness and purity, interaction between tile spouses, and mention of sexual intercourse between the spouses. In the explanation of these verses and Traditions, issues did arise, questions were asked and both sexes were involved jointly or separately. The following important points can be monitored:

1. In Islam sex has always been taken seriously and it should remain so. It is not a subject for fun or mere absolute pleasure. It is never discussed obscenely or subjected to scrutiny. Decency and due respect always characterize the subject.

2. Sex is never discussed in isolation for its sake or mere pleasure. It is always related to marital life and family life. It is viewed as a superior human relationship subject to strict regulations. Thus sex within a marital relationship is a worship that is rewarded. Outside a marital relationship sex is a punishable sin.
3. Sex is privacy between the spouses. What goes on is confidential and should not be divulged to outside parties. The human factor in marital and sexual relationship is superior to mere pleasure.
4. Legislation concerning sex is not subject to change by pressure groups or change in social attitudes.
5. Like the rest of Islamic teaching, knowledge about those verses and Traditions on the subject is not age-specific and is not meant to start at a certain age. As the Muslim is learning the Quran and Sunnah he or she will come across these teachings.

Concerning adolescents and youth, the attitude of Muslims should differ from that of others; so here are posed some questions:

***How does the attitude differ in both cases?**

1- How does Islam equip them to deal with the pressures of a promiscuous society, especially in cases of these Muslims being living in some communities where nearly all their peers are sexually active?

In Islam, sex is more than just a means of context of marriage, a concept that differs from some religious ones in that it is integral to the process of pleasing one's partner and creating a loving, passionate relationship

As children get older and older and more able to mentally handle the subject, sex should be taught to be the beautiful able to convince you. Sex, on most cases, is an act that's between two people observed by God and if one of

those three is not comfortable with it, then something is wrong. The reality is that it happens for non-Muslims and Muslims alike and not talking about it or discussing it and its consequences can only make the problem worse thing than it is, within the context of marriage, so that once they grow up, they will be able to appreciate it for its inherent beauty and purpose.

Islam recognizes very clearly the power of sexual needs and this subject is discussed very clearly in Quran and in sayings of prophet Mohammad (PBUH) in a serious manner, in context with the marital and family lives. Islam does not consider women (or men) just an objective of sexual pleasure, but with a legal framework of relationship fulfilling the will of god. While the sex outside marriages is a punished sin, sex with one's spouse is an act of worship. The Islamic laws regarding sex are fixed and do not change with peer or siblings pressure or changing the values of the society. Virginity at the time of marriage is considered a virtue in Islamic morality, but a disadvantage in the west. No wonder less than 10% of western brides (European and American) are virgins.

Although the Quran has placed so much emphasis on acquiring knowledge, and in the days of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Muslim men and women were never too shy to ask him about all affairs, including such private affairs as sexual life, so as to know the teachings and rulings of their religion concerning them. As Aisha, the wife of the prophet testified, "Blessed are the women of the Ansar (the citizens of Madina). Shyness did not stand in their way seeking knowledge about their religion." (Narrated by All except Termizi). The way the ladies asked the prophet-directly or through his wives is a proof that sexual matters were not taboo but were fully acknowledged and respected. **"Shyness is part of the faith"** as the prophet taught, but he also taught, "There

is no shyness in matters of religion" even entailing the delicate aspects of sexual life.

For some Muslim parents of today, sex is a dirty word. They feel uncomfortable in discussing sex education with their children, but do not mind the same being taught at their children's school by secular or non-Muslim teachers, by their peers of either sex, and by the media and television. An average child is exposed to 9000 sexual scenes per year.

Teens and adolescents will be always curious and they will search for answers. If they have nowhere or no one reliable to go to because of embarrassment they will go to more readily available –yet unreliable- source. This might end doing more harm than good. So, Islamic-based sex information could benefit everyone; parents and kids just alike.

These parents should know that sex is not always a dirty word. It is a very important instinct and demand of ours. God Who cares for all the aspects of our life, and not just the way of worshipping Him, discusses reproduction, creation, family life, menstruation and even ejaculation in the Quran. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who was sent to us as an example, discussed many aspects of sexual life including sexual positions with his Companions.

The main reason Muslim parents do not or cannot discuss sex education with their children is because of the their cultural upbringing, not their religious training. They are often brought up in a state of ignorance in regard to sex issues. As a result, they may not be comfortable with their own sexuality or its expression. They leave Islamic education to Islamic classes and sex education to schools (if any) as well as the media.

And here, there is a question to be posed: Is sex education about knowing the anatomy and physiology of the human body or about the act of sex or about

reproduction and family life or about prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy? Is giving sex education equivalent to permission in engaging in sex?

It is our firm belief that facts about sex should be taught to children in a way commensurate with their age as they grow up both by the family and the school. We emphasize that this should be done within the total context of Islamic ideology and Islamic teaching in the Muslim societies, so that the youth- beside getting the correct physiologic knowledge become fully aware on the sanctity of the sexual relation in Islam and the grave sin of blemishing such sanctity whether under Islamic law, or far more important in the sight of God. Provided the Islamic conscience is developed we see no reason to shun sex education (which is unfortunately the rule in many Muslim countries), and we believe it is better to give the correct teaching rather than leave this to chance and to incorrect sources and to the concomitant feeling of guilt by the hush-hush atmosphere in which this is done.

***What is sex education and who has to teach it?**

One sex educator at a western school told the parents, "I am not planning to tell your children whether or not they should engage in sex or how to do it but in case they decide to do it, they should know how to prevent sexually transmitted diseases (STD), venereal diseases (VD), acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and pregnancy."

The problem with this is that at the present time sex education as taught in some schools is incomplete. It does not cover morality associated with sex, sexual dysfunctions and deviations and the institution of marriage.

One of the basic questions is, "Do children need sex education?" Do you teach a baby duck how to swim or just put it in the water and let it swim? After

all, for thousands of years men and women have been having sex without any formal education. In many traditional civilizations, sex education starts after marriage and with trial and error. Some couples learn it faster than others and do it better than others due to difference in sexual perception and expression of one partner. In my opinion having a dozen children is not necessarily proof of their love. An appropriate and healthy sex education is crucial to the fulfillment of a happy marriage.

In Islam, anything that leads to wrong is also considered wrong. Therefore parents should control the music children are listening to or the TV program they are watching, the magazines they are reading, and the clothes (which may provoke desire in the opposite sex) they are wearing. While group social activity should be permitted with supervision, dating should not be allowed.

In fact during a recent survey, 32% of a high school boys responded by saying that if they have paid for the food and the girl does not go all the way, they have a right to force her to have sex. Many of the rapes occur at the end of the date and are not reported. Because one thing leads to another, anything which breaks down sexual inhibition and loss of self-control i.e. alcohol, drugs, parking, petting or just being together for two members of the opposite sex in a secluded place should not be allowed for Muslim teenagers. Kissing and petting is preparing the body for sex. The body can be brought to a point of no return.

In summary Muslim parents should teach their children that they are different from non-Muslims in their value system and way of life. Having a feeling and love in your heart for someone of the opposite sex is different and beyond control, while expression of the same through sex is entirely different and should be under control. Muslim children should be told that they don't

drink alcohol, eat pork, take drugs, and they don't have to engage in pre-marital sex either.

***Role of Muslim parents and Muslim organizations:**

I am not proposing that all Muslim youth be married at age 16. But I must say that youth should accept the biological instinct and make decisions which will help to develop a more satisfied life devoted to having a career rather than spending time in chasing (or dreaming about) the opposite sex. Parents should help their sons and daughters in selection of their mate using Islamic practice as a criteria and not race, color or wealth. They should encourage them to know each other in a supervised setting. The community organization has several roles to play.

a) To provide a platform for boys and girls to see and know each other without any intimacy.

b) Offer premarital educational courses to boys and girls over 18 separately to prepare them for the role of father and husband and of mother and wife. The father has a special role, mentioned by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), **"One who is given by God, a child, he should give it a beautiful name, should give him or her education, and training and when he or she attains puberty, he should see to it that he or she is married. If the father does not arrange their marriage after puberty, and the boy or girl is involved in sin, the responsibility of that sin will lie with the father"**.

***Curriculum for Islamic sex education:**

Islamic sex education should be taught at home starting at an early age. Before giving education about anatomy and physiology, the belief in the Creator

should be well established. As Dostoevsky put it, "Without God, everything is possible," meaning that the lack of belief or awareness of God gives an OK for wrongdoing.

A father should equally teach his son and daughter, and the mother should also equally teach her son and daughter. Meaningfully, the subject should be an open one, and not to remain shadowed or conservative within the family. In the absence of a willing parent, the next best choice should be a Muslim teacher (preferably a physician) for boys and girls at the Islamic religious classes or specific sex-education classes on Islamic perspectives.

The curriculum should be tailored according to age of the child and classes be held separately. Only pertinent answers to a question should be given. By this I mean that if a five year old asks how he or she got into mommy's stomach, there is no need to describe the whole act of intercourse. Similarly it is not necessary to tell a fourteen year old how to put on condoms. This might be taught in premarital class just before his or her marriage. A curriculum for sex education should emphasize the Islamic aspects although. It should include:

a. Sexual growth and development

- * Time table for puberty
- * Physical changes during puberty
- * Need for family life

b. Physiology of reproductive system

- * For girls- the organs, menstruation, and its detailed mechanism.
- * For boys- the organs, the sex drive, and details of mechanism of arousal and emission

c. Conception, development of fetus and birth

d. Sexually transmitted disease (VD/AIDS)

e. Mental, emotional and social aspects of puberty

f. Social, moral and religious ethics

g. How to avoid peer pressure

“Today's sex education is one of the most devastating things that can possibly happen to any society and it certainly has overwhelmed our society. For over one hundred years, established psychological precepts, which have repeatedly been substantiated by clinical observations, reveal two important facts concerning human sexuality. The first is that life-sustaining human sexual needs can only be fulfilled in an-affectionate, monogamous, heterosexual relationship. Sex educators do not stress this fact enough. The second salient psychoanalytic fact is that, in humans, unlike in any other creatures, three phases of sexual development occur before mature adult sexuality is reached. The public school courses given during each of these phases cause great harm to student and society in general.”

Sex education is only one facet of the multitude of social changes in Western societies that successfully transformed societal attitudes towards previously strongly accepted and adhered to basic assumptions and principles. Capital punishment, mercy killing, abortion, homosexuality and legalization of cannabis are further examples where ethical issues and moral judgments seem to lack consistency with time in Western societies. The rationalization of such perpetual attitudinal changes can partly be found in the Freudian concept of the pleasure principle and his interpretation of human behavior as a function of

aggression and sexuality. It can partly be explained by a decline in spirituality and a tendency to embrace materialism.

Islam defines the essence of life and rationalizes the creation of the universe simply and explicitly, "*I have created jinn and humankind only that they might worship me*" (51:56). "*Life here is a vehicle to the hereafter*". Thus Muslim life is to be based on submission and adherence to the will of God and His instructions. These two contradictory approaches to the perception of life are applicable to any major issue in existence concerning the Muslim and non-Muslim. The choice is left to the individual which way to decide, bearing in mind the implications of his decision and accepting liability for his actions. "If you tell kids about sex, they'll do it. If you tell them about VD, they'll go out and get it". Incredible as may seem, most oppositions to sex education in this country are based on the assumption that knowledge is harmful. But research in this area reveals that ignorance and unresolved curiosity, not knowledge, is harmful. Our failure to tell children what they want and need to know is one reason we have the highest rates of out-of-wedlock teens pregnancy and abortion of any highly developed country in the world."

It is to be said here that it's very natural to be slightly embarrassed or uncomfortable in the face of this issue but we have to admit that sex is a natural part of our existence. Also, teens and adolescents **will be curious and they will** search for answers. If they have nowhere or no one reliable to go, they will go to more readily available, most probably non-Islamic sources. This might end doing more harm than good. I hope providing this information will benefit everyone - parents and kids alike.

The following is an article by Shahid Athar, the well known muslim American psychiatrist; it was published on the internet: After my presentation on sex

education guidelines for Muslim youth and parents at the Islamic Center in Toledo, Ohio, in 1992, many questions were asked by Muslim youth. The Toledo Muslim community is progressive, affluent and has an even mixture of Arab and Indo-Pakistani immigrants.

I compiled all the written questions submitted to me, answered them to the best of my knowledge, and then sent the questions to the late Dr. Mahmood Abu Saud, the well-known scholar, for a second opinion. He did not know my answers. Some of the answers have already been published in the *Islamic Monitor*, the magazine of the Islamic Society of Toledo, in English and Arabic. After each question, Dr. Abu Saud's reply and my reply are given for comparison.

1. Please explain the importance of hijab (women veil): What is the degree of sin if mature Muslim sister does not wear a dress properly (cover her head, etc.)?

Abu Saud: The word "*hijab*" is used in the Holy Qur'an in its linguistic original sense, i.e., a barrier, something to separate two things from one another. The Prophet's wives were ordered by God to observe *hijab*, meaning not to face all mature males who are entitled to marry them. They had to speak to such males from behind a curtain or a door so nobody would see them.

In our times, the word is usually used to indicate the dress of a woman in accordance with the Islamic requirements. What is definite for man and woman is that neither gender should dress or act in a way that is intended to attract the attention of the opposite sex. By instinct, males are more attracted to females' bodies than vice versa. Accordingly, Islam ordained that women should not show of their bodies what would particularly attract the attention of males. Besides, they should not show of their adornment other than that conventionally shown by women in an Islamic society.

As for the degree of sin, it depends upon the degree of violating these rules and the intention of the female who violates them. There are no fast rules determining the details of how to dress and cover other than to be modest and not show off.

Athar: *hijab* is an injunction from God (33:59). The extent of *hijab* can be questioned. However, obeying/disobeying an injunction altogether is a reflection of the faith of the person. The degree of sin or forgiving is up to the Law Maker

2. When one is engaged, are you allowed to go out with your Fiancee?

Abu Saud: Yes, provided there is no touching, necking and no staying behind closed doors or in a place where they would not be seen by others. Engagement in Islam is not a contract of marriage binding on either party.

Athar: No, not alone; unless a third adult member of the family is present, i.e., brother, sister or one of the parents.

3. Can a Muslim marry someone his parents disapprove of?

Abu Saud: Yes, as long as the marrying person is legally entitled to marriage.

Athar: Yes, however, one must find out why the parent(s) object to this marriage, as maybe they are right. Is the person you plan to marry an alcoholic, a drug dealer, a pimp? This is not a question of your or your parents' right but a question of your communications with your parents.

4. What are your views on Muslim teens (boys/girls) talking socially?

Abu Saud: It is healthy for boys and girls to talk and socialize as long as they do that within the Islamic moral code: no obscenity, no touching, no secret appointments, etc. They should talk socially in order to know each other as ordained by God in Qur'an (*Surah al-Hujrat*). However, one must be careful about what this social talking leads to.

Athar: They should talk socially in order to know each other as ordained by God in the Qur'an (*Surah al-Hujrat*). However, one must be careful in what this social talking leads to.

5. If you think abortion is murder, then what would happen if it were illegal? Ladies would do it at home, punch themselves in the stomach, and then they and the babies would die.

Abu Saud: Most of the Muslim jurists do not think that abortion before the end of the third month is murder, although they declare it reprehensible unless there is a legitimate justification. If it is illegal, then it is the woman's problem; she should have taken enough precaution not to get pregnant.

Athar: A crime is a crime, no matter how noble your intention is and means to achieve it. In this case both fetus and mother may die (a double crime).

6. According to statistics, the majority of teenagers who do not even have orgasm when they have sex. The orgasm they get is when they talk about it in the locker room.

Abu Saud: If so, why have sex? Orgasm is the acme of sexual pleasure. However, talking about it simply arouses the instinct and does not help in sublimating the desire. Granted, girls and boys cannot avoid thinking of it, but it would be more healthy to talk about it in the open with a responsible person, although in such cases, most probably there will be no orgasm.

Athar: Not true! Orgasm is related to duration and extent of foreplay and not intensity of sex. In the locker room, they can pretend they have orgasms to impress others.

7. How does one go about finding a suitable practicing Muslim spouse?

Abu Saud: Islamically speaking, both boys and girls are entitled to propose to the other sex. Thus, frequent gatherings of Muslims allow you to talk to whomever you feel like being your mate, one or more, take their addresses and write to them, invite them into your house and keep your parents informed of what you are doing. Attend youth conferences. Try to participate in discussions and lectures so as to expose yourself and become noticeable. You may also publish an advertisement in *Islamic Horizon*.

Athar: Stay in the community of practicing Muslims, doing things in the community in which you are known, and let your friends and family know that you are ready and available. Once you find one, let him/her know indirectly that you like him/her, preferably through your parents.

8. You are giving the wrong idea to the parents. You are making them think when girls and boys are friends, it is bad ... WHY?

Abu Saud: When boys and girls work together for doing good, they become friends. When they meet in public such as in conferences, youth camps and in study rooms and the like, they become friends. When boys and girls start meeting in hiding, or in secrecy without informing their guardians, when they start to touch each other's bodies, when they start a love affair, even without sleeping together, this is not an innocent friendship, and should be discouraged.

Athar: I did not give this idea. See answer #4.

9. You talk about monogamy. Our society in the Muslim world is not monogamous but polygamous. They are allowed to have four wives. Those are their right to possess as well as slaves.

Abu Saud: There is no question to answer, but the above statement is a wrong point of view. Polygamy is not common in the Muslim world, although it exists. There are strict terms set in the Quran on marrying more than one woman, and they are really difficult to observe. However, a woman can always indicate in her marriage contract that she would not accept to be with another wife. and can even insist on an important compensation in case she is divorced for no fault of her own. Whatever the case may be; to have another wife is much better than to have a mistress. If in the inquirer's view, polygamy is slavery, the second wife should not accept it.

Athar: Muslim society in the Muslim world is by practice monogamous. There is less than one percent polygamy, and that is by permission and not injunction. In the West, men who can control their desire, have one wife and one to four

mistresses. Also in the West, they practice polygamy but not at the same time, i.e., cycle of marriage, divorce, marriage and divorce several times in their lives.

10. Is there any harm in men and women sitting together, in this lecture hall for instance. It seems natural that a family sit together with other family and friends. We seem to do this everywhere except here.

Abu Saud: There is no harm in men and women sitting together. They used to do so in the days of the Prophet, and the books of *hadith* are full of such instances. You are right in your observation, and it is for you and others of some moral courage and clean thoughts to stand up and DO JUST THAT: SIT TOGETHER.

Athar: Islam believes in separation of sexes in social gatherings unless people are *mahram* to each other (see *Surah Ahzab* and *Surah Nur*). This is natural, even in secular schools, that girls like to sit, walk or play with girls rather than boys. Unnecessary social mixing may lead to other wrongs. The Creator of the human body knows what is good for us and we don't.

11. What should a Muslim boy do if he is constantly rejected when he proposes?

Abu Saud: He must be following the wrong approach and procedure, or there must be something basically wrong with him. Counseling would be very useful in this case.

Athar: He should find out why he/she is being rejected. Maybe it is the way he/she proposed, etc.

12. What is the Islamic rule concerning masturbation?

Abu Saud: There is no authentic text prohibiting masturbation, although it is reprehensible on account of two man factors: It leads to sexual arousal and more desire, and it actually affects the health, especially for boys. Sex is like any other natural instinct, in that the more you think of, the more it is accentuated.

Generally speaking, humans sublimate and administer their instincts. We want

to possess, but we work and earn; we want to eat, but we control our eating habits: and we want to have sex, but we marry.

Athar: Masturbation is considered *makruh* (detestable) in Islam; i.e., it is between unlawful and permitted. Some scholars of the past have permitted it to students and soldiers who are single in a non-Muslim society where temptation is high, in order to save them from adultery. The medical harms are not confirmed.

13. If you are an unmarried Muslim girl and pregnant, what choices do you have: Abortion, adoption, etc.?

Abu Saud: The first option is to marry the father of the child. The second is to have an abortion in the first three months of pregnancy. The third is to keep the child, and the fourth is to give him/her up for adoption providing the child keeps his father's name.

Athar: Abortion if the health of the mother is physically or mentally threatened; otherwise, carry to term, then adoption or even marriage with the boy if possible. Hopefully, Muslim girls don't come to this difficult stage and marry beforehand. If they are ready for sex, they should be ready for marriage.

14. In what circumstances are abortions allowed and are we Muslims allowed to use contraceptives?

Abu Saud: About abortion, see question #6. About contraceptives, they are allowed in Islam by explicit statement of the Prophet (PBUH) where he did not forbid *coitus interruptis*.

Athar: Abortions are not allowed unless it is a matter of rape and incest, and the health of the mother is concerned. Chemical contraceptives, i. e ., birth control for married women, is allowed though not promoted because of its many medical side effects.

15. What is the right age to get married in this society?

Abu Saud: There is no fast rule fixing such an age. When a person is mature enough, can live independently and is ready to meet the responsibilities of marriage, he/she can marry.

Athar: In this society, about a million girls get pregnant each year, and if they were married, they would not be counted in teenage pregnancy statistics. This right age is when you are ready to marry. If you have achieved puberty, then you must abstain from sex until you think you are ready for marriage. Otherwise, you may fall into the sin of premarital sex.

16. How does one go about proposing to either a boy or a girl?

Abu Saud: If you know the person, simply talk about your desire to get married and wait for the reaction. Then, if the reaction is positive, just express your desire to engage the person. If the answer is positive again, inform both families and arrange for the "official" engagement.

Athar: You let him/her know your intention to marry him/her, through your parents or trusted friends.

17. 1 sees a lot of women in this hall without *hijab*. We know this is against Islam and against the Prophet's teaching. I would like to know why.

Abu Saud: The answer depends on what you do mean by *hijab* (see question #I). If it is only uncovering of hair while the body is well covered, then the question is controversial. Slave women during the days of the Prophet even used to pray without covering their hair. Men never were seen uncovering their hair in public, but that was a societal convention. The idea of covering hair is the same as covering the adornment and the body of the woman. In simple words, as women are very proud of their hair and do consider it a part of their beauty that attracts the attention of men, it is then supposed to be covered.

Athar: See answer #I.

18. All religions prohibit premarital sex and consider that as sin. Why don't all religious leaders put their point across to the government and not leave this subject to the big "L" liberals?

Abu Saud: Because sex in the society in which we live is liberal; and accordingly, the government elected by the people is liberal.

Athar: Government does not control personal expressions or emotions. The good and bad, and right and wrong have to be recognized and accepted individually.

19. Is abortion allowed if the life of the woman is in danger and/or you have amniocentesis and find the child could be handicapped/ Down's syndrome?

Abu Saud: If there were danger for the mother, abortion would be allowed. If there will definitely be a congenital defect, then the matter depends on the degree of this defect. If it is so serious that the child will not be able to function at all, or will not be able to live on his own, then the question is controversial. In all cases, if abortion takes place in the first three months (that is, four months from the last period), it may be carried out.

Athar: Yes, under medical decision.

20. What if you want a child but don't want to get married?

Abu Saud: Adopt a child according to the Islamic rules: Mainly, keep the child's father's name and no inheritance. He will never be YOUR child.

Athar: You will have to have another man's sperm, which is adultery. When the child is born, he/she would like to know the father. What will you tell him/her that will satisfy and make him/her happy?

21. Is there anything wrong with being married young?

Abu Saud: No, as long as you are ready for marriage. See question #15. The Prophet (PBUH) says, "He who can afford to get married, let him marry. . . "

Athar: No, unless you are marrying a man who is too old.

22. What is sex?

Abu Saud: Sex is the cohabitation of a male with a female for the purpose of reproduction. A married couple may decide not to have children and still they legitimately perform sex. Sex without marriage is illegitimate and is obviously harmful to the individuals and their society.

Athar: Sex is the act of intimacy between two people of the opposite or same sex, starting with being together, to foreplay and the sexual act. The best sex organ is said to be the brain; other organs are hand and mouth.

23. Why are Muslim men allowed to marry non-Muslim women and Muslim women not allowed to marry non-Muslim men?

Abu Saud: The Quran says, "*Do not marry (your girls) to unbelievers until they believe*" (2:221). The family structure is so paternal that the non-Muslim father would dominate and dictate. This meant that the children would be non-Muslims, that the wife would not be free to practice her religion, and that the different laws of Islam (such as inheritance, alimony, guardianship, etc.) cannot be observed. Accordingly, such marriage would lead to what is prohibited and thus becomes prohibited.

Athar: Not true. Muslim men are allowed to marry women from only people of book (Jews and Christians), not Hindu or atheist, etc. Even then they are encouraged to prefer believing women even if she is a slave than idolater. The reason Muslim women are not allowed non-Muslim men are many to include the future of children.

24. Are Muslim girls allowed to play sports?

Abu Saud: Yes, of course. In public, she must be covered, and if she plays with boys, there should be no touching.

Athar: Yes, only with girls.

25. Islam is a very patriarchal and sexist religion. Why is the podium faced toward the men? Why don't you direct your speech toward the women? A woman will look attractive to a man, and that is why she must cover up,

right? Well, have you ever thought that maybe a woman will also find a man attractive? Why should not he cover up? Why are men placed on a higher stool than women? Is that really what God wants?

Abu Saud: Islam is not patriarchal or sexist; it is YOUR society, which are both. The Prophet (PBUH) used to talk to women directly, facing them. He, and the caliphs after him, used to address them, answer their questions and sell to and buy from them. Both men and women are required to cast down their eyesight and be modest. By instincts men are more attracted to the woman's body than vice versa, and that is why she must cover up. However, man, being obligated to earn the living of the family and to protect it, has to work and mix with others, such that covering up would not be practical.

Athar: Not true, as men and women in the audience could hear the speaker the same way.

26. What is the right age to get married in this society? Can you marry a person whom your parents do not approve of?

Abu Saud: See question #3 and question #15.

Athar: See question #3. The right age is when a person is physically and emotionally mature and ready for marriage. In this society, more than a million teenage girls become pregnant each year. If they are ready for sex, they should be ready for sex with responsibility and commitment which comes from marriage.

27. Right of inheritance to a fetus: the rape situation in Islamic countries where rape is monumental and CANNOT be proved.

Abu Saud: The embryo is a prospective inheritor; i.e., if the father dies during the pregnancy of his wife, the estate inheritance division will be suspended until the birth or miscarriage of the fetus. There is no evidence that rape in Muslim countries is monumental, nor is it a fact that proving it is impossible. However, if the father is not known, there would be no inheritance except from the mother.

Athar: In the U.S.A., 200,000 women are raped every year, nearly two per minute, but half of the rapes are not reported. The reporting of rape in Muslim countries is related to weakness within women, for shame or whatever else.

28. Is placing of the private parts to the mouth harmful, for boys and girls alike?

Abu Saud: Oral sex is not forbidden in Islam as long as it is practiced between husband and wife.

Athar: No, but only with your spouse. *"Your women are your tilth for you, so go to your tilth as ye wish"* (2:223). Thus, all sexual positions except anal intercourse are permitted between husband and wives. There may be some medical harm in oral sex if organs are not clean or have infection. In that case they should seek medical treatment first before engaging in sex.

29. Are Muslim boys allowed to wear earrings, or is it a woman's dress?

Abu Saud: The general rule is that men should not try to look like woman and vice versa. If conventionally agreed and accepted, earrings are used only for women; then a Muslim boy should not wear them.

Athar: Men are not allowed to mimic women in dress or other ways including jewelry.

30. Are girls or boys allowed to talk about the opposite sex in a way that conveys a feeling?

Abu Saud: It is human to have feelings towards the other sex. But to talk about it is another matter that depends entirely on what sort of talk it is. Modesty is the key word in this context. One must be decent and modest. One must be clean in thought and deed. God knows what is in the hearts of His servants and the servants must be aware of His cognition.

Athar: Yes, but be cautious not to give the wrong emotion. To play with someone's emotions is not right.

31. Are women allowed to work, leaving their children at home?

Abu Saud: There is no prohibition for women to work. If they have children, it is the responsibility of both parents to look after them. However, it is biologically the mother who should cater to the needs of the child in his early age. Whether she can leave him at home during her working hours or not, is a matter of circumstances and age of the child. What is essential is consideration of the interest of the child as the first priority.

Athar: Not a good idea. This deprives children of her mother's love and presence, both of which are badly needed.

32. What are the Islamic jurisdictions toward marriage?

Abu Saud: In Islam, marriage is a civil (though divine) contract, witnessed first by God, then by the society. The main terms of an Islamic marriage are: the free consent of both spouses, the public declaration of marriage, the dower to the wife, the respect of the terms that either party may opt to include in the contract (such as the wife's condition to be the sole wife, to divorce herself without the consent of the husband without mentioning any reason, or to get her dower at any certain time, etc.), and that the information in the contract is correct (for instance, whether or not either spouse is married, whether or not either of them has a disease, etc.)

Athar: Marriage is ordained by God and is a tradition of Prophet Muhammad. He said marriage is half of faith and that it is a shield against wrongdoing.

***Final remarks:**

It is not necessary for the youth or parents who have read the above answers to agree with either mine or those of Dr. Abu Saud, as sometimes we did not agree with each other, either. It is also possible that both of us may be wrong. The purpose of this particular article is to make parents aware of youth's questions and stimulate discussion within a family.

Muslim youth, instead of taking our answers for granted, should seek more explanation from their parents, Sunday school teachers, Imam of the mosque

and above all, from the Quran and Sunnah. *"It is not befitting a believing man or a believing woman that when God and His Messenger have decided an affair for them, they should after that claim have any say in their affairs and whosoever is rebellious to God and His messenger, he verily goes astray in error manifest"* (33:36).

"Say: Are they equal those who know, and those who do not know?"
(39:9)

"Blessed are the women of the Helpers. Their modesty did not stand in the way of their seeking knowledge about their religion".

The topic of sexuality provokes strong emotions in people, especially youngsters, and because of this reaction, we see sexual images and actions everywhere. Fear, mystery, curiosity, desire-all of these very powerful emotions can be easily manipulated by-and into sexual behavior. "A lot of underage people drink because its frowned upon by authority figures and the same goes for sexual activity," said one teenage Muslim boy. "Basically, a lot of people become curious about sex because of a combination of their peers telling them that they are weird if they don't and their parents telling them they will go to hell if they do." Sexuality is such a complex subject that to dismiss or trivialize it is to suppress a natural urge, which demands attention, either through discussion or-as, is often the case- release.

"My parents go so far as to tell me what I'm feeling is unnatural, and that I'm being wrong just thinking about the opposite sex in that way," one person said. "I mean, I don't plan to act out on what I'm feeling, but I have to at least talk about it-but not to my parents, I guess." Many young people complain that their parents set unrealistic expectations regarding sexual pressure or anxiety, and they also feel abandoned by parents who simply tell them to "just say no."

This leaves them with no choice but to consult less reliable sources of information, such as their equally confused peers.

"If we as parents do not teach our children about sex, they will probably gain information from the wrong source. Teaching sex education in mixed classes to hot-blooded teenagers without benefit of moral values is like pouring gasoline on emotional fires." Tim LaHaye, Family Life Services, Author of several books on sex and marriage during a presentation at the Islamic Center in Toledo, Ohio, a survey of sex attitude was obtained. A total of 157 attendees out of 200 responded. 95 were parents and 62 were youth. Toledo's Muslim community is well established, educated and progressive and has a mixture of Arab and Indo-Pakistani immigrants. To each question, their (parent vs. youth) response is given.

1. Should an Islamic viewpoint on sexuality be presented in the Weekend Islamic School?

| Parents | Youth |
|---------------|----------|
| Yes: 88 (92%) | 52 (83%) |
| No: 7 (8%) | 10 (17%) |

2. Should parents teach sex education at home?

| | |
|---------------|----------|
| Yes: 82 (86%) | 47 (75%) |
| No: 13 (14%) | 15 (25%) |

3. Are you aware that sex education classes in public schools do not teach moral views and abstinence?

Yes: 72 (75%) 46 (74%)

No: 23 (25%) 16 (26%)

4. Do you allow social mixing of boys and girls above 12 years of age?

Yes 64 (67%) 32 (51%)

No 31 (33%) 30 (49%)

5. Should parents supervise such activities when they are permitted?

Yes 94 (99%) 48 (77%)

No 1 (1%) 14 (23%)

6. Should parents be aware of and choose the movies, TV shows, music and magazines children are exposed to?

Yes 93 (98%) 45 (72%)

No 2 (2%) 17 (28%)

***Interpretation of the data:**

It is obvious from this survey that both parents and youth as a majority approve of sex education being given at home or at Sunday Islamic School. Nearly two-thirds of them approve of supervised mixing of boys and girls. While the majority of parents feel that they should choose movies, music, TV programs for their youth, the youths themselves, who otherwise are conservative, are equally divided on this

issue. We hope that with continued emphasis on Islamic perspective on sex education that their attitude may change in the future.

***Sex education after marriage:**

Yes, this is something; the parents and kids alike, we have to approve that most of adults do not know about properly overtaken sex, and don't make it in the perfect picture it has to be executed on, so when talking about sex education, it has to be considered that it is bilateral, this is to say for both sexes; males and females, and for both parties; parents and children.

This essay is not intended to be a sex manual for married couples, although I may write such someday. I just wanted to remind the reader of a short verse in the Quran and then elaborate. The verse is, *"They are your garments, and you are their garments" (2:187)*.

Husbands and wives are described as garments for each other. A garment is very close to our body, so they should be close to each other. A garment protects and shields our modesty, so they should do the same to each other. Garments are put on anytime we like, so should they be available to each other anytime. A garment adds to our beauty, so they should praise and beautify each other.

For husbands I should say that sex is an expression of love and one without the other is incomplete. One of your jobs is to educate your wife in matters of sex especially in your likes and dislikes and do not compare her to other women.

For wives I want to say that a man's sexual needs are different than a women's. Instead of being a passive recipient of sex, try to be an active partner. He is exposed to many temptations outside the home. Be available to please him and do not give him a reason to make a choice between you and hellfire.

Sex is an important area of marital life, and when people are in trouble they have only the doctor to resort to: and unless the doctor has had some basic teaching of sex, he or she will be quite helpless to help out. Sexual problems may manifest as strained family relations, psychosomatic symptoms or infertility. Medical treatment may affect sex such as some antihypertensive or antidepressant drugs. Sexual counsel is often a neglected aspect of managing such varied diseases as coronary thrombosis, diabetes, incipient heart failure etc. The role of lack of sexual education in some cases of infertility is well known. Surgery may influence sex in men and women. A carelessly repaired episiotomies, or colporrhaphies may have a devastating effect on marital happiness. The psychological premath and after-math of the operation of hysterectomy is only too well known. On top of all of this, Muslim women patients would wish to know the religious ruling on the multitude of gynecological and obstetric situations relating to worship, and their reference is their doctor. It is therefore a religious dictate that medical education preparing doctors who will cater for the needs of Muslim communities, should equip them with the knowledge necessary to answer this need.

***The role of the Muslim physician:**

Teaching sex should also be present in the curricula of medical schools. This is sometimes done in our medical school as part of the gynecology and obstetrics program. There is no difficulty whatsoever with Islam and rather

conservative men and women students, if the subject is given within an Islamic perspective.

At that point, we have to get back to the basic level of the issue of the sex education to discuss it from a different point of view; here we have to consider several issues.

***Why should we concern ourselves with sex education?**

Why is the question asked at this time?

Is sex education such an important issue in Muslim life and Muslim society?

Furthermore, who needs sex education?

How and when should it be made available?

Who should face the problem and provide the service?

What are the sources and means of information?

More specific questions are:

What are the bases of the theoretical principles that apply?

What are the problems and dangers of practical application?

This multitude of questions reflects my anxieties as a Muslim sexologist who puts her faith and fear of God before her career and profession. My fear of committing a sin predates my enthusiasm of doing a successful job.

***How can a Muslim physician handle the problem?**

Do we really have a role in sex education? What are our theoretical principles and means of application? What are the ethical and moral issues? The chances are actually there if once in lifetime a consultation may involve a sexual problem. At that time, the first requirement is a combination of medical knowledge and Islamic orientation. One should know where he stands. The second requirement is setting limits on moral and ethical principles. And the third requirement is knowledge of the patient and his or her religious and moral orientation, for that would be the physician's way to get into his track of action

in order to reach his goal and achieving the result he would be satisfied with. If these requirements are fulfilled, then one may be facing one of three situations:

- a. Sexual illiteracy (lack of enough sexual knowledge)
- b. Sexual dysfunction
- c. Sexual deviation

If any of these situations arise outside a marital relationship, the first thing to be carried out is to discuss the matter in a scientific way, declaring its drawbacks, having the evidence of himself/herself being complaining, the next step is twinning the good about the scientific facts with Allah judgments, whether those that came in the holy Quran, or in the biography of prophet Mohammad (PBUH), and on the other hand, the disadvantages of not following these divine orders, both on the level of our worldly existence within the present life, or on the level of the after life, also both on the level of the corporeal and the spiritual well beings. This takes sometime actually, but the more important is insisting to make sessions not very long apart from each other in order to make things under control as much as possibly could it be.

Within a marital relationship how much can we indulge in sex education? One can consider situations where spouses come for help; the nature and kinds of complaints vary a lot; they are sometimes due to lack of sexual knowledge, some other times they are due to incapability to apply what they have as knowledge on their own sexual lives, sometimes they come expressing vague and nonspecific complaints, some other times they are conflicted between the moral and sexual complaints, and ... and... and.. So, if we consider all possible permutations, there would be hundreds of possible complaints, but the common between all is having the same ground, which is lacking the right and the proper way of dealing with the spouse, either on the physical, sexual, or the moral levels, since there is no fixed ideal to follow, very basically; because of the lack

of having the real Islamic model in mind, concerning different sides of the marital life.

***What do we have to teach?**

The Muslim doctor needs to understand thoroughly all that the Quran has mentioned pertaining to sex and all that the Traditions of the Prophet included concerning conjugal rights and how spouses should treat each other concerning those conjugal rights. The Quran says, *"So let man consider fools what he is created." "He is created from a gushing fluid that issues from between the loins and ribs."*(86:5-7) It goes on to say, *"Did We not create you from a base fluid which We laid up in a safe abode for a known term. Thus We arranged. How excellent is Our arranging."*(77:20&21)

This theme keeps recurring in the Quran and is always related to other teachings. *"Verily We created the human being from a product of wet earth, then placed him as a drop in a safe lodging, then fashioned We the drop a clot, then fashioned We the clot a little lump, then fashioned We the little lump bones, then clothed the bones with flesh, and then produced it as another creation-so blessed be God, the best of Creators."*(23:12-14)

In other chapters the Quran says, *"Then lo! On the Day of Resurrection you are raised." And, "There is enough here for Muslims to reflect on-creation, death, resurrection." And, "They question you concerning menstruation. Say it is a harm (a damage) so refrain from women during menstruation and do not approach them until they are purified. Once they purify themselves then enjoy them from where God has instructed you. Truly God loves the repenters and those who care for purity" (4:222-223). "Your women are a tilth for you (to cultivate) so enjoy your tilth the way, the timing, the place you wish and make an introduction for yourselves..."(2:223)*

What more details do we need to know to fulfill this human instinct? The closest you can come to details is what happened between Joseph and Zulayka.

"And she approached him, she in whose house he was and she bolted the doors and said I am ready for you. He said I seek refuge in God-Lo! He is my Lord who perfected my resort. Wrongdoers never prosper She verily desired him and he desired her but he saw the sign of his Lord. Thus it was that We might ward off from him evil and lewdness. Lo! He was of our chosen slaves and they raced to the door and she tore his shirt from behind."(12:23-25)

The Prophet (PBUH), says, **"The best of you is the one who is best to his family."** He also said, **"Beloved to me of your world are pleasant scents and women."** He once told the Companions, **"And there is a reward for what you deposit in the womb of your wife."** They said, **"Oh Messenger of God, the one of us satisfies his desire and gets a reward for that."** He answered, **"What if he deposits it in a prohibited womb? Isn't he going to sin?"** So if he deposits it in a permitted womb there is a reward for him.

But at the same time he instructed his Companions not to divulge what goes on between them in private as husband and wife. He simulated that happening to a devil making love to a she-devil. He also instructed women not to describe the particulars of their female friends to their husbands as if they can see the woman described. This is to avoid masturbation in fantasy and abominations.

The physician may have more to offer in cases of sexual dysfunction within a marital relationship. He may find physical or organic pathology that needs correction. He may detect psychological factors having an impact on the sexual relationship. The physician has still to set limits to how deep and far he can go. The decency and virtue of marital bondage and privacy of such a relationship need not be obscenely dissected and divulged to a third party, particularly if he or she be of the opposite sex. Do we really need to worry that much about sexual problems? Do we have so many of them as to warrant explicit discussions? A more general answer is that in a practicing Muslim

society we should not expect to face the same problems as Western societies. Irrespective of the sex of the Muslim sexologist, one main background should always be there; this is that the Quran and the *Sunnah* should be the framework for Muslim life and thus shape and fashion the behavior and attitudes of Muslims. As the children are brought up they will have an Islamic orientation to marital life and sex education is then part of that education rather than a separate and major issue in isolation. We do not need to take sex as an issue and introduce it into the education of children. We need to introduce to them the Quran and *Sunnah* in the first place. If they can care for their Islamic character, other issues will take care of themselves. Virtue breeds virtue and vice breeds vice. Those who enjoy life as a whole, should hope to enjoy their marital life both emotionally and physically, and should not lack the means to do so.

IV. MALE CIRCUMCISION; MEDICAL VERSUS RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES

Circumcision is the removal of a fold of loose skin (the foreskin) that covers the head (glans) of the unerect penis. The amount of this skin varies from virtually none, to a considerable amount that droops down from the end of the flaccid penis. The practice is common amongst many divergent human cultures. A variety of methods are, moreover, used and the amount of foreskin removed also varies.

Historically circumcision has been a topic of emotive and often irrational debate. At least part of the reason is that a sex organ is involved. (Compare, for example, ear piercing.) During the past two decades the medical profession in Australia have tended to advise parents not to circumcise their baby boys. In fact there have even been reports of harassments by medical professionals of new mothers, especially those belonging to religious groups that practice circumcision, in an attempt to stop them having this procedure carried out. Such attitudes are a far cry from the situation years ago when baby boys were circumcised routinely in Australia. But over the past 20 years the rate has declined to as low as 16-19%.

However, a reversal of this trend is starting to occur. In the light of an increasing volume of medical scientific evidence pointing to the benefits of neonatal circumcision a new policy statement was formulated by a working party of the Australian College of Paediatrics in August 1995 and adopted by the College in May 1996. In this document medical practitioners are now urged to fully inform parents of the benefits of having their male children circumcised. Similar recommendations were made recently by the Canadian Pediatric Society who also conducted an evaluation of the literature, although concluded that the

benefits and harms were very evenly balanced. The American College of Pediatrics has moved far closer to an advocacy position and many recognized authorities in the USA strongly advocate circumcision of all newborn boys. More details of their statements appear below.

***Why the foreskin increases infection risk:**

The increased risk of infection in the uncircumcised may be a consequence of the fact that the foreskin presents the penis with a larger surface area, the moist skin under it represents a thinner epidermal barrier than the drier, more cornified skin of the circumcised penis (the glans of which develops a thick stratum corneum layer), the presence of a prepuce is likely to result in greater micro-trauma during sexual intercourse, thereby permitting an entry point into the bloodstream for infectious agents, and, as one might expect, the warm, moist mucosal environment under the foreskin favors growth of micro-organisms. The preputial sac has even been referred to by Dr Gerald Weiss, an American surgeon, as a 'cesspool for infection', as its unfortunate anatomy draped around the end of the penis results in accumulation of secretions, excretions (urine), dead cells and growths of bacteria. Parents are told not to retract the foreskin of male infants which makes cleaning difficult. Even if optimal cleansing is performed there is no evidence that it confers protection.

***History:**

Circumcision has been practiced widely in Western countries this century. From at least the mid -1940s to mid-1970s over 90% of boys in the USA and Australia were circumcised soon after birth. The major benefits at that time were seen as improved lifetime genital hygiene, elimination of phimosis (inability to retract the foreskin) and prevention of penile cancer. The trend not to circumcise

started in the mid to late 1970s, after the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee for the Newborn stated, in 1971, that 'there are no valid medical indications for circumcision'. In 1975 this was modified to 'no absolute valid ... ', which remained in the 1983 statement, but in 1989 it changed significantly to 'New evidence has suggested possible medical benefits'.

Dr Edgar Schoen, Chairman of the Task Force on Circumcision of the American Academy of Pediatrics, has stated that the benefits of routine circumcision of newborns as a preventative health measure far exceed the risks of the procedure. During the period 1985-92 there was an increase in the frequency of neonatal circumcision and during that same time Schoen points out that the association of lack of circumcision and urinary tract infection has moved from 'suggestive' to 'conclusive'. Moreover, it heralded the finding of associations with other infectious agents, including HIV. In fact he goes on to say that 'Current newborn circumcision may be considered a preventative health measure *analogous to immunization* in that side effects and complications are immediate and usually minor, but benefits accrue for a lifetime', reduction in balanitis (inflammation of the glans, the head of the penis), reduced urinary tract infections, problems with erections at puberty, decrease in certain sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as HIV, and, in older men, elimination of penile cancer and a decrease in urologic problems and infections. Therefore the benefits are different at different ages.

***Anti-circumcision lobby groups**

In a letter written by Dr Schoen to Dr Terry Russell in Brisbane in 1994, Schoen derides an organization known as 'NOCIRC' for their use of 'distortions, anecdotes and testimonials to try to influence professional and legislative bodies and the public, stating that in the past few years they have become increasingly

desperate and outrageous as the medical literature has documented the benefits. For example they have compared circumcision with female genital mutilation, which is equivalent to cutting off the penis. In 1993 the rate of circumcision had risen to 80% in the USA and Schoen suggests that 'Perhaps NOCIRC has decided to export their "message" to Australia since their efforts are proving increasingly futile in the US'. One only has to do a search on the World Wide Web to read the statements from this group and others like it and any intelligent person can quickly make up their own mind about the quality of their material and the message they are trying to promulgate. Some of these people mean well and some are intelligent, but lack a broad perspective. Dr Schoen also noted that when Chairman of the Task Force his committee was bombarded with inaccurate and misleading communications from this group. They even publish their own journals, e.g. '*Cicumcision*'. Another of these groups is 'UNCIRC', which promotes procedures to reverse circumcision, by, for example, stretching the loose skin on the shaft of the retracted penis or the use of surgery. This has led to genital mutilation. Claimed benefits of 'increased sensitivity' in reality appear to be a result of the friction of the foreskin, whether intact or newly created, on the moist or sweaty glans and undersurface of the prepuce in the unaroused state and would obviously in the 're-uncircumcised' penis have nothing to do with an increase in touch receptors. Indeed, nerves do not regenerate. Moreover, the sensitivity during sexual intercourse is in fact identical, according to men circumcised as adults.

***Benefits outweigh the risks:**

Dr Tom Wiswell, a respected authority in the USA was a strong opponent, but then switched camps as a result of his own research findings and the findings of others. This is what he has to say: 'As a pediatrician and

neonatologist, I am a child advocate and try to do what is best for children. For many years I was an outspoken opponent of circumcision ... I have gradually changed my opinion'. This ability to keep an open mind on the issue and to make a sound judgment on the balance of all available information is to his credit he did change his mind!

Wiswell looked at the complication rates of having or not having it performed in a study of 136,000 boys born in US army hospitals between 1980 and 1985. 100,000 were circumcised and 193 (0.19%) had complications, with no deaths, but of the 36,000 who were not circumcised the complication rate was 0.24% and there were 2 deaths. A study by others found that of the 11,000 circumcisions performed at New York's Sloane Hospital in 1989, only 6 led to complications, none of which were fatal.

A retrospective study of boys aged 4 months to 12 years found significantly greater frequency of penile problems (14% vs 6%; $P < 0.001$) and medical visits for penile problems (10% vs 5%; $P < 0.05$) among those who were uncircumcised, compared with those who were circumcised.

***Pain and memory**

No adverse psychological aftermath has been demonstrated. It must be recognized that there are many painful experiences encountered by the child before, during and after birth. Circumcision, if performed without anesthetic, is just one of these. Cortisol levels have registered an increase during and shortly after the procedure, indicating that the baby is not unaware of having had something done in its unanesthetized state and one has to weigh up the need to inflict this short term pain in the context of a lifetime of gain from prevention or reduction of subsequent problems. Anesthetic creams and other means appear to

be at least partially effective in reducing trauma and some babies show no signs of distress at all when the procedure is performed without anesthetic. Many, however, do, and this may be contributed by the restraining procedure, as well as the surgery itself.

***Penile hygiene:**

The proponents of not circumcising, nevertheless stress that lifelong penile hygiene is required. This acknowledges that something harmful or unpleasant is happening under the prepuce. Moreover, a study of British schoolboys found that penile hygiene does not exist. Furthermore, Dr Terry Russell, an Australian medical practitioner states 'What man after a night of passion is going to perform penile hygiene before rolling over and snoring the night away (with pathogenic organisms multiplying in the warm moist environment under the prepuce)'. The bacteria start multiplying again immediately after washing and explain the whitish film, termed 'smigma', that is found under the foreskin. Bacteria give off an offensive odor, necessitating several showers a day by uncircumcised men, some of whom, together with their partners, find the stench so unpleasant that this smell has caused these men to seek a circumcision on this basis alone. For mothers and fathers, it is far easier to maintain cleanliness of their son's penis if it is circumcised.

***What motivates parents to get their baby boy circumcised, and the rates:**

The reasons for circumcision, at least in a survey carried out as part of a study at Sydney Hospital, were: 3% for religious reasons, 1-2% for medical, with the remainder suggested by the researchers as 'to be like dad' or a preference of one or both parents for whatever reason. The main reason may

have more to do with hygiene and appearance, as will be discussed later in the section on socio-sexual aspects. The actual proportion of men who were circumcised when examined at this clinic was 62%. Of those studied, 95% were Caucasian, with younger men just as likely to be circumcised as older men. In Adelaide, South Australia, a similar proportion has been noted, with 55% of younger men being circumcised. In Britain, however, the rate is only 7-10%, much like Europe. Rates in Africa, Asia and India vary according to religion and culture, with higher rates amongst Muslims and certain tribes and low rates amongst other groups and nations. In the USA, as indicated above, the rate of circumcision has always been high, although differs in different regions: the rates for 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1994 in the northeast region were 62%, 68%, 65% and 70%, in each respective year; for the mid-west they were 78%, 78%, 74% and 80%, respectively; for the southern region: 64%, 63%, 61% and 65%; and for the western region: 41%, 38%, 36% and 34%. The actual rates are higher than indicated by this data, as they represent only the numbers reported, whereas not all are. In Canada the rate varies markedly between different regions. Even in the same state, Ontario, for example, the rate between different districts ranges from 2% to 70%, with a mean of around 50%.

***Physical problems:**

Phimosis (inability to retract the foreskin) affects 2-10% of uncircumcised males, and can lead to urinary retention, vesico-urethral reflux and hypertension. *Paraphimosis* (where the retracted foreskin cannot be brought back again over the glans) is a very painful problem, relieved by circumcision or slitting the dorsal surface of the foreskin. To pediatric surgeons, the most obvious medical reasons for circumcision are balanitis (inflammation of the glans) and posthitis (inflammation of the foreskin), which are very painful conditions, virtually

limited to uncircumcised males. In babies, balanitis is caused by soiled diapers, playing and sitting in dirty areas, antibiotic therapy, as well as yeast and other micro-organisms. Balanoposthitis (inflammation of the foreskin and glans) is common in uncircumcised diabetic men owing to a weakened, shrunken penis, and such men also have more problems associated with intercourse. Diabetes is common and inherited, so a family history of this disease may add to considerations in favor of circumcision at birth. Uncircumcised boys may entrap their foreskin in zippers, resulting in pain, trauma, swelling and scarring of this appendage. In elderly men, infections and pain from balanoposthitis, phimosis and paraphimosis are seen and care-takers report problems in achieving optimal hygiene in uncircumcised men. The need for an appliance for urinary drainage in quadraplegics and in senile men is facilitated if they are circumcised. Boys and men who are not circumcised can be a source of irritation if they do not retract the foreskin when they urinate, as 'splatter' will occur. Although not a medical problem, it is a source of annoyance for other people (such as a parent or partner) if it is they that have the job of cleaning the bathroom. Foreskin problems also mean intercourse is painful.

***Neonatal urinary tract infections**

In 1982, it was reported that 95% of urinary tract infections (UTIs) in boys aged 5 days to 8 months were in uncircumcised infants. This was confirmed by Wiswell and a few years later Wiswell and colleagues found that in 5261 infants born at one US Army hospital, 4% of UTI cases were in uncircumcised males, but only 0.2% in those who were circumcised. Wiswell then went on to examine the records for 427,698 infants (219,755 boys) born in US Armed Forces hospitals from 1975-79 and found that the uncircumcised had an 11-fold higher incidence of UTIs. During this decade the frequency of

circumcision in the USA decreased from 84% to 74% and this decrease was associated with an increase in rate of UTI. Reviews by others in the mid-80s concluded there was a lower incidence in circumcised boys. The rate in girls was stable during the period it was increasing in boys, in whom circumcision was in a decline. In a 1993 study by Wiswell of 209,399 infants born between 1985 and 1990 in US Army hospitals worldwide, 1046 (496 boys) got UTI in their first year of life. The number was equal for boys and girls, but was 10-times higher for uncircumcised boys. Among the uncircumcised boys younger than 3 months, 23% had bacteremia, caused by the same organism responsible for the UTI. It should be noted that these studies gave figures for infants admitted to hospital for UTI, so that the actual rate would undoubtedly have been higher. The infection can travel up the urinary tract to affect the kidney and a higher rate of problems such as pyelonephritis and renal scarring (seen in 7.5%) is reported in uncircumcised children. These and other reports, all point to the benefits of circumcision in reducing UTI.

Indeed, Wiswell performed a meta-analysis of all 9 studies that had been published up until 1992 and observed that every one had found an increase in UTI in the uncircumcised. The average was 12-fold higher and the range was 5 to 89-fold, with 95% confidence intervals of 11-14. Meta-analyses by others have reached similar conclusions. There have been other studies since then that have added further support. One of these was in Sydney and involved boys under 5 years of age (mean 6 months). It found that 6% of uncircumcised boys got a UTI, but only 1% of circumcised.

The benefit appears to extend beyond childhood and into adult life. In a study of men aged, on average, 30 years, and matched for race, age and sexual activity, the circumcised had a lower rate of UTI.

The fact that fimbriated strains of the bacterium *Escherichia coli*, which are pathogenic to the urinary tract and pyelonephritogenic, have been shown to be capable of adhering to the foreskin, satisfies one of the criteria for causality. Thus in infancy and childhood the prepuce becomes colonized with bacteria. Fimbriated strains of *Proteus mirabilis*, non-fimbriated *Pseudomonas*, as well as species of *Klebsiella* and *Serratia* also bind closely to the mucosal surface of the foreskin within the first few days of life. Circumcision prevents such colonization and subsequent ascending infection of the urinary tract.

Since the absolute risk of UTI in uncircumcised boys is approx. 1 in 25 (0.05) and in circumcised boys is 1 in 500 (0.002), the absolute risk reduction is 0.048. Thus 20 baby boys need to be circumcised to prevent one UTI. However, the potential seriousness and pain of UTI, which can in rare cases even lead to death, should weigh heavily on the minds of parents. The complications of UTI that can lead to death are: kidney failure, meningitis and infection of bone marrow. The data thus show that much suffering has resulted from leaving the foreskin intact. Lifelong genital hygiene in an attempt to reduce such infections is also part of the price that would have to be paid if the foreskin were to be retained. However, given the difficulty in keeping bacteria at bay in this part of the body, not performing circumcision would appear to be far less effective than having it done in the first instance.

***Sexually-transmitted diseases:**

In 1947 a study of 1300 consecutive patients in a Canadian Army unit showed that being uncircumcised was associated with a 9-fold higher risk of syphilis and 3-times more gonorrhoea. Work in the mid-70s showed higher chancroid, syphilis, papilloma virus and herpes in uncircumcised men. At the University of Western Australia a 1983 study showed twice as much herpes and

gonorrhoea, 5-times more candidiasis and 5-fold greater incidence of syphilis. Others have reported higher rates of non-gonococcal urethritis in uncircumcised men. In South Australia a study in 1992 showed that uncircumcised men had more chlamydia (odds ratio 1.3) and gonococcal infections (odds ratio 2.1). Similarly in 1988 a study in Seattle of 2,800 heterosexual men reported higher syphilis and gonorrhoea in uncircumcised men, but no difference in herpes, chlamydia and non-specific urethritis (NSU). Like this report, a study in 1994 in the USA, found higher gonorrhoea and syphilis, but no difference in other common STDs. In the same year Dr Basil Donovan and associates reported the results of a study of 300 consecutive heterosexual male patients attending Sydney STD Center at Sydney Hospital. They found no difference in genital herpes, NSU, seropositivity for HSV-2 and genital warts (i.e., the benign, so-called 'low-risk' human papillomavirus types 6 and 11, which are visible on physical examination, unlike the 'high-risk' types 16 and 18, which are not). As mentioned above, 62% were circumcised and the two groups had a similar age, number of partners and education. Gonorrhoea, syphilis and hepatitis B were too uncommon in this Sydney study for them to conclude anything about these other STDs. Similar findings were obtained in the National Health and Social Life Survey in the USA, which asked about gonorrhoea, syphilis, chlamydia, non-gonococcal urethritis, herpes and HIV (which is more often acquired intravenously), although some under-reporting by uncircumcised men was likely as they tended to be less educated. Also, circumcision at birth was assumed, so that the number who sought circumcision later in life for problems, such as STDs and/or other infections, and therefore had switched group, was not taken into account. Design aspects of a number of the studies have in fact been criticized. As a result there is still no overwhelming agreement. Nevertheless, on the bulk of evidence it would seem that at least some STDs could be more common in the uncircumcised, but this conclusion is by no means absolute in

Western settings, and the incidence may be influenced by factors such as the degree of genital hygiene, availability of running water and socioeconomic group being studied. In some more recent studies in developed nations, in which hygiene is good, no difference was apparent.

***Cancer of the penis:**

The incidence of penile cancer in the USA is 1 per 100,000 men per year (i.e., 750-1000 cases annually) and mortality rate is 25-33%. It represents approximately 1% of all malignancies in men in the USA. This data has to be viewed, moreover, in the context of the high proportion of circumcised men in the USA, especially in older age groups, and the age group affected, where older men represent only a portion of the total male population. Thus 1 in 100,000 per year of life translates to 75 in 100,000 during each man's lifetime, but since it occurs almost entirely in uncircumcised men, if we assume that these represent 30% of males in the USA, the chance an uncircumcised man will get it would be $75 \text{ per } 30,000 = 1 \text{ in } 400$. In a study in Melbourne in 1990, although 60% of affected men were over 60 years of age, 40% were under 60. In 5 major series in the USA since 1932, not one man with penile cancer had been circumcised neonatally, i.e., this disease is almost completely confined to uncircumcised men and, less commonly, in those circumcised after the newborn period. The finite residual risk in those circumcised later is the major contributing factor to estimates of lifetime risk in the total population of circumcised men of 1 in 50,000 to 1 in 12,000,000. The predicted lifetime risk for an uncircumcised man has been estimated as 1 in 600 in the USA and 1 in 900 in Denmark. In underdeveloped countries the incidence is higher: approx. 3-6 cases per 100,000 per year and in Uganda it is the most common malignancy in males, leading to calls for greater circumcision in that country. In Australia, the most recent

figures of the New South Wales Cancer Council (for 1993) show 28 cases per year (including one in a child), with 5 deaths, which is similar to the 1 in 100,000 figure above and applies to a population in which the majority of the older men are circumcised. The rate is set to escalate, however, as more of the males who were not circumcised during the period after the mid 1970s reach the ages when this cancer generally begins to appear.

The so-called 'high-risk' papilloma virus types 16 and 18 (HPV 16/18) are found in a large proportion of cases and there is good reason to suspect that they are involved in the causation of penile cancer, as is true for most, if not all, cases of cervical cancer (see below). HPV 16 and 18 are, moreover, more common in uncircumcised males. These types of HPV produce flat warts that are normally only visible by application of dilute acetic acid (vinegar) to the penis and the data on high-risk HPVs should not be confused with the incidence figures for genital warts, which although large and readily visible, are caused by the relatively benign HPV types 6 and 11. Other factors, such as smoking, poor hygiene and other STDs have been suspected as contributing to penile cancer as well, but it would seem lack of circumcision is the primary prerequisite, with such other factors adding to the risk in the uncircumcised man. Financial considerations are, moreover, not inconsiderable. In the USA it was estimated that the cost for treatment and lost earnings in a man of 50 with cancer in 1980 was \$103,000. The amount today is higher.

In Australia between 1960 and 1966 there were 78 deaths from cancer of the penis and 2 from circumcision. (Circumcision fatalities today are virtually unknown.) At the Peter McCallum Cancer Institute 102 cases of penile cancer were seen between 1954 and 1984, with twice as many in the latter decade compared with the first. Moreover, several authors have linked the rising

incidence of penile cancer to a decrease in the number of neonatal circumcisions. It would thus seem that 'prevention by circumcision in infancy is the best policy'. Indeed it would be an unusual parent who did not want to ensure their child was completely protected by this simple procedure.

There is also some data to suggest that circumcised males may have half the incidence of prostate cancer, which is very common (27% of new cancers in males and 7% of all deaths).

***Cervical cancer in female partners of uncircumcised men:**

A number of studies have documented higher rates of cervical cancer in women who have had one or more male sexual partners who were uncircumcised. These studies have to be looked at critically, however, to see to what extent cultural and other influences might be contributing in groups with different circumcision practices. In a study of 5000 cervical and 300 penile cancer cases in Madras between 1982 and 1990 the incidence was low amongst Muslim women, when compared with Hindu and Christian, and was not seen at all in Muslim men. In a case-control study of 1107 Indian women with cervical cancer, sex with uncircumcised men or those circumcised after the age of 1 year was reported in 1993 to be associated with a 4-fold higher risk of cervical cancer, after controlling for factors such as age, age of first intercourse and education 1.

Another study published in 1993 concerning various types of cancer in the Valley of Kashmir concluded that universal male circumcision in the majority community was responsible for the low rate of cervical cancer compared with the rest of India. In Israel, a 1994 report of 4 groups of women aged 17-60 found that gynaecologically healthy Moshav residents had no HPV 16/18, whereas

healthy Kibbutz residents had a 1.8% incidence. Amongst those with gynecological complaints HPV 16/18 was found in 9% of Jewish and 12% of non-Jewish women. So-called 'high-risk' HPV types 16, 18 and some less common forms are responsible for virtually every case of cervical cancer. These same high-risk HPVs also cause penile intraepithelial neoplasia (PIN). In a study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 1987 it was found that women with cervical cancer were more likely to have partners with PIN, the male equivalent of cervical intraepithelial neoplasia (CIN). CIN may lead to cancer or, more often, it goes away. Thus co-factors are suspected. Interestingly, smigma (the film of bacteria, secretions and other material under the foreskin), obtained from human and horse has been shown to be capable of producing cervical cancer in mice in one study, but not in another. Thus the epidemic of cervical cancer in Australia, and indeed most countries in the world, would appear to be contributed, at least in part, by the uncircumcised male and would therefore be expected to get even worse as the large proportion of men that were born in the past 10-20 years and not circumcised reach sexual maturity.

***AIDS virus:**

In the USA the estimated risk of HIV per heterosexual exposure is 1 in 10,000 to 1 in 100,000. If one partner is HIV positive and otherwise healthy then a single act of unprotected vaginal sex carries a 1 in 300 risk for a woman and as low as a 1 in 1000 risk for a man. (The rates are very much higher for unprotected anal sex and intravenous injection). In Africa, however, the rate of HIV infection is up to 10% in some cities. (A possible reason for this big difference will be discussed later.) In Nairobi it was first noticed that among 340 men being treated for STDs they were 3-times as likely to be HIV positive if they had genital ulcers or were uncircumcised (11% of these men had HIV).

Subsequently another report showed that amongst 409 African ethnic groups spread over 37 countries the geographical distribution of circumcision practices indicated a correlation of lack of circumcision and high incidence of AIDS. In 1990 Moses in the *International Journal of Epidemiology* reported that amongst 700 African societies involving 140 locations and 41 countries there was a considerably lower incidence of HIV in those localities where circumcision was practiced. Truck drivers, who generally exhibit more frequent prostitute contact, have shown a higher rate of HIV if uncircumcised. Interestingly, in a West African setting, men who were circumcised but had residual foreskin were more likely to be HIV-2 positive than those in whom circumcision was complete.

Of 33 cross-sectional studies, 22 have reported statistically significant association, by univariate and multivariate analysis, between the presence of the foreskin and HIV infection (4 of these were from the USA). 5 reported a trend (including 1 US study). The 6 that saw no difference were 4 from Rwanda and 2 from Tanzania. In addition there have been 5 prospective studies and 2 from Kenya and 1 from Tanzania reported statistically significant association. The increased risk in the significant studies ranged from 1.5 to 9.6. The findings have, moreover, led various workers such as Moses and Caldwell to propose that circumcision be used as an important intervention strategy in order to reduce AIDS. Such advice has been taken up, with newspaper advertisements from clinics in Tanzania offering this service to protect against AIDS.

Perhaps the most interesting study of the risk of HIV infection imposed by having a foreskin is that by Cameron, Plummer and associates published as a large article in *Lancet* in 1989. It was conducted in Nairobi. Rather than look at the existing infection rate in each group, these workers followed HIV negative men until they became infected. The men were visiting prostitutes, numbering

approx. 1000, amongst whom there had been an explosive increase in the incidence of HIV from 4% in 1981 to 85% in 1986. These men were thus at high risk of exposure to HIV, as well as other STDs. From March to December 1987, 422 men were enrolled into the study. Of these, 51% had presented with genital ulcer disease (89% chancroid, 4% syphilis, 5% herpes) and the other 49% with urethritis (68% being gonorrhoea). 12% were initially positive for HIV-1. Amongst the whole group, 27% were not circumcised. They were followed up each 2 weeks for 3 months and then monthly until March 1988. During this time 8% of 293 men seroconverted (i.e., 24 men), the mean time being 8 weeks. These displayed greater prostitute contact per month (risk ratio = 3), more presented with genital ulcers (risk ratio = 8; $P < 0.001$) and more were uncircumcised (risk ratio = 10; $P < 0.001$). Logistic regression analysis indicated that the risk of seroconversion was independently associated with being uncircumcised (risk ratio = 8.2; $P < 0.0001$), genital ulcers (risk ratio = 4.7; $P = 0.02$) and regular prostitute contact (risk ratio = 3.2; $P = 0.02$). The cumulative frequency of seroconversion was 18% and was only 2% for men with no risk factors, compared to 53% for men with both risk factors. Only one circumcised man with no ulcer seroconverted. Thus 98% of seroconversion was associated with either or both cofactors. In 65% there appeared to be additive synergy, the reason being that ulcers increase infectivity for HIV. This involves increased viral shedding in the female genital tract of women with ulcers, where HIV-1 has been isolated from surface ulcers in the genital tract of HIV-1 infected women.

It has been suggested that the foreskin could physically trap HIV-infected vaginal secretions and provide a more hospitable environment for the infectious inoculum. Also, the increased surface area, traumatic physical disruption during intercourse and inflammation of the glans penis (balanitis) could aid in

recruitment of target cells for HIV-1. The port of entry could potentially be the glans, subprepuce and/or urethra. In a circumcised penis the drier, cornified skin may prevent entry and account for the findings.

In this African study the rate of transmission of HIV following a single exposure was 13% (i.e., very much higher than in the USA). It was suggested that concomitant STDs, particularly chancroid, may be a big risk factor, but there could be other explanations as well. Studies in the USA have not been as conclusive. Some studies have shown a higher incidence in uncircumcised men. But in one in New York City, for example, no significant correlation was found, although the patients were mainly intravenous drug users and homosexuals, so that any existing effect may have been obscured. A study in Miami, however, of heterosexual couples did find a higher incidence in men who were uncircumcised, and, in Seattle homosexual men were twice as likely to be HIV positive if they were uncircumcised.

In an editorial review in 1994 of 26 studies it was pointed out that more work was needed in order to reduce potential biases in some of the previous data. At least one study since then has controlled for such potential confounding factors, confirming a significantly lower HIV prevalence among circumcised men.

The reason for the big difference in apparent rate of transmission of HIV in Africa and Asia, where heterosexual exposure has led to a rapid spread through these populations and is the main method of transmission, compared with the very slow rate of penetration into the heterosexual community in the USA and Australia, now appears to be related at least in part to a difference in the type of HIV-1 itself ^[46]. In 1995 an article in *Nature Medicine* discussed findings concerning marked differences in the properties of different HIV-1

subtypes in different geographical locations. A class of HIV-1 termed 'clade E' is prevalent in Asia and differs from the 'clade B' found in developed countries in being highly capable of infecting Langerhans cells found in the foreskin, so accounting for its ready transmission across mucosal membranes. The Langerhans cells are part of the immune system and in turn carry the HIV to the T-cells, whose numbers are severely depleted as a key feature of AIDS. The arrival of the Asian strain in Australia was reported in Nov 1995 and has the potential to utilise the uncircumcised male as a vehicle for rapid spread through the heterosexual community of this country in a similar manner as it has done in Asia. It could thus be a time bomb about to go off and should be a major concern for health officials.

Sexual transmission of HIV and other STDs would be reduced by use of barrier protection such as condoms. Despite the campaigns, passion will override compliance on occasions in the most sexually promiscuous, at-risk group, who are at an age when risk-taking behavior is prevalent (cf. smoking in young people vis-a-vis the anti-smoking campaign), with tragic consequences. Thus education is only part of the answer and where an additional simple procedure is available to reduce the risk, and then logic dictates that it should be used. The result will be many lives saved.

***Socio-sexual aspects:**

In the setting of Australia, a small and restricted, but interesting survey of circumcised vs. uncircumcised men and their partners was conducted by Sydney scientist James Badger (who regards himself as neutral on the issue of circumcision). It involved responses to a questionnaire published in Australian Forum magazine or placed in Sydney clinics of the Family Planning Association of New South Wales. There were 180 respondents (79 male, 101 female) who

were aged 15-60. The women were mainly (50%) in the 20-30 year-old age group of 25% of the men, more of whom (33%) were aged 30-40. It found that:

- 18% of uncircumcised males underwent circumcision later in life anyway.
- 21% of uncircumcised men who didn't, nevertheless wished they were circumcised. (There were also almost as many men who wished they hadn't been circumcised and it could be that at least some men of either category may have been seeking a scapegoat for their sexual or other problems. In addition, this would no doubt be yet another thing children could blame their parents for, whatever their decision was when the child was born.)
- No difference in sexual performance (consistent with Masters & Johnson).
- Slightly higher sexual activity in circumcised men
- No difference in frequency of sexual intercourse for older uncircumcised vs. circumcised men.
- Men circumcised as adults were very pleased with the result. The local pain when they awoke from the anaesthetic was quickly relieved by pain killers (needed only for one day), and all had returned to normal sexual relations within 2 weeks, with *no decrease in sensitivity* of the penis and claims of 'better sex'. (Badger's findings are, moreover, consistent with every discussion the author has ever had with men circumcised as adults, as well as email received from a number of such men. The only cases to the contrary were a testimonial in a letter I received from a member of UNCIRC and a very brief email message that didn't say why.)
- Women with circumcised lovers were more likely to reach a simultaneous climax.
- Women with uncircumcised lovers were 3 times as likely to fail to reach orgasm. (These data could, however, possibly reflect behaviors of

uncircumcised males that might belong to lower socio-economic classes and/or ethnic groups whose attitudes concerning sex and women may differ from the better educated groups in whom circumcision is more common.)

- Circumcision was favored by women for appearance and hygiene. (Furthermore, some women were nauseated by the smell of the uncircumcised penis, where, as mentioned above bacteria and other micro-organisms proliferate under the foreskin.)
- The uncircumcised penis was found by women to be easier to elicit orgasm by hand.
- The circumcised penis was favored by women for oral sex (fellatio).

These findings are consistent with other studies. In a survey of new mothers, hygiene and appearance were the two major reasons for choosing to have their newborn son circumcised. There was a strong correlation between their son's circumcision status and the woman's ideal male partner's circumcision status for intercourse. Thus by being circumcised they thought that their sons would likewise be more attractive to a future sexual partner (with the implication that they would be at an advantage in passing on their, and therefore the mother's, genes to the subsequent generation). Their own preference thus affected their choice for their sons. 92% said the circumcised penis was cleaner, 90% said it looked 'sexier', 85% it felt nicer to touch and 55% smelled more pleasant. Even women who had only ever had uncircumcised partners preferred the look of the circumcised penis. Only 2% preferred an uncircumcised penis for fellatio, with 82% preferring the circumcised variety. Preference for intercourse for circ vs uncirc was 71% vs 6%, respectively; manual stimulation, 75% vs 5%; visual appeal, 76% vs 4%. What then is sexier about a circumcised penis? Quite likely it is that the glans is exposed in both the erect and unerect state. American producers of erotic films and publishers of photographic works choose

circumcised men, or at least uncircumcised men whose foreskin is smooth and free from loose, wrinkled skin, as the latter lacks visual appeal, especially to those who are not used to seeing an uncircumcised penis.

As far as sex is concerned, the National Health and Social Life Survey in the USA found that uncircumcised men were more likely to experience sexual dysfunctions; this was slight at younger ages, but became quite significant later in life and included finding it twice as difficult in achieving or maintaining an erection. It was also discovered that circumcised men engaged in a more elaborate set of sexual practices. Not surprisingly, in view of the findings above, circumcised men received more fellatio. However, they also masturbated more, a finding that, ironically, contradicts the wisdom in Victorian times that circumcision would reduce the urge to masturbate. As noted in other studies, circumcision rates were greatest among whites and those who were better educated, reflecting their exposure to and ability to evaluate and respond to scientific information about circumcision. There was little difference between different religious groups.

In Britain a class distinction is associated with circumcision, with the Royal Family and the upper classes being circumcised and the lower classes generally not. Some ancient cultures and some even today practice infibulation (drawing a ring or similar device through the prepuce or otherwise occluding it for the principal purpose of making coition impossible). This is the opposite of circumcision. It was, moreover, espoused in Europe and Britain in previous centuries as a way of reducing population growth amongst the poor and to prevent masturbation.

Consistent with the accounts above of men circumcised as adults, clinical and neurological testing has not detected any difference in penile sensitivity between men of each category. Sexual pleasure also appears to be the same.

***Why are human males born with a foreskin?**

The foreskin probably protected the head of the penis from long grass, shrubbery, etc when humans wore no clothes, where evolutionarily our basic physiology and psychology are little different than our cave-dwelling ancestors. However, Dr Guy Cox from The University of Sydney has recently supplemented this suggestion with a novel idea, namely that the foreskin could be the male equivalent of the hymen, and served as an impediment to sexual intercourse during adolescence before humans became civilized. The physical difficulties may explain why the word for uncircumcised in Hebrew means 'obstruction' or 'to impede', so explaining the Biblical term 'uncircumcised heart' when referring to obstructionism.

***What caused many cultures to ritually remove it?**

According to Cox, the ritual removal of the foreskin in diverse human traditional cultures, ranging from Muslims to Aboriginal Australians could be a sign of civilization in that human society acquired the ability to control, through education and religion, the age at which sexual intercourse could begin. Food for thought and discussion!

Another compelling explanation involves the ritualization of circumcision's prophylactic effects, especially as many different human groups and cultures that live in desert or other hot environments have adopted it as part of their customs. Infections, initiated by the aggravation of dirt and sand, are not uncommon under such conditions and have even crippled whole armies, where it is difficult to achieve sanitation during prolonged battle. Historically it was not uncommon for soldiers to be circumcised in preparation for active service. The Judeo-Muslim practice of circumcision quite likely had its origin in Egyptian civilization, where illustrations of the operation itself, as well as of circumcised Pharaohs, date back to 3000 BC. One possible reason the Egyptians could have circumcised themselves and their slaves might have been to prevent schistosomal infection. Urinary tract obstruction and hematuria are common in

localities such as the Nile Valley that are inhabited by the blood fluke, *Schistosoma haematobium*, and the foreskin would undoubtedly possess the adverse ability of being able to hold water infected with the cercaria stage of the life cycle of this parasite and so facilitate its entry into the body. The perpetuation of the procedure by the Jews may have subsequently been driven by a desire to maintain cleanliness in an arid, sandy desert environment. Such considerations could also explain why it is practiced in multiple other cultures that live in such conditions. In each instance, the original practical reason became lost as the ritual persisted as a religious rite in many of the various cultures of the world. In the Muslim religion circumcision occurs near the time of puberty. In other cultures it is associated with preparation for marriage and as a sign of entry into manhood. Interestingly, in Japan, which, like most of Asia, is traditionally a non-circumcising nation, circumcision has recently started to become a fashion amongst young men. The procedure is currently being promoted by way of articles and advertisements in the vast array of 'girlie', sex magazines read by young males. The message is that it improves hygiene generally and attractiveness to women specifically.

***To summarize:**

Lack of circumcision:

- Is responsible for a 12-fold higher risk of urinary tract infections. Risk = 1 in 20.
- Carries a higher risk of death in the first year of life (from complications of urinary tract infections: viz. kidney failure, meningitis and infection of bone marrow).
- One in ~400-900 uncircumcised men will get cancer of the penis. A quarter of these will die from it and the rest will require at least partial penile amputation as a result. (In contrast, penile cancer *never or rarely* occurs in men circumcised at birth). (Data from studies in the USA, Denmark and Australia,

which are not to be confused with the often quoted, but misleading, annual incidence figures of 1 in 100,000).

- Is associated with balanitis (inflammation of the glans), posthitis (inflammation of the foreskin), phimosis (inability to retract the foreskin) and paraphimosis (constriction of the penis by a tight foreskin). Up to 18% of uncircumcised boys will develop one of these by 8 years of age, whereas all are unknown in the circumcised. Risk of balanoposthitis = 1 in 6. Obstruction to urine flow = 1 in 10-50.
- Means problems that may result in a need for circumcision later in life: complication risk = 1 in 100 (compared with 1 in 1000 in the newborn). Also, the cost can be 10 times higher for an adult.
- Is the biggest risk factor for heterosexually-acquired AIDS virus infection in men. 8-times higher risk by itself, and even higher when lesions from STDs are added in. Risk per exposure = 1 in 300.
- Is associated with higher incidence of cervical cancer in the female partners of uncircumcised men.

***Conclusion:**

The information that appears in this review should prove informative to medical practitioners and health workers and thereby enhance the quality of information that is conveyed to parents of male children and to adult men. It should also prove to have educational value to others. It is hoped that as a result the choice that has to be made concerning circumcision, especially of male infants, is much more informed. Although there are benefits to be had at any age, they are greater the younger the child. Issues of 'informed consent' may be analogous to those parents have to consider for other medical procedures, such as whether or not to immunize their child. The question to be answered is 'do the benefits outweigh the risks'. When considering each factor in isolation there

could be some difficulty in choosing. However, when viewed as a whole, in my opinion the answer to whether to circumcise a male baby is 'yes'. Nevertheless, everybody needs to weigh up all of the pros and cons for themselves and make their own best decision. I trust that the information I have provided in this article will help in the decision-making process.

V. MUSLIM YOUTH AND PORNOGRAPHY

Internet pornography is the latest media menace parents and anyone concerned about children and morality in general, must deal with.

Pictures of naked women (it's usually women, since most pornography caters to heterosexual men) and couples engaged in various forms of sexual intercourse, to name just a few of the contents of pornography, are not just reserved to the internet though.

For decades, "porn" in various forms has been found in magazines, films, and more recently during a lot of prime time television.

The internet is just the latest tool pornographers have found to spread their "art", which poses a number of problems.

For instance, unlike television, the Internet's lure to pornography is not something that can be ignored by flipping a channel, or pushing the off button.

It is not uncommon for children and adults to be doing a search on a general topic, punching in a couple of search words or a possible internet address, only to suddenly find the pornographic pictures pop up on the screen, even after they try to close the windows, or move to another site.

The pervasiveness of pornography on the internet means Muslims need to consider once again the Islamic perspective on this issue while they use this new medium.

Pornography consumption is not something that can easily be stopped. Once the appetite for it has developed, it actually increases.

***The Islamic perspective:**

"There is no room for anyone to say pornography is not Haram. It's absolutely Haram," notes Shaykh Muhammad Nur Abdullah. He is the Imam of the Islamic Foundation of Greater St. Louis in Missouri. Nur Abdullah has a degree in Shariah (Islamic Law) from Madinah university, and a Master's Degree in Quran and Hadith from Umm al Qura university in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

"If someone is looking at someone committing Zina (sex outside of marriage) whether it is movies or pictures or the actual thing, it's all Haram," he adds.

Some of the proofs he gives for the prohibition of pornography in Islam include verses 31 and 32 of chapter 24 (Noor) of the Quran:

“Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty (chastity); that will make for greater purity for them: and Allah is well acquainted with all what they do (31), And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their chastity that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what ordinarily appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not to display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands’ fathers, their sons, their husbands’ sons, their brothers, and their brothers’ sons, or their sisters’ sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male attendants free of sexual desire (castrate), or small children who have no carnal knowledge of women, and they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments (32) (24:31&32)

As well as Hadiths (Prophet Mohamed PBUH statements) that say what leads to Haram (religiously prohibited) is Haram, and that adultery is committed by the eye and the hand, even before a sexual encounter takes place.

Dremali, who is a graduate of Al Azhar university in Cairo, Egypt, agrees.

He has openly discussed the problem of the internet, pornography and Muslim youth in his Khutbahs. On a day to day level, he says he gets at least two cases daily of young Muslims, boys and girls, who come to the mosque and speak to him personally about this problem.

Dremali says the teenagers feel guilty, but they cannot stop looking at this material. They need a cure, they have become addicted (see [tips on how to get out of addiction to pornography](#)).

"The person who looks at these things will always have Shaytan (Satan) in his mind because he wants to commit these (actions)," he says. "Shaytan never takes the person immediately to commit adultery (he does it in steps)."

Dremali also gives a clear example of the role the internet plays in being one of the steps leading to sex outside of marriage.

"The hand commits adultery by touching Haram and the person using the keyboard and using the mouse to look at these pictures, he or she is committing adultery," he warns.

Dremali says the view expressed by Hizb At-Tahrir is ruining Muslim youth, some of who are using this opinion to justify looking at pornography.

In his 1988 study Pornography Effects: Empirical and Clinical Evidence, Victor Cline, then with the University of Utah's Department of Psychology

noted that studies show pornography is progressive and addictive for many. It often leads to the user acting out his fantasy - often on children.

For those who have been trained from a young age to lower the gaze and practice Islamic principles of modesty, this may not even be an issue. But for those who have sadly fallen into pornography addiction, there is a way out.

Alcoholics' Anonymous is an organization that has fought the battle against alcohol addiction since 1935. It's "Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous" provides a clear, general guide on how to get out of the addiction of alcohol, which has killed people, ruined families, and led to health problems. Sound Vision has adapted the following 12 steps from this guide to, Insha Allah, help those now addicted to pornography and seeking a way out.

***Step One-Admit that you can't give up:**

Admit you are unable to get a grip on your consumption of pornography. It is uncontrollable. Every time you turn on the internet, go to the video store, turn on the television, you cannot say NO to yourself. You cannot NOT surf porn sites, or stop watching. You are no longer in control of your life.

Step Two-Admit only Allah can get you out of this:

You know, after trying through so many ways to control your addiction and subsequently failing, that only Allah can help you out of this. You may have known it before, but you are convinced of it now without a shadow of a doubt.

Step Three- Your life and death are all in Allah's control:

Have decided to put your complete trust in Allah, who is in control of all aspects of your life and your death, and to bring this problem and seek His Help first and foremost.

Step Four-Did a self-analysis:

You have done an honest, sincere, but often painful self-evaluation of your good points, bad points, and analyzed your addiction, trying to understand how you reached this point.

Step Five-Made a specific repentance to Allah:

You admitted to Allah and to yourself, and another trusted Muslim (if possible) exactly where you went wrong. You did not make a general request for repentance. You specifically listed your mistakes, and in particular, your addiction to pornography.

Step Six-Were open and ready to receive Allah's help to change:

You knew your Tawbah, being sincere, must be followed by action. You were ready to do what is necessary to change, no matter how difficult or painful. Even if it meant not even watching television for the news, or never surfing the internet alone.

Step Seven- Asked for the removal of faults:

You asked Allah, with sincerity, humility and regret, to help you never repeat this action (i.e. looking at pornography) again and to help you avoid repeating sins committed in the past again.

Step Eight-Decided to seek others' forgiveness:

You made a list of everyone you had hurt through your addiction. Whether it was your wife or husband, children (to whom we set a bad example) or parents, and made the Niyyah (intention) to approach them seeking forgiveness.

Step Nine-Asked forgiveness directly:

You slowly, with difficulty but sincerity, met with each individual and asked for their forgiveness and sought to make amends for the pain you have caused in a Halal way.

Step Ten-Did a nightly self-evaluation:

You continually, every night, did an honest self-evaluation of your behavior, and were ready to admit your mistakes and thank Allah for the good you did that day.

Step Eleven-Made lots of Dua and tried to increase your Taqwa:

You prayed and continue to pray five times a day, seeking closeness to Allah, and a consciousness of Him (Taqwa) wherever you are. You increase your reliance on Him to help you with with this addiction to pornography and with all other matters in your life.

Step Twelve-You preached and practiced:

You didn't just "move on" after Allah blessed you to get out of this addiction. You helped others you knew with this problem with regular contact, sincere Nasihah, respecting the etiquette of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. By the grace of Allah, helping others helped you maintain control over

your addiction and you helped another Muslim or another human being, get out of this destruction and misery.

***The danger of chat rooms:**

Dremali notes that one specific danger related to the internet and adults and children is chat rooms, where anyone with access can communicate with others anonymously, even lying about names, ages and identities.

What happens there, says the scholar, is that people arrange to meet for sexual encounters. This includes Muslims, says Dremali, who has observed this happen.

In particular, he says America Online has "the most dangerous chat rooms. I advise every parent to stop America Online, or watch the America Online chat room with their kid. **"Your kids are not necessarily angels who don't know about porn"**.

In his notes, Taha Ghayyur wrote: "Unfortunately there are a lot of Muslim youth who are using pornography on the [internet], and they basically use the internet only for that purpose," Too often, though, parents are willing to bury their heads in the sand when the issue of pornography and their children comes up.

"How do you know your kids don't know about it?" asks Dremali.

The easy access to pornography on television (no longer reserved to just the very late night hours), on the magazine stands and the internet makes it almost impossible to avoid, even if one's intentions are clear.

In the case of the internet, sometimes accompanying links or windows to pornographic websites or webpages will suddenly open up, against the wishes of the surfer.

This however, does not mean parents should automatically assume the worst about their children.

Shaykh Nur Abdullah stresses the importance of openly talking to children about the problem, especially if they have been caught looking at such material. If parents don't do this "then we are turning our face away from the problem," he says ([see tips for parents](#)).

***But don't stop the internet or any other media:**

Despite the danger of exposure to pornography though, neither Shaykh Nur Abdullah nor Imam Dremali recommend ridding Muslim homes of the internet, for instance. Both say the key is really in how the medium, like other ones of the past (i.e. television, magazines, etc.) is being used.

"The internet is good and bad," says Dremali. "Allah gave us the brains to think where is the good way and where is the bad way. According to your choice Allah will judge you."

***YOU PORN ADDICTS: THERE IS A WAY OUT!!**

"Say: O Ibadi (My slaves) who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins)! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah, verily Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (Quran 39:53)

Whether it's pornography, stealing, lying, backbiting, our sins, for most of us at least, accumulate day by day.

We may try to hold our tongues, lower our gaze, not disrespect our parents and/or elders, or avoid a myriad of the sins Allah has ordered us to avoid, but as humans we are weak, and we can and do make mistakes daily (if not hourly).

But while Allah prescribes punishment, either in this life, the next life or both, the doors of repentance are always open. No matter how awful our sin, until we die, Allah is always ready to hear and accept our repentance, provided it is sincere and results in change.

In the Quran, Allah repeatedly says that He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.

In a commentary of Qur'anic verses 63 to 73 of Surah 25 (Al-Furqan), Syed Abul Ala Maududi discusses this story from the time of the Prophet related by the scholar Ibn Kathir as an example of forgiveness:

Abu Huraira said: "One day when I returned home after offering the Isha prayer in the Prophet's Mosque, I saw a woman standing at my door. I saluted her and walked into my room, closed the door and busied myself in voluntary worship. After a while she knocked at the door. I opened the door and asked what she wanted. She said that she had come with a problem: she had committed Zina (sex outside of marriage), had become pregnant, given birth to a child and then killed it. She wanted to know if there was any chance of her sin being forgiven. I replied in the negative. She went back grief-stricken, exclaiming, 'Ah! This beautiful body was created for the fire!'

The next morning, after the prayer, when I related the night's incident before the Holy Prophet, he said, 'You gave a very wrong answer, Abu Huraira. Haven't you read the Qur'anic verse which says:

'(Those) who do not invoke any other deity than Allah, nor slay such life as Allah has made sacred, except for just cause, nor commit fornication; and any

that does this not only meets punishment but the penalty on the Day of Judgment will be doubled to him, and he will dwell there in ignominy—except the one who believes (or reaffirms his faith) and does righteous deeds. Allah will change evil of such persons into good deeds, and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.’

Hearing this from the Prophet, I went out in search of the woman, and had her traced again at Isha time (night prayer). I gave her the good news and told her what the Holy Prophet had said in reply to her question.

She immediately fell prostrate on the ground and thanked Allah, Who had opened a way for her forgiveness.

Then she offered repentance and set a slave-girl, along with her son, free."

***And hereafter are some points to be taught to youth (and non-youth)**

to protect them against this trap called “pornography addiction”:

Tip #1: Know what is Halal and what’s not

We may think only hard core pornography is Islamically unacceptable. This is not true.

Improperly dressed men and women, sexual situations, foreplay, kissing, touching, dirty jokes: none of these are Islamically acceptable.

Tip #2: Remember your accountability to Allah

In America and some other countries, you’re fully responsible for your actions when you turn 18. In Islam, you’re fully accountable as soon as you understand these things. So that means that from that point onwards, you cannot assume looking at this stuff is no big deal. Your eyes will testify about what you looked at on the Day of Judgment. Remember that Allah is always watching. He

is Most Just and Merciful, and He rewards us for the good and punishes us for the bad we do.

Tip #3: Become conscious of the Haram

Too often, it's easy to dismiss that billboard with the spandex-and-bikini-top-clad blonde girl advertising gum, or the guy in tight leather pants and no shirt advertising perfume. When you see it, remember the Islamic perspective, your accountability to Allah, and lower your gaze. Do the same for television and the internet. If you keep doing this, Insha Allah, it'll become a habit, and eventually an automatic reaction.

Tip #4: If feeling overwhelmed, remember Allah

In situations where you feel overwhelmed and can't get yourself to switch the channel, close the browser window or turn your eyes away from the billboard, ask Allah's help. You don't necessarily need any heavy duty, long Duas. La hawla wa la quwwata illa billah (there is no power or ability except with Allah) is short, simple, and reminds you who is really in control and can help you out of this.

Tip #5: Seek refuge in Allah from Shaytan

Shaytan lured you into this mess. Seeking refuge in Allah (saying Aoutho billahi minash Shaytan ir Rajeem), will help you resist him and his whisperings to continue looking at the material, Insha Allah.

Tip #6: Get up and leave

If you feel unable to control looking at the screen or the magazine, leave the situation. Get out of the living room, your bedroom where the internet is, or

where you've been reading the magazine. Take a walk. Just do something to physically get out of the situation.

Tip #7: Avoid those involved in pornography

If one of your friends is into pornographic magazines, websites, dirty jokes etc. either help him or her change through gentle and sincere advice ([see etiquettes of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil](#)) or abandon frequent contact with them. Their compulsion will affect you, so it's best to stay as far away as possible, by remembering the danger to yourself, your religion, and your relationship with Allah.

Tip #8: Stay away from places where it's found

Sometimes it's on a billboard on a highway and you can't miss it. But often times, you'll notice certain parts of your city (the seedier ones) tend to be filled with this kind of material (where there are usually strip joints, for example). Avoid these places as much as you can. If it's on your way to school, try to change your route. Also, in summer, stay away from the beach.

Tip #9: Surf or watch T.V. when others are around

The temptation to sneak a look at dirty pictures or that bikini-clad babe is heightened when you're alone in your room watching television or surfing the internet. Try to avoid late night T.V. and internet surfing. Instead, watch or surf when others are around so you can resist the urge to sneak a peek, thinking no one's watching (and remember Allah is ALWAYS watching). It is a good idea not to have TV or computer in the bedroom anyway. Living room or study room are better place for this stuff.

Tip #10: Remember your example

If you have younger brothers and sisters, think of the bad example you're setting for them. What message will they get if they barge into your room and catch you watching Baywatch or flipping through Playboy.

Tip #11: For brothers-remember your mom and sister

Disgusting right? Exactly. No one in his right mind would look at his mom or sister the way many of us look at the Baywatch babes or the girls on the internet or in magazines. Remember mom and your sister, and that should sicken you enough to stop, Insha Allah.

Tip #12: Have someone watch over you

If you really feel you're becoming addicted (see <http://www.soundvision.com>) to this kind of material, try to watch TV, surf the internet with someone else. You don't have to tell them why you're doing this, but this method can perhaps keep you in check and help you avoid looking at pornography or other similar material. After all, Shaytan tempts us most easily when we're alone. Sitting in the company of a family member or good Muslim friend will Insha Allah, help.

Tip #13: Fast

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) advised us to fast to cool passions. This should be a method we use to handle the desire aroused by pornography and similar material.

Tip #14: Tauba: Return to Allah

If you do end up watching the bad stuff, repent to Allah. Seek His forgiveness, reaffirm your faith in Him, and do good deed to compensate for that sin. He is All-Forgiven as long as you are sincere.

Tip #15: Repent Again and Fine Yourself

If you lapse, do tauba again. Allah is All-Forgiving as long as we mean it. But then you need to discipline yourself by promising to yourself that if I did it again, I will pay this much in charity or fast for a day.

The message is that don't give up on you. Keep trying. Struggle is life. Shaitan could be creative. And with the help of Allah, you will be the winner insha Allah.

***WHAT TO DO IF A FRIEND IS INVOLVED IN SUCH A BIG SIN LIKE PORNOGRAPHY ADDICTION?**

Al Tirmithi reported that the prophet (PBUH) addressed his companions saying: "Do not keep company except with whom who is a good believer (follower), and do not feed anyone except to whom who is pious"

There is no doubt that when young people keep company with those who have faith and piety, they will adopt their righteousness, integrity, and good habits as well as following them in their faith and piety. On the other hand, those who accompany wrongdoers and the rebellious, take from their evil, corruption and bad habits, and will follow them in their wrongdoing and rebellion. Al Tirmithi recorded this meaning from the words of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) when he said: **"A man embraces the religion of his friend, thus the individual should be aware of whom he takes as a friend"**

In order not to have conflicts about the meaning of this statement of prophet Mohammad's (PBUH), we have to understand that the friendship is a very precious blessing, so, and taking in consideration that "Faith increases and decreases" as Allah messenger (PBUH) mentioned in one of his statements, friends who basically are in good terms with the good principles –especially religious ones-, should be alert for each others' level of faith, to give a good hand to that whose faith is in a status of decrease due to any reason, and not to abandon him with the excuse of his being not very religious, on the contrary, we have to be more focusing on treating the wrongdoing(s) he sinks in. let us see an example of the role of a friend towards another on the light of Islamic basics:

Enjoining or commanding the good and forbidding the evil is a Muslim's duty. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Whoever among you sees a Munkar (offensive or evil act), then he must change it with his hand; if he is incapable, then with his tongue; if he is incapable, then with his heart; and that is the weakest faith" (Muslim).

Here are some tips to be considered:

Tip #1: Know what you are talking about

Know the [Islamic perspective](#) on this issue by reading up on it and talking to knowledgeable and trustworthy Muslims and followers.

Tip #2: Hate it with your heart

Sometimes, we are not in a position where we can do anything about pornography with our hand or by saying something about. The least we should do is hate this in our hearts. That means hating to hear dirty jokes, to see half-naked individuals selling products on television or in magazines, and hating to

encounter this kind of material in general. By hating it, we will develop sensitivity against it, and be able to see how disgusting it is.

Tip #3: Practice what you preach

Not only is this an Islamic requirement, but also keep in mind that if Imran or anyone else sees you lecturing about porn but catches you sneaking a peak at one of the women on Baywatch, he'll notice your hypocrisy and be less likely to take you seriously.

Tip #4: Show genuine concern for him

Friendship is built on concern for others. This is why so many young people turn to friends instead of parents in times of crisis because many parents often don't express this concern openly. By showing genuine concern, your advice is more likely to be heeded, InshaAllah.

Tip #5: Be sincere in your advice

Don't try to change Imran so he can see how much you know, or to impress others. Do it sincerely, for the sake of Allah and because Imran is your brother, and all Muslims are like one body.

Tip #6: Speak to him in private

NEVER bring up this problem in front of other people. Even if Imran doesn't realize this is wrong, belittling him or exposing this fault of his in front of others will make him defensive and angry. He'll probably not want to associate with you very much after you've humiliated him publicly. Your opportunity to help him then, is lost. Talk to him when the two of you are alone.

Tip #7: Talk to him on the right occasion

Indirectly bring up the topic when you're alone together. Either wait for him to tell you about his latest Internet surfing adventures or when something inappropriate comes on television, lower your gaze or ask him to change the channel. When he asks why, begin the discussion.

Tip #8: Be gentle

Yelling, screaming, threatening, trying to trash your friend's computer are not going to get him to stop viewing pornography. Remember that harshness often makes people rebel instead of turning them towards what's right. Think about your parents. When they yell at you to do something, are you likely to do what they ask happily and willingly? Or are you more likely to do it if they address you in a gentle and kind manner? Use the same principle on any friend having the same problem.

Tip #9: Speak about your personal experience

Start off describing your own initial ignorance about this topic, but after researching you found out why watching pornography and similar material was unacceptable and decided not to try to stop looking at it. This will make it clear to that friend that you yourself are dealing with the problem, not just talking. After doing this, discuss with him gently about his own problem with pornography.

Tip #10: Be patient

In a best-case scenario, your friend will realize the error of his ways, and automatically stop looking at the pornographic material.

In a most-case scenario, he will feel uncomfortable, but will not be willing to give up his habit. He may whine, try to justify what he's doing, etc.

Be patient. Change does not happen overnight. Keep at him, but continue to be gentle, and wisely bring up the issue. Offer to help him. Give him [some tips](#) (see above).

Tip #11: Make Doa' (prayers and requests from Allah) for him

Only Allah can really change anyone's heart and actions. Make Doa' for this friend and others in same situation regularly. Don't give up on him/them.

***SOME STATISTICS AND FACTS ABOUT PORNOGRAPHY:**

Web usage by interest:

- #1 News/Information
- #2 Adult (pornography)
- #3 Chat room/Discussion Groups
- #4 Games

***Percentage of pornographic sites:**

"Over 30% of sites on the World Wide Web are pornographic" (*USA Today*, April 8, 1998)

Looking for one thing, finding another

"Our internet search engine reports reveal a disturbing reality. In over 99% of the hits directed to our site, the person performing the search was looking for pornography, many looking for child pornography. To think, 99% used pornography search words inspired our project, Internet Intervention. Internet Intervention is a network of computers, hosting hundreds of websites, which direct the keyword searcher of child pornography to an Intervention Help

Site. The very people that need it the most see our message of help. Click here to see a help website that you could have been directed to if you use child pornography search words on your search engine request."

-From the website of the Tonya Flynt Foundation, an anti-pornography website. Tony Flynt is the daughter of notorious American pornographer Larry Flynt.

***A Multi billion dollar industry:**

Pornography is a \$12-\$13 billion-a-year industry-more than the combined annual revenues of the Coca-Cola and McDonnell Douglas corporations.

Pornographic entertainment on the Internet constituted the third largest sector of sales in cyberspace, with estimated annual revenues of \$100 million. Such marketing success has fueled an increase in the size of the pornography industry -- \$10 *billion* annually, according to conservative estimates.

***Hits on a porn site:**

Playboy's headquarters received 4.7 million hits (electronic visits) in a recent seven-day period.

***Porn video rentals:**

Porn video rentals soared to 665 million in 1996, accounting for 13.3% of video rentals in America. Profits of sales and rentals of porn videos was \$4.2 billion in 1996.

***Addiction to pornography:**

Pornography consumption can be as "mood altering" and as addictive as narcotics,

Studies show pornography is progressive and addictive for many. It often leads to the user acting out his fantasy - often on children.

***Pornography's effects on fathers:**

More sophisticated analysis reveals that men who had "purchased pornographic materials in the past year" had significantly lower marital,

fathering and family-life satisfaction when compared to those who had not purchased pornographic materials in the past year.

***Pornography and sexual assault:**

Research gathered over the past few decades demonstrates that pornography contributes to sexual assault, including rape and the molestation of children.

Child molesters often use pornography to seduce their prey, to lower the inhibitions of the victim, and to serve as an instruction manual.

***Who consumes pornography?**

A primary pornography consumer group is boys between ages 12 - 17.
-Attorney General's Final Report on Pornography, 1986, pg. 258

***Pornography's effect on sexual relationships:**

Pornography distorts the natural development of personality. If the early stimulus is pornographic photographs, the adolescent can be conditioned to become aroused through photographs. Once this pairing is rewarded a number of times, it is likely to become permanent. The result to the individual is that it becomes difficult for the person to seek out relations with appropriate persons.

VI. ISLAMIC CONCEPTS OF MARITAL SEXUALITY

Demonstrating the venerable characteristics that are of Islamic *Shari'a* that are exemplified in its divinity, practicality, and comprehensiveness; we – hereby- are talking about the point of Allah's comprehensiveness with regard to creation, life, and man, as we study Allah's view towards sex. This issue will be addressed in this chapter in order to clarify that Allah is a religion in harmony with man's innate nature. Its laws are for eternity as well as for this life... until Allah returns the earth and all what is on it to His Holy self. Allah the Almighty says: ***"..And who is better in judgment than Allah for a people who have firm faith? (5:50)***

Undoubtedly, Allah acknowledges the innate impulses and sexual urges of man. This is based on the words of Allah. God Almighty says: ***"(That is) the nature (fitra) with which Allah has created mankind" (30:30).***

It should be noted that there couldn't exist any contradiction between the law of Allah and the urges that He inculcates in man. How could such contradiction exist when the laws which Allah, the Almighty, laid down were laid down for the sake of man to be His vicegerent on Earth and to strive his utmost in building up its civilization. As Allah is the lord of mankind and the One worthy of man's worship, it is Him who legislates for them laws that raise humanity an achieve their welfare and happiness for them in this world and the one after.

Allah recognizes the power of sexual need, but the subject is discussed in the Allah and the saying of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in a serious manner, in regard to marital and family life. Parents should familiarize themselves with this body of knowledge.

The sexual aspect of life in Allah has three basic purposes:

1-Fulfillment of one's desire, satisfaction of one's sexual pleasure, and enjoyment of this blessing so as to lead a balanced happy life, with positive effect on oneself and others.

2-Ejection of bodily fluids from the body; otherwise suppression or retention of semen can cause various kinds of serious illness namely; pelvic congestion and its well-being-threatening sequences especially prostatitis.

3-Conservation of human race and continuity of its kind until it reaches the total number of human beings intended by Allah leave to experience life in this world, to fulfill the divine purpose, and to show gratitude to its creator.

***Evidence Confirming Allah's Acknowledgement of These inclinations and Urges:**

i- Allah words:

1- *“Made tempting to people is the love of lusts, women, and children, heaped up hoards of gold and silver, choicest horses, cattle and crops. Such is the enjoyment of the life of this world, but the everlasting and best abode is with Allah” (3:14)*

2- *“And there is no blame on you if you make an indirect proposal of marriage to widowed women during their waiting terms, or keep it concealed in your hearts for Allah knows that you will think of them, but do not make any secret engagement with them, except to speak of righteousness...” (2:235)*

3- *“And the woman of the house he was living in began to tempt him and totally locked the doors on them, and she said: ‘come take me’, he said: I seek refuge in Allah, he is my lord who has given me a good abode...” (12:23)*

4- *“So when she heard about their sly talk, she sent for them and she gave each one of them a knife and she said: ‘Coe*

forth Joseph before them; so when they saw him, they were so carried away in admiration for him that they cut their hands unknowingly and they said: ‘God forbid! This cannot be human, he must be an honorable angel’ (12:31)

5- *“It is lawful for you, on the nights of fasting to approach your wives, they are your garments and you are their garments; Allah knows that you were betraying yourselves, but he has turned to you and pardoned you, so now approach them and seek what Allah has ordained for you...” (2:187)*

6- *“If you fear Allah, speak not in an affected tone, so that he in whose heart is a disease may yearn; but tell honorable words (with clear meanings)” (33:32)*

7- *“And from HIS signs (miracles) is that HE created for yourselves spouses, for you to find serenity with them and he has set between you affection and mercy..” (30:21)*

ii- in Sunnah (Prophet Mohamed (PBUH) sayings):

1- **“Five practices are basic instinctive characteristics: circumcision (male), shaving pubic region, clipping the nails and cutting the moustaches short”**

2-**“If you enter your town by night after coming from a journey, do not enter upon your family till the woman whose husband was absent shaves the pubic hair and the woman with unkept hair to comb her hair”**

3- **Jabir ben Abdallah (a young companion of the holy prophet who was in his early twenties or late teens at that time) narrated: “while we were returning from a ‘ghazwa’ (holy battle) with Prophet (PBUH), I started driving my camel fast, as it was a lazy camel, a rider came behind me and bricked my camel with a spear he had with him, and then my camel started running as fast as the best camel you may see. Behold! The rider was the**

Prophet (PBUH) himself. He said: ‘what makes you run in such a hurry?’ I replied: ‘I am newly married’. He said: “Did you marry a virgin or a matron? I replied: ‘a matron’. He said: ‘Why didn’t you marry a virgin so that you may play with her and she with you?’ I said: ‘o Allah messenger; my parents passed away leaving 9 sisters and me, so I pitied a virgin for taking that huge responsibility of taking care of my 9 younger sisters’ He said: ‘God bless you’. And he gave me the permission to precede the rest of the army, and advised me saying: ‘but make it so that you may enter Madina at night for your wife to get ready for you.

4-“When one of you (means Muslim men) sees a woman, he should come to his wife, for that will repel what he feels in his heart”

5-Describing the events of an actual intercourse, prophet Mohamed (PBUH) said: “...marriage is not complete until she tastes the honey of her husband and he tastes her honey”. Mentioning the equality in needs and interests and also in the ways of having fun, satisfaction and fulfillment.

6-“I intended to prohibit cohabitation with a lactating women until I considered the Romans and the Persians do it without any injury being caused to children thereby”. The reason why the Holy prophet was going to forbid such an act is that he thought that if ever a woman performs sexual intercourse, this could affect her hormonal pattern in a way that it could harm baby’s health through affecting his nutrition. The reason why suckling the milk of a woman by her adult husband is right was explained in the following lines by Imam Malik; when the adult drinks milk of his wife, the milk is treated as a food and not as foster milk.

7-“Othman ben Madhoun (one of the followers) said: “Allah Messenger (PBUH) refused his permission for sexual abstinence” and he added: if he had approved, we would have had castration done. And the

purpose of refusing permitting sexual abstinence is the refusal of prohibiting what Allah permitted.

8-“Whoever claims himself to be a good follower of mine, let him have a spouse”

9-Prophet Mohamed was about to go into a Holy battle, then he said to the group of Muslim members of his army: “whoever is engaged to marriage and did not yet marry, let him not come with me nor follow me”

***And masturbation.. what about the Islamic point of view concerning it?**

This was a question of a young man to the Islamic web site www.islamonline.net, and here is the exact answer sent to him:

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger.

Dear brother, we would like to thank you for showing keenness on learning the teachings of Allah, and we appreciate the great confidence you have in us. We hope our efforts meet your expectations.

With regard to your question, it is very important as it touches a problem most of Muslim youth, who are yet to get married, are facing due to the great deal of temptations surrounding them. As you know, masturbation is perfectly acceptable in non-Muslim societies and is practiced by large number of people: young, single, old, and even married. However, the situation is different in Allah. The ruling on masturbation is governed by some considerations that might change the ruling from one person to another.

The late prominent scholar **Sheikh Mustafa Az-Zarqa**, may Allah bless his soul, has analyzed the issue of masturbation in detail and, after discussing the different views of scholars and jurists regarding it, issued the following fatwa:

The only legal text used as evidence for the prohibition of masturbation is Allah's saying describing the believers: ***“Those who guard their sexual organs except with their spouses or those whom their right hands possess, for (with regard to them) they are without blame. But those who crave something beyond that are transgressors.” (23:5-7)***

Commenting on this verse, some scholars hold the view that this habit (masturbation) falls under the category of those who seek fulfillment of their sexual desires outside the framework of marriage, and as such they are deemed transgressors. Those scholars put masturbation under the list of the forbidden categories of sexual fulfillment since it constitutes transgression of boundaries. This view is held by the Shafei (followers of the Shafi`Allah school of *Fiqh*). However, some other scholars believe that the transgression meant in the aforementioned verse refers to extra-marital relations and what falls under the category of *Zina* (adultery). According to this view, masturbation does not fall under the meaning of this verse. This view is very close to the opinion held by the Hanafites (followers of the Hanafi school), who maintain that masturbation is basically forbidden, but it may be permissible under the following conditions:

1. If the person is unmarried,
2. If he or she fears that without masturbation he/she will commit *Zina*, and
3. If the masturbation here is, rather than fulfilling a sexual desire, just to release the sexual tension resulting from stimulation.

I conclude that the general principles of Shari`ah go against this habit, because it is not the normal way of fulfilling sexual desire; however it is a deviation – and that is enough to condemn it, even though this act does not fall under the category of absolute prohibition like *Zina*. However, the law of necessity, which is one of the principles of *Shari`ah*, should also apply here. For example, if someone is afraid that he would commit a greater sin like *Zina* or he will be harmed by some psychological disorders, then the ban on masturbation

would be relaxed just to remove the hardship, based on the *Shari`ah* principle that states that “*necessity is judged according to the circumstances that warrant it.*”

That means going to the extreme in masturbating is not permissible in all cases, for the following two reasons:

1. It would be resorted to not as a case of extreme necessity to release the tension and the pain resulting from sexual arousal, but to fulfill the sexual desire, and
2. It is harmful to one’s health, and whatever is physically harmful is not allowed in *Shari`ah*, according to the consensus of the Muslim scholars.

In addition to the two conditions stipulated by the Hanafites, I would add two more conditions based on the general rules of *Shari`ah*:

1. The difficulty of getting married, and
2. The inability to fast.

As we know, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised those who cannot afford marriage to fast, saying: “**O youth, whoever of you is able to marry, let him marry, for it prevents forbidden stares or lapsing in adultery. And if he cannot marry, let him observe fasting, for it is a shield against evil.**” This is the view I believe to be the most correct concerning this issue.”

Allah Almighty knows best.

VII. CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE IN ISLAM

***The legislation of marriage in response to the human urge and inclinations towards sex as a main instinct:**

For Allah, the institution of marriage based on mutuality of natural interest and cordiality between spouses represents a sublime manifestation of the Divine Will and Purpose. This is discernible in the Quranic verse cited below:

Allah Almighty says:

“And among His signs is this, that He created for you from among yourselves mates that you may dwell in tranquility with them and He has made between you affection and mercy. Surely in this are signs for people who are reflecting” (30:21).

I would like here to express that there are two verses in the holy Allah, which are complementary with each other, putting the whole constitution for the marital life with all its sides, the first one is this one which is setting the rule for the everyday life events within the marriage, and the second is coming a bit later telling about every single rule concerning the sexual life. This makes a perfect mixture for the believing followers if they stick to what Allah ordered and Prophet Mohamed (PBUH) has demonstrated in his blessed Sunnah.

Here comes the urge to disclose the meanings present in this past verse, which could be not very clear to most of people (even Allah) who read the Allah just simply without getting into its profound meanings, and among whom I have met a lot in the audients of the lectures I gave in different countries of the Allah

world, and who were so astonished of that clear miraculous meaning which seemed like unclear to them. So let us interpret in details; word by word the verse #21, coming in chapter 30 (called “*Ar-rum*” or “*the Romans*”):

-And among his signs (aya’s’); this means that this is one of the multiple Allah miracles, and mentioning the word “aya” –which comes in this verse in the plural form- has many meanings in the Arabic dictionary:

1st: sign-mark-indication

2nd: miracle-wonder-marvel

3rd: example-lesson-warning

4th: exemplar-pattern

5th: masterpiece

6th: verse (divine book verse)

So, here is clear that Allah Almighty mentioned only 1 word to indicate all these above-meanings; let us continue to admire together the inimitability and the wondrous nature of the Holy Allah;

- “that he created for you”: this is just the literal/verbal meaning of the verse, but the substantial meaning is something else; this is that Allah wants people in general and followers specifically to get the idea of the particularization and the individualization which is gotten from the word ‘for you’.
- “from among yourselves”: This is to be said also literally, but substantially, we have to try to see through that there is a common source for the

created beings, so as every spouse has to know that his mate is created in the very first place from his/her self so as to have to look after, and to keep safe, sound, and happy, and also not ever to hurt, neither verbally nor physically, which is to be summarized into giving the same care to the spouse as to oneself. All these meanings are inspired from the word “yourselves”

- “:mates/spouses”: Here is lastly the entity that Allah kept introducing to mention; so this is the lucky structure Allah was talking about with all this specification for humans to know that the man/woman entities are not separable from each other as they both have the same source of creation; which was split to be reunified at an indicated time; that is marriage, which is the Holy unification God likes most.
- “that you may dwell in tranquility with them”: the target word in his verse is “tranquility”, so let us enquire about the meanings of the Arabic word used to give this verbal meaning in the Arabic dictionary:

1st: trust in-confidence in

2nd: having faith in-rely on

3rd: feel at ease with

4th: to calm with-to tranquilize with

5th: to be relieved with

As we notice, all these up-mentioned meanings are the main purposes of the marital relationship; and that is why Allah created both parties from the same source and entity so as if someone finds his right partner, all these purposes would be there and fulfilled.

-“and he has made between you”: this is to signify the main kind of feelings that should be present between parties to be married, so as to be able to start over a marital life on solid basis.

-“affection and mercy”; of course the original language any statement is established with gives the best and the most precise meaning ever, and this is the clue of the poorness of the verbal/literal meaning in relation to the substantial profound meaning originally aimed to; and I would like all of us to notice other very important point here; this is that Allah Almighty did not mention love as to be there obligatorily before marriage, but He preconditioned these two above-mentioned kinds of feelings; affection, and mercy. So let us move to the different meanings of the word ‘affection’ (*Mawaddah*):

1st: cordiality-friendly feeling-goodwill

2nd: sincere affection-friendliness-amicability

3rd: intimacy-friendship-love

About the word “mercy” (*Rahmah*):

1st: mercy-clemency

2nd: lenity-leniency

3rd: compassion-pity

4th: sympathy-graciousness-kindness

If we have a significant and a profound look throughout all these positive feelings mentioned just above, we could conclude that the simplest way to express “Mawaddah” or “affection” is to talk very gently with one’s partner and

to take a very special care to be a very sweet talker, meaningly, usually to say nice words, like unceasingly flattering the other's good looking and elegance, always saying nice words expressing positive feelings like love, missing, appreciation, and also being thankful whenever indicated, and overall being always aware of the other's feelings whether positive or negative, like happiness, sadness, and always being supportive and merged to each other as one unit.. and many other positive feelings that could be concluded from, and are included in the global meaning of the word "Mawaddah" or "sincere affection"

Coming to the word "*rahmah*" or "mercy":

I personally assume that in nowadays lifestyle-language; this could be simply translated into: non-charging/non-burdening one another beyond his/her tolerance or bearing capability, whether this overcharging is physical, emotional, moral, or financial.

So, let us imagine a marital life, both parties of which are good believing followers, having all these up-mentioned positive feelings, and insisting on performing the good behavior Allah ordered, wouldn't it be a greatly happy life? Surely no one could ever imagine that there is an existing marital life with no negative sides, but taking these principles as basics of our marital life would be always able to cut every negativity short, because of having the power of fighting due to the hardness of the ground this relationship specifically is standing over. On the other hand, letting go one or both of the two main preconditions Allah set as rules for the happy marriage would never guarantee a long-lasting happiness within the marital life.

-“surely in this”: this is to mention that what came in the words of the verse so far is positively...

-“signs”/”*aya's*”’: here is a repetition of the word “aya” also in the plural form, this is meant by Allah Almighty to remind the reader that it is not a simple thing to differentiate two sexes from the same origin; to remodel them to match each other, and to put all these positive feelings in the one towards the other...

Really, especially this matter of feelings is not at all a facile process to be created. Coming to the last word in this amazing Quranic verse;

-“for people who are reflecting”’: the exact word means verbally:

1st: thinking about-cerebrate

2nd: consideration-contemplation

3rd: reflection-mediation-cogitation

4th: pondering-musing-speculation

5th: thought-intellection-reasoning

From all these above-mentioned meanings of this word, we clearly conclude the substantial meaning, that is Allah here wants to attract readers’ attention saying that this Quranic verse is not as simple as to be read verbally and that’s it; but to be read, understood, thought about very deeply, picked up its profound meanings which are there beyond the mere words, here why he mentioned the way of carrying out this whole process of marriage, and of leading a happy marital life, and here is why he is making an alert for the reader that he should reread, reunderstand, cerebrate, all the in-mentioned meanings (in

the verse) for the purpose of Allah to be fulfilled, so as to avoid ruining marital lives which are the most holy and sacred link mostly desired by Allah.

And here ends the Quranic verse which settles the rules and the principles that are now requested by the specialized psychologists and marriage counselors to be followed in order to achieve a maximally successful marital life.

According to Islamic tradition (*Sunnah*), marriage has been deemed to be an essential requirement. Celibacy has been regarded as a malevolent condition fraught with evils.

The Islamic approach concerning marriage and morals differs from what is known about some of the traditional moralizations of a negative kind. Surprisingly enough, certain traditional moralists regarded sexuality as something basically wicked. They viewed sexual intercourse; even with ones legal spouse, as impure, evil, undesirable, destructive, and as if it were characteristic of the guilty and fallen.

Still more surprising is the generalized view harbored in the West that the traditional world commonly believed in the superstition that ascribed an evil connotation to everything pertaining to sex. The famous Western philosopher, Bertrand Russell, is no exception in this regard. In his book: *Marriage and Morals*, he generalizes that:

“ ... anti-sexual elements, however, existed side by side with the others from a very early time, and in the end, where ever Christianity and Buddhism prevailed, these elements won a complete victory over their opposites. Westermarck gives many instances of what he calls ‘the curious notion, that there is something impure and sinful in marriage, as in sexual relations generally.

In the most diverse parts of the world, quite remote from any Christian or Buddhist influence, there have been orders of priests and priestesses vowed to celibacy. Among the Jews the sect of the Essenes considered all sexual intercourse impure. This view seems to have gained ground in antiquity.

... There was indeed a generalized tendency towards ascetism in the Roman Empire. Epicureanism nearly died out and stoicism replaced it among cultivated Greeks and Romans. ... The neo-Platonists were almost as ascetic as the Christians. From Persia the doctrine that matter is evil spread to the West, and brought with it the belief that all sexual intercourse is impure. This is, though not in an extreme form, the view of the Church..."

Negative sexual attitudes continued through the centuries to affect masses of credulous people, in an adverse and also frightening manner of repugnance towards sex. Some psychoanalysts largely and uniquely attribute the high incidence of psychosomatic disorders and spiritual ailments to a widespread prevalence of deeply ingrained negative sexuality.

***What could have been the causative factors in the misconceptions about sexuality?**

***What could be the reasons for men to deny themselves the natural satisfaction and the psychosomatic well being associated with healthy and desirable sex?**

***Why should people lead their lives, so as to virtually condemn an essentially wholesome part of their lives?**

These are some of the complex questions for which thinking men have yet to provide meaningful and convincing answers. Yet, we all know that there could be many different reasons for, and causes of, aversion to human sexuality. Apparently, the reasons include prejudicial thinking about sexual desire and intercourse. The prejudice was carried to the extreme among the Christians, in organizing their churches and the clergy.

The celibacy of Jesus Christ inspired them to the effect that married status for saints and preachers was considered tantamount to pollution of their chastity and piety. Accordingly, Popes are always chosen from among unmarried priests. In fact, all the members of the Catholic clergy are bound by their oaths of celibacy towards remaining virtuous.

Bertrand Russell says:

“Two or three beautiful descriptions of this institution (marriage) have been culled out of the immense mass of the patristic writings; but in general, it would be difficult to conceive anything more coarse or repulsive than the manner in which they regarded it. ... The object of the ascetic was to attract men to a life of virginity, and as a necessary consequence, marriage was treated as an inferior state. ... To ‘cut down by the axe of Virginity the wood of Marriage’ was in the energetic language of St. Jerome, the end of the saint”

Church approves marriage for purpose of human procreation. The need for propagation of human species is not construed as something adequate to lift the stigma of impurity from any sexual act. Another reason for conceding marriage is to eliminate fornication between men and women. Again to quote Bertrand Russell:

“Christianity, and more particularly St. Paul, introduced an entirely novel view of marriage that it existed not primarily for the procreation of children, but to prevent the sin of fornication”

The Catholic Church regards marriage as sacrosanct and binding until death intervenes. Accordingly, dissolution of marriage, or divorce, is not permitted. The prohibition of annulment of marriage or divorce may have something to do with a possible desire to atone for the original sin, resulting in the expulsion of Adam and Eve in an unmarried state.

Irrational attitudes towards women prevailed among some of the ancient peoples. These included a notion that a woman was not a complete human being; for, her situation as a creature might well lie somewhere between a human being and an animal. Also, she was devoid of an articulate spirit, so that she could never make it to Heaven! Similar other superstitions were rampant in the past.

Fortunately, however, the aforementioned beliefs and notions were not universally carried to the extreme. Any natural limits of women, as identified and evaluated in the past, were not encroached upon. Any impact of traditional ways of thinking did not go beyond cultivation of a sense of pride by men and inculcation of a sense of inferiority among women through generations.

Apparently, the belief in the inherent wickedness of sexual desire and intercourse made men and women absolutely and equally distressed in spiritual terms. Moreover, it caused a rather demoralizing conflict between the natural instinct's urge and the religious or sectarian belief about wickedness of carnal desire and sexual intercourse.

Spiritual ailments and unhappiness arising from the aforementioned conflict included disharmony between genuine natural desires and socially induced aversion towards their fulfillment. The problem assumed extraordinary proportions, in as much as it became the subject of intensive investigations by psychologists and psychoanalysts.

In the above context, the revolutionary logic of Allah can be of extraordinary interest. Allah gives no slightest indication to the effect that sexual desire is evil in it, or that it is necessarily fraught with evil consequences. On the contrary, the Islamic endeavor in this regard is aimed at regulating human sexuality in a most humane manner.

In the perspective of Quran, only the genuine interests of the present society, or the posterity limit human sexual relations. In this connection, the Islamic approach follows well known guidelines, leading neither to any sense of sexual deprivation and frustration, nor to any repressed or inhibited sexual desire. It is a pity that scholars, like Bertrand Russell, who has evaluated the Christian and Buddhist morals, have refrained from specifically commenting on Islamic ethics.

In his book: *Marriage and Morals*, Bertrand Russell mentions in passing about Allah. For example, he says:

“Great religious leaders, with the exception of Mohammad and Confucius, if he can be called religious – have in general been very indifferent to social and political considerations, and have sought rather to perfect the soul by meditation, discipline and self-denial.”

Nonetheless, it is true that from the Islamic point of view sexual desire is not only compatible with human intellectuality or spirituality, but is evidenced

as part of the nature and temperament of the prophets. According to one tradition (*hadith*), love and affection for women were characteristic of the moral conduct of the prophets.

There are several other traditions and narrations indicating prophetic regard for women. According to some, the Prophet of Allah and the pious Imams too have all explicitly demonstrated their love and regard for their wives and the womenfolk. At the same time, they have strongly disapproved of any human inclination towards celibacy or monasticism

One of the companions of the Holy Prophet, Osman bin Madaoon, devoted himself to Allah's worship to such an extent that he kept fast practically everyday, as well as regular nightly vigils in prayers. His wife brought the matter to the attention of the Prophet, who reacted with visible annoyance and proceeded at once to where his companion was and said:

“O Othman! Know that Allah has not deputed me to encourage any monastic life. My Shariah laws are meant for enhancing and facilitating human accomplishment of their natural lives. Personally, I offer my prayers, keep fast and maintain my conjugal relations. Accordingly, to follow me in Allah means conforming to the traditions laid down by me, which include the requirement that men and women should marry and live together harmoniously”

The Islamic position as explained above makes it clear that human sexuality in itself neither represents any inborn wickedness, nor it invariably signifies evil consequences. Furthermore, it clarifies that wickedness has been traditionally ascribed to human sexuality in the process of evolving religious

morality in the Western world. Now, the Western world has taken a 180-degree turn in reversing its extreme traditional morals.

At present, the Western world believes in respecting and freeing sexual desires and involvements through lifting of traditional moral restraints. In fact, many Westerners now favor sexual permissiveness. They contend that whatever morality has been inherited by them carries no more than a religious connotation. They claim that today's new morals are based on not only philosophical, but also scientific reasons.

Unfortunately, the negative sexuality traditionally and recently evolved in the West has penetrated the moral fabric of our society, too.

This is despite all the erstwhile difficulty of international communication. Now with the improved means of communication and regular international contacts, the modernistic Western speculations are virtually flooding our society, as will be explained later on herein.

Allah recognizes the strong sexual urge and desire for reproduction. Thus Allah encourages marriage as a legal sexual means and as a shield from immorality (sex without commitment). In Allah the marriage of a man and woman is not just a financial and legal living arrangement, not even just for reproduction, but providing a total commitment to each other, a contract witnessed by God. Love and joy of companionship is a part of the commitment. A married couple assumes a new social status and responsibility for himself, his wife and his children and for the community. The Allah says, ***“Among His signs is that He created consorts for you from among yourself, so that you may find tranquility with them, and (He) set love and compassion between you. Verily in this are signs for people who reflect” (30:21).***(see above)

***SAYINGS OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD ABOUT MARRIAGE:**

“Marriage is my tradition. He who rejects my tradition is not of me””**Marriage is half of religion. The other half is being Godfearing”**. In Allah rulings, there is no fixed rule as to the age of marriage. It is becoming fashionable for young Muslim men not to marry until they have completed their education, have a job, or reached age 26-30 or more. Similarly young Muslim girls say they want to marry after age 24. Why? When asked, they say, “I am not ready for it.” Not ready for what? Don’t they have normal sexual desire? If the answer is yes, then they have only one of the two choices a) marry or b) postpone sex (abstinence until they marry). The Great Allah *says, “Let those who find not the where withal for marriage, to keep them selves chaste till God find them the means from His Grace” (24:33).*

The Prophet said, **“Those of you who own the means should marry, otherwise should keep fasting for it curbs desires”** (Ibn Massoud).

VIII. PROTOCOLS OF SEX PRACTICE IN ISLAM

The Quranic exercise of sexuality assumes, therefore, an infinite majesty. It is life conveyed, existence multiplied, creation perpetuated. The sexual function is in itself a sacred function. It is one of those signs (*aya*) by which the power of Allah may be recognized. To accept one's sex is to accept being a witness to Allah. So the relation of the sexes was to be the object of very special attention on the part of the Allah: it must be regulated so that it may be used in the right way. The Allah does not itself lay down prohibitions; it merely regulates sexual practices.

Practicing sex in Allah is sometimes could be a rewarded worship (if within marriage), or a penalized sin (if outside marriage/adultery), so let us have a round on the different forms of possible sex practices and what Allah stated concerning them:

***IDEAL PICTURE OF SEX PRACTICE:**

Coming to the other Quranic verse mentioned earlier setting very clear and in the very details Allah rules about optimum sexual relationship between married couple, establishing a “manual” of dealing a happiest sex life ever, and thus adding to performing the previous everyday life-instructions explained latterly, this would lead people to get a perfect marital life.

“Your wives/women are tilth for you so you have to approach your polwings by any way you desire and introduce for yourselves and fear Allah and know that you are to meet Him (in the hereafter) and give good tidings to those who believe”(2:223)

-“your wives”: this is the verbal meaning, which also means your wives. About the substantial meaning: Allah here is talking to males of mankind of his creatures, this is proved by starting the verse by this word “your wives”, and here, we have to notice the same principle followed in the verse of “*Ar-rum*” explained latterly, this is targeting the possession instinct using the word ”your” reminding man here that these women (wives) are belongings to them with all the preconditions of possessing a belonging, among which is proper conservation and guarding, and looking after, and all other feelings mentioned in the explanation of the verse (30:21). Allah Almighty could have mentioned “wives” or “women” without the word “your”, but here is clear again the desire of stimulating the instinct of possession being so powerful and governing especially in men.

-“tilth”: its different verbal meanings are as follows:

1st: plowing

2nd: tilling

3rd: cultivation

4th: culture

5th: arable place

Substantially: Allah here is confining the place of the sexual act between the man and the wife to the site of cultivation (which is putting a seed to obtain the a plant, the seed here being the sperms and the plant being the offspring); this is in the mean time denying every other place for mating but the vagina which fulfills the above-mentioned conditions, as well as confirming one of the

main purposes of marriage which is giving rise to further generations of mankind... simply having kids.

-“for you”: here is again the mostly clear purpose of Allah to endear wives to their husbands; by confirming these women and their given offspring to be belonging to men. The instinct of acquisition and mastery being much stronger in men than in women, and Allah, being the creator of both parties He insists on mentioning it but towards the kind purpose which is: being tender and take a good care of one’s woman; and also mentioning that they are the carriers of your children; is suggestive of their rights (women’s) to have your best care you men!!

- “so you approach your powling”: Actually this is an order from Allah to men whom He started the verse talking to; and He gives the meaning of those men are not free in approaching or non-approaching their wives; but they actually.. have to.. proved by this clear, non-conditioned order to them given by the greatest creator Almighty, and this is inclusively a divine admission of the women right in having sex and that she is not just a receiver or a container for man’s desire or ejaculate; but taking in consideration women’s timidity sometimes and pride some other times, one or both of which could keep them from requesting the relationship, Allah being her creator as well as his, is ordering this approach to be taken over by the man, him being the positive partner in the sexual relationship; so man is the one to be ordered of approaching, initiating, and performing; the whole thing being dependent on his own capabilities, and if ever he is not that capable, the act could not be performed, but on the other hand, e has to consider motivating himself towards it even if he does not desire it spontaneously; for another partner is being having

a right in it, and this right is not to be suspended to partner's terms. By the way, this is a known policy in treating male sexual dysfunction.

- "By anyway you desire": in the first part of this sentence, the original Arabic word mentioned in this verse is a very small one "*anna*" which is an Arabic adverb of time, place and manner/method, the second part is "you desire"; substantially, I assume that this small and simple word "*anna*" could solve the problem the most widespread in the whole world; this is the sexual boredom. In this verse, man is given an unlimited freedom in sexual action in performing the sexual relationship, meaningly, in whatever place, time, and manner couple wills. So, about the time, sex is allowed any time; day or night, so long as neither of the couple is fasting (like during the daytime of the holy month of Ramadan). About the place, this denotes the possibility of changing the place of the intercourse so that to bypass the condition-link between the act and the place and thus avoiding boredom as well; this sometimes works markedly in sex therapy, especially when choosing unusual places for the intercourse, that is to add a funny texture to the process; thing also breaking boredom. Coming to –and ending with- the manner; I personally explained this part of the Quranic expression is meaning the sex positions, which nowadays reached several hundreds (this is explained and confirmed by several statements of Prophet Mohamed's which will be mentioned later). Please notice that this was mentioned that early in time (more than 1425 years ago) by insinuating one's freedom in choosing between unlimited patterns of having sex!!!

- "and": in the Arabic language this "and" is just one letter. It may be a bit weird that I am giving such a small word and look attentively, to the significance of it is being specifically here: in the Arabic linguistics, this letter is there for the purpose for the purpose of togetherness; meaning that what is mentioned before occurs obligatorily with what is mentioned after it; in other words, what is before and what is after this letter should be happening together

necessarily. Now, in the light of this fact, let us see what is this thing which is preconditioned by Allah to be taken over in order to have all the latterly mentioned rights in sex relationship:

- “introduce”: this is a very important basic element for the sexual relationship in general and for a successful one in particular; this is the ‘introduction’ or...’the foreplay’. Yes, this is a divine order from Allah to men to introduce for the act; this is of course because Allah knows very well the importance of such a basis for the act being –again and again- the creator of men, women, their instincts, needs, requirements, as well as best ways available to perform this act in a way so as to achieve optimum outcomes possible; and this could never happen without a properly executed foreplay. The man being the main approacher and initiator, he is the one who has to be told to, or rather ordered to do it, in order to guarantee woman’s right to get her pleasure which could be ignored or neglected by the man, or sometimes she does not ask for it out of timidity or shyness, and some other times she does not even know about her capability to get the same pleasure as her husband. To summarize, Allah is extremely keen about giving the women their rights to obtain their sexual pleasures and getting their orgasms; their sexual cycles being a bit longer in time than men’s, if man was left without being sexually-educated or directed to how to act, he could be finishing his own cycle while doing sex and that’s it, in this situation, with his cycle being shorter than his wife’s, women would never be able to reach orgasm so long as her spouse does not care about introducing for the act, and thus a very important right of hers’ is let down, but Allah Almighty would never let this happen, so, on the way of preventing these fallings, Allah gave these orders to men specifically.

- “for yourselves”: Hereby is a deeper and deeper meaning of sexual practice; this is about the nature of the instinct and the difference of its potency between man and woman, being much more potent in males because of the huge

quantity of testosterone he has in his serum by nature, also the difference in perceiving and responding to sexual stimuli including the compliance and interaction of man's sex partner, being larger although on men than women; so, one of the main sexual stimuli for the man is the woman sexual interaction, pleasuring, and orgasm, and even multiple orgasms. In other words; as much as the woman reacts and interacts with the man and responds to his erotic plays (foreplays), the man's pleasure and excitement increase. This is actually the profound meaning of Allah divine words: "for yourselves"... what a beauty!!!! Back to reality; these are the words of the creator of the mankind and all their instincts, meaningly the manual for best performance of the mankind Allah has sculptured by his divine hands, thus He is the best to tell about His product

- "and fear Allah and know that you are to meet him": here comes the turn for the threat for those who would not obey the previous divine orders, meaning that Allah here is reminding men (whom the whole speech was directed to) that the previous matter was as serious as they would be profoundly asked about before the great Allah Almighty, their Lord who is to punish them if not obedient.

- "and give good tidings to those who believe": the believers in the religious language are those who obey God's orders and follow Prophetic behaviors. The highest spiritual ambition for such people should be the hope of meeting Allah. To uphold such a hope is to give glad tidings to people of faith. It would only be unrepentant sinners who would fear the meeting. Note how the most sensuous matters are discussed frankly and immediately taken up into the loftiest regions of spiritual upliftments. From all what was mentioned hereabove, I concluded that this single verse in "Al baqara" chapter ("the cow") gives a whole manual for having a perfect sexual life, with a very deep consideration and understanding of human instincts and needs, also mentioning the

preconditions on the way to achieve it, this is following these instructions determined by our greatest Creator... our Lord.. Allah Almighty.

***TURNING SEX INTO SADAQA:**

“Women shall have rights similar to the rights upon them; according to what is equitable and just.” (2:216)

They do indeed! This passage of the Holy Quran has a general sense. One basic right of every person taking on a contract never to have sex other than with his or her own legitimate partner is that each spouse should therefore provide sexual fulfillment to the other, as part of the bargain.

Now, every man knows what sexual things please him, but some men, particularly those who have not been married before and are therefore lacking experience, don't seem to know much about how to give the same pleasure to the woman; even worse, some men do know but they can't be bothered to make the effort. Yet this is vital if a marriage is to succeed and not just be a disappointing burden for the woman, and it is a vital part of one's Islamic duty. It is not acceptable for a Muslim man just to satisfy himself while ignoring his wife's needs. Experts agree that the basic psychological needs of a man are respect and sexual satisfaction, while that of a woman is love. Neither respect nor love is things that can be forced, they have to be worked for, and earned. The Prophet (s) stated that in one's sexual intimacy with one's life partner there is sadaqa (worship through giving):

God's Messenger(s) said: “In the sexual act of each of you there is a sadaqa.” The Companions replied: **“O Messenger of God! When one of us fulfils his sexual desire, will he be given a reward for that?” And he said, “Do you not think that were he to act upon it unlawfully, he would be sinning? Likewise, if he acts upon it lawfully he will be rewarded.” (Muslim)**

What is the magic ingredient that turns sex into sadaqa, that makes it a matter of reward or punishment from Allah? It is by making one's sex life more than simple physical gratification; it is by thought for pleasing Allah by unselfish care for one's partner. A husband that cannot understand this will never be fully respected by his wife.

Neither spouse should ever act in a manner that would be injurious or harmful to their conjugal life. Nikah (marriage) is the sacred tie between husband and wife, that sincere and devoted love without which they cannot attain happiness and peace of mind.

“Of His signs is this: that He created for you spouses that you might find rest in them, and He ordained between you affection and mercy.”

(30:21)

Now, every Muslim knows that a man has a right on his wife. However, because nikah is a contract never to seek sexual satisfaction outside the marriage bond, Allah commands not only the women but the men in this respect, and makes it clear that if a husband is not aware of the urges and needs of his wife, he will be committing a sin by depriving her of her rights.

According to all four orthodox jurists, it is incumbent upon the husband to keep his wife happy and pleased in this respect. Likewise, it is essential for the wife to satisfy the desire of the husband. Neither should reject the other, unless there is some lawful excuse.

The jurists believed that a woman's private parts needed “protecting” (tahseen). What they meant was that it was important for a Muslim husband to satisfy his wife's sexual needs so that she would not be tempted to commit adultery (zina) out of despair or frustration.

A Muslim wife is not merely a lump of flesh without emotions or feelings, just there to satisfy a man's natural urges. On the contrary, her body

contains a soul no less important in God's sight than her husband's. Her heart is very tender and delicate, and crude or rough manners would hurt her feelings and drive away love. The husband would be both foolish and immoral to act in any way unpalatable to her natural temperament, and a man selfishly seeking his own satisfaction without considering that of his wife is a selfish boor. In fact, according to a hadith narrated by Daylami:

“Three things are counted inadequacies in a man. Firstly, meeting someone he would like to get to know, and taking leave of him before learning his name and his family. Secondly, rebuffing the generosity that another shows to him. And thirdly, going to his wife and having intercourse with her before talking to her and gaining her intimacy, satisfying his need from her before she has satisfied her need from him.” This is another of the things implied by the saying that one's wife is *“a tilth unto you.”* (2:223) The imagery is that of a farmer taking care of his fields. According to Abul-Ala Mawdudi (a big Islamic knower):

“The farmer sows the seed in order to reap the harvest, but he does not sow it out of season or cultivate it in a manner which will injure or exhaust the soil. He is wise and considerate, and does not run riot.” Likewise, in the case of husband and wife, the husband should not just:

“Take hold of his wife and rub the seed and finish the business of procreation. The damage in this case could sometimes be irreparable, because a woman, unlike a farm, is very sensitive and has emotions, feelings, and strong passions which need full satisfaction and attention in a proper and appropriate manner.”

If this is not taken into consideration, and the wife is not properly prepared to start lovemaking, or is unsatisfied when it is finished, there could be many psychological and physiological complications leading to frigidity and other abnormalities. Indeed, many husbands eventually become disappointed with their wives, believing them to be frigid or unable to respond to their

activities (unlike the sirens on the film or TV screen), and they wonder what is wrong with them. A possible explanation will follow in a moment.

“Allah created male and female from a single soul in order that man might live with her in serenity” (7:189)

As we read, the primary reason for marriage was not unhappiness, frustration and strife. If your marriage is frankly awful, then you must ask yourself how such a desperate and tragic scenario could be regarded by anyone as “half the Faith.” According to a hadith narrated by Daylami:

“Not one of you should fall upon his wife like an animal; but let there first be a messenger between you.” “And what is that messenger?” they asked, and he replied: “Kisses and words.”

These “kisses and words” do not just include foreplay once intimacy has commenced. To set the right mood, little signals should begin well in advance, so that the wife has a clue as to what is coming, and is pleasantly expectant, and also has adequate time to make herself clean, attractive and ready. As regards intimacy itself, all men know that they cannot achieve sexual fulfillment if they are not aroused. They should also realize that it is actually harmful and painful for the female organs to be used for sex without proper preparation. In simple biological terms, the woman’s private parts need a kind of natural lubrication before the sexual act takes place. For this, Allah has created special glands which are the endocervical ones, also those as the Bartholin glands which emit their content at the time of female orgasm, which provide the necessary “oiling.” It is still possible to read old-fashioned advice to husbands that a desirable wife should be “dry” which is remarkable ignorance and makes one really grieve for the poor wives of such inconsiderate men. Just as no one would dream of trying to run an engine without the correct lubricating fluids, it is the same, through the creative will of Allah, with the parts of the female body designed for sexual intimacy. A husband should know how to stimulate the production of these

“oils” in his wife, or at the very least allow her to use some artificial “oils” such as astrogel or KY gel. This lack of knowledge or consideration is where so many marital problems frequently arise.

As Imam al-Ghazali says: “Sex should begin with gentle words and kissing,” and Imam al-Zabidi adds: “This should include not only the cheeks and lips; and then he should caress the breasts and nipples, and every part of her body.” Most men will not need telling this; but it should be remembered that failure to observe this Islamic practice is to neglect or deny the way Allah has created women.

Firstly, a husband must overcome his shyness enough to actually look at his wife, and pay attention to her. If he cannot bring himself to follow this Sunnah, it is an insult to her, and extremely hurtful. Personal intimacy is a minefield of opportunities to hurt each other, glancing at the watch, a yawn at the wrong moment, appearing bored, and so on. A husband’s duty is to convince his wife that he does love her, and this can only be done by word (constantly repeated word, I might add, such is the irritating nature of women!), and by looking and touching.

Many people believe that the expression in the eyes reveals much of the human soul. Certainly the lover’s gaze is a most endearing and treasured thing. Many wives yearn for that gaze of love, even after they have been married for years. If you cannot bring yourself to look at her while paying attention to her, she can only interpret this as a sign that you do not really love her. And even though it may be irritating to you, and seem quite superfluous, most women are deeply moved when a man actually tells her that he loves her (especially when this man is her husband).

***Sex is clean!**

Sex is not a thing to be ashamed of, nor to be treated lightly, or to be indulged to excess. It is as solemn a fact as any in life. It is compared to

husbandman's tilth; it is a serious affair to him: he sows the seed in order to reap the harvest. But he chooses his own time and mode of cultivation. He does not sow out of the season nor cultivate in a manner, which would injure or exhaust the soil. He is wise and considerate and does not run riot. Coming from the simile to human beings, every kind of mutual consideration is required, but above all, we must remember that even in these matters, there is a spiritual aspect. We must never forget our souls, and we are responsible to Allah. It was carnal-minded men who invented the doctrine of original sin: "Behold". Says the psalmist; "I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me". This is entirely repudiated in Allah, in which the office of father and mother is held in the highest veneration. Every child is born pure. Celibacy is not necessarily a virtue, and may be a vice.

A modest upbringing is part of good character. The Prophet (s) himself said: "Modesty brings nothing but good." (Bukhari and Muslim) But another, also important, part of Islamic teaching says that all of Allah's creation is beautiful and pure, particularly when it is part of the body of human beings, who are designed as His deputies upon the earth. In some religions, people traditionally believed that the woman's private parts are in some way unclean, or dirty, or even evil.

***SAYING**

HAVING SEX:

"When one of you have sex with your wife, it is a rewarded act of charity." The Companions were surprised and said, "But we do it purely out of our desire. How can it be counted as charity?" The Prophet replied, "If you had done it with a forbidden woman, it would have been counted as a sin, but if you do it in legitimacy, it is counted as charity."

2. **“Let not one of you fall upon his wife like a beast falls. It is more appropriate to send a message before the act, so, his companions asked: what should the message be? He replied: the kiss, and the word.”**

3. **“Do not divulge the secrets of your sex life with your wife to another person nor describe her physical feature to anyone, as whoever does this, is like someone who is doing this act in public.”**

4. **“I get married, eat meat, stand up in night prayers, fast and break my fast. Whoever disdains from my traditions is not one of my followers”**

5. **O young men, whoever among you have the means to establish a marital life, he should get married. For marriage preserves the chastity of one’s eyes and sexual organs, and whoever cannot afford to get married; he must fast for abstention in that case will protect him from sin.”**

6. **“No solution is ever better for two people who are in love like marriage”.**

From all the above-mentioned sayings of prophet Mohamed (PBUH), and taking in consideration that Allah stated him as **“not saying anything out of his own will”**, we can see a very bright picture of progressist Allah, opposing the general idea of the Allah being retarded and considering good manners.

***PROHIBITED SEXUAL ACTS BETWEEN SPOUSES:**

and covers, the sexual aspect of marriage is an extension of this. The husband is asked to be gentle, considerate and loving with his wife, and to try to satisfy her needs. The wife must reserve herself exclusively for her husband, and make

In Allah, t

efforts to be attractive, as well as making herself available to him whenever he is in need of her. This latter obligation also applies to the husband.

In Quran, any sexual relations are reserved EXCLUSIVELY for the confines of marriage. Both husband and wife are also obligated to honor the privacy of the intimate relations between them, and should not speak of them to anyone.

***The Prohibition of Sex when wife is Menstruating (having her monthly course):**

It is forbidden for a Muslim man to have sexual intercourse with his wife when she is menstruating. The Allah is clear on this subject:

“They ask you concerning menstruation. Say: that is an “Atha” (a harmful thing for a husband to have a sexual intercourse with his wife while she is having her menses), therefore keep away from women during menses and go not unto them till they have purified (from menses and have taken a bath). And when they have purified themselves, then go in unto them as Allah has ordained for you (go in unto them in any manner as long as it is in their vagina)...” (2:222)

Among Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) statements about this issue are the followings:

- A man asked God messenger (PBUH): **“O God messenger; what is it the legitimate for me of my wife while she is menstruating”? So God messenger replied: “let her be wrapped properly and consider her upper body”**
- Aisha (prophet’s wife) said: **“if ever one of us (prophet wives) menstruated, and the prophet wanted her as a sex partner, he used to tell her to be wrapped properly and used to approach her”**.

- Abou Horaira narrated that while God messenger was in the mosque, he called Aisha (his wife) saying: **“O Aisha; give me the dress” (in order to wear it for prayer), so she replied: “I am menstruating”, so he replied: “your menstruation is not in your hand”**.
- Aisha narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) used to lie on her legs while she was menstruating and recite the Allah.
- Aisha said: **“I used to drink while menstruating, then give the cup to the prophet, so he used to put his lips on the place of mine and drink”**.

This is totally controverting the policy of the Jews towards the menstruating women, which represents a moral pain and hurt to the women, the God’s beloved creatures.

About this issue in particular, a lot of big Islamic knowers agreed that the only prohibited enjoyment with the menstruating women is vaginal penetration, otherwise is all allowed, to the extent that one of the biggest (Al Hakam ben Otaiba) mentioned that the man could even play with his penis on his wife’s vulva so long as he would not penetrate. Others preconditioned the capability of self-controlling of the man in order not to commit the sin of penetrating the menstruating woman. So if a man knows about himself the lack of self-control, either generally or especially concerning the sexual matter, he has then to avoid approaching his menstruating wife basically.

***The prohibition of the Anal Intercourse:**

1- Al-Tirmithi narrated that Allah messenger said: **“Allah Almighty will not look at the man who commits sodomy with a man or a woman”**.

2- Malik related to me that he asked Ibn Shihab about someone who committed sodomy. Ibn Shihab said, **“He is to be stoned, whether or not he is muhsan (protected by being married).”**

So, the very clear conclusion is that it is forbidden for a Muslim man to penetrate his wife in her anus. Allah Almighty says in the Allah:

“...so keep away from menstruating women and do not approach them until they have purified themselves (the after-period shower), but when they have purified themselves, you may approach him as ordained for you by Allah, for Allah loves the repentants, and those who keep themselves pure and clean”(2:222)

“Your wives are a tilth for you, so go to your tilth (have sexual relations with your wives in any manner as long as it is in the vagina and not in the anus), when or how you will, and send (good deeds, or ask Allah to bestow you pious offspring) before you for your ownelves. And fear Allah, and know that you are to meet Him (in the Hereafter), and give good tidings to the believers (2:223)

What is understood from the above verse is that a tilth can only refer to a place where something might grow. Therefore, what is meant here is the entry, which produces children.

***Other sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) on the subject:**

1- Ibin Maja reported that prophet Muhammad said: **“He is cursed who has anal intercourse (with his wife)”**.

2- Al-Tirmithi reported that prophet Muhammad said: **“Whoever has sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman, or woman in her anus... has disbelieved in that which was revealed to Muhammad (PBUH).”**

3- A man went to the prophet (PBUH) asking about approaching women from behind, so he said: **“allowed”, and he re-explained saying: “from**

behind into before, and not from behind into behind”. And he added: “Allah is never ashamed of the right things, do not ever approach women into the anus”.

From the latterly-mentioned prophetic statement we can see that the variations in the sexual positions were as well there far more before the modern science stated them, the very clear example here is “the French style” (the doggy style), which is a largely preferred sex-mating position especially for men.

It cannot be stressed too strongly that even animals do not satisfy their sexual urges in this unnatural way. Human beings who are guilty of sodomy are, thus, even lower than animals.

Among the great blessings Allah gave to us, is the opportunity to make a pleasant thing, which gives us the double benefit, the joy of the present life as well as the reward of the other life; let us see together what I am talking about.

***And what about using viagra from Islamic point of view?**

Sex to most Muslims is a dirty word, a word that they don't even want to talk about. On the other extreme, many Muslims' are obsessed with sex. This I can say from the questions about sex that I receive on E-mail from Muslims all over the world. The desire to have a better sexual performance for men is again, not a new preoccupation. Muslim Hakims (traditional physicians') have been working on medications for over one thousand years trying to achieve a magic love pill. Now that this "love pill" seemingly has arrived, wealthy Muslims' are ecstatic. Viagra, which is sold around \$10 per pill in the U.S.A., was being sold at \$100 per pill on the black market in other countries. The grand religious scholar of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Baaz has allowed it to be used by men if it does not cause any harm to the body.

Sexual desire is a gift from God, just like all other desires that He has built in us. It is not our fault that we get aroused at sexual thoughts. These are built in physiology. In order to have a legitimate outlet for this built in desire, God has created mates for us.

Allah says, "*He that created you mates from among yourselves that you can dwell in them in tranquility*". (30:21)

And as we know, sex outside of marriage is not permitted in Islam.

Impotency is a disease and should be dealt with as any disease. To seek a cure for a disease is advised by Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) who said that "**God has created no disease unless he created a cure for it as well, except old age**". Thus, before we physicians' start a new treatment, we either must find out the cause for impotency, which could be vascular, neurogenic, infectious, diabetic, or due to hormonal deficiency. So, treating all the causes with one type of treatment would be wrong, and that is why many patients' on Viagra do not respond because they have not been screened properly to see if they would be good candidates. In addition, if the mental stimulation is not present before, then Viagra alone will not achieve the desired results, as the brain is the most important sex organ.

The appropriate way for a man to deal with this is to see his physician for a thorough evaluation, hormone testing, and psychological as well as sexological testing. There is some suggestion that patient's who may have underlying coronary artery disease, who have not been actively involved in sex, should be screened first for coronary artery disease before using Viagra. About 20 men have died after sex while taking Viagra. It is not clear that any of these deaths were directly related to Viagra.

I see several social problems in the use of Viagra indiscriminately. It may lead to more sexual promiscuity and infidelity. A few years ago, an old man in New York who used Viagra, left his wife and then went for a much younger lady. His wife sued the company. This magic blue tablet is also being called "the party drug", or the "love pill", and it is being distributed by some of the nightclubs. What is the difference between getting high on marijuana and cocaine, or on Viagra? Many women are also complaining that they are being subject to Viagra attacks by their husbands and boyfriends even if they are not in a mood.

Sex is an expression and extension of love. In the absence of love, sex becomes a boring routine. Forced sex, even in marriage, is to be considered rape. Instead of trying to achieve potency, men should try to achieve love and respect for and from their wives. Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), who was ahead of his time, had encouraged foreplay before intercourse, saying "**Do not attack your women like a wild beast, but send a message before**". He also was known to have said, "**Do not leave her before she is satisfied**". Thus Islamic sexuality is based on nature and not attempting to achieve a quick result. The human body is a wonderful creation of God, but not a sex machine. It will not run better on any potency-inducing drug, except if ever it is medically indicated, but I assume that the wide-spread usage of viagra nowadays, even in young men who do not actually need it, is a part of the present facile-life adoring, and extreme luxury seeking without making any effort, or on making a minor effort, these youth are eventually consuming creatures and not productive ones, all these characters, being running in the same track. Finally men have to know that viagra does not create the desire, neither does it insert the pleasure, it just make sexual organs respond to such human feelings, having got to be there in the first place.

IX. CONCEPT OF ADULTERY IN ISLAM

God says in the Allah, *“Do not go near to adultery. Surely it is a shameful deed and evil, opening roads (to other evils)” (17:32)*. *“Say, ‘Verily, my Lord has prohibited the shameful deeds, be it open or secret, sins and trespasses against the truth and reason’” (7:33)*. *“Women impure are for men impure, and men impure are for women impure and women of purity are for men of purity, and men of purity are for women of purity” (24:26)*. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has said in many situations that adultery is one of the four major sins. However the most interesting story is that of a young man who went to the Prophet and asked for permission to fornicate because he could not control himself. The Prophet dealt with him with reasoning and asked him if he would approve of someone else having illegal sex with his mother, sister, daughter or wife. Each time the man said ‘no’. Then the Prophet replied that the woman with whom you plan to have sex is also somebody’s mother, sister, daughter or wife. The man understood and repented. The Prophet prayed for his forgiveness.

Adultery is a crime not against one person but against the whole of society. It is a violation of marital contract. A very high percentage of all first time marriages worldwide result in divorce in two years and the main reason for divorce are the adultery of one of the partners. Adultery, which includes both pre-marital and extra marital sex, is an epidemic, especially in the western society. Nobody seems to listen to the Bible, which says frequently, “Thou shall not commit adultery.” The Quranic approach is, *“Do not approach adultery.”*

What does it mean that not only is illegal sex prohibited, but also anything, which leads to illegal sex, is also illegal? These things include dating, free mixing of the sexes, provocative dress, nudity, obscenity and pornography.

The dress code both for men and women is to protect them from temptation and desires by on lookers who may lose self-control and fall into sin. ***“Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that will make for greater purity, and God is well acquainted with all they do. And say to the believing woman that they should lower their gaze, and guard their modesty” (24:30-31).***

So we conclude that, staying away of adultery gives a positive outcome for the whole human tree; the person, the family, and the community. Other negative outcomes of adultery are spreading of the STDs, and illegal children who have simply an unknown future; most probably to be obscure. I can imagine that if ever human beings stayed away from adultery over ages, there would not be something like the AIDS for example present in our world.

For me I have made a personal conclusion for the reason for which is the adultery (prohibited fornication) that disagreed and punished in Allah; this that the fornication as an act, could largely be prevented, this is because there are so many steps before it is actually committed; I remember one of my patients, who had fallen into this sin, he was regretting this fault greatly, and needed to talk about it, especially that he had a wonderful wife whom he was in love with, then, me understanding that it would sometimes be of help talking about some bad or a painful event in our life over and over to get rid of all its marks, I started over reviewing the whole thing with him, stating the points of seduction he has been through, the weak sides of his personality which secreted this failure in confronting this temptation, and... counting –with him- the number of the steps, the one of them having led to the other, where he could have stopped at, and prevented himself from proceeding, and we found those to be seventeen to twenty-two stations, this range having arisen from the difference between my

and his opinions concerning some points being or not alarming of the approaching danger. That is why I find no excuse for anyone who falls into this deep well so long as being having some religious background about how to resist own's will to commit prohibited acts.

***ETHICS TO BE OVERTAKEN AFTER COMMITTING THE CRIME**

OF THE PROHIBITED ADULTERY:

1- A man came to prophet Muhammad (PBUH) telling him: **'O God Prophet, I knew a woman at the end of the city, and I caressed her without actual love-making, so make me any judgment you want. So Omar said to him: "Allah would have been sheltered you if ever have you sheltered yourself. "And", he said, "God messenger said nothing", so the man rushed away, so God messenger sent a man after him to call him back, and he recited to him this verse: "make prayers both at the beginning and the end of the day, also during the night, as good deeds eliminate bad ones, this is to be memorized by memorizers". So a man replied: "O God messenger; is this for him specifically? He said: no, it is for everyone."**

This sheltering Omar invited the man to is for the sake of getting back to Allah, regretting what he had committed, and discontinuing it.

2- A man came to the Prophet (PBUH) while in the mosque, and said: **"O God messenger", I fornicated, so he turned away from him, and the man repeated it four times, so the Prophet said: "woe unto you!! Get back to Allah and ask him forgiveness", so he backed off.**

3- Said ben al mosayab narrated that a man came to Abou Bakr telling him that he has committed fornication, so Abou Bakr asked him: **"did you tell anyone other than me"? He said: "no". so Abou Bakr said to him:**

“repent to Allah and be sheltered by His shelter, that is Allah accepts penitence from his slaves”

4- God prophet (PBUH) once said: “all my followers may be pardoned but the disclosers; this is that a man committed a sin and he is sheltered by Allah and on the next morning he removes away Allah shelter by saying: O people, last evening, I made such and such things”.

X. ORAL SEX; WHAT ABOUT IT?

There is a very well-known Islamic rule; this is: whatever was not prohibited by a divine word of Allah's (in the Allah), nor by a prophetic statement or behavior (said by Allah messenger PBUH), is to be allowed; as basically everything is allowed, so the exception is what was prohibited -as mentioned before- by Allah Almighty or by his messenger (PBUH).

Based on the latter principle, oral sex is an allowed act for Allah if ever they desire to do it, preconditioned of course that it would be confined to the spouse, same as every other sex practice.

This is to say that a married couple has the right to enjoy each other in whatever way they wish, but to have intercourse in the place through which conception may occur, in any position he wishes, as Allah says: *“Your wives are a tilth for you, so go to your tilth when or how you will . . .”* (2:223)

Intercourse is forbidden for the husband in two situations:

1. At the time of the monthly period, as Allah says: “They ask you concerning menstruation. Say: that is an “*atha*” (a harmful thing), therefore keep away from women during their menses, and go not unto them till they have purified themselves. And when they have purified themselves, then go into them as Allah has ordained for you. Truly, Allah loves those who turn unto Him in repentance and loves those who purify themselves.” (2:222)
2. Anal intercourse. The Messenger of Allah (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon Him) said: “He is cursed, the one who has intercourse with his wife in her anus.” (Reported by Abu Dawud and Imam Ahmad).

Another hadith refers to both issues mentioned above: “Avoid the anus and the time of menstruation.” (reported by Ahmad and Abu Dawud).

The issue of oral sex is suspended –like any act ever- on two conditions:

1. It should not cause any harm; this precondition is fulfilled in the case of well being, i.e. when one is in good health and does not complain of sicknesses threatening the partner or to be transmitted to him/her.
2. It should not lead to any disgusting feeling; which is considered moral harm to the partner, which is why it is very advisable to guarantee that the spouse is approving the act in order to fulfill the maximum joy out of the act. And here I have a statement coming of my experience in this field, this is that almost all female spouses disagree with the act at the very beginning of their sex lives, but talking with them about considering it a prerequisite for their husbands' sexual joy, and subsequently would increase their love to them and their desire towards them, the young ladies actually follow the instructions in the vast majority of cases, and things get better gradually afterwards.

The great fact that would always keeps us relaxed about everything is that Allah knows best and that his blessed Prophet Muhammad has given the great example to be followed as he is the greatest knower of the profound meanings of Allah rules, upon the light of which, the humankind should make his.

To conclude we can say that it is unanimous that anal intercourse is haram (religiously prohibited). But the question is does this refer only to male genital parts?

The words used in fiqh books in the context of coitus or its prohibition such as ityaan (“copulation”) and eelaaj (“penetration”) generally denote penetration of the penis. However, the question may be answered by replacing the words “anal intercourse” with “normal intercourse at the time of menses.” If the analogy is correct then the answer is: this prohibition does not only refer to male genital parts but is absolute. Yet “enjoyment of the rear (dubur) without penetration (eelaaj) is licit” (see further down).

There is no such consensus at all. The licitness of oral sex seems frank and explicit in the School of Imam Malik *radī Allahu `anhu* as you will see further down. In our own time, Qadi Muhammad Ahmad Kan`an of Beirut in his book on marital etiquette *Usul al-Mu`ashara al-Zawjiyya* (“Principles of Marital Cohabitation”, gives the fatwa that oral sex between spouses is licit. As for the implicit fatwas to that effect they are countless. The basic ruling is licitness from head to toe except for anal intercourse, and also except genital intercourse at the time of menses, all provided harm is avoided, as spelled out in the “Reliance of the Traveller”.

Following are several examples:

*Imam al-Shafi` Allah (may Allah bless his soul) said in “al-Umm”, book of Nikah, chapter on (the prohibition of anal sex), that apart from the prohibition of anal sex, “enjoyment of the whole body regardless of vaginal penetration (iblaagh al-faraj) is permissible.”

*Imam al-Nawawi (may Allah bless his soul) said in the *Rawda*, book of Nikah, chapter on the rights of the husband in sexual enjoyment (istimta`): “He has the rights to all kinds of sexual enjoyment, except for anal intercourse, which is strictly prohibited.” Further down, discussing the absolute prohibition of masturbation after marriage, he says: “But it is permissible that he masturbate with the hand of his wife... just as he may enjoy her entire body.”

*In his book called ‘Minhaj’, al-Nawawi states: “The husband may look at her entire body” without reservation. Al-Shirbini comments: and vice-versa including the genitals. He also says: “The saying of the Imam that enjoyment of the rear (dubur) without penetration (eelaaj) is licit, is explicit in that ‘looking is permissible’”.

*Hujjat al-Allah Imam al-Ghazzali himself (may Allah bless his soul) said in his book ‘the Ihya’ – on which Hartford sometimes relies at the exclusion of standard fiqh or hadith sources: “The husband should not penetrate his wife during menstruation, but he may enjoy the whole body of the menstruating wife, except that he may not penetrate her in other than the place of usual penetration, because the reason for prohibiting copulation with the women in menses is noxiousness (proved by some scientific researches to precipitate male chronic urethritis and female cervical cancerous changes), but noxiousness is always present in other than the place of usual penetration (the anus); so its prohibition is even stricter than that of the menstruating woman.”

*Shaykh Muhammad Sa`id al-Buti in his ‘Fatawa’ titled ‘Ma` al-Nas’ (p. 84): “Q. What is the status of coitus between the buttocks? A. The prohibited in sexual intercourse between spouses is the penetration of the penis into the anal opening. As for enjoying what is short of this such as the buttocks, it is not prohibited, in fact, all other than that is allowed.”

*According to Imam al-Suyuti (may Allah bless his soul) in al-Wishaah min Fawaa'id al-Nikaah, the best work of Arabic coitology (ilm al-baah) is “Tuhfat al-`Arus wa-Nuzhat al-Nufus”, by the eighth-century (Maliki) litterateur Abu `Abd Allah ibn Ahmad al-Bija'i. It was published in Cairo at the Sharafiyya press in 1301/1883, this edition having been about 200 pages in 25 chapters. On p. 160 he lists some of the literal and figurative names used by the Arabs for copulation, among them: ‘al-tadlis with a Sad’, which means: non-vaginal coitus. However, readers of chapter 23 titled “Concerning the man’s coitus in other than the vagina” will not find any mention of oral sex other than the vague general statement in its first sentence: “There is no disagreement that coitus

between a man and a woman is permissible – except for anal sex – in all her folds and her entire body.”

On p. 142 al-Bija’Allah mentions more explicit fatwas in the context of the discussion on looking:

We now turn to the permissibility of looking at the wife’s pudendum (farj)... The Malikis allow it stating that there is no harm in it and it is not makruh (hated act).’ He narrated from Malik that he said: ‘There is no harm in looking at the wife’s pudendum during intercourse.’ He added in his narration: ‘And there is no harm in licking it with his tongue!’ Ibn al-Qattan continued: “The Madhhab of the Hanafis also allow looking. The Shafi`is have two positions

*The Maliki fatwa on the licitness of oral stimulation is confirmed by Imam al-Qurtubi in his Tafsir for Surat al-Nur (24), verse 31: (*And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent...*)

To conclude, some comments about certain statements heard in the current discussion:

The consensus was that in terms of muamalat (social transactions) everything is deemed halal unless it has been explicitly forbidden. Many scholars agree that oral sex falls under this category and it is not forbidden.

As for the SPERM of the male, the Shafie madhabs says it is PURE, but the liquid before that which is called the MAZI LIQUID is NAJASA. Now before ejaculation is completed, surely the MAZI LIQUID is there, so the partners in fact might be licking the MAZI liquid which is NAJASA...hence it

could be understood if this is the case then O.S. is MAKRUH!... but certainly NOT HARAM because there is no evidence to say so.

Any type of vaginal sex, which takes place in societies in which sex is considered to be a game and entertainment, is not allowed in Allah. Some think that Allah only allows that type of vaginal sex that is necessary for human reproduction.... By cohabitation with women intend and aim to produce offspring and not to fulfill your desire. Sometimes, it is praiseworthy to intend and aim only for procreation, but it is wrong that “Allah only allows that type of vaginal sex that is necessary for human reproduction”! The Law condones marital sexual intercourse for (mutual) pleasure, proved by that contraception is licit. And higher and better yet than procreation, the aim of pleasing Allah and quieting human lusts in order to fully turn to Him was the intention of many of the Salaf (prophet’s companions and big Islamic knowers) behind intercourse.

***Recommended books in English on marital subjects:**

1-Woman in Shari-a by Abd al-Rahman Doi

2-Marriage in Allah by Muhammad Abd al-Rauf (former rector of Allah University of Malaysia)

3-The Islamic View of Women and the Family by M. Abd al-Rauf (New York: Robert Speller and Sons, 1977. ISBN 0-8315-0156-1)

4-Marriage and Sexuality in Allah and The Proper Conduct of Marriage in Allah, respectively Madelyn Farah’s and Muhtar Holland’s translations of al-Ghazzali’s book of Nikah from his Ihya’ –Ulum al-Din.

5-http://www.themodernreligion.com/misc/sex/sex_queries.htm#oral (with a response from Shaykh Yusuf Al Qaradawi):

***From Sheikh Yusuf Abdullah Al-Qaradâwi (from
www.islamonline.net):**

Content of Reply Wa`alykum As-Salaamu wa rahmatul Allahi wa barakaatuh. In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger. I was asked about oral sex in America and Europe when I began to travel to these countries in the early 70s. We were not used to be asked these questions in our Muslim countries. Those Western people are accustomed to stripping naked during sexual intercourse. These are communities of nakedness, and from the licentiousness of the woman that she wears nothing to screen her body in her daily life. So they are in need of more excitements during copulation. However, men in our Muslim societies see nothing in the Muslim woman that can excite them on the basis of her wearing either Hijab (veil) or Niqab (face cover). But concerning whether being in complete nakedness during practicing copulation is lawful or not, the Prophet of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, is reported to have said, "Guard your private parts except from your wife or your slaves." Muslim jurists are of the opinion that it is lawful for the husband to perform cunnilingus on his wife, or a wife to suck her husband's penis (fellatio) and there is no wrong in doing so. But some say that if sucking leads to releasing semen, then it is Makrooh (blameworthy), but there is no decisive evidence (to forbid it). These parts are not dirty like anus, but it is normally disgusting to man. But there is no decisive evidence to make it unlawful, especially if the wife agrees with it or gets her ecstasy by practicing it. Allah, Exalted and Glorified be He, says: *"And who guard their modesty, save from their wives or the slaves, that I heir right hands possess, for then they are not blameworthy, but Who so craveth beyond that, such are transgressors."* (23: 5-7) Allah Almighty knows best.

XI. HOMOSEXUALITY IN ISLAMIC RULINGS

Of all topics most popular in today's media, issues concerning homosexuals and homosexuality in general top the list. Homosexuality is generally defined as a sexual relationship between partners of the same sex. Debate concerning its causes and consequences has been going on for many centuries and almost in every period in human history. However, never before in human history has it been granted such wide scale acceptance in western society as it has now. The question that I seek to answer here is whether such wide scale acceptance should in fact be granted to homosexual behavior? Is such behavior rational, scientifically functional or is it actually detrimental to the high level of civilization that we've achieved?

Allah teaches that homosexual acts are sinful and punishable by God. This teaching comes not from human beings, but from the Creator of all humans. God tells us in His own words how He punished the people of Lot for their homosexual behavior.

The story of Prophet Lot, (on whom be peace), finds mention in several Quranic passages, especially Chapter 26:160-175 which reads:

“The people of Lut rejected the apostles. Behold, their brother Lut said to them: “Will you not fear (God)? “I am to you an apostle worthy of all trust. “So fear God and obey me. “No reward do I ask of you for it: my reward is only from the lord of the Worlds. “Of all the creatures in the world, will you approach males, “And leave those whom God has created for you to be your mates? Nay, you are a people transgressing (all limits)!” They said: “If thou desist not, O Lut! You will assuredly be cast out!” He said: “I do detest your doings.” “O my Lord! Deliver me

and my family from such things as they do!” So We delivered him and his family, all Except an old woman who lingered behind. But the rest We destroyed utterly. We rained down on them a shower (of brimstone): and evil was the shower on those who were admonished (but heeded not)! Verily in this is a Sign: but most of them do not believe. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might Most Merciful.”

From these passages we learn that God saved Lot and the righteous ones of his family, and rained on the rest a shower of brimstone, so they were utterly destroyed. This is mentioned in the Allah not only for the sake of information, but mainly to serve as a warning to anyone who dares to repeat such acts.

Allah believes that every human action leads to consequences. Good actions entail good results, and evil actions entail evil consequences. Some of these consequences may not become known for many years after a certain action. The consequences of some actions will become manifest only after death when one enters a new, everlasting life.... A common mistake among humans is that if they don't see any negative consequences for their actions they consider it harmless. Human experience has taught us that a source of superior knowledge can be of tremendous benefit to humans.... God, the source of all knowledges, warns us of His punishment if people perpetrate homosexual acts. Let us pay attention and learn the easy way.

Some will say that a person may be born with homosexual tendencies. We say that everyone is a free agent. God lays before us two paths and has given us knowledge of where these paths lead. One is the path to which the devil calls us. We must avoid that. One is the path leading to paradise. We must stick to that one. Everyone experiences evil prompting from time to time. We must resist those with all our might. If one feels a tendency to do something that God prohibits, he or she should seek help from Allah Almighty our great creator, by

making more prayers to him to help one to bypass the crisis, and by making the divine requests “do’a”, and also from a community of loving, caring, believers who would understand his or her difficulty and help him or her overcome it. A common ploy of the devil is to convince people that they cannot avoid sin. Then they do not even try. But Allah promises that the devil can have no lasting power over those who sincerely seek Allah (*Quran 15:42*)

Finally, our bodies are given to us in trust from God. One should not use his or her body contrary to the user guide provided by its Maker. Consenting adults also need God’s consent.

***Islamic Ruling Concerning Homosexuality:**

Allah considers homosexuality as a sexual deviation leading to a perverted act that goes against the natural order Allah intended for mankind. It is a corruption of the man’s sexuality and a crime against the opposite sex. Therefore, the Islamic shari’ah strictly prohibits the practice of this perverted act. This is mentioned in many places in the holy Allah.

The story of the people of the prophet Lut who were addicted to this practice, is the best example. Prophet Lut said to his people: “*Verily, you do sodomy with men, and rob the wayfarer! And practice all wickedness in your meetings,*” (29:29). And he said to them: “*Of all the creatures of the world, will you approach males, and leave those whom Allah has created for you to be your wives? Nay, you are a trespassing people!*” (26:165-166). But their answer to Prophet Lut, (peace be upon his soul): “*Bring us the Wrath of Allah if you are telling us the Truth.*” (29:29). And so Allah gave them the punishment they deserved: “*And We rained on them a rain of torment. And how evil was the rain of those who had been warned,*” (26:173).

Just as a person who has a sexual urge should not satisfy it by committing zina (fornication or adultery), a person who has this perverted thought should not act upon it. In order to maintain the purity of the Muslim society, most

Muslim scholars have ruled that the punishment for this act should be the same as for zina (i.e. one hundred whiplashes for the man who has never married, and death by stoning for the married man). Some have even ruled that it should be death for both partners, because the Prophet, (PBUH), said: **“Kill the doer and the one to whom it was done.”**

****It is important for the reader to note that the imposition of Islamic punishments is only lawful for the Islamic ruler in Islamic lands after the due process of law has been fulfilled. It is not permitted that anyone not authorized by the ruler implement such measures even in an Islamic country much less anyone to take it upon themselves to do so elsewhere.*

***Religion’s Position to Homosexuality:**

Homosexuality and lesbianism have been dubbed “alternative lifestyles”, “personal preference”, “a natural variation”, etc. in the West today. Where homosexuality was considered an illness by the Association of Psychiatrists, it is now removed from the list and replaced by homophobia (the dislike of homosexuals and homosexuality). Consequently, Allah and Allah are considered intolerant and biased due to their continued opposition. Arguments in favor of tolerance to homosexuals are based on the assumption that homosexual behavior is biologically based and not merely learned from society.

Scientifically speaking, sex is a means to an end. The end being the propagation of the human race. This end can never be fulfilled by sex between males (in the case of gays) or between females (in the case of lesbians). Therefore, the general conclusion is that homosexuality is irrational and illogical.

If we consider the construction of the bodies of the male and female, what is noticed at once is that the construction of a body of a male (the penis and the anus with no vagina) does not accommodate having sex with another male. Nor does the construction of a body of a female (no penis, a vagina) accommodate sex with another female. What is obvious to common sense is that the construction and location of specific sexual organs in the bodies of a male and a female accommodate sex between a male and a female and not among members of the same sex. Therefore, the conclusion once again is that homosexuality is an unnatural and an irrational behavior.

The case with birth control is different to the “cause effect” argument above [this point was brought up in my meeting in class with the SMSU (Southwest Missouri State) Gay Lesbian Alliance]. Birth control is simply the further delaying or prevention of a naturally occurring delaying process. The egg (ovum), which when fertilized develops into a zygote, which then eventually develops into the fetus, is released in the female’s body in a specific period of time and pregnancy is caused only if a sperm fuses with the egg in that specific time period. If the egg is not fertilized during that period, then the cycle in humans ends in menstruation.

Early opposition to homosexuality was based on the argument that such behavior being unnatural. Sodomy cannot produce children, which is one of the main natural consequences of sexual relations. “Mother Nature” did not make us that way, it was argued. To counter such arguments homosexual researchers scoured the earth until they found supposed homosexual behavior among the animal kingdom. They found that the males of some species of exotic fishes off the coast of Japan imitated the behavior of females of the species in order to prevent other males from impregnating their mates, and some rare butterflies

from islands of the coast of Africa also had males exhibiting female behavior during mating season, etc. However, if the animal kingdom is to be used to justify human behavior, there also exists a spider in South America, whose female is much larger than the male. When mating is complete, the female eats her mate.

During the 80's it was claimed that a gland in the base of the brain, which is small in women and large in men, was found to be small among homosexuals. However, this evidence, while seeming incontrovertible to the layman, was immediately refuted by scientists. The data was taken from cross-sections of the brains of dead adult humans whose sexual preference was identified prior to death. Consequently, the reduced size among homosexuals could have been a result of the practice and not its cause. That is, they could have been born with normal sized glands which then became small due to their deviant lifestyle. Further many people in the sample studied had AIDS and AIDS in its later stages affects the brain.

Recently genetics has become the most commonly used foundation for the pro-gay argument. In 1993 Dr. Dean Hamer, a researcher at one of the Cancer Institutes, claimed to have discovered “the first concrete evidence that ‘gay genes’ really do exist.” Homosexual orientation was supposedly transmitted to males on the X chromosome from the mother. Hamer’s findings, published in the prestigious journal Science, transformed his colorless career as a government scientist into a dynamic media personality and penned his memoirs. He gave expert testimony to the Colorado Supreme Court that formed the basis of the victorious decision striking down anti-gay Proposition 2. However, a replication of his study at the University of Western Ontario failed to find any linkage whatsoever between the X chromosome and sexual orientation. It was also found that Hamer’s study lacked a control group; a fundamental principle of scientific research. Furthermore, in June 1994, the Chicago Tribune reported

that a junior researcher in Hamer's laboratory who assisted in the gene mapping in the homosexuality study, alleged that he selectively reported his data. She was then summarily dismissed from her postdoctoral fellowship in Hamer's lab. But a National Institute of Health investigation substantiated her claims and gave her another position in a different lab. Though Dr. Hamer was coy about his own sexuality in his memoirs, he later admitted in his lectures that he was gay.

It should be noted that Allah, in its final form, did not introduce anti-gay legislature to the world. The texts of the Torah are replete with clear condemnation of such practices.

The consequence of AIDS is enough to prove that homosexuality is evil and dangerous to society. The early spread of AIDS was concentrated among the homosexual community. It later spread to the heterosexual community through blood transfusions and intravenous drug usage and so-called bisexuals. And continues on a rampage among promiscuous heterosexuals.

Socially speaking, among the groups that have directly and indirectly contributed to the wide scale spread of AIDS to even innocent patients like children are homosexuals and their practice of anal sex.

“There are specific behaviors that place people at a high risk for AIDS. The first is anal sex, which can cause rectal bleeding and thereby allow easy transmission of HIV. This practice is therefore extremely dangerous and, of course, the greater the number of sexual partners, the greater the risk. Anal sex is commonly practiced by Gay males in some cases with many sexual partners. For this reason about two thirds of persons with Aids are homosexual or bi-sexual males (Macionis 545).”

The above statistic of two thirds shows the trend in the spread of AIDS a few years after it was recognized as a threat (1987). Now the pattern may have changed due to the initial wide scale spread of AIDS, which the above statistic

suggests was directly or indirectly the result of homosexual behavior among men.

AIDS results in many national cost problems too:

“...The cost of treating Aids already exceeds \$150,000 per person and may rise further as new therapies develop....Added to the direct medical costs are the tens of billions of dollars in lost earnings and productivity...There is little doubt that Aids is a medical and social problem of monumental proportions (Macionis 545).”

From the psychological point of view, it was clearly recognized by experts who were objective and unprejudiced, that psychologically speaking homosexuality is an abnormal behavior. However large scale lobbying by homosexuals and certain psychologists brought in biases into this scientific field of inquiry and hence the truth got masked and the results are stated below:

“Before 1973 the DSM [Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders] listed homosexuality as a sexual disorder. Protests by gay activist groups and many psychotherapists eventually led to its elimination from the manual as a sexual disorder per se, but the DSM did retain a category called “ego dystotic homosexuality- the feeling of extreme distress over one’s homosexual preference”. DSM III R has dropped even this category, and the issue of homosexuality is no longer mentioned (Comer 480).”

“Until the early 1970’s the U.S psychiatric establishment classified homosexuality as a mental illness, but that designation was dropped amid increased political activity and efforts by homosexuals to be seen as individuals exercising different sexual preferences rather than aberrant personalities (Encyclopedia Britannica, vol 6, 31).”

Homosexuality is proven to be a learned behavior according to experiments with clinical cases of intersexuality. At puberty, the individuals in question were “generally attracted to the sex opposite to their sex of rearing [even if it be opposite to their genetic sex of males, having X Y chromosomes and females both X chromosomes] This suggests that sexual orientation is primarily established in post natal experiences (Encyclopedia Britannica, vol 27, 247)

***So, what about the Hormonal Differences?** When hormones are artificially altered in female animal’s bodies (introducing excess androgen parenterally) it makes them behave more like males even showing mating preference for members of the same sex.

The same source however, also narrates that changing the hormone level postnatally does not mean that sexual preference for partners will change. The only thing that will change will be the arousal level.

Therefore, based on the above, I believe I can justifiably conclude that abnormal sexual preference even when it becomes “normal” to a particular individual due to abnormal circumstances like the above can be controlled. If every male took his sexual desires towards every attractive female to their conclusion, you can well imagine the galloping rate of rapes in this or any other society. Just because certain individuals experience sexual desires towards members of the same sex, because something went wrong somewhere, does not at all mean that they should engage in homosexual behavior or that their behavior be accepted without question or search for a solution.

Coming to the religious perspective, there is absolutely no doubt that Christianity, Judaism and Allah, the three most widely embraced religions in the

whole world, condemn homosexual behavior in the strongest terms; according to the Old Testament the Torah, the people of “Lut” were destroyed because they engaged in homosexual behavior and were unrepentant and non-accepting of God’s admonishment (Holy Bible, Genesis chapter 13, 14, 18, 19; Torah 7:80-84; 4:16 etc)

In the book of Romans, in the Bible (New Testament), Paul states:

“Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error (Romans 1:22-27).”

The above verse also condemns those who worship God in the image of a man i.e those who believe in the concept of a “God- incarnate”.

Allah considers homosexuality to be the result of a choice. It is inconceivable that Allah made people homosexuals then declared it a crime and prescribed punishments for it in both this life and the next. To accept such a proposition is to accept that God is unjust. Inclinations can exist within humans for a variety of natural and unnatural acts, from fornication to rape and from necrophilia to bestiality. These inclinations may come from satan suggestions (devil’s), media influence, or even from human whisperings or direct contact. Human beings are not like robots who only do what they are programmed to do. Humans choose and God holds them responsible for their choices. Were homosexuality a product of genetic destiny, it would be unfair for God to criminalize it and punish those who practice it. Currently, some scientists are even claiming that murder is of genetic origin. To accept that would mean to excuse murderers and tolerate murder.

Allah instructs parents to separate their children in their beds by the age of ten in order to avoid sexual experiences, which may result from childhood experimentation. Such experiences may be reinforced by contacts in schools and through abuse from adults. Also the distinctions between male and female are strongly made in Islamic teachings. The Prophet cursed men who imitated women and women who imitated men. The Western fashion industry is controlled by homosexuals who attempt to blur the distinction between males and females, in order to make their behavior more acceptable. Consequently, men's fashion has become more feminine in style and color and women are now wearing three-piece suits, ties and hats and traditionally men's shoes. These distinctions may be relative and vary from a society to another. For example, in Scotland men traditionally wear knee-length dresses called "kilts". In Scotland it would not be considered imitation of females, but in a society where only women wear such dress it would be considered imitation.

***GENERAL CONCLUSION:**

According to common sense, society, science, logic, psychology and religion – i.e all those aspects of present society, that have contributed to its civilization, homosexuality is irrational, illogical, abnormal and an immoral behavior. Those who practice it should not be personally condemned but their behavior should and solutions to their ills be found, and the free practice of homosexual behavior be stopped, so that our society prospers. If clear and concrete evidence were indeed found in the other direction, everyone would gladly change the above conclusions. Therefore let our end be towards the truth! And what is surprising in all the hereabove proofs, so long as Allah created mankind, Allah prohibited homosexuality, so this prohibition HAS to be the right way for the good of the mankind... Who could ever know about the product better than the manufacturer?!! Allah almighty says: *"..What is left after the truth except error? How then are you turned away."*(10:32)

XII. POLYGAMY (MULTI-MARRIAGE) IN ISLAMIC LAW

Polygamy was a way of life until the Quran was revealed 1400 years ago. When the earth was young and under-populated, polygamy was one way of populating it and bringing in the human beings needed to carry out God's plan. By the time the Quran was revealed, the world had been sufficiently populated, and the Quran put down the first limitations against polygamy.

Polygamy is permitted in the Quran, but under strictly observed circumstances. Any abuse of this divine permission incurs severe retribution. Thus, although polygamy is permitted by God, it behooves us to examine our circumstances carefully before saying that a particular polygamous relationship is permissible.

Our perfect example here is the prophet Muhammad. He was married to one wife, Khadijah, until she died. He had all his children, except one, from Khadijah. Thus, she and her children enjoyed the Prophet's full attention for as long as she was married to him; twenty-five years. For all practical purposes, Muhammad had one wife - from the age of 25 to 50. During the remaining 13 years of his life, he married the aged widows of his friends who left many children. The children needed a complete home, with a fatherly figure, and the Prophet provided that. Providing a fatherly figure for orphans is the only specific circumstance in support of polygamy mentioned in the Quran (4:3).

Other than marrying widowed mothers of orphans, there were three political marriages in the Prophet's life. His close friends Abu Bakr and Omar insisted that he would marry their daughters, Aisha and Hafsa, to establish traditional family ties among them. The third marriage was to Maria the

Egyptian; she was given to him as a political gesture of friendship from the ruler of Egypt.

This perfect example tells us that a man must give his full attention and loyalty in marriage to his wife and children in order to raise a happy and wholesome family.

The Quran emphasizes the limitations against polygamy in very strong words:

"If you fear lest you may not be perfectly equitable in treating more than one wife, then you shall be content with one." (4:3)

"You cannot be equitable in a polygamous relationship, no matter how hard you try." (4:129)

The Quranic limitations against polygamy point out the possibility of abusing God's law. Therefore, unless we are absolutely sure that God's law will not be abused, we had better resist our lust and stay away from polygamy. If the circumstances do not dictate polygamy, we had better give our full attention to one wife and one set of children. The children's psychological and social well-being, especially in countries where polygamy is prohibited, almost invariably dictate monogamy. A few basic criteria must be observed in contemplating polygamy:

1. It must alleviate pain and suffering and not cause any pain or suffering.
2. If you have a young family, it is almost certain that polygamy is an abuse.
3. Polygamy to substitute a younger wife is an abuse of God's law (4:19).

***This is a reprint from appendix 30 from Dr. Khalifa's translation of the Quran:**

***INTRODUCTION:**

Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam does not provide an explicit prohibition of Polygamy. Unlike Judaism, Christianity and perhaps-other religions as well, Islam deals with the issue more clearly and provides certain legal requirements and restraints that amount to the discouragement of such a practice.

The reason for not prohibiting polygamy categorically is perhaps due to the fact that there are certain conditions which face individuals and societies in different places and at different times, which make the limited practice of polygamy a better solution than either divorce or the hypocritical pretence of morality.

Our present day feelings about what is "tasteful" or "distasteful" are something we cannot force on all people everywhere, at all times and under all conditions, unless it is a question of a law coming from God. This leads to the following question.

***IS POLYGAMY IMMORAL PER SE?**

To shorten the discussion, let us begin with the assumption that religions are acceptable sources of "morals". Let us also select two religions (Judaism and Christianity), which are the closest to Islam, in order to see where they stand on that issue.

a) In Judaism: It is notable that most of the Old Testament Prophets are polygamous. According to the Old Testament, Abraham "the friend of God" had more than one wife, David had one hundred wives, and Solomon is even said to have had 700 wives and 300 concubines.

If polygamy is immoral per se, then these and other leading figures in the

Biblical traditions are immoral. In this case, there would be no sanctity attached to the Bible, its Prophets, or its teachings! No sincere Jew, Christian or Muslim would regard God's chosen Messengers as immoral persons!

The Dictionary of the Bible states: Polygamy meets us as a fact: e.g. Abraham, Jacob, the Judges, David, Solomon...In Deuteronomy 17:17, the King is warned not to multiply wives; later regulations fixed the number at eighteen for a king and for an ordinary man.

The Philosophy behind the legalization of polygamy is explained in the Encyclopedia Biblica: The man who owns his wife as a chattel can on the same principle own as many as he pleases, that is to say, as many as he can afford to buy and keep...The Talmudists formulate the rule that no Jew may have more than four wives, kings may have at most eighteen.

It was only at the beginning of the eleventh century (about four centuries after the advent of Islam!) that polygamy was expressly prohibited in Judaism.

According to Westermarck: "Among European Jews polygamy was still practiced during the Middle Ages, and among Jews living in Muhammadan countries it occurs even to this day.

An express prohibition of it was not pronounced until the convening of the Rabbinical Synod at Worms, in the beginning of the eleventh century. This prohibition was originally made for the Jews living in Germany and Northern France, but it was successfully adopted in all European countries. Nevertheless, the Jewish Marriage Code retained many provisions, which originated at a time when polygamy was still legally in existence."

b) In Christianity: As the Old Testament is a vital part of the Christian Faith, it cannot be disregarded in this discussion.

It was concerning the Old Testament laws and Old Testament Prophets that Jesus (as) said plainly that he came not to destroy the Law or the Prophets but rather to fulfill. In addition, there is no passage in the New Testament that

clearly prohibits polygamy. This was the understanding of the early Church Fathers and for several centuries in the Christian era.

Westermarck, the noted authority on the history of human marriages states:

"Considering that monogamy prevailed as the only legitimate form of marriage in Greece and Rome, it cannot be said that Christianity introduced obligatory monogamy in the Western World. Indeed, although the New Testament assumes monogamy as the normal or ideal form of marriage, it does not expressly prohibit polygamy, except in the case of a bishop or deacon. It has been argued that it was not necessary for the first Christian teachers to condemn polygamy because monogamy was the universal rule among the peoples in whose midst it was preached: but this is certainly not true of the Jews, who still both permitted and practiced polygamy at the beginning of the Christian era. Some of the Fathers accused the Jewish Rabbis of sensuality, but no Council of the Church in the earliest centuries opposed polygamy, and no obstacle was put in the way of its practice by kings in countries where it had occurred in the times of paganism. In the middle of the sixth century Diarmait, King of Ireland, had two queens and two concubines. Polygamy was frequently practiced by the Merovingian kings. Charles the Great had two wives and many concubines; and one of his laws seems to imply that polygamy was not unknown among priests. In later times Philip of Hesse and Frederick William II of Prussia contracted bigamous marriages with the sanction of the Lutheran clergy.

Luther himself approved of the bigamy of the former, and so did Melanchthon. On various occasions Luther speaks of polygamy with considerable toleration. It had not been forbidden by God: even Abraham, who was a "perfect Christian", had two wives. It is true that God had allowed such marriages to certain men of the Old Testament only in particular circumstances, and if a Christian wanted to follow their example he had to show that the circumstances were similar in his case; but polygamy was undoubtedly preferable to divorce.

In 1650, soon after the Peace of Westphalia, when the population had been greatly reduced by the Thirty Years' War, the Frankish Kreistag at Nuremberg passed resolution that thenceforth every man should be allowed to marry two women. Certain sects of Christians have even advocated polygamy with much fever.

In 1531 the Anabaptists openly preached at Munster that he who wants to be a true Christian must have several wives. And the Mormons, as the entire world knows, regard polygamy as a divine institution."

***WHAT IS THE LEGAL STATUS OF POLYGAMY IN ISLAM?**

The Verse that allows polygamy was revealed after the battle of Uhud in which many Muslims were killed, leaving widows and orphans for whom due care was incumbent upon the Muslim survivors.

The translation of the verse is as follows: *"If you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two, or three, or four; but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then (marry) only one..." (Quran 4:3)*

From this verse a number of facts are evident:

- 1) Polygamy is neither mandatory, nor encouraged, but merely permitted.
- 2) The permission to practice polygamy is not associated with mere satisfaction of, rather, it is associated with compassion towards widows and orphans, a matter that is confirmed by the atmosphere in which the verse was revealed.
- 3) Even in such a situation, the permission is far more restricted than the normal practice which existed among the Arabs and other peoples at that time when many married as many as ten or more wives.
- 4) Dealing justly with one's wives is an obligation. This applies to housing, food, clothing, kind treatment...etc., for which the husband is fully responsible.

If one is not sure of being able to deal justly with them, the Quran says: ***"then (marry) only one."*** (Quran 4:3)

This verse, when combined with another verse in the same chapter, shows some discouragement of such plural marriages. The other verse plainly states: ***"You are never able to be fair and just between women even if it is your ardent desire..."*** (4:129)

The requirement of justice rules out the fantasy that man can "own as many as he pleases." It also rules out the concept of a "secondary wife", for all wives have exactly the same status and are entitled to identical rights and claims over their husband. It also implies, according to the Islamic Law, that should the husband fail to provide enough support for any of his wives, she can go to court and ask for a divorce.

5) The verse says "marry," not kidnap, buy or seduce. What is "marriage" as understood in Islam? Marriage in Islam is a civil contract, which is not valid unless both contracting parties consent to it. Thus, no wife can be forced or "given" to a husband who is already married.

It is thus a free choice of both parties. As to the first wife:

A) She may be barren or ill and see in polygamy a better solution than divorce.

B) She may divorce him (unilaterally) if he is married to a second wife provided that the nuptial contract gives her the right of unilateral divorce**.

*****In Islam, it is lawful for every woman to put any preconditions she wishes in her nuptial contract.***

C) She can go to court and ask for a divorce if there is evidence of mistreatment or injustice inflicted upon her.

But if polygamy is discouraged and loaded with such constraints, could it have been better if the Quran simply forbade it? To answer this question, we may

have to raise another one: Could Polygamy be a Better Solution in Some Cases? Scholars in the past and at present, Muslims and Non-Muslims have consistently pointed out such cases.

The following are a few examples, which are tied in with the general approach of Islam to individual and social problems.

A) Individual Cases

1) A man who discovers that his wife is barren, and who at the same time instinctively aspires to have children and heir. In a situation as this, then man would either have to:

- Suffer the deprivation of fatherhood for life.
- Divorce his barren wife and get married to another women who is not barren, on condition that his first wife accepts this situation or have a divorce.

In many cases, neither solution can be considered as the best alternative.

Polygamy would have the advantage of preserving the marital relationship without depriving the man of fathering children of his own.

2) A man whose wife becomes chronically ill would have one of possible alternatives:

- He may suppress his instinctive sexual needs for the rest of his life.
- He may divorce his sick wife at a time when she needs his compassion most, and get married to another woman, thus legally satisfying his instinctive needs.
- Or he could compromise by keeping his sick wife, and secretly take for himself one or more illicit sex partners.

Let us discuss these alternatives from the point of view of the Islamic Teaching:

- The first solution is against human nature. Islam recognises sex and sexual needs and provides legitimate means for their satisfaction.

- The second solution is clearly less compassionate; especially where there is love between two parties. Furthermore, divorce is described by the Prophet Muhammad (saw) as the "mostly hated permitted thing by God". The last solution is plainly against the Islamic teaching which forbids illicit sexual relationships in any form.

To sum up, Islam being against immorality, hypocritical pretence of morality, and against divorce unless no better solution is available, provides for a better alternative which is consistent with human nature and with the preservation of pure and legitimate sex relationships. In a situation like this, it is doubtful that any solution would be better than polygamy, which is, after all, an optional solution.

B) Social Cases

1) Anthropologists tell us that among various tribes and societies, polygamy is a social and economic necessity. In some very poor areas, the infant mortality is very high. Children on the other hand, are a source of additional labor for the earning capacity of the family. To have more children under such circumstances would require the practice of polygamy. It is by this very reason that Christian missionaries in some African regions justified their permission to local people to practice polygamy without being excommunicated from the church. One researcher has even found, through his studies that women in such societies not only accept polygamy, but some of them even prefer this.

2) Aside from cases where women outnumber men, devastating wars, in the past and at present, have taken their toll mainly among men. The result is not simply more women who cannot find husbands, but even more widows who may aspire to a respectable family life. In such a situation, if polygamy is bad, the limitation on polygamy is even far worse.

Both unmarried women and widows are human beings. Unless their instinctive needs are legitimately satisfied, the temptation is great for corruption and immorality. But aside from the moral question these women are also exploited. They are used as tools for men's pleasures, yet have no guarantees, no rights or security, financial or emotional. Should they become pregnant, it is their burden alone. But even if such women are ready to pay the price for this personally, society also suffers seriously from such situations. The increasing number of illegitimate children born today under conditions such as these, provides a potential base for tomorrow's maladjusted and criminals. Furthermore it is inhuman, humiliating for those children to grow up without knowing who their fathers were and without enjoying a clean and normal family life.

***One question remains:**

Why Not Polyandry (plurality of husbands for the same women?)

It is evident that the nature of women is physiologically and psychologically different from that of men. Psychologically speaking, the woman is monogamous by her very nature. Furthermore, in all cultures, new and old, the headship of the family is normally man's. One can imagine what would happen if the family had two or more heads. Furthermore, if the woman was married to more than one husband, being the one who gets pregnant, which would be the father of her children?

***Conclusion:**

It is now evident that the association of "polygamy" with Islam is not unfair or biased but based on serious misunderstanding. Polygamy was practiced, often without limitations, in almost all cultures. It was sanctioned by various religions, and practiced both before Islam and for many centuries

thereafter. It is presently practiced, though secretly, by the Mormons, and it is allowed by Christian missionaries in Africa and other areas where polygamy is a social necessity.

It is both honest and accurate to say that it is Islam that regulated this practice, limited it, made it more humane, and instituted equal rights and status for all wives. What the Quranic decrees amount to, taken together, is a discouragement of polygamy unless necessity for it exists.

It is also evident that the general rule in Islam is monogamy and not polygamy. However, permission to practice limited polygamy is only consistent with Islam's realistic view of the nature of man and women and of the various social needs, problems, and cultural variations.

The question is, however, far more than the inherent flexibility of Islam; it also is frank and straightforward approach of Islam in dealing with practical problems. Rather than requiring hypocritical and superficial compliance, Islam delves deeper into the problems of individuals and societies, and provides for legitimate and clean solutions that are far more beneficial than would be the case if they were ignored.

There is no doubt that the second wife legally married and treated kindly is better off than a mistress without any legal rights or security. There is no doubt also that the legitimate child of a polygamous father, born in the "full light of the day, " and who enjoys all the rights and privileges of a son or daughter, is far better off than the wanted or unwanted illegitimate child (especially if it is a girl).

It is fair also to say that polygamy may be harmful in many respects. Islam, however, does not regard polygamy as a substitute for monogamy.

Realizing its disadvantages Islam allows it under strict conditions and when no better alternative is available. This is actually consistent with a general rule in Islamic Law, "The Lesser of Two Evils." This means that if a harm is certain, and if there is no way to avert such harm unless some other harm is done, then it is better to cause the lesser harm in order to avoid the greater. It is like a captain who gets rid of the ship's freight in order to save the lives of the sailors.

This vitality, flexibility, and far-sightedness of the teachings of Islam cannot possibly be attributed to any man or group of men, including Prophet Muhammad (saw) himself. Its secret simply lies in its Divine Source, God Most High, who knows in entirety what human needs and problems are.

Man can reject the guidance of God, become his own god, and establish his own standards of morality. Ultimately, however, he may discover the mirage that alluded him. A few honest questions finally:

- What is the situation in countries that banned polygamy?
- Do they really enjoy sincere and faithful "monogamy"?
- What is the degree of cohesion of the family?
- Is there any significant number of mistresses, "sweethearts", and illegitimate children?
- How observant are married men and women of the strict "monogamous" relationship?
- Are infidelity and secret extramarital sexual relationships more moral than the legitimate, legally protected husband-wife relationships, even under polygamy if there is a pressing need for it?

- Which of the two situations is best?

After all, Islam, by its nature, is a universal religion, which is revealed by God to guide people in all places at all times.

This guidance can hardly be secured by avoiding issues and problems, which are real, even as they are relevant to human life on earth with its diversity. Hypocrisy, apology, or burying one's head in the sand are hardly realistic means of achieving righteous human life. They are not effective in achieving moral upliftment either.

XIII. WOMEN IN THE QURAN AND THE SUNNAH

In Islam there is absolutely no difference between men and women as far as their relationship to Allah is concerned, as both are promised the same reward for good conduct and the same punishment for evil conduct. In the Quran, Allah says: *“And for women are rights over men similar to those of men over women”*. (2:226). The Quran, in addressing the believers, often uses the expression, *‘believing men and women’ to emphasize the equality of men and women in regard to their respective duties, rights, virtues and merits. It says: “For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast, for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in Allah’s praise, for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward”*(33:35)

This clearly contradicts the assertion of the Christian Fathers *that women do not possess souls and that they will exist as sexless beings in the next life.* The Quran says that women have souls in exactly the same way as men and will enter Paradise if they do good deeds:

“Enter into Paradise, you and your wives, with delight”(43:70)

“Who so does that which is right, and believes, whether male or female, him or her will We quicken to happy life” (16:97)

The Quran admonishes those men who oppress or ill-treat women:

“O you who believe! You are forbidden to inherit women against their will. Nor should you treat them with harshness, that you may take

away part of the dowry you have given them - except when they have become guilty of open lewdness. On the contrary live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If you take a dislike to them, it may be that you dislike something and Allah will bring about through it a great deal of good". (4:19)

Considering the fact that before the advent of Islam the pagan Arabs used to bury their female children alive, make women dance naked in the vicinity of the Ka'ba during their annual fairs, and treat women as mere chattels and objects of sexual pleasure possessing no rights or position whatsoever, these teachings of the Noble Quran were revolutionary. Unlike other religions, which regarded women as being possessed of inherent sin and wickedness and men as being possessed of inherent virtue and nobility, **Islam regards men and women as being of the same essence created from a single soul.** The Quran declares:

"O mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, his mate, and from this pair scattered (like seeds) countless men and women. Reverence Allah, through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and reverence the wombs (that bore you); for Allah ever watches over you". (4:1)

The Prophet of Islam (PBUH) said, "**Women are the twin halves of men.**" The Quran emphasizes the essential unity of men and women in a most beautiful simile:

"They (your wives) are your garment and you are a garment for them" (2:187)

Just as a garment hides our nakedness, so do husband and wife, by entering into the relationship of marriage, secure each other's chastity. The garment gives comfort to the body; so does the husband find comfort in his wife's company

and she in his. "The garment is the grace, the beauty, the embellishment of the body, so too are wives to their husbands as their husbands are to them." Islam does not consider woman "an instrument of the Devil", but rather the Quran calls her 'muhsana' - a fortress against Satan because a good woman, by marrying a man, helps him keep to the path of rectitude in his life. It is for this reason that marriage was considered by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a most virtuous act. He said: **"When a man marries, he has completed one half of his religion."** He enjoined matrimony on Muslims by saying: **"Marriage is part of my way and whoever keeps away from my way is not from me (i.e. is not my follower)"**. The Quran has given the 'raison d'être' (reason of being) of marriage in the following words:

"And among His signs is this, that He has created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquillity with them; and He has put love and mercy between you. Verily in that are signs for those who reflect". (30:21)

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was full of praise for virtuous and chaste women. He said:

"The world and all things in the world are precious but the most precious thing in the world is a virtuous woman. He once told the future khalif, 'Omar: "Shall I not inform you about the best treasure a man can hoard? It is a virtuous wife who pleases him whenever he looks towards her, and who guards herself when he is absent from her."

On other occasions the Prophet said:

"The best property a man can have is a remembering tongue (about Allah), a grateful heart and a believing wife who helps him in

his faith." And again: "The world, the whole of it, is a commodity and the best of the commodities of the world is a virtuous wife."

Before the advent of Islam women were often treated in a very bad manner. The Prophet wanted to put a stop to all cruelties to women. He preached kindness towards them. He told the Muslims:

"Fear Allah in respect of women." And:

"The best of you are they who behave best to their wives." And:

"A Muslim must not hate his wife, and if he be displeased with one bad quality in her, let him be pleased with one that is good." And:

"The more civil and kind a Muslim is to his wife, the more perfect in faith he is."

The Prophet (PBUH) was most emphatic in enjoining upon Muslims to be kind to their women when he delivered his famous "khutba" (Public speech) on the Mount of Mercy at Arafat in the presence of one hundred and twenty-four thousand of his Companions who had gathered there for the Hajj al-Wada (Farewell Pilgrimage). In it he ordered those present, and through them all those Muslims who were to come later, to be respectful and kind towards women. He said:

"Fear Allah regarding women. Verily you have married them with the trust of Allah, and made their bodies lawful with the word of Allah. You have got (rights) over them, and they have got (rights) over you in respect of their food and clothing according to your means."

In Islam a woman is a completely independent personality. She can make any contract or bequest in her own name. She is entitled to inherit in her position as mother, as wife, as sister and as daughter. She has perfect liberty to choose

her husband. The pagan society of pre-Islamic Arabia had an irrational prejudice against their female children whom they used to bury alive. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) was totally opposed to this practice. He showed them that supporting their female children would act as a screen for them against the fire of Hell:

It is narrated by the Prophet's wife, Aisha, that a woman entered her house with two of her daughters. She asked for charity but Aisha could not find anything except a date, which was given to her. The woman divided it between her two daughters and did not eat any herself. Then she got up and left. When the Prophet (PBUH) came to the house, Aisha told him about what had happened and he declared that when the woman was brought to account (on the Day of Judgment) about her two daughters they would act as a screen for her from the fires of Hell.

The worst calamity for a woman is when her husband passes away and, as a widow, the responsibility of maintaining the children falls upon her. In the Eastern World, where a woman does not always go out to earn her living, the problems of widowhood are indescribable. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) upheld the cause of widows. Most of his wives were widows. In an age when widows were rarely permitted to remarry, the Prophet encouraged his followers to marry them. He was always ready to help widows and exhorted his followers to do the same. Abu Hurairah (ONE OF THE SINCEREST FOLLOWERS) reported that the Prophet said: **"One who makes efforts (to help) the widow or a poor person is like a mujahid (warrior) in the path of Allah, or like one who stands up for prayers in the night and fasts in the day."**

Woman as a mother, commands great respect in Islam. The Noble Quran speaks of the rights of the mother in a number of verses. It enjoins Muslims to

show respect to their mothers and serve them well even if they are still unbelievers. The Prophet states emphatically that the rights of the mother are paramount. Abu Hurairah reported that a man came to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and asked: **"O Messenger of Allah, who is the person who has the greatest right on me with regards to kindness and attention?"** He replied, **"Your mother."** **"Then who?"** He replied, **"Your mother."** **"Then who?"** He replied, **"Your mother."** **"Then who?"** He replied, **"Your father."**

In another tradition, the Prophet advised a believer not to join the war against the Quraish in defense of Islam, but to look after his mother, saying that his service to his mother would be a cause of his salvation. Mu'awiyah, the son of Jahimah, reported that Jahimah came to the Prophet (PBUH) and said, **"Messenger of Allah! I want to join the fighting (in the path of Allah) and I have come to seek your advice."** He said, **"Then remain in your mother's service, because Paradise is under her feet."**

The Prophet's followers accepted his teachings and brought about a revolution in their social attitude towards women. They no longer considered women as mere chattels, but as an integral part of society. For the first time women were given the right to have a share in inheritance. In the new social climate, women rediscovered themselves and became highly active members of society rendering useful service during the wars which the pagan Arabs forced on the emerging Muslim world. They carried provisions for the soldiers, nursed them, and even fought alongside them if it was necessary. It became a common sight to see women helping their husbands in the fields, carrying on trade and business independently, and going out of their homes to satisfy their needs.

Aisha reported that Saudah bint Zamah went out one night. 'Omar saw her and recognized her and said, **"By God, O Saudah, why do you not hide yourself from us?"** She went back to the Prophet (PBUH) and told him about it

while he was having supper in her room, and he said, **"It is permitted by Allah for you to go out for your needs."** The predominant idea in the teachings of Islam with regard to men and women is that a husband and wife should be full-fledged partners in making their home a happy and prosperous place, that they should be loyal and faithful to one another, and genuinely interested in each other's welfare and the welfare of their children. A woman is expected to exercise a humanizing influence over her husband and to soften the sternness inherent in his nature. A man is enjoined to educate the women in his care so that they cultivate the qualities in which they, by their very nature, excel.

These aspects were much emphasized by the Prophet (peace be upon him). He exhorted men to marry women of piety and women to be faithful to their husbands and kind to their children. He said:

"Among my followers the best of men are those who are best to their wives, and the best of women are those who are best to their husbands. To each of such women is set down a reward equivalent to the reward of a thousand martyrs. Among my followers, again, the best of women are those who assist their husbands in their work, and love them dearly for everything, save what is a transgression of Allah's laws."

Once Mu'awiyah asked the Prophet (PBUH), **"What are the rights that a wife has over her husband?"** The Prophet replied, **" Feed her when you take your food, give her clothes to wear when you wear clothes, refrain from giving her a slap on the face or abusing her, and do not separate from your wife, except within the house."** Once a woman came to the Prophet with a complaint against her husband. He told her: "There is no woman who removes something to replace it in its proper place, with a view to tidying her husband's house, but that Allah sets it down as a virtue for her. Nor is there a man who walks with his wife hand-in-hand, but that Allah sets it down as a virtue for him;

and if he puts his arm round her shoulder in love, his virtue is increased tenfold." Once he was heard praising the women of the tribe of Quraish, "**...because they are the kindest to their children while they are infants and because they keep a careful watch over the belongings of their husbands.**"

The Shari'ah regards women as the spiritual and intellectual equals of men. The main distinction it makes between them is in the physical realm based on the equitable principle of fair division of labor. It allots the more strenuous work to the man and makes him responsible for the maintenance of the family. It allots the work of managing the home and the upbringing and training of children to the woman, work which has the greatest importance in the task of building a healthy and prosperous society.

It is a fact, however, that sound administration within the domestic field is impossible without a unified policy. For this reason the Shari'ah requires a man, as head of the family, to consult with his family and then to have the final say in decisions concerning it. In doing so he must not abuse his prerogative to cause any injury to his wife. Any transgression of this principle involves for him the risk of losing the favor of Allah, because his wife is not his subordinate but she is, to use the words of the Prophet (PBUH), '**the queen of her house**', and this is the position a true believer is expected to give his wife. In contrast to these enlightened teachings of Islam in respect of women, Western talk of women's liberation or emancipation is actually a disguised form of exploitation of her body, deprivation of her honor, and degradation of her soul!

After discussing both sexual and social feminine rights in Islam, here is completed the picture of the Muslim woman in Islamic rulings, this is the picture that counteracts the traditional one known about the Muslim woman, taken surely from non-reliable sources which are eventually dishonest ones.

XIV. CONCEPTS OF CONTRACEPTION AND ABORTION IN ISLAM

***Is birth control permissible in Islam?**

***What about [Muslim](#) point of view in abortion?**

In a lot of Muslim countries, demographic matters have gained prime importance because of an unprecedented large increase in the population.

This chapter is a mere effort to clear these misconceptions that many Muslims have about the lawfulness of birth control in Islam.

***Is birth control permissible in Islam?**

A Muslim has three sources of knowledge to obtain answers to the questions pertaining to various aspects of human life. These sources are:

1. The Holy Qur'an;
2. Sayings (*hadith*) and acts (*Sunnah*) of the Holy Prophet (pbuh); and
3. The views of the leaders of juristic schools qualified to interpret the teachings of Islam.

1. The Holy Qur'an

No Quranic text forbids prevention of conception. There are, however, some Quranic verses which prohibit infanticide and these are used by some Muslims to discourage birth control.

But contraception does not amount to killing a human being. These verses in fact were revealed to forbid the pre-Islamic Arab practice of killing or burying alive a newborn child (particularly a girl) on account of the parents' poverty or to refrain from having a female child. Perhaps in those days, people did not know safe methods of contraception and early abortion.

2. Hadith

The principle of preventing conception was accepted in those sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) which allowed some of his followers to practice *'azl* or coitus interruptus. These “ahadith” (prophetic statements) embodied the earliest legal reasoning of Muslims on contraception and were essential instruments of argument in later Islamic thought on contraception. There is a sufficient number of “ahadith” on contraception. The most commonly quoted ones are the following.

1. According to Jabir, **"We used to practice *'azl* in the Prophet's (PBUH) lifetime while the Quran was being revealed."** There is another version of the same *hadith*, **"We used to practice coitus interruptus during the Prophet's (PBUH) lifetime. News of this reached him and he did not forbid us."**

2. According to Jabir, **"A man came to the Prophet (PBUH) and said, 'I have a slave girl, and we need her as a servant and around the palmgroves. I have sex with her, but I am afraid of her becoming pregnant.' The Prophet (pbuh) said, 'Practice *'azl* with her if you so wish, for she will receive what has been predestined for her.'"**

3. According to Abu Sa'id, **"We rode out with the Prophet (PBUH) to raid Banu al-Mustaliq and captured some female prisoners . . . we desired women and abstinence became hard. (But) we wanted to practice *'azl*; and asked the Prophet (PBUH) about it. He said, 'You do not have to hesitate, for God has predestined what is to be created until the judgment day.'"**

4. According to Abu Sa'id, **"The Jews say that coitus interruptus is minor infanticide, and the Prophet (PBUH) answered, 'The Jews lie, for if God wanted to create something, no one can avert it (or divert Him).'"**

5. According to 'Umar Ibn Khattab, **"The Prophet (PBUH) forbade the practice of *'azl* with a free woman except with her permission."**

6. According to Judhamah bint Wahb, **"I was there when the Prophet (pbuh) was with a group saying, 'I was about to prohibit the *ghila* (intercourse with a woman in lactation) but I observed the Byzantines and the Persians,**

and saw them do it, and their children were not harmed.' They asked him about coitus interruptus, and the Prophet (PBUH) replied, 'It is a hidden infanticide . . .'"

These 'ahadith' (Sayings) reflect two points:

- 1- First that the Prophet (PBUH) knew about the practice and did not prohibit it (no. 1)
- 2- Second, that the Prophet (pbuh) himself permitted the practice (no. 2 & 3).

Muslim jurists determine the lawfulness of an act on the basis of a method, which comprises four principles or sources (*usul*). Two of these (Quran and *Sunnah*) are religious sources. The other two principles include analogical reasoning (*qiyas*) and the consensus of the '*ulama* (*ijma*').

The most detailed analysis of Islamic permission of contraception was made by the great leader of the Shafi'i School of jurisprudence, al-Ghazzali (1058-1111). He discussed this issue in his great work, *Ihya' 'ulum al-Din* (The revival of Religious Sciences), in the chapter on biology in religion.

Al-Ghazzali stated that there was no basis for prohibiting this method of contraception which is the coitus interruptus ('*azl*'). For prohibition in Islam was possible only by adducing an original text, an explicit provision in the Quran or hadith) or by analogy with a given text. In the case of contraception, there was no such text, nor was there any principle on which to base prohibition.

In his view, coitus interruptus was absolutely permitted, and this permission could be ratified by analogical reasoning. A man could refrain from marriage; or marry but abstain from mating or have sexual mating but abstain from ejaculation inside the vagina (external ejaculation or coitus interruptus). Although it was better to marry, have intercourse, and have ejaculation inside the vagina, abstention from these was by no means forbidden or unlawful.

Al-Ghazzali made a distinction between infanticide and contraception. He said that a child could not be formed merely by the emission of the spermatic fluid, but by the settling of semen in the woman's womb; for children were not created by the man's semen alone but of both parents together. So contraception could not be compared with infanticide which is the killing of an existing being, while contraception was different.

In the process of contraception, the two (male and female) emissions are analogous to two elements, 'offer' (*ijab*) and 'acceptance' (*qabul*), which are components of a legal contract in Islamic law. Someone who submits an offer and then withdraws it before the other party accepts it is not guilty of any violation, for a contract does not come into existence before acceptance. In the same manner, there is no real difference between the man's emission and retention of the semen unless it actually mixes with the woman's 'semen'.

Al-Ghazzali classified earlier and contemporary opinions into the following groups:

- 1- Unconditional permission for *'azl*;
- 2- Permission if the wife consents but prohibition if she does not.

Al-Ghazzali accepts prevention or contraception if the motive for the act is any of these:

- 1- A desire to preserve a woman's beauty or her health, or save her life.
- 2- Desire to avoid financial hardship and embarrassment
- 3- Avoidance of other domestic problems caused by a large family.

On the other hand, he did not accept avoidance of female birth as a legitimate motive for contraception.

Another great scholar, Ibn Taymiyah, discussed Divine providence, procreation and contraception (in this way) in the early fourteenth century. He argues, "Allah creates children and other animals in the womb by willing the meeting of parents in intercourse, and the two semens in the womb. A man is a fool

who says, 'I shall depend on God and not approach my wife and if it is willed that I be granted a child I will be given one, otherwise not and there is no need for intercourse.' This is very different from having intercourse and practising withdrawal, for withdrawal does not prevent pregnancy if God wills a pregnancy to occur, because there can be involuntary pre-emission of semen.

Most scholars of the Prophet's (PBUH) tradition, like Ibn Majah and Ahmad, agreed that coitus interruptus was permitted by the Prophet (PBUH)

This in brief is the review of juristic opinion about contraception. There is no doubt that the earliest followers of the Prophet (PBUH) practiced *'azl*. This practice was within his knowledge and he did not forbid it.

To summarize, it was agreed in total that it is lawful to avoid pregnancy via avoiding meeting of the sperm and the ovum, measuring on this, it is then lawful to take contraceptive pills which prevents the ovulation from its very source.

Moreover, it is permissible to use condoms so long as this does not cause any harm and so long as both husband and wife consent to their use, because this is similar to *'azl* (coitus interruptus or “withdrawal”). But it reduces the sensation of pleasure, which is the right of both partners, and reduces the chance of conception, which is also the right of both partners. Neither one of them is allowed to deprive the other of these rights. And Allah is the course of strength.

***Muslim jurists and abortion:**

Many Muslim scholars have discussed the thorny question of abortion. They have based their discussion on the division of the development of fetus into two stages. According to them, the whole period of pregnancy can be divided into two stages: the first 120 days, and the remaining period before childbirth. Most classical Muslim jurists claim that it is permissible to have an abortion for valid reasons during the first stage.

The Holy Qur'an has also described the process of fetal development. According to it, the development of fetus progresses through stages of differentiation and growth.

“Man We did create from a quintessence (of clay); then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed; then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a (foetus) lump; then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed out of it another creature. So blessed by God the Best to create!” (23:12-14)

In another *Surah*: *“O mankind! If you have a doubt about the Resurrection, (consider) that We have created you of dust; then of sperm; then out of a leech-like clot, then out of a morsel of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed, in order that We may manifest (Our power) to you; and We cause whom We will in the wombs, for an appointed term, then do We bring you out as babes” (22:5)*

All Muslim scholars agree that the fetus changes to a human being after 120 days of conception. The following *hadith* also supports this point.

The Prophet (PBUH) said, **"Each of you is constituted in your mother's womb for forty days as a *nutfah* (fertilized ovum), then it becomes an *'alaqah* (leech-like clot) for an equal period, then a *mudghah* (cartilaginous structure) for another equal period, then the angel is sent and he breathes the soul into it."**

This view of embryonic development was central to the Muslim arguments on abortion. According to Muslim scholars, it is lawful to have an abortion during the first 120 days, but after the stage of ensoulment (insertion of the soul), abortion is prohibited completely except where it is imperative to save the mother's life.

The Hanafi scholars, who comprised the majority of orthodox Muslims in later centuries, permitted abortion until the end of the four months. According to

them, a pregnant woman could have an abortion without her husband's permission, but she should have reasonable grounds for this act. One reason which was mentioned frequently was the presence of a nursing infant. A new pregnancy put an upper limit on lactation, and the jurists believed that if the mother could not be replaced by a wet-nurse, the infant would die.

Many Shafi'i and Hanbali scholars agreed with the Hanafis in their tolerance of the practice, some putting an upper limit of forty days for a legal abortion, other eighty days or 120 days according to the stage they think the fetus is an ensouled human being at.

By comparing the Muslim jurists' consensus on the permission of contraception, there appears a difference of opinion on abortion. But given the fact that prohibition was not the dominant view by any standard, given the fact that Muslims believed in ensoulment as the crucial event before which the fetus was not a person, and given the fact that the sanction of contraception strengthened the view that abortion should be legalized before ensoulment, perhaps we can say that, on the whole, abortion was religiously tolerated. This conclusion gains indirect support from the contemporary medieval Arabic secular literature. Medicine, *materia medica* and popular literature all treated contraception and abortion as if they were two aspects of the same process: birth control.

***Views of some modern Muslim jurists:**

The Grand Mufti of Jordan, Shaykh 'Abd Allah Al-Qalqili, issued a *fatwa* in 1964 in which he said: "There is agreement among the exponents of jurisprudence that coitus interruptus, as one of the methods for the prevention of childbearing, is allowed. Doctors of religion inferred from this that it is permissible to take a drug to prevent childbearing, or even to induce abortion. We confidently rule in this *fatwa* that it is permitted to take measures to limit childbearing.

Another Muslim scholar, Dr. Ismail Balogun of Nigeria's University of Ibadan, wrote about the lawfulness of modern contraceptive methods:

The question that arises because coitus interruptus was the only contraceptive method known by the Prophet's Companions, and which practice the Prophet (PBUH) condones, is this: can Muslims of today practice any other method? The answer can only be in the affirmative, as long as other methods are not injurious, either to the man or woman. The question is tantamount to asking whether a Muslim can today wear clothes different in shape from those worn by the Prophet (PBUH) and his Companions during their time.

Shaykh 'Ali Jad al-Haq, the Grand Mufti of Egypt, commented on the projection of family planning as a distrust in the popular belief that Allah will take care of a family's needs regardless of how big it grows, in these words:

Contraception, through withdrawal or any newer method, does not mean distrust in Allah's generosity or mercy. Do you recall what our Prophet (pbuh) said to the camel-man who was afraid of losing his valuable beast? **"First take the precaution of tying up your camel and then trust in Allah's care for her."** Is this not the best counsel for combining planning with faith in God's concern for all? When Al-Ghazzali wrote about contraception as a possible solution of the family's problems, the great Imam was not suggesting disbelief in God's care for the family.'

Let me also refer to a famous verse from the Quran: ***"There is no creature on earth for whom Allah does not create the means of livelihood."*** The verse does not mean that man need not work for his livelihood. Omar bin Khattab, the second Khalif of Islam, explained this verse clearly: "The man who trusts Allah is one who believes that Allah will make the seed grow, but he does not neglect to sow his crop."

Human forethought and effort are certainly not incompatible with complete faith in Allah's care for His creation.

***Conclusion:**

The early followers of Islam were few and weak in the midst of a vast majority of aggressive and oppressive people. The good of the Muslims then required that there should be a call for the multiplication of their numbers, in order that they might be able at the time to fulfill their responsibilities in defending the mission of Islam and protecting the true religion of Allah against the power and multitudinous adversaries threatening it. But now we find that conditions have changed. We find that the density of population in the world threatens a serious reduction in the living standards of mankind to the extent that many men of thought have been prompted to seek family planning in every country so that the resources may not fall short of ensuring a decent living for it's people to provide public service for them.

Islam, as the religion of pristine nature, has never been opposed to what is good to man. Indeed it has always been ahead in the effort towards the achievement of this good so long as it is not in conflict with the purposes of Allah's law.

Family planning, understood by Islam, is not opposed to marriage or to the begetting of children, nor does its concept imply disbelief in the doctrine of fate and Divine dispensation for Allah Almighty has bestowed reason upon man to enable him to distinguish between the useful and the harmful, and to help him follow the path that would assure him happiness in this world as well as in the world to come.

XV. MISCONCEPTIONS REGARDING SEXUALITY IN ISLAM

- **Allegations that Islam is a religion of sexual suppression and shame:**

This includes wrong thoughts about Islamic concepts of sexuality, believing that sex in Islam aims only at having kids. Before we repel the biased suppression raised by the enemies of Islam who accuse it of being a religion of sexual suppression and guilt, we should first consider the definition of sexual suppression as postulated by Freud, psychologists and educators: “sexual suppression is to deem sexual intercourse as impure and to feel responsible if one indulges in it, even if it is within the legal bond of marriage. This assumption bears similarities to monasticism that is incongruent with Islam. We have discussed above that Islam prohibits monasticism, dispraises celibacy and permits marriage in order to relieve sexual urges and give vent to lust. Islam regards sexual intercourse as a commendable deed that deserves reward from Allah. These are the rational teachings of Islam, which are compatible with contemporary life. Thus, where is the sexual suppression they allege? According to teachings and reality, when a young man feels sexual desire, there is no need to seek refuge with Allah or to suppress his urges, because it is a natural matter that cannot be denied. There is no need for young men to suppress this desire in order to attest their chastity and purity before others. By removing the causes of guilt and shame, they aim at end psychological and nervous disorders that occur as a result of this feeling and that may lead to committing crimes. Islam, however, does not permit the young man to submit to his whims and desires. It sets regulations and orders him to be chaste and elevated in character, and prohibits him from deviating from the straight path and conceding to immorality. These regulations differ from suppression as young men adherence to chastity and sublimation is a temporary elimination to sexual desire and

urges. This temporary cancellation organizes and refines sexual desire, but does not eradicate it completely.

Further evidence that sexual suppression is not a distinguished feature of Islam, as mentioned earlier, Islam permits, for the single person who feels a strong desire, to resort to masturbation in order to curb his urge. Although masturbation is a prohibited practice, Islam permits the practice only to the extent that it prevents to commit adultery. This is based on the Islamic rule: “necessity does not know law”.

The jurists declared that masturbation is unlawful if one’s urge is weak and does not cause him to be over stimulated. In case the urge is very strong, it is lawful to resort to masturbation with neither reward nor sin. Surely Islam is the religion in accordance with human nature and reality because it provides appropriate solutions in conformity with every day situations and aims to remove hardships and difficulties. Almighty Allah says: “*Allah wills for you ease and He does not will difficulty*” (2:185)

He also said; “*And has imposed no difficulties on you in religion*” (22:79).

Thus, the tongues of those who allege that Islam is a religion of monasticism and suppression are to be silenced. While their allegations may concur with the other distorted religions, it absolutely contradicts the teachings of Islam because Islam, as mentioned above, has always been and will always remain the practical religion suited to human nature; “*But who, for people whose faith is assured, can give better judgment than Allah?*” (5:50)

- **Islamic rules avoids any kind of approach to the woman while menstruating (having her monthly course):**

This is a logic continuation of the above-mentioned misconception concerning that sex is merely for having kids, being, at the time of the menstruation, not ready to give kids, as well as penetration being prohibited during those days. But

there are a lot of right statements of Allah messenger contradicting these misconceptions, which were mentioned earlier in chapter ‘VIII’

- **Performance of sexual intercourse in a conservative way (being shy or conservative while having sex):**

This means that every one of the spouses has to enjoy sex only on a very narrow scale, the relation being happening conservatively with as few as possible of being uncovered or to expose one’s private parts to the other, also with negligible or no talks meanwhile to complete the picture of the conservation covering the relationship.

This is opposed by several Quranic verses and prophetic sayings mentioned latterly, to which we add the following statements of the prophet’s wife “Aisha”:

-“I used to bath with Allah messenger in the same pub, and I used to tell him: ‘leave some water for me’, and he used to say to me: ‘you leave me some’”.

*Responding to a follower’s question about the extent of the exposure between spouses:

-“I used to see his (she means his genitals) and he used to see mine”

*Answering a question about the way the Prophet was following, in order to getting pure of “janabah” (after intercourse or night emission), “Aisha”, wife of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) replied:

-“He used to wash his sex organ then to shower”

From the above-mentioned statements, it is very clear that the scope of exposure between Prophet Muhammad (who is the ideal of the Islamic behavior) and his spouse(s) was unlimited, otherwise “Aisha” (May Allah bless her soul) would not tell such statements.

- **Female circumcision:**

The issue of female circumcision is summarized in the following points:

1. Female circumcision is a habit practiced long before Islam. Its map of distribution does not coincide with the Islamic map, and includes parts of Russia, some Asian (including some Arab) tribes, parts of South America and the Nile valley (Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia). Female circumcision is still being practiced by both Non-Muslims and Muslims in these countries. However, at present in Egypt and Sudan only Muslims practice it, (a minority in Egypt and more in Sudan).
2. Female circumcision is not an Islamic requirement. Even the prophetic saying (hadith): "circumcision is sunnah (obligatory) for men and charity (good deeds) for women", was considered non authentic by various sources. In another hadith (which is also considered a weak one, i.e. not highly authentic), the Prophet (PBUH) instructed Omm Atiya, a woman practitioner of circumcision, "Take the minimum, Omm Atiya, and don't exceed it, for this would be more pleasurable for the husband and protective of chastity by satisfying the wife's desire" (narrated by Ibn Majjah). This is taken to refer exclusively to the tribes of that time who would **insist** on the procedure.

Hereby, I have a personal point of view; this is that this event –if it has really happened- gives a space for the medically-indicated excision of a part of the clitoris in case the girl is having a bigger clitoris than it has to be, which makes her vulnerable to clitoral inflammations and ulcerations, the clitoris being thin skinned and not covered by the keratin of which is constituted the outer layer of the regular skin, but if he had prohibited it absolutely, people having medical indication could have regretted seeking surgical correction, for the prophet had prohibited it frankly by name. Hence, Islam did not recommend or forbid female circumcision (same stand in Christianity and Judaism: both knew it).

3. Female circumcision is not practiced in Islamic countries other than Egypt and Sudan and possibly exists in few others. Women of Mecca, Medina (whose people are the mostly following ones to prophetic 'sunnah'), Najd, the Persian Gulf, Iran, North Africa, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, etc are not circumcised. This is an established fact.

4. Female circumcision does not diminish sexual desire, for this depends mainly on psycho-hormonal factors. All circumcision does it to make the woman less able to get satisfaction by the regular ways of foreplay, and this is certainly a frequent cause of marital disharmony and problems, despite the fact that circumcised women could get aroused very naturally on simple informing the husband of the special way he has to follow in order to turn his wife on. The major factor of chastity before marriage and fidelity within it remains to be the conscience and proper Islamic upbringing. There is no evidence whatsoever that the moral standards in Islamic countries which do not have circumcision are lower than in Islamic countries that have it.

5. In view of this, it seems that there is no Islamic basis of making circumcision a requirement for women/Muslim converts or, for that matter, non-converts.

Male circumcision is a different story. It is definitely a sunnah (although not compulsory, fardh) and it takes after the covenants of Prophet Ibrahim (Prophet Abraham). It is clearly meant for males only and scriptural reference to it is the Torah, none in the Quran, but of course in the teaching of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Torah says, "**And Abraham took Ishmael, his son, and all that were born at his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the self-same day as God had said unto him**" **Genesis 17:22, see also Genesis 17:12.**

The fact that Christians (unlike Jews and Muslims) ceased to circumcise their boys, was not a decree of Christianity proclaimed by Jesus (PUH). It was Paul who later exempted Christians from circumcision and permitted them to eat pig's meat. There was no proof that Jesus was not circumcised nor that he did eat pig's meat.

Conclusion: Female circumcision is not required by Islam.

About the details of the issue of the advantages of male circumcision, revise chapter V.

XVI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Sometimes, it is claimed that religion is love's enemy. The usual reasoning behind the claim is based on a situation, where a religion fails to distinguish between love and lust. Thus, the wickedness of lust is ascribed to love, as well. The allegation is not true in the case of Islam. Yet, it can be relevant to Christianity. Islam does not treat sexual passion as wicked in itself, not to speak of considering its direct or indirect association with love as something bad or undesirable.

Deeply sincere and mutual love between spouses is highly respected in Islam, over and above; it is actually highly requested, being a strong reason of avoidance of sexually related sins such as fornication. Islamic teachings commend realization of love on a sound and lasting basis, these preconditions, which are automatically guaranteed once being having a religious conscious.

In the general context of religion versus love, there is one point that is often overlooked. This concerns the tendency for mutual opposition between human intellect and love. Some moralists have wrongly overlooked this in indiscriminately excluding love from morality. They only regarded love as blind and capable of overruling the intellect. They believed that love is not amenable to reason, inferring wrongly that it is also least susceptible to conventional and legal, or moral, disciplining. In other words, they saw nothing but anarchic extremism love.

Accordingly, religions or social systems, which based their morality on intellectual considerations alone, were not conducive to any salutary treatment of love. They treated love as something beyond the scope of any recommendation or advice. This is notwithstanding the fact that what is deserving of advice in matters of love can well concern one's modality of response to any casual manifestation of love in extenuating circumstances over which, one is supposed to have no control.

This is in order to maximize the sublime and beneficial effects of love, while remaining immune to its harmful consequences, if any.

Thus, in short, it is a question of the relationship between love and chastity. One may ask whether or not love can, in its most positive sense, flourish in any permissive social environments. Or, is it simply a question of whether or not love's meaningfulness is invariably linked with any social preference for chastity, secreting an underestimated status of women, which is built on a faulty imaginary background.

What concerns us about love hereby is that it is eventually the sparkle of sex feeling, sex desire, sex pleasure, and sex acting, I don't mean here the genuine feelings of love or the real love emotions, but love per-se, in the case of sexual leaning it is the mere love of "feeling sexually aroused"; this magic sneaker which creeps in the nerves reaching the brain, being the main sex organ, the latter giving the signal of the starting over of the whole thing to happen, every single step of which is full of joy, reaching the so-called the 'pleasure of the pleasures' which is the orgasm.

In his book: "**The Pleasures of Philosophy**", Will Durant acknowledged that love was generally agreed to be the most fascinating thing in the course of human life. At the same time, he noted with surprise that very rarely attention was focused on the origin and growth of love, in the relevant multilingual, poetic and philosophical works of most sensational poets and writers on the subject of love.

Three distinct schools of ancient arid could be identified. Modern thought concerning the origin and purpose of love, so as to deduce its unique or two-sided interaction with the sexual instinct. We have noted that love, as conceived in the West and the East both, is distinct from lust. Also, it is universally recognized as

praiseworthy and respectable, although the relevant conceptualizations differ, as already explained. What remains to be examined now is mainly the question of love in relation to chastity, especially in order to specify the areas and conditions in which they can flourish.

With regard to love and chastity, the relevant social regulations can be either explicit or implicit in moral terms. Where these are explicitly regulated, women may be assigned an elevated position in society, so that they are ordinarily not approachable by men. In the other situation, where love and chastity are implicitly promoted; but not regulated, women's position is subject to the utter tedium of placing themselves at the disposal and protection of their men (which is the situation in most of places on earth nowadays). One may wonder as to which one of these two sets of conditions are apt to enhance love and chastity.

Furthermore, modesty in women might be capable of endearing them to men and awakening mutual love, in anticipation of any subsequent consummation. Thus, men could be prompted to enhance their capabilities and resolution towards significant achievements, by drawing on their otherwise dormant life-oriented energies.

At the same time, Will Durant mentioned the fact that modern young women would seem to be only too willing to discard conventional morality, as if it were some old clothes that went out of fashion. He observed that these women could be audacious not only in displaying themselves, but in their sartorial tastes. Consequently, diminished masculine imaginability concerning female appeal was specified by him to be the only adverse effect of the radical change in the women's outlook and behavior. He opined that, had it not been for men's residual imaginability, perhaps there would have remained no visualization of female beauty.

As for Bertrand Russell's romantic love, we may quote his own words as follows: "The essential of romantic love is that it regards the beloved object as very difficult to possess and as very precious. ... The belief in the immense value of the lady is a psychological effect of the difficulty of obtaining her, and I think it may be laid down that when a man has no difficulty in obtaining a woman, his feeling towards her does not take the form of romantic love."

Then, Bertrand Russell says: "From the point of view of the arts, it is certainly regrettable when women are too accessible; what is most to be desired is that they should be difficult but not impossible of access. ... In a state of complete freedom, on the other hand, a man capable of great love poetry is likely to have so much success through his charm that he will seldom have need of his best imaginative efforts in order to achieve a conquest."

Furthermore, he mentions in another context as follows: "Among modern emancipated people, love in the serious sense with which we are concerned is suffering a new danger. When people no longer feel any moral barrier against sexual intercourse on every occasion when even a trivial impulse inclines to it, they get into the habit of dissociating sex from serious emotion and from feelings of affection; they may even come to associate it with feelings of hatred."

So we can see the great matching between literal, philosophical and artistic viewings of the matter of male-female relationship on one side, and the Islamic religious viewing on the other side, especially the theory of being difficult but possibly available which translates exactly the forbidding of sex but inside the marital relationship.

Islam treats questions concerning sexual behavior on the same ethical basis as is commonly recognized today in the regulation of political and economic

activities. For, individuals are prone to making genuine and willful mistakes in ordering their sexual lives on the basis of their own moral judgment. They may, through misconception, or wantonly, ignore the need for maintaining a democratic concern for morality, in coping with their individual problems, arising in circumstances evidencing lack of any personal restraint and overall chaos.

In principle, any societal regulation of political and economic activities ought to recognize the relevant human instincts and tendencies. For, the aggression instinct and tendency to dominate others can be instrumental in politics. Economic activities may be prompted by a desire to accumulate wealth. Likewise, sexual aptitude can lead to indulgence in lustful activities. However, it is not known why the supporters of the proposed new sexual freedom deem a *laissez faire* policy fit for sexual affairs only, while they seemingly accept the controllability of political and economic activities.

One of the important aspects of sexual ethics concerns the emotion of love. Since the ancient times, the essence of love has been given special attention in philosophy. Ibn Sina (in the Islamic millenium) brought out a treatise on love. Human love has been commonly acknowledged as a wholesome reality, in terms of its all embracing and sublime nature. In literature, specially the poetic, love has not only been eulogized, with a sense of pride (to the extent of proclaiming the superiority of the heart over the mind), but contrasted with lust's debasingly animal-like nature.

Mostly in our literature we find that love has been extolled not only in terms of its Divine connotation, but also in its down-to-earth human emotional context. In either case, there has been no confusion of love with any kind of lust.

In contrast, there have been others, who chose to equate love with a sort of libido, or any persistent metabolic intensity of the sexual instinct. Evidently, they tended to assume that love is rather incapable of sublimation even in Divine terms. They treat love as if it has neither any spiritual origin, nor it is (or ought to be) humane in quality, nor it can be humanitarian in purpose. Those who treat love as both Divine and human differentiate between the animal-like manifestation and the humane accomplishment of love. The others make no such distinction, so that love and lust become synonymous. A very evident example of this situation is the case of one of my patients, who was in great love with his fiancée, despite her being extremely rude to him and to his parents and family, so he used to take her side in whatever condition requiring a judgment, while he was seeing very clearly her being wrong, moreover, he used to be insulted and humiliated repeatedly from the part of her and her family, but, and because at that time he had not yet gotten her sexually, he used to approve everything regarding her adopted (and her family's) point of view, irrespective whether or not this would match the righteousness. Afterwards, after marriage, in other words after having had her sexually, things changed markedly, as if the whole picture was masked before, and it became disclosed, even his perception for the right and the wrong became different!!

Today, a third category of thinkers has become evident. They believe that all kinds of love are sexually prompted, but gradually the carnal motivation assumes a spiritual or contemplative aspect under specific conditions. To them, love is primarily sexual, with only occasional platonic manifestations. However, this dual or two-fold quality of love is affirmed by them only in terms of its expression, objective and effects. There is no duality in so far as the origin and causation of love are concerned.

With regard to the last category of thinkers mentioned above, it is not a matter of surprise that they believe in a material basis of human spirituality. They see no extreme difficulty in the mutual transformation of the material and spiritual aspects of human behavior. In fact, one of them claims that every spiritual affair has a natural basis and every natural thing has a spiritual extension.

Be that as it may, we need not discuss the above in any great psychological and philosophical depth. We can thus avoid going into the pros and cons of the many ancient and current interpretations of any basis of love. For the time being, it should be enough to suggest that love, in effect, can bring about creativity of the human intellect and spirit, as well as induce artistic and cultural refinements of sociological importance.

The above suggestion is valid, irrespective of whether or not love originates in the sexual instinct, and then becomes capable of expressing itself in physical and also spiritual terms, in an interchangeable manner. Any sublime effect of love is far different from its alleged instinctiveness, or simple animal-like concupiscence, which seeks no more than its physiological gratification.

In short, in love, as in several other matters, Westerners and Easterners differ in their intellectual approaches. A typical Westerner is often unable to nurture love within any abstract framework that goes beyond any mechanical process of coping with problems of routine living. Eventually, he comes round to distinguishing love from lust, and also to believing in empathy and spiritual harmony, which it is capable of breeding.

Otherwise, love comes to him as a handy natural talent, leading to marriage or cohabitation, according to the social requirements of living. On the other hand, a typical Easterner seeks to cherish love beyond the requirements of routine living.

Had love been sexual in origin, quality and effect, probably it would not have necessitated separate treatment in sexual ethics. Whatever was discussed earlier concerning the pros and cons of sexual ethics would have been rather sufficient. However, love's origin or, at any rate, its psychological quality and social effects can be quite safely construed as independent of the sexual instinct.

Accordingly, morals concerning nurturing of human inclination to love can be treated in a manner distinguishable from that of the sexual instinct. Gratifying the sexual instinct is not the only concomitant of love. For, sexual gratification is not enough to sustain love, which needs also psychological contentment. Moreover, any denial of love can possibly lead to afflictions, which cannot be remedied by any animal- like gratification of the sexual instinct, assuming that the former is derived from the latter.

Bertrand Russell endorses the need for profound love as follows: “Those who have never known the deep intimacy and the intense companionship of happy mutual love have missed the best thing that life has to give; unconsciously, if not consciously, they feel this and the resulting disappointment inclines them towards envy, oppression and cruelty”.

To end over, here are some points to be well acknowledged, well referred to, in order to recognize very clearly the stance of Islam towards sex:

- It acknowledges man’s innate urges and natural instincts.
- It has also laid down social, psychological and legal rules to control the sexual instincts. It emphasized on adhering to chastity and sublimation.
- It has laid down practical rules before the two genders (male-female) to protect community from the claws of moral dissolution.

- It calls to Muslims to be cautious, aware and alert to the plans and conspiracies of enemies against Islam.
- It silences the tongue of those who accuse it of sexual suppression with persuasive proofs.

One should recognize these immutable facts in order to declare that Islam is the religion of realism in balance with human nature. There is neither honor for Muslims nor stability for human kind save by following the teachings and principles of Islam, since it lightens life for the world. Almighty declares: ***“there has come to you from Allah a (new) light and a perspicuous Book. Where with Allah guides all who seek his good pleasure to ways of piece and safety, and leads them out of darkness, by His Will, unto the light, guides them to a path that is straight” (5:15,16)***

We conclude with;

All praises be to Allah the Lord of the Universe.

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