**The Rights and Responsibilities of Marriage**

Assalamoalaikum warehmatullahe wa barakatahu

I have about fifteen minutes to address all of you and this is a very critical subject and there's so much that can be said about it and I am really glad that Altaf bhai’s presentation was very comprehensive and it touched upon a lot of things that really need to be given a lot of attention. Each one of his points is chapters in the book of marriage and really it should be taken very, very seriously. All of those things can be mentioned very easily in a sentence or two but when it comes to implementing them in our family lives; it's actually a very heavy discussion. And the few minutes I have with you I have to be selective in what I think is pertinent and what I think inshaAllah wa tallah is an Amana to share with you.

I see these conference presentations opportunities not just for rhetoric and takbeers in the end but also opportunities to share food for thought and I want to pretend in these few minutes that I am just talking to a family that I know, just one of you or a family that I know and there is a marriage that is about to happen in your family. You are about to get your daughter married or you're about to get your son married and I just want to share some very relevant, I think relevant advice in regards to this matter.

Marriage is all about trust from the very beginning and its one thing that unfortunately I'm noticing more and more in the premarital process is missing. The foundation of two families coming together if it is not, trust, transparency and openness there’s going to be clearly problems after marriage. You know marriage has become almost like a very difficult sale you know you go to a car dealer ship, the salesman presents his best self and the best features of the car and he gets really offended if you ask difficult questions and if you start asking about the transmission problems that have been reported previously or the recalls or anything else he goes like “I don't know if I want to deal with this”.

What's happened to us in the marriage discourse is that we actually market ourselves. The boy and the girl and the families, they market themselves so they turn the house into something it's not when they're coming over, when the in-laws are coming over they turn themselves and their conversations into something that aren’t genuine and is not really a representation of who they are. How many families, and I can't even count and he and she (pointing out to other speakers) are from the counseling profession and they can tell you families would come and say we had no idea they were like this, no clue who we were dealing with, they were completely different people before. This kind of scamming which you would think would happen in the sales industry is actually happening in the institution of marriage and that's a crisis! Some of the more I guess forward thinking families that aren't as conservative quote and quote they say no let the girl and boy talk to each other let them email one another and let them have a few conversations. But at this point, both of them are so blind and they are so interested in just getting on with the celebrations and the new dress, the gifts and you know all the stuff. They are so caught up in the hype and all the congratulations that they are getting, phone calls and text messages that when they even talk to each other it's empty fluff conversations and they see what they want to see in the spouse. They are not able to have an intellectually sound conversation a lot of times the young men and young women because you know **Hub ul ain la tara or Ain ul hub la taraa** the eye of love can't see. You are already infatuated with the idea so you have a hard time seeing any flaws and that infection actually lasts a little bit longer even after the marriage. For the first couple of weeks, you can’t see any flaw in your spouse even the way they sneeze you're like "it's amazing the way the boogers just spread out” it's you know “Allah really made us for each other” but then it starts wearing off and reality starts setting in “How come you never told me this or that or the other”, “I did not realize you were this way or that way”.

So first my encouragement to the families and to the young people that are looking to get married is to be mature in the process there's a place for love and emotions and infatuation and I tell you, you have to put the brakes on that until the marriage is really close and everything else is settled. There are some other really serious things that need to be settled first.

Then the other thing that I want to talk about is the elders, specifically the elders in our community you people are so worried about your messed up kids that you say, “Maybe if we marry him to a good girl or maybe if we marry her to a good boy, things will work out fine”. All the messed up things that you know about your child you don't tell anyone, you do not tell even the family that you're dealing with and you keep it hidden as best as you can because if they found out they wouldn’t marry your child and on top of that of course you are suffering from some kind of Schizophrenia in which you tell yourself the lie so much that we have a good boy that you start believing it yourself and in the face of reality. I mean your child is coming that’s not a child that’s a man, Your son is coming at 2, 3 in the morning he can’t even stand up straight but you say “Oh he must have been making tahajjud”, “The tafseer seminar must have been late” Come on! A lot of times our parents know that the young man has a drug problem or an alcohol problem or a clubbing problem. I am not even qualified for this stuff and I get emails “Brother, we were talking the conversations were getting well between our families we were from the same neighborhood our families knew each other” By the way that doesn't mean anything anymore because families are not the same when they fly over so if you knew them back in the 70's or something then that's not a formula to gauge their families No you don't know them! They don't even know their own family bro! He does not even know his own uncle, his cousins, his aunt. It’s not the same family! That's a very shallow gauge anyhow they say well he used to go to the masjid, he did aitekaaf, he was praying, has a little bit of a beard Alhamdulillah it's a good boy you know my parents got me married to him and I thought he was okay but the first time we went out to eat \*true story\* he ordered a beer and I'm sitting there going, "What's going on? What are you doing?" He goes, “What's the big deal? Why are you flipping out? Calm down!”

This is the lack of foundation in many marriages and so we should not complain about the divorce rates because sometimes they're really justifiable. There's some serious situations out there that we have to deal with and I am not advocating for divorce but I am saying look there's a reason these kinds of things are happening and there are some really fundamental realities that we are choosing to close our eyes to that we can't afford to anymore because for the sake of our own sons and our own daughters.

Then there's the second matter that I want to talk about this is just one dimension of the many dimensions that can be spoken about; Post marriage, after marriage. And this problem starts before and it permeates after. We're living in a society in which the standards of haya the standards of shame, holding yourself back regard you know some kind of reservation between yourself and the opposite gender; those standards are dropping and I am not complaining about the Kuffar I’m talking about the Muslim communities. In our homes and in our lifestyles now our social interactions have become very permissive even within the semi-religious, semi conservative circles.

We've got extremes on the one hand we have these families in our communities and we have got all colors of the spectrum in America right? So we have some families who are so incredibly conservative that women are actually evil so if you see them anywhere near the masjid, "Astaghfirullah il azeem” you know? You might get into a car accident in the parking lot because you were trying to get away from the Sheitaan I mean the sister. There's that extreme and then there's the other extreme where there's all good in the hood and you're socializing like it's your own brother! it's NOT your own brother you know it’s the husband of your friend it's not someone you should be chitchatting with unnecessarily . So there is actually a line in the middle that needs to be respected and if we do not respect it you know what happens. When we have a lot of interactions of course social gatherings, iftars and dinner and things like that we get together with other families and young couples are coming together and there's a potluck in these kinds of gatherings. I want you to understand one of the fundamental, central, pivotal Surahs in the Quran about marriage is Surah Nur and in this Surah it seems that first it deals with too many varied topics like it starts with people who violate the sanctity of marriage, the Zaani it starts with them the fornicator, the adulterer. It also deals with the scandal that was started about the marriage of the Prophet Muhammad SAWW the accusation made against Hazrat Aisha R.A also a matter dealing with marriage. It also deals with some rules that should be observed inside the house for instance,

**"O you who have believed, do not enter houses other than your own houses until you ascertain welcome and greet their inhabitants. "**

So you know let yourself known, let the women cover themselves, let them take caution that a ghayr mehram man is coming in. So there needs to be some adjustments made when a stranger is about to enter the home. So watch out. You know in arabic they say and I repeat this a lot of times “Inn an nabiba min al ishara ti yafha”

In urdu we say, " Aqalmand ke lye ishara kaafi hai" When Allah is saying make yourself known before you come inside, it's to allow the family to adjust themselves but you know what, there's no adjustment anymore.

And the very next ayaats are about lowering your gaze. That's incredible Lowering your gaze where? In the original context of the Surah where? In the house! Yes, you should lower your gaze when you're walking in the mall, you should lower your glance because you are gonna see inappropriate things particularly husbands watch out! Lower your eyes. Sheitaan will want you to be uninterested in your wife. That's what he wants you to be and you know compare her to whatever you see on the street or anywhere else. Lower your eyes but you know what, more important than all of the virtual kinds of pleasure that the people are pursuing the people you are interacting with on a regular basis you’re gonna see them over and over again PARTICULARLY in those cases lower your eyes. You know it's disturbing! I've even heard husbands talking about how well somebody else's wife was dressed. I mean that's disgusting for a Muslim community. It's violating the sanctity of marriage even in what we would consider as not criminal behaviours "Oh it's not haram to sit and have dinner together" I'm not saying it is but I'm saying it does have psychological and social consequences.

And one of the most remarkable things in this Surah specifically Surah Nur is that right after this conversation about certain rules around the house even certain rules about whether your children should come in the bedroom or not and when they can and when they cannot and the fact that they should ask permission how many of you, even me have even set rules like that "Beta when you come into my room, knock first". Ask and then come in, don't just knock and open the door "I Knocked!" that's the other thing. Knock and ask permission and then walk in and there are even certain hours that Allah set in the ayaat there are certain ayaats where they should do that and other in which it is an open door policy. It’s fine I know my hours.

And then in this same Surah, Allah azwajal talks about the ayaat of Noor; the light in the heart. This is the same Surah that talks about the Khimar - the covering of women but everything else seems to be related to marriage and guarding haya and all of a sudden there is a conversation of the most deepest elements of spirituality problems. The most profound passage in the Quran on spirituality is in this same Surah why? Because we are being taught that look, observing these things will help your spirituality, violating these things will hurt your spirituality. The light in your heart will be hurt or damaged if you do not address these things. They have direct consequences.

These are the few things again 15 minutes is very little time I do not even think I should give longer speeches than 15 minutes because I am in the teaching profession and I have respect for something called "Attention Span" which Muslims Alhamdulillah face extra special problems with because we are used to on a weekly basis we attend a convention every week called Jummah prayer and Alhamdulillah some of us get the best sleep of our lives in those 20 minutes. You know first thing we hear is Alhamdulillah next thing we hear is aqimasSalat. So I'm mindful of that but hopefully, these things are conversations you can have with your family and really reflect upon how you and I are conducting ourselves in our households. I worry about my daughter and how I’m gonna get them married and my boys, I really do! Not just how I am going to raise them which is a big problem but the other problem is where am I going to get families that see life the same way beyond just the appearances. Where am I going to find those real men of the future, real women of the future.

May Allah azwajal help us grow those real men and real women and may Allah azwajal protect the sanctity of marriage in our homes and give us the ability to have a clear, transparent, just and merciful process even for getting our children married.