Islamic Guide To Sexual Relations

Muhammad ibn Adam al-Kawthari
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FOREWORD

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful. All praise is for Allah Most High, Lord of the worlds. And may peace and blessings be upon His beloved Messenger Muhammad, a Mercy to the worlds, and upon his entire family, his Companions and the righteous ones who follow in their footsteps until the Day of Judgment.

In answering questions from the public over the past five years or so, I have come across many individuals who desire to know the Islamic ruling on matters of sexual intimacy between spouses. Aided by the relative anonymity of email as a medium of communication, questioners have opened up and began to pose frank questions courageously without being shy and without the fear of being humiliated.

The prevalence and variety of these questions led me to keep records of them, and it quickly became evident that many Muslims are unaware of the Islamic laws and etiquettes pertaining to sexual relations. Many desire to live their conjugal lives in harmony with Islamic teachings and have a genuine inclination to learn, but are prevented by the embarrassment of asking a scholar directly. I realised that there is real need for a comprehensive work on the subject if Muslims are to live their lives in conformity with the teachings of the Qur’an and Sunna. Owing to this great need, and the significance of the issue for married couples, I began preparing a detailed and comprehensive work – often referring to the notes taken of the questions posed to me – the result of which is in your hands, Al-hamdulillah.

This book approaches the issue of sexual relations head on to apprise married couples of the teachings of Allah Most High and His beloved Messenger ﷺ on this subject, allowing them to enjoy their union while receiving divine reward in doing so. What are the correct intentions behind sexual relations? What are couples allowed to do and what must
they avoid? How does one prepare for sexual relations? What are the rules and etiquettes of foreplay, sex itself and the moments after sex? What is the ideal way of spending the first night of marriage? These are just a few of the questions answered in this book. In addition, many modern issues such as bondage, cross-dressing, using sex aids, watching pornography, oral sex and phone sex will be discussed exhaustively in light of the teachings of the Qur'an, Sunna, reference works from the four Sunni Schools of Islamic law, and other works of classical and contemporary scholars.

It begins with an introduction outlining the importance of the subject at hand and my approach to it. Thereafter, the book is divided into various chapters that take an aspect of sexual behaviour and explore it in some depth. To further the benefit of the book, references for all the quotes have been provided, citing volume, page or hadith numbers. Similarly, notes explaining key terms and concepts have been included wherever necessary. The book ends with a conclusion, a detailed bibliography and an index of terminologies used and personalities quoted.

I thank Allah Most High for giving me the ability and strength to prepare this work. I am grateful to my parents, teachers, family and friends, all of whom, although they had no hand in any of the actual stages of producing this work, without their love, support and prayers for me, I am doubtful whether I would be able to compile this work. May Allah reward them accordingly, Ameen.

I am grateful to Shaykh Mufti Zubair Bayat (may Allah preserve him) of Durban, South Africa, who, despite his extremely busy schedule, spared time to review the entire manuscript, and provided important corrections and suggestions. May Allah reward him, give him Baraka in his time, and bless him in this world and the next. I am also indebted to brother Yahya at Turath Publications, whose constant encouragement and resolve kept me on my toes. May Allah accept his efforts in his desire and pursuit to produce high quality Islamic works, Ameen.

I also extend my appreciation to anyone else who may have helped me in any way. The absence of their names here in no way undermines their contribution. Their reward is with Allah, and His reward surpasses any gratitude that I may offer: "Indeed, what is with Allah is better for you, if only you were to know." (Qur'an 16:95)

I have tried my utmost best to clarify and systematically explain matters concerning the sexual relationship of a husband and wife. If I have done some good, it is from Allah Most High, and if I have erred, then it is from me and the whisperings of Satan. I pray, and I ask the

readers to pray, that Allah forgive me and overlook my shortcomings, and make this work purely for His sake, Ameen.

And the last of our prayers is, "Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds."

Muhammad ibn Adam al-Kawthari
Darul Iftaa, Leicester, UK
January 14, 2008 CE / Muharram 7, 1429 AH
I congratulate the author, Mufti Muhammad ibn Adam (hafizahullāh), for this excellent work on a rather sensitive but much required subject. The author, a young, dynamic and promising Islamic scholar, has put tremendous effort into conducting meticulous research in preparation of this book, which is well annotated with references and footnotes.

Some years ago, having noticed a need for good, authentic material on the subject in the English language, I penned a concise work titled, "Etiquettes of Sexual Relations", which has gone through dozens of prints to date, Al-hamdullāh.

Now, Mufti Muhammad has in a very lucid and clear manner, prepared a detailed work on the subject. It covers many contemporary issues, including current sexual practices, and the Islamic rulings on them. I have had the opportunity to review this work, and to offer suggestions, which the author graciously accepted.

I have found this work to be beneficial and highly informative, and strongly recommend any prospective couple, and indeed any couple, to study this book.

May the Almighty crown his efforts with success and acceptance and may he continue to serve the Ummah with his scholastic abilities.

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INTRODUCTION

The completeness of Islam is displayed in the guidance it provides for every aspect of life, from purity and prayer, to trade regulations, marriage and inheritance laws. There is little place for the separation of religion from the state, rather, Islam insists on adherence to the full spectrum of its teachings – from the fundamental articles of faith (‘aqā’id) and devotional worship (‘ibadāt), to financial transactions (mu‘āmalāt), social and communal etiquettes (mu‘āshara) and moral ethics (ākhīlaq).

Allah Most High says:

"O you who believe, enter into Islam completely, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Surely he is an open enemy for you." 
(Qur’an 2:208)

It is a common fallacy that Islam is restricted to particular forms of devotional worship, and has nothing to say about social issues, marriage, divorce, politics, economics and so on. A cursory study of the Shari’a reveals that a great portion of Islamic law exists to address these very questions. Compilations of Prophetic narrations and manuals of Islamic law (fiqh) have substantial chapters dedicated to these subjects. Of the four volumes of the renowned classical Ḥanafi fiqh Manual, Al-Hidaya, only the first explains the rules of devotional worship; the other three are dedicated to laws on trade, marriage, divorce, penal law, dietary laws, inheritance and other issues. The same pattern is found in many hadith collections where the majority of the work consists of matters other than the pure devotional worship.
The implication of this is that a Muslim who confines his practice of Islam to purely devotional worship is omitting a great portion of the teachings of the Qur’an and Sunna. Muslims are therefore duty bound to learn the full spectrum of Islamic teachings and implement them, and the fruit of this is a blissful, peaceful and successful life in this world and the next.

The beloved Messenger ﷺ is a light that shows the way to that which is of benefit in both worlds, and is the exemplar of perfection, even for the mundane realities of everyday life. Imam Muslim (may Allah have mercy on him) relates in his Sahih from the Companion Salmān al-Farisi ﷺ that some polytheists approached him saying:

نَلْدَ عَلَّمَكَ رَبُّكَ كُلَّ شَيٍّ حَتَّى الْخَزَاءَ

“Your Prophet has taught you everything, even about excrement [i.e. etiquettes of relieving oneself].” He replied:

أَحَلَّ قَالَ لَهُ اتَّخِذِي مَالَكَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَن يَسْتَبْلِعَ الْقِبْلَةَ بِفَتَاحِ أَوْ بَوْلِ، وَأَن لاَ تَسْتَجِي بِالْزَّيْنِ، وَأَن لاَ تَسْتَجِي أَحْدَيْ أَحْدَيْنَ أَبْنَيْنِ أَبْنَيْنَ أَبْنَيْنَ، أَوْ تَسْتَجِي بِجْرِيْعَ أَوْ عَظَمٍ

“Indeed! He has forbidden us from facing the Qibla when excreting or urinating, and from cleaning ourselves with our right hand, and from cleaning ourselves with less than three stones, and from cleaning ourselves with dung or bone.” (Sahih Muslim 262 & Sunan Abī Dāwūd 7, the wording is of Abī Dāwūd)

Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِنَّمَا أَنَا كَبِيرُ الْمَوْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ مَثَلُوُّ عَلَى أَحَدَيْنَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَلَا يَسْتَبْلِعَ الْقِبْلَةَ، وَلَا يَتَسْتَجِي بِالْزَّيْنِ

“Verily, I am to you like a father, I teach you [i.e. do not be ashamed in learning even the basics from me]. If any one of you goes to relieve himself, he must not face the Qibla nor turn his back toward it, and must not clean himself with his right hand...” (Sunan Abī Dāwūd 8)

Accordingly, Islam does not neglect one of the most private moments in an individual’s life, namely, the sexual relationship between a husband and wife. Detailed and explicit rulings regarding sexual behaviour can be found in the Qur’an, Sunna and works of classical scholars. It is common to find scholars dedicating whole chapters to this delicate, yet important, subject. Imam Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī’s Iḥyā’ Ulūm al-Din, Al-Tibb al-Nabawī by Imam Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, Imam Ibn Qudama’s Al-Mughni, Imam Nasā’ī’s Isharat al-Nisā’, Imam Abū l-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzi’s Sayd al-Khāṭir, the Ghunya al-Talibin by Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jilālī and countless other classical works deal with this topic in some detail. The major reference works in all four Sunni Schools of Islamic law (madhhabs) also discuss many aspects of sexual relations and what married couples may and may not do.

A healthy sexual relationship is absolutely vital in marriage. Scholars today generally agree that one of the primary reasons for failed marriages is failed sexual lives. The root cause of marital discord is often sexual dissatisfaction, with problems in the bedroom often leading to unhappiness, frustration, and, at times, even divorce.

Among the objectives of marriage is to satisfy one’s sexual needs in a lawful manner, and if either spouse is unfulfilled, the temptation to look elsewhere can become overwhelming. Often, a spouse will refuse to engage in a form of sexual activity, mistakenly believing it to be unlawful, which could easily sour their relationship. It is therefore of key importance for married couples to understand the teachings of Islam regarding sexual behaviour. With some basic education on the subject, it is possible to have a healthy sexual life and avoid marital conflict.

A second, but no less important, reason for a detailed exposition of this subject is the modern world’s fixation with sexuality. The topic has been institutionalised in the school curriculum under the banner of “sex education”, where children are taught what some may consider shameful and sordid acts. Furthermore, the increasing pervasiveness of sexual imagery is affecting Muslims, with growing numbers becoming addicted to pornography and other unlawful means of sexual gratification.

In this environment, it is crucial to present the Islamic stance on this subject, otherwise Muslims will be left to learn about it from non-Islamic resources, damaging their character, spirituality and physical health.

Some may consider any discussion on sex to be offensive and a breach of religious propriety (adab) and modesty (haya’), unaware that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself explained this subject in considerable
detail. Several hadiths describe how the Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught men and women matters relating to sex, many of which will be explored over the course of this book.

Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim (may Allah have mercy on them) both record a hadith in their Sahih collections, related by Abu Hurayra ﷺ, in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was teaching his Companions ﷺ the rules of having a ritual bath (ghusl), when he said:

إذا جلس بني شعبه الأثري، لم جهدها، فقد وجب عليها الغسل

“When a man sits amidst her four parts and then exerts pressure on her, a ritual bath becomes obligatory upon him.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 287 & Sahih Muslim 348, the wording is of Muslim)

In this hadith, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ describes explicitly how a man might have sex with his wife such that it necessitates a ritual bath of purification. There are numerous other examples which illustrate the frankness with which the Prophet ﷺ discussed these matters.

The Companions ﷺ also did not shy away from asking the Messenger of Allah about questions of a sexual nature. In a famous incident, Sayyiduna Umar ibn al-Khattab ﷺ asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about the permissibility of penetrating one’s wife from behind i.e. penetrating the vagina, and not the anus. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not rebuke him for asking an “offensive” question, but waited until Allah Most High Himself revealed verses of the Qur’an to answer his question. (See: Sunan al-Tirmidhi 2980)

Remarkably, women also felt able to ask the Messenger of Allah ﷺ questions of a sexual nature without any reluctance or being ashamed of such enquiry. Rather, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not shy away from answering them, even though he was shy by nature.

Umm Salama ﷺ relates:

جاءت أم سلمة إلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فقالت: يا رسول الله، إن لله لا يسحرني من أحد، فإن علي المرارة من غير إذ احتملت، قال الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: إذا رأت المرارة، فغطت أم سلمة وجدتها وقالت: يا رسول الله، وحكم المرارة؟ قال: ثم توبي ميمك، فผม طهرها ولدها?

“Umm Sulaym ﷺ came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said, “O Messenger of Allah, Surely, Allah is not shy of the truth. Is it necessary for a woman to take a ritual bath after she has a wet dream?” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied, “Yes, if she notices a discharge.” Umm Salama covered her face and asked, “O Messenger of Allah! Does a woman have a discharge?” He replied, “Yes, let your right hand be in dust [an Arabic expression said light-heartedly to someone whose statement you contradict], how does the son resemble his mother?” (Sahih al-Bukhari 130)

Here, a woman has no qualms in asking the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about something as intimate as a wet dream. Umm Sulaym’s statement “Allah is not shy of the truth” is a clear indication that there is no shyness when it comes to learning about matters of Din. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used this phrase himself when he prohibited anal sex, saying:

إني لله لا يسحرني من الحق، لا نناه النساء في أدارهن

“Allah is not shy of the truth; do not enter women in their anus.” (Sunan Ibn Majah 1924, Musnad Ahmad & others)

It is clear, then, that there is nothing wrong in discussing this subject for instructional purposes, as long as it is done with decency. In fact, it is a mistake to shy away from the teachings of Allah Most High and the Messenger ﷺ, even those regarding sexual matters.

Imam Bukhari relates from Mujahid who said, “Sacred knowledge (‘ilm) is not gained by a shy person nor an arrogant one.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 1:60)

Likewise, he relates from Sayyida A’isha ﷺ who said, “How praiseworthy are the women of Anṣār! Shyness does not prevent them from having a deep understanding of religion.” (Ibid)

Modesty is, without doubt, a fundamental element of our religion, but when it comes to religious matters it should not prevent one from learning. In the modern world, questions of sexuality are openly discussed, often indecently; why then should we feel ashamed of learning the pure and decent teachings of Islam on this subject?

Those who feel that the contents of this book are overtly explicit should keep in mind the words of Allah Most High, His Messenger ﷺ and the Companions ﷺ, “Surely, Allah is not shy of [expounding] the truth” (Qur’an 33:53, Sahih al-Bukhari 130 and Sunan Ibn Majah 1924). Whatever is discussed in this book is based directly on the Qur’an,
Sunna, sayings of the Companions ﷺ, works of classical scholars, reference works in each of the four Sunni Schools of Islamic law, and authentic works of some learned contemporary scholars.

In light of the two reasons discussed above, namely, sexual problems between married couples as a cause of marital discord, and the modern-day fixation on sex and its powerful influence on Muslims, the need to guide Muslims to the Islamic teachings regarding sexual matters is clear.

A third reason is that many Muslims simply do not know the Islamic laws and etiquettes on sexual relations; some are even unaware that sex during menstruation is categorically forbidden. There are also many who desire to live their lives in harmony with Islamic teachings and are motivated to learn, but feel too embarrassed to ask a scholar directly. For such individuals, this book will prove to be an invaluable resource. 

In shā' Allāh.

Finally, some Muslim couples may be engaging in practices that are completely permitted, but are under the false impression that they are prohibitively disliked or forbidden. I once came across an individual who believed that kissing his wife's body was unlawful, but he did it nevertheless. Even though he had not committed a sin, it was detrimental to his spirituality to practise an act he believed to be unlawful, despite it being perfectly lawful. People in this situation must be apprised of what is permitted, preventing them from feeling guilty for engaging in it. More seriously, performing acts that one believes are unlawful, even if they are completely lawful, will eventually instil a lax attitude towards Islamic law in the heart, and this will inevitably lead to acts that are actually unlawful. Clear guidelines, therefore, are absolutely necessary to inform Muslims of what is permitted and to safeguard them from falling into prohibited acts.

INTENTIONS AND SEXUAL RELATIONS

INTENTION (nǐya) is the fundamental element that elevates mundane acts into acts of great virtue, drawing immense rewards. Sayiduna ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ relates that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say:

\[
\text{إِنَّا الأَحْيَانَ بِالْأَنْعَامِ وَإِنَّا لَكُمْ لَا نَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ شَيْءًا مَّا كَانَ.}
\]

"Actions are but by intentions, and one shall only have that which one intends..." (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1)

Imam Ibn Nujaym (may Allah have mercy on him) mentions a well-known juristic maxim (qaʿida fāqiyya) which states: “There is no reward without intention.” (Al-Ashbāh wa 'l-Nazāʾir: P. 19)

Imam ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Mubārak (may Allah have mercy on him) says: "How often a paltry act becomes great by its intention, and how often a great act becomes paltry by its intention." (Siyyar Aḥām al-Nubālāʾ 8:400)

As such, forming the correct intention for everything that one does is of paramount importance. For one’s acts to be consonant with the Sunna of the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and to win unto the pleasure of Allah Most High, one must form an intention for Allah, otherwise, it remains but a routine habit.

Sexual relations with one’s spouse are not excluded from this principle, in that they should be performed with transformative intentions and objectives (maqāṣīd) in mind, namely:

1. Increasing the nation (umma) of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ and seeking pious offspring who will serve Islam.
Allah Most High says:

"So now have relations with them [your wives] and seek what Allah has ordained for you." (Qur'an 2:187)

The great exegete (mufassir) of the Qur'an Imam Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) quotes from many Companions (sahabah), their followers (tabi'ain), and other classical exegetes (mufassirin), such as Abû Hurayra, 'Abdullâh ibn Abbâs, Anas, Mujâhid, Ikrima, Sa'id ibn Jubayr that the words of Allah Most High “and seek” refers to having children. (Tafsîr al-Qur'an al-Ázîm 1:300)

The great nineteenth century scholar of Qur'anic exegesis and Prophetic narrations in the Indian Subcontinent, Shaykh Shabbir Ahmad Uthmânî, writes in his renowned Urdu exegesis of the Qur'an, “You should seek the children ordained for you in the heavenly book (al-lawh al-mahdi) through sexual intercourse with your women. Mere satisfaction of lust and sexual desire should not be the aim.” (Tafsîr-e-Uthmânî 1:130)

Sayyida 'Á'ishah relates that the Messenger of Allah said:

"Marriage is from my way (sunnah). And whoever does not practice my way [out of rejection] is not from me. And marry [and procreate], for indeed I will outnumber the other nations by you..." (Sunan Ibn Mâjah 1846)

It is evident from these texts that procreation and seeking of pious offspring are valid objectives of sexual relations with one's spouse. The Messenger of Allah encouraged his followers to marry in order to seek what Allah provides through the beautiful union of a man and woman.

2) Protection against fornication and other corrupting activities, such as masturbation, looking at pornographic material, and leering lustful gazes at the opposite gender.

Sayyiduna 'Abdullâh ibn Mas'ûd relates that the Messenger of Allah said to us:

"O group of young men, anyone [of you] who can afford it should marry, for it lowers the eyes and guards the private parts. Anyone who is unable to marry should fast, for it restrains the appetite." (Saheeh al-Bukhari 4779)

Sayyiduna Jâbir relates that he heard the Messenger of Allah say:

"When a woman attracts anyone of you and she captivates his heart, then he should go to his wife and have sex with her, for it would repel what he feels [i.e. sexual desire]." (Saheeh Muslim 1403)

One of the basic objectives of sexual relations with one's spouse, therefore, is chastity and to satisfy one's sexual needs lawfully so that one can refrain from unlawful acts.

3) Fulfilling the right of one's spouse in a lawful manner, as it is the responsibility of each spouse to satisfy the sexual needs of the other, as will be discussed in more detail later on, by the Will of Allah.

4) Removing fluids from the body, which would otherwise leave one susceptible to illness and poor health. (Ibn al-Qayyîm, Al-Tibb al-Nabawî 178)

5) Enjoying this great gift that the All-Merciful has given to mankind. There is nothing wrong in intending enjoyment and sexual gratification...

1 Note that all medical statements quoted in this book are derived from the books of classical and contemporary Muslim scholars, some of whom would have had their medical training from Greek-influenced medicine, hence their medical opinions and understanding of the body may be taken from Greek medicine, rather than Prophetic medicine. And whilst Prophetic medicine can, of course, never be disproved or denied, there are aspects to Greek medicine which have been. As such, medical opinions in this book may differ from the findings and approach of modern Western medicine, and some of which might not today be wholly accurate. The reader is advised to keep this in mind whilst reading the book.
when engaging in sexual relations with one's spouse. Sex is not a dirty act, but rather something that has been practiced by countless Prophets and pious servants of Allah Most High. As such, lawfully enjoying this act does not conflict with modesty or good character in any way.

Sex at times is perceived as unclean, and as something that should only be practiced as a need, like the need to relieve oneself. People holding this misconception perform sex reluctantly, and consider any enjoyment derived from it as disrespectful or immoral. They have completely missed the point. Lawful sex is an act of worship, and should be enjoyed as much as possible.

SEX IS A FORM OF CHARITY (ṢADAQA)

The correct intentions mentioned above elevate sex from an act of physical pleasure into an act of immense reward and a form of charity. Sayyiduna Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إن كل نسجته صدقة، وكل كبرتها صدقة، وكل تجديدةها صدقة، وأحوائه بالغوتة صدقة، وهي عن نكر صدقة، وهي في بعض أحكام صدقة. يا رسول الله، أتاني أحدًا شهودًا يشكوه فيها أخبره، قال: أرغم لئلا ومضها في حرام.

"...Verily in every Tasbīh [i.e. saying Subhan Allāh] there is charity, in every Taḥādīr [i.e. saying Allāhu Akbar] there is charity, in every Taḥmīd [i.e. saying Al-ḥamdu lillāh] there is charity, in every Taḥtīl [i.e. saying Lā ihādha illallāh] there is charity, enjoining of good is charity, forbidding of evil is charity, and in the sexual act of each of you there is charity." [The Companions said], "O Messenger of Allah! One of us fulfills his sexual desire and he is given a reward for that?" And he said, "Do you not see that were he to act upon it unlawfully, he would be sinning? Likewise, if he acts upon it lawfully he will be rewarded." (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 1006)

Imam Nawawī (may Allah have mercy on him), the great hadith expert (muḥaddīth) and Shāfi‘ī jurist (juqūh), comments on this hadith in his monumental commentary of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim. "In this hadith there is an indication that through correct intentions, the merely permissible becomes an act of worship. As such, sex becomes an act of worship if one intends by it to fulfill the right of the wife and treat her honourably as Allah Most High has commanded, or to seek pious offspring, keep oneself chaste or one's wife chaste, or to protect both spouses from looking at the unlawful, thinking about it and desiring it, or other praiseworthy goals." (Al-Minhaj Sharh Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj 778)

It is clear from this that even at the peak of passion, one does not forget one's Lord. One should remember the many lofty aims beyond sexual gratification that can be sought through sexual relations with one's spouse. By these means, this beautiful, gratifying and enjoyable act is elevated into an act of worship and charity.

Imam Ibn al-Jawzī (may Allah have mercy on him) states: "At times, sex results in producing offspring like unto the calibre of Imam Shāfi‘ī and Imam Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal (may Allah have mercy on them). Sex of this nature is superior to one thousand years of [voluntary] worship!" (Ṭadhīb al-Insān 358)
SEX AS A RIGHT OF BOTH SPOUSES

Islam protects the sexual rights of both the husband and wife, and to satisfy the sexual appetite of one’s spouse is a legitimate objective of sexual relations and even of marriage itself.

The right to sexual fulfilment belongs to both husband and wife, and it is a mistake to assume that only the husband has this privilege. The wife has as much right to expect her sexual needs to be fulfilled as the husband. As such, sexual relations are a right of both spouses.

The renowned Hanafi jurist Imam Ibn ‘Abidin (may Allah have mercy on him) states: “Among the consequences of marriage is the permissibility of each spouse deriving sexual pleasure from the other.” (Radd al-Muhurrār ‘alā ‘Uduw al-Muherrār 3:4)

Imam ‘Ala al-Din al-Kasānī (may Allah have mercy on him), a prominent classical Hanafi jurist, states: “And both spouses share this ruling of deriving sexual pleasure, for just as the wife is lawful for the husband [in terms of deriving sexual pleasure from her]; her husband is lawful for her... It is the right of the husband to demand sex from her whenever he so desires unless there is an impediment, such as menstruation (hayd), postnatal bleeding (nifās), ḥilā [the husband swearing an oath to abstain from sex with his wife], being in the state of iḥrām and other impediments. And it is [also] the right of the wife to request sex from him, since deriving sexual pleasure from him is her right, as it is his right to derive sexual pleasure from her. When she requests sex from him, he will be obligated to agree and compelled through the courts once [meaning once throughout the marital relationship], and after that he will be religiously [and not legally] obliged to have sex with her in the context of living together in excellence and fostering the marital relationship...” (Badā’i al-Sanā’i 2:381)

Despite the fact that each spouse is religiously obliged to fulfil the sexual needs of the other, there is a slight legal difference between the husband’s and the wife’s right to demand sex. The husband can demand sex through a court of law and is generally expected to take the initiative, and the wife must consent to his demand unless there is a genuine physical excuse or Shari’ah-contravening impediment. However, in the case of the wife, even though it is religiously obligatory for the husband to fulfil her sexual needs, she cannot demand this through a court of law after he has had sex with her at least once since being married.

This distinction comes about because of various considerations, including the difference in the nature of male and female sexual desire, the husband being the head (nawwār) of the family, and the consideration of how each party’s “demanding” would affect marital relations. In other words, a woman does not have an explicit legal right to demand sex in the same fashion as a man; but this distinction exists merely because of the inherent temperamental, physical, and emotional differences between the sexes. (See: Radd al-Muhurrār 3:4)

All of the above is at the level of law. The spirit of marriage is different. Seeking one’s rights through demands, force and argumentation contradicts the spirit of marriage, and never solves anything. Rights should always be understood in light of the following Prophetic guidance:

أَكِلُّ الْمُؤْذِينَ إِيَّاهُمْ هَلْفَةً وَجُبِرَاكُمْ حَيْراً مَّسَاهُمْ حَلَفاً

“The most perfect of believers are those most perfect of character; and the best of you are the best of you to your spouses.” (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 1162)

THE HUSBAND’S RIGHT TO SEXUAL RELATIONS

A man is entitled to have sex with his wife whenever he is desirous of it, and it is her religious duty to make herself available to him. Failing to do so without a valid excuse is a major sin, and this is emphasised in many hadiths:

Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra R.A. relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِذَا ذَهَبَ الْرَّجُلُ لِإِشْرَافِهِ فَلَمْ تَأْرَىَتْهُ فَقَادَّتْ أَعْضَانَهَا ، لَنْعَنُّهَا اللَّهُ أَمَّا مَلَكِكَ حَتَّىَ تُصْحِحِّ

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"When a man calls his wife to his bed and she refuses, and then he sleeps being angry, the angels curse her until morning." (Sahih al-Bukhari 3065 & Sahih Muslim 1436, the wording is of Muslim)

Sayyiduna Abu Hurayra ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ جَعَلَتُ لَهُ فِي النَّارِ عَلَيْهِ مَمَّا رَفَعَهُ فِي الْجَهَلَةِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ فِي

"By the One in Whose hands is my life, there is not a man who calls his wife to his bed and she refuses except that Allah becomes angry with her until her husband is pleased with her." (Sahih Muslim 1436)

Such is the emphasis on this command that even if the wife happens to be busy when her husband calls her, she must leave everything and respond to his call. Sayyiduna Talq b. Ali ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِذَا الْرَجلَ دَعَى زَوْجَتَهُ عَلَى لَوْقَاتِهِ إِنَّهَا كَانَتْ عَلَى الْكَبْطَرِ

"When a man calls his wife for the fulfilment of his sexual need, she must come, even if she is [busy] in the cooking area." (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 1160)

The prophetic narrations above, and others, clearly illustrate the importance of obedience to a husband’s request for sexual relations. It is a grave sin, in normal circumstances, for the wife to refuse her husband, and even more so if her refusal leads to the husband committing an unlawful act.

Imam Nawawi states in his commentary of the hadith related by Abu Hurayra ﷺ quoted earlier: “This hadith indicates that it is unlawful (harām) for the wife to refuse her husband sexual relations without a valid reason. Menstruation is not considered a valid reason, since the husband has a right to enjoy her from above the garment [i.e. with her clothes acting as a barrier].” (Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim P: 1084)

It was in this context that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ instructed women to seek permission from their husbands before observing a voluntary fast, since the husband may desire to fulfil his sexual needs whilst she is fasting. He ﷺ said:

"A woman must not fast [i.e. optional fasts] whilst her husband is staying with her except with his permission." (Sahih al-Bukhari 4886)

Two points, however, are worth considering here:

Firstly, the husband’s right to demand sex does not mean that he is allowed to force himself violently over his wife for sexual gratification. The hadiths mention the husband “sleeping in a state of anger” and “being displeased” demonstrating the fact that the husband should restrain himself from forcing himself aggressively over her and hurting her. Had this been allowed, surely the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would have permitted it for the husband.

Secondly, the wife’s duty to make herself available applies in normal situations when there is no Shari’a-contravening impediment or when she does not have a valid excuse. The wife is required to obey her husband as long as she does not have to forgo her own rights. As such, the various hadiths are an admonition for women who use sex as a weapon against their husbands.

However, if the wife is menstruating or has postnatal bleeding, she is ill, physically unable to have sex, exhausted, emotionally drained or sexual activity is detrimental to her well-being, then she no longer is obligated to comply with her husband’s demands for sex. Rather, the husband is required to show her sympathy by understanding that she may be unable to have sex. But, simply “not feeling up to it” is not a justified reason.

Allah Most High says:

لا يَكَلَفُ اللَّهُكَفْرَةَ إِلا وَصْحَى

"On no soul does Allah place a burden greater than it can bear." (Qur’an 2:286)

It is often observed that a husband will demand his wife to fulfil his sexual needs, disregarding the fact that she is extremely ill and not physically capable of having sex. Some threaten their wives with divorce, and support their behaviour by quoting the above hadiths! It is important to understand that if the wife is not in a state to engage in sexual activity and has a genuine and Islamically valid reason, but the
husband forces her, then he will be sinful. Muslim husbands need to realise that their wives are also human beings, and not machines that can be switched on and off whenever they desire!

Ultimately, these matters are best resolved through mutual understanding, regard for one another, love, gentleness and putting one’s spouse before oneself. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “None of you can be a [true] believer until they love for their brother what they love for themselves” (Sahih Muslim 45). The importance of this concept becomes even greater in a marital relationship.

THE WIFE’S RIGHT TO SEXUAL RELATIONS

Like men, women have sexual needs. However, unlike men, they have more control over their sexual urges due to the inherent temperamental, physical, and emotional differences between women and men.

A woman will not normally demand the fulfilment of her sexual needs. Instead, when she is in the mood, she will employ various means of seducing her husband, by adorning herself, talking to him enticingly, and gazing at him longingly. Medical experts are of the opinion that a woman’s sexual desire reaches its peak directly after the completion of her menstrual cycle. A perceptive husband realises this and is responsive to her signals.

The husband is religiously obliged to fulfil the sexual needs of his wife. It is a sin on his part to deprive his wife of this right without a valid excuse or permission. This is why many jurists hold that it is religiously obligatory for the husband to have sex with his wife every so often.

(See: Badā’ al-Sanā’i 2:331)

Sayyiduna ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr ﷺ relates:

在一旁，涉及妻子的懷孕，他可以拜訪她，問她：你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個男孩。他說：一個男孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個女孩。他說：一個女孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個男孩。他說：一個男孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個女孩。他說：一個女孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個男孩。他說：一個男孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個女孩。他說：一個女孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個男孩。他說：一個男孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個女孩。他說：一個女孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個男孩。他說：一個男孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個女孩。他說：一個女孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個男孩。他說：一個男孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個女孩。他說：一個女孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個男孩。他說：一個男孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個女孩。他說：一個女孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個男孩。他說：一個男孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個女孩。他說：一個女孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個男孩。他說：一個男孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個女孩。他說：一個女孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個男孩。他說：一個男孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個女孩。他說：一個女孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個男孩。他說：一個男孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個女孩。他說：一個女孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個男孩。他說：一個男孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個女孩。他說：一個女孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個男孩。他說：一個男孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個女孩。他說：一個女孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個男孩。他說：一個男孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個女孩。他說：一個女孩，你想要一個男孩還是女孩？他說：一個男孩。他說：一個男孩，你想要一個男孩还是
"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to me, ‘Have I not been informed that you fast all day and pray all night?’ I said, ‘Yes, O Messenger of Allah.’ He said, ‘Do not do it. Fast and break the fast, and pray and sleep, because your body has a right over you, your eye has a right over you, your wife has a right over you, and your visitor has a right over you. It is enough for you to fast three days out of every month. Every good action is multiplied by ten, so that is like fasting all the time.’" But I was austerer then and made things hard for myself. I said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, I feel strong.’ He said, ‘Fast the fast of the Prophet of Allah, Dāwūd (peace be upon him), but do not do more than that.’ I said, ‘What is the fast of Dāwūd (peace be upon him)?’ He said, ‘Half the time.’ When he became old, Abūlūlāh used to say, ‘I wished I had accepted the easier options provided by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.’ (Sahih al-Bukhārī 1874)

In this hadīth, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ advises Abūlūlāh ibn Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ ﷺ to be moderate in his worship, and on learning that he had not slept with his wife, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to him, ‘Your wife has a right over you,’ clearly defining the husband’s responsibility to fulfill his wife’s sexual and other needs.²

Abū Juhayfā ﷺ relates:

"In the days of the Prophet of Allah, the Prophet of Allah would say to the wives of the Prophet, ‘If you fast, you will be rewarded and if you break your fast, you will be rewarded.’"

Abū Juhayfā ﷺ also relates:

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ joined Salmān ﷺ and Abū al-Dardā’ ﷺ together in brotherhood. Salmaṇ visited Abū al-Dardā’ and saw Umma al-Dardā’ [Abū al-Dardā’s wife] poorly dressed and said to her, ‘What is the matter with you?’ She said, ‘Your brother Abū al-Dardā’ has no need of this world [meaning he did not care whether his wife adorned herself for him or not since he was very busy in worshiping Allah Most High].’ Abū al-Dardā’ came and made some food for him [i.e. Salmān]. Salmān said, ‘Eat.’ He said, ‘I am fasting.’ Salmān said, ‘I will not eat unless you eat.’ He says, ‘So he ate.’ In the night, Abū al-Dardā’ went to stand in prayer and Salmān said to him, ‘Sleep!’ and so he slept. Then he got up again and Salmān said, ‘Sleep!’ When it was the latter part of the night, Salmān said, ‘Now get up and they both prayed together.’ Salmān said to him, ‘Your Lord has a right over you, your self has a right over you and your wife has a right over you, so give each rightful person their due right.’ Abū al-Dardā’ came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and mentioned this to him and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘Salmān spoke the truth.’ (Sahih al-Bukhārī 1867)

Scholars differ over how regularly a husband must have sex with his wife to fulfill her needs.

¹) Imam Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī holds that it is religiously obligatory for a man to have sex with his wife once every four nights, a view supported by the following incident:

‘Abd al-Razzaq relates in his Al-Musannaf from Qutāda and Shā’bī that a woman came to ’Umar ﷺ and said, ‘My husband stands at night [in prayer] and fasts during the day.’ ’Umar ﷺ said, ‘You have praised your husband excellently well.’ Ka’b ibn Sawwar said to ’Umar, ‘She is [actually] complaining.’ ’Umar ﷺ said, ‘How?’ He said, ‘She claims to have no share in the marriage from her husband [meaning her husband does not fulfill her rights].’ ’Umar ﷺ said, ‘If you understand this much, then you decide between them.’ He (Ka’b) said, ‘O Amīr al-Mu’minīn! Allah has permitted him four wives. So she has one day of every four days, and one night of every four nights.’ (Suyūtī, Tārikh al-Khulāṣa P. 161)

² This hadīth also presents a model of chastity, modesty and bashfulness of the female companions (may Allāh be pleased with them all), and tells us how patiently they bore the indifference of their husbands. In the instance quoted, the politeness with which the wife of Abūlūlāh ibn Amr answered her father-in-law, when he enquired about the treatment of her husband, is an exceptional example of decency and endurance.
In light of this, Imam Ghazâlî’s view is that a man must fulfill his wife’s sexual needs once every four nights, since he is permitted to spend the other three nights with his other wives, were he to have four. This is also the favoured position of Imam Taḥâwî (may Allah have mercy on him) of the Hanafi School. (See: Ṣadd al-Muḥtâr 3:209 & Jadîd Fatâhî Maṣâ’il 2:172)

2) Imam Ibn Ḥazm (may Allah have mercy on him) holds that it is religiously obligatory for a man to sleep with his wife once every month. He states: “It is obligatory upon a man to have sex with his wife at least once in every interval (tuhur) between menstruations if he is able to do so, otherwise he will be sinful. The proof for this is the statement of Allah Most High: “But when they are purified, then approach them from where Allah has commanded you.” (Al-Muhalla P. 1672)

Imam Ibn Hazm derives his opinion from the word of Allah Most High: “Approach them,” a command indicative of obligation. Most scholars consider this to be a statement that permits sex after menstruation - her menses prohibited sex, and so Allah Most High returns permission once she is purified. Imam Ibn Hazm understood the text literally and ruled that having sex after one’s wife is purified from menstruation is obligatory.

3) According to some scholars, a man must have sex with his wife once every four months or else he is sinful. They substantiate their position with the following narration:

Ibn Jarîr relates, “I was informed by the one whom I trust that Umar ibn al-Khattâb ﷺ, while on patrol, heard a woman saying [singing poetry], “This night stretches out and is dark, and that I am without a companion to be intimate with has made me sleepless. Were it not for the fear of Allah like unto Whom there is none, the sides of this couch would have been moving.” Umar ﷺ said, “What is wrong with you?” She said, “You sent my husband on an expedition some months ago, and I long for him.” He said, “Do you intend to do wrong?” She said, “I seek the refuge of Allah!” He said, “So restrain yourself, for it is only a matter of the message being delivered to him.” Umar ﷺ sent a message to him [to return]. Then he went to [his daughter] Hafṣa and said, “I want to ask you about a matter which concerns me, so dispel it for me. How long can a woman remain without her husband?” She lowered her head and was shy. He said, “Truly Allah is not shy of the truth.” So she gestured with her hand indicating three months, and if that is not possible, then four months. Hence Umar ﷺ declared that armies must not be kept on service for more than four months.” (Ṭaḥrîṣ al-Khulafâ’ P. 161-162)

Imam Muwaqqaf al-Dîn ibn Qudâma (may Allah have mercy on him), a prominent Hanafi jurist, also concurs with this position in his masterpiece of Hanafi and comparative fīqh Al-Mughni. He asserts that if the husband abstains from fulfilling his wife’s sexual needs due to an Islamically valid reason such as illness, then there is no fixed time-period for having sex with her. If, however, he abstains without any genuine reason, he is obliged to have sex within four months, and if he fails to fulfill her sexual needs after this period, he is ordered to divorce her. (Al-Mughni 8: 551-552)

Most jurists (fuqahâ’), including many Hanafi scholars, hold that it is religiously obligatory for a husband to have sex with his wife every so often, without this being fixed at a specific frequency. The prominent Hanafi jurist Imam Hâski states, “It is religiously obligatory for a husband to have sex with his wife every so often, and he must not reach the duration of four months without her permission…”

Imam Ibn ‘Abidîn explains this by stating that the husband is religiously obligated to have sex with his wife every so often, unless he has some kind of illness or some other valid excuse. He then cites Imam Taḥâwî from the Hanafi School who holds the view that the husband is obligated to have sex with her once every four nights. However, he further states, that the established position of the Hanafi School (ahbîr al-madâthib) is that there is no fixed time-limit, rather the husband will be obligated to spend the night with his wife and fulfill her sexual needs every so often. (See: Ṣadd al-Muḥtâr ‘alâ ‘l-Durr al-Mukhtar 3:202-203, Ṣadd al-Qasam)

According to the author, this last position seems to be the most reasonable and practical, especially in our times. As such, the husband must engage in sexual relations with his wife every so often - enough to maintain her outward and inward chastity such that she does not incline towards committing an unlawful act. If a man consistently refuses his wife, he will be sinful.

However, as in the case of the husband’s right to sexual relations, the obligation to fulfill the sexual needs of one’s wife is conditional on the man’s physical ability to have sex with his wife. If the husband is too...
ill or weak to engage in any sexual activity or fears that having sex with his wife will result in unbearable weakness, then he is not required to fulfil his wife’s sexual needs, and will not be sinful.

-3-

SEXUAL RELATIONS: HOW OFTEN?

We have discussed the woman’s religious right to sexual relations, we will now examine in detail the frequency with which a couple should engage in sexual activity through mutual agreement, aside from the religious obligations and rights of each spouse.

The Sharî'a does not fix a specific limit or restriction on how often a couple may engage in sexual activity, as the temperament, physique and sexual libido of each individual varies considerably. As such, couples should mutually decide what is best suited for them. There is no general set rule in this matter; the answer will vary from couple to couple, keeping in mind the needs of both spouses.

However, Islam is a religion of moderation and its adherents are encouraged to be moderate in all aspects of life, since the best course is the middle course. An extremist tendency in either direction is at odds with the spirit of Islam. Moderation permeates every teaching of Islam, and even in sexual matters, moderation is the ideal approach.

Complete celibacy or reducing one’s sexual activity to the bare minimum may be unhealthy. It is therefore unadvisable for a couple to abandon sex altogether given the fact that Allah Most High has blessed them with a means of fulfilling their sexual needs.

Similarly, excessive sex is likely to be harmful to one’s health. Faqih Abū ‘l-Layth al-Samarqandi relates in his Al-Busūn from Sayyiduna Ali that, “Whoever is desirous of a long healthy life should eat in the mornings and evenings, avoid taking loans, abstain from walking around bare-footed, and desist from having sex excessively.” (Qanûn-e-Mubâshsharât P. 16)

Note that this advice is not a Sharî’a ruling, but rather a piece of general advice. It is advisable in this regard to consult a specialist should one be concerned about one’s personal situation.
Some scholars recommend having sex once a week and consider this to fall within the ambit of moderation. They base their position on the hadith related by Aws ibn Aws al-Thaqafi that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

من عَصَلْ يَمَّ عَبْدَتْهَ وَاغْشَأَّ، يَمُّ بَكَرَةً وَلَبْكَرَةً وَمَرْكَزَ وَمَرْكَزَ وَبِفَتْنَةٍ وَلَّمْ يُشْرِكَ وَلْيَا مِنْ الإِيمَانِ فَإِمْسَكْ،

"Whoever causes [his spouse] to bathe and bathes himself on Friday, then goes out early [for Friday prayers], walks and does not ride, and takes his seat close to the imam and listens attentively, and does not indulge in futility, will earn the reward of a year’s fasting and praying at night for every step he takes." (Sunan Abî Dâwûd 349 & Sunan al-Nasâ‘î 1381, the wording is of Abû Dâwûd)

In this hadith, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ uses the phrase, “man ghassala” which translates literally as “whoever bathes another” or “whoever causes another to bathe.” Imam Su‘ûqî (may Allah have mercy on him) interprets this statement in his commentary of Sunan al-Nasâ‘î where he says, “...And it is said that the meaning of ghassala (bathes another or causes another to bathe) means he has sex with his spouse before leaving for [Friday] prayers, because this will aid him in lowering his gaze on the way...” (Sunan al-Nasâ‘î li Sharh al-Su‘ûqî 3:95)

Imam Ibn Qudâma states: “The meaning of the Messenger of Allah’s ﷺ statement “man ghassala wa igtasala” is that he has sex with his wife and then takes a bath.” (Al-Mughnî 2:201)

Accordingly, one of the meanings of this hadith is that whoever has sex with his wife on Friday and so takes a bath himself and causes his wife to take a bath, and puts into practice the other actions mentioned, will earn the reward of a year’s fasting and praying at night for every step he takes to Friday prayers.

Because Friday comes once every week, these scholars consider that having sex once a week is recommended and in line with the spirit of moderation.

In conclusion, moderation is the golden rule. Having sex too often can be exhausting and unhealthy, whilst abandoning sex altogether or reducing it to a bare minimum may also be damaging and unhealthy. Couples should negotiate what is an achievable goal for them in terms of sexual activity so that they may settle on a level that is mutually satisfactory. The best way to achieve this is through honest and respectful discussion. That way, sex will be more fulfilling for both spouses, In shâ’ Allah.
SELECTING A TIME FOR SEXUAL RELATIONS

Generally, the shari'a does not specify any particular time for engaging in or desisting from sexual activity. Married couples may choose any time of the day or night for sex, unless there is some other external factor prohibiting sex, such as the time for prayer is about to end and one has not yet prayed, or the wife is menstruating. It is authentically reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ engaged in sexual relations with his wives at various times of the day and night.

Furthermore, sexual activity can only take place if the urge exists and if the couple have the necessary agility and are relaxed. As such, it is impractical to impose specific times for sex, given that couples differ from one another in their hours of work, times of resting and sleeping, and their desire to have sex. As a result, Shari'a has not legislated a time in which they should engage in sexual relations.

Scholars mention, however, certain times that are favourable for sexual activity, and others during which it is disliked. Statements are transmitted from certain Companions and early Muslims ﷺ.

It is worth noting that these preferences are based on medical reasons, individual experiences or personal judgments, and do not constitute a legal (shari'i) ruling. There is no sin attached to disregarding them. Many of the statements quoted from the Companions and early Muslims in this respect are not authentically established with proper chains of transmission, for instance the poetry transmitted from Sayyiduna 'Ali ﷺ on this subject.

Given this, one need not consider the advice below to be binding or authentically established. It should not be given more importance than it deserves, but at the same time, one should not consider what some books mention about preferable times for having sex and times to avoid sex as baseless. These recommendations are based on experience and personal judgment and this is the context in which the terms "preferred" and "disliked" should be read in the coming sections.

PREFFERED TIMES

1) The optimal time for sex is when one is relaxed and a temperamental balance exists in both spouses. Any tension or anxiety, whether hunger, thirst, anger, depression or illness will dampen the passion and may well prove to be unhealthy for the body. For some people, the optimal time is the night, when the husband is unoccupied with the pressures of work, whilst others may feel fresh and agile in the morning directly after waking up from sleep.

2) Some scholars consider the latter part of the night to be the best time for sex because the stomach is full during the earlier part of the night, and sex on a full stomach is harmful. Sexual relations between couples are best suited after food has been completely digested. This was also the usual practice of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, although he is reported to have slept with his wives at other times as well.

Abū Ishāq relates, "I asked al-Aswad ibn Yazid regarding what Sayyida 'A'isha ﷺ informed him about the [night] prayer of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. She (‘A’isha ﷺ) said:

كَانَ يَنامُ أُولَا الْيَلِدِينَ وَحُيْرَا أَخْرَىٰ، قَالَتْ: "إِنَّكَ لَمْ تَخْلَفْ حَاجَةً طَوْفَانَ يَنَامُ، فَإِذَا كَانَ عَنْدَ الْبُدْرِ الْأَوْلىٰ، قَالَ تُحَرَّمْ لَنَا وَلَادًا!"، قَالَ: أُلْدَمْ بِاللَّهِ أَمَّا أَحْلَمْ وَلَدًا، فَإِنَّمَا تَنَامُ وَلَادًا. (Allah's immaculate immaculate)

"He would sleep in the early part of the night, and wake up in the latter part [to offer prayers]. If he then wished to fulfill his desire with his wife, he would fulfill his desire, and then sleep. When the first call to prayer was made he would jump up (by Allah, she, i.e. 'A'isha, did not say, "He would stand up") and pour water over himself (by Allah she, i.e. 'A'isha, did not say that he took a bath but I know what she meant). If he was not in a state of major ritual impurity, he would [merely] perform ablution, the ablution for prayer and then offer two Rak'ats [Sunna of Fajr]." (Sunh Muslim 739)"
For those who find it difficult to wait for the end of the night, a practical solution is to eat a light meal in the early part of the evening. In this way, the stomach will not be full when having sex in the earlier part of the night.

3) Sexual relations on Friday and the night preceding Friday is also recommended and some consider this virtuous. Imam Abū ʿAbdullāh Ghazālī states in his renowned Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn that according to some scholars, sex on Friday and the night preceding it is recommended (mustahab) due to the hadith narrated by Awn ibn Awn al-Thaqafi regarding the reward of one bathing and causing the spouse to bathe on Fridays, quoted earlier. (See: Iḥyāʾ al-Sādiq al-Muttaqin bi Sharḥ Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn 6:175)

**Disliked Times**

1) Having sex when one needs to relieve oneself is both disliked and detrimental to one’s health, whether one needs to urinate or defecate. There is also a hadith reported in this regard. Sayyiduna Anas ibn Malik relates that the Messenger of Allah is reported to have said:

> لا يجَعَل أَحَدُكُمْ إِخْرَاجَهُمْ وَجَعَلَهُمْ مُرْتُبَّةً فَكَانَتْ مَكْرَهُمْ، وَلا يَجَعَل أَحَدُكُمْ يَجَعَلَهُمْ وَجَعَلَهُمْ مُرْتُبَّةً فَكَانَتْ مُكْرَهُمْ.

“One of you should not have sex when there is a need to defecate, for that causes the illness of piles (bawāṣir), and one of you should not have sex when there is a need to urinate, for that causes the illness of tumour (nawaṣūr).” (Kanz al-Umār 44902, the chain of transmission for this report is not authenticated)

2) Imam Ghazālī states in his Iḥyāʾ that it is disliked to have sex during three nights of each month: the first, the last and the middle night (i.e. the fourteenth night). It is said that the devils appear on these nights where sexual relations are taking place between spouses. The desirability of sexual relations on these nights is related from ‘Ali, Muʿawiya and Abū Ḥurayra. (See: Iḥyāʾ al-Sādiq al-Muttaqin bi Sharḥ Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn 6:175)

**Sex During Pregnancy and the Period of Breastfeeding**

There is no difference of opinion between the scholars that it is permitted for a couple to have sex whilst the wife is pregnant. Likewise, it is permitted to have sex during the period of breastfeeding.

Sayyiduna Sa’d ibn Waqqas relates that:

> أن رَجَلًا جَاءَ إِلَيْهِ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ: إِنِّي أَخْلَصُ عَنِ الرِّجْلِ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: لَمْ تَنْفَعْ ذَلِكَ؟ فَقَالَ الرَّجُلُ: أَسْقِطْ عَلَى وَلَدِيَّ، وَلَا أُرَبِّي أَوْلَادِي، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: لَوْ كَانَ ذَلِكَ ضَرَّاً، ضَرَّ فَارِسَ وَأَرَّمَ.

“A man came to the Messenger of Allah and said, “I practice coitus interruptus [i.e. withdrawal method or ‘azl] with my wife,” The Messenger of Allah said, “Why do you do that?” He replied, “I fear for her child or her children.” The Messenger of Allah said, “If it was harmful, then it would have harmed the Persians and Byzantines.” (Saḥīḥ Muslim 1443)

Mulla Ṭabaqī al-Qārī (may Allah have mercy on him), the great scholar of hadith and Hanafi jurist, explains that the man feared for the child in his wife’s womb, and that having sex with her may cause her to conceive again, resulting in twins which could weaken both foetuses. A second interpretation is that he feared for the child being breastfed, in that sex may be harmful for the suckling child. The Messenger of Allah rejected both notions saying that if sex was harmful during pregnancy or during the period of breastfeeding, it would have harmed the Persians and Byzantines. (See: Mīrāṯ al-Mafāthī 6:238)

Judamina bint Wahb al-Asadiyya relates that she heard the Messenger of Allah say:

> لَقَدْ نَعْمَتَ أَنَّ أُهِبَ عَنِ الْقُدْلَةِ حَتَّى ذَكَرَ أَنَّ الْرَّفِيعَ وَأَفَارُ يَصِبُّونَ ذَلِكَ فَلا يَضْرُّ أَوْلَادِهِمْ.

“I considered prohibiting sex during the period of breastfeeding (ghayba), but I remembered the Byzantines and Persians practicing this, and their children were not harmed...” (Saḥīḥ Muslim 1449)

Moreover, the Messenger of Allah forbade sex with a woman pregnant from another man (Sunan al-Tirmidhī 1131), from which the scholars inferred the permissibility of sex with a woman pregnant from oneself.
Having said the above, scholars recommend that couples should seek reliable medical advice before having sex during both pregnancy and the period of breastfeeding. If a particular couple are advised by a medical specialist that sex is harmful during pregnancy or the period of breastfeeding, whether it puts the mother at risk, the suckling child or the fucus, then sexual relations should be avoided (Adab-ul-Mubasharat, P. 34-35). The hadith of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, in this context, is understood to apply to normal situations.

Furthermore, the husband should ensure he is extremely gentle and careful with his pregnant wife during sexual relations. He should avoid positions that may cause discomfort to her, especially in the final stages of pregnancy when the wife can become tired and exhausted very easily. (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Uṣūl al-Ma’āṣir al-Zawajīyya P. 79)

**SEXUAL RELATIONS DURING MENSTRUATION (HIJRA) AND POSTNATAL BLEEDING (NIFAS)**

1) Having sex during menstruation is absolutely and emphatically unlawful (harām) as established by the explicit text of the Qur’an and numerous Prophetic hadiths. There is complete scholarly consensus (ijma’) within the Muslim Ummah on this. Allah Most High says:

"Among the Jews, when a woman menstruated, they did not eat with her, nor did they live with menstruating women in their houses. So the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ regarding this practice, so Allah Most High revealed: ‘They ask you concerning menstruation. Say: ‘It is an impurity. So keep away from women during menstruation’ till the end of the verse. Thus, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘Do everything except for sex.’’ (Sunan Muslim 302)

Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra ﷺ relates from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that he said:

"The one who has sex with a menstruating woman, or with a woman in her anus, or who goes to a fortune-teller, has disbelieved (kufr) in that which was revealed to Muhammad ﷺ. (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 1:35)

The "kufr" mentioned in this hadith is to indicate the severity (taghlib) of these actions, in that sex during menstruation, anal sex and accepting as true what a fortune-teller says are acts that are close to disbelief. Others hold that if these acts are carried out whilst considering them to be lawful (tahlib), one would leave the fold of Islam without doubt. (See: Tuhfat al-Ahwādhi bī Shāhī Jannī al-Tirmidhi 1:435)

Imam Nawawi states, “Having actual sex with one’s spouse during menstruation is unlawful by the consensus of the Muslims due to the explicit texts of the Qur’an and Sunna. Our scholars state that a Muslim who considers having actual vaginal sex with a menstruating woman as lawful has become a unbeliever (kufr) and an apostate (muta’al). Someone who indulges in this without considering it to be lawful, and does it forgetfully (nisyān), or without knowing that the woman was menstruating, or is ignorant of its prohibition, or was compelled, then no sin was committed and he is not required to expiate for it. However,

Sayyiduna Anas ﷺ relates:

"Among the Jews, when a woman menstruated, they did not eat with her, nor did they live with menstruating women in their houses. So the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ regarding this practice, so Allah Most High revealed: ‘They ask you concerning menstruation. Say: ‘It is an impurity. So keep away from women during menstruation’ till the end of the verse. Thus, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘Do everything except for sex.’’ (Sunan Muslim 302)"
if he has sex with her deliberately, knowing that she is menstruating, knowing of its prohibition and with a free choice, then he has certainly committed a major sin (hadīth). Imam Shafi’i (may Allah have mercy on him) has stressed that it is a major sin, and sincere repentance is necessary.” (Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim P: 366)

Sex during menstruation is also harmful from a medical point of view. Research has discovered that menstrual flow contains certain toxic substances that can be detrimental if they enter into the male body or are prevented a clear passage of flow from the female body. This can occur when having sex while the woman is menstruating. Hence, sex during menstruation has resulted in an increase in both men and women being inflicted with various types of painful and often fatal blood-borne diseases. (African Journal of Reproductive Health Vol. 8, No. 2, Aug. 2004 pp. 55-58)

As such, the spouses must completely avoid sex during the period of menstruation. If they ever engage in it, they must sincerely repent and ask Allah Most High for forgiveness. They should also give something in charity as a form of expiation.

Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbás (r) relates from the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) regarding a man who has sex with his wife while she is menstruating that:

“He should give a half dinar in charity.” (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 136)

The majority of the classical scholars, including Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik and Imam Shafi’i (may Allah have mercy on them all), consider giving something in charity to be optional, and not a requirement for the acceptance of one’s repentance (tawba). As such, seeking forgiveness from Allah Most High is sufficient. However, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (may Allah have mercy on him) and some others hold that giving something in charity is necessary along with sincere repentance.

(See: Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim P: 366-367)

2) All the Sunni Schools of Islamic law (madhhab) are in agreement that it is permitted for the husband to derive sexual pleasure from his wife through direct skin-to-skin contact of the area above her navel and below her knees. As such, kissing, hugging, embracing is all permitted. The husband may touch any area of the wife’s body from above the navel and below the knees with his hands, his penis or any other part of his body. It is also permitted for the wife to masturbate her husband.

since the husband is not touching any area that is in between her navel and knees. Shaykh Abu ‘Abdul ‘Aziz al-Khasawneh and many others relate a complete scholarly consensus on this. (Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim P: 367)

Sayyida ‘A’isha (r) relates:

“...” (Sahih Muslim 293)

Haram ibn ‘Umayr (r) relates from his paternal uncle that:

“He asked the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), ‘What is permitted for me to do with my wife when she is menstruating?’ He said, ‘Whatever is above the covering (izār).’” (Sunan Abi Dawood 214)

It is stated in the Hanafi Fiqh reference work Al-Fatāwa al-Hindiyya, “It is permitted to kiss one’s menstruating wife, sleep with her and enjoy her entire body, except for that which is in between the navel and knees according to Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Abu Yūsuf...” (Al-Fatāwa al-Hindiyya 1:39)

Imam Ibn ‘Abidin states in his Radd al-Muhtār, “It is permitted to enjoy the navel and everything above it, and the knee and everything below it, even without a barrier.” (Radd al-Muhtār‘ al-Durr al-Muhtār 1:292)

3) As for the area between the navel and knees, the majority of the scholars, including Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik and Imam Shafi’i, hold that direct skin-to-skin contact of that area is not permitted, irrespective of the presence or absence of sexual desire (shakhsu’a). However, indirect contact, such as stimulation through a barrier [like clothing] is permissible. Therefore, it is permitted for the husband to
rub his private parts against his wife's private parts if there is some sort of clothing in between that prevents the transfer of body-heat. This position is based on the hadiths in which there is mention of wearing the covering (iṣān).

Imam Ibn ʿAbidin, of the Hanafi School, states, “It is also permitted to enjoy that which is in between the navel and knees but with a barrier [such as clothing], without actual sex, even if blood spreads all over.” (Radd al-Muhtar ’ala ‘Umm al-Muhitār 1:292)

However, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Imam Muhammad ibn al-Hasan, Imam Nawawī and some other scholars hold that it is permitted for the husband to touch the area between the navel and knees of his wife's body, even without a barrier, as long as the actual vagina and anus are avoided. They base their position on the statement of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ where he said, “Do everything except for sex.” (For further details on the various positions of the Imams, see: Fath al-Bāri 1:525 & Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim P: 367)

4) Finally, according to Imam Shafiʿi, Imam Malik, Imam Ahmad and the majority of the early (ṣalaf) and late (khulaf) scholars, the restriction on sexual relations remains even after menstruation ends until the wife takes the obligatory ritual bath (ghusl) or, in the absence of water, a dry ablution ( ḥayām). (Al-Minhaj P: 367)

According to the Hanafi School, however, there is some detail regarding this. If menstruation ends after the ten-day maximum duration, then sex is permitted, even without a ritual bath, though having a bath is recommended. When menstruation ends before the ten-day maximum duration, and it is after the completion of her normal menstrual habit (ʿaḍa), then sex is permitted only after having a bath or the passing of one whole prayer-time. If it ends before the completion of her normal menstrual habit, it remains prohibited and sinful to have sex, even after she bathes, until she completes her normal habit. (See: Radd al-Muhtar 1:294 and Ḥadīth Sharh Nūr al-Idhāh P. 141-142)

It should be noted that the rules pertaining to menstruation also apply to postnatal bleeding (nifās). As far as abnormal uterine bleeding (istihāda) is concerned, there are no sexual restrictions and it is permitted for the couple to have sex in this period even if blood spreads all over, though the wife should wash and remove traces of blood before sexual relations. (Radd al-Muhtar 1:294)

PREPARING FOR SEXUAL RELATIONS

To maintain a healthy sexual relationship, it is vital to prepare psychologically and physically for sexual relations. Preparing for sex is as important as sex itself. Both spouses should take care to prepare themselves for sex to enjoy their union to the fullest extent. Being remiss in this could have detrimental consequences.

It was a habit of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to clean his mouth and teeth with the tooth-stick (ṣawāb) when entering the house to visit his wives. Shurayh ibn Hani’ relates:

ṣaλdana ʿaʿašana, ʿaථa: bārāi ʿaiyın kana bi’dā allah ‘alīyī wa ʿalīyīn ʾa דעת ʾabī bīyina?

قَالَ: ِبِلْسَوْاَكَ

“I asked ʿA’isha ُرُواْلِ, “What did the Messenger of Allah ﷺ do first when he entered his house?” She replied, “Use the Sūdāb.” (Ṣaḥīh Muslim 253)

When returning from a long journey, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his Companions ُرُواْلِ would not enter their homes at night unexpectedly, rather, they would give prior notice to allow their wives to prepare themselves for their returning husbands. Sayyiduna Jabir ُرُواْلِ relates:

kāma ʿrūs ollah ‘alīyī wa ʿalīyīn fi ʿašāti, qaṭa wa ʿtuma al-mudīna dīnīyīn ʿa דעת,

قَالَ: أُنَذَّرُونَا ُثَحِيَّتَ تَحِيَّتَلاِي عِنَامًا كَيْ يُسْتَطِيبُ السَّمَّاءَ وِيُسْتَطِيبَ ِسَمَّاءً

“We were with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ on an expedition. When we came back to Madîna, we intended to enter our houses. So he ُرُواْلِ said, “Wait until we enter in the latter part of the evening
so that a woman with dishevelled hair can comb her hair, and
and a woman whose husband has been absent can shave her pubic
care.

(Sahih al-Bukhari 4949 and Sahih Muslim 1928, the wording
is of Muslim)

Sayyiduna Jabir ﷺ also relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إذا قدم أحدكم ليلاً فلا يأني أمه طرفاً حتى تسجع النية وتنفرغ الشرحة

“When one of you comes [back from a journey] at night, he
should not go to his family as a night visitor, [but wait] until the
woman whose husband has been absent can shave her pubic
hair, and the dishevelled woman can comb her hair.” (Sahih al-Bukhari
4948 and Sahih Muslim 1928, the wording is of Muslim)

Imam Abu ‘l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzi states in his Suyut al-Khatir that couples
should fix a particular time of day or night for sexual relations so
that both are prepared physically and psychologically. This not only
enhances their pleasure, but will also eliminate the possibility of either
of them being unprepared, whether mentally or physically. (Suyut al-
Khatir P: 280)

PREPARATION OF THE WIFE
1) Cleanliness and Personal Hygiene
Purity (tahara), cleanliness (naza’fa) and personal hygiene have been
given great importance in Islam. Purity is the key to prayer - the
principal act of worship in a Muslim’s life. Purity brings about the love
of Allah Most High towards oneself. Allah Most High says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْوَالِدَانِ يُحِبُّ الْمُطَهِّرِينَ

“Surely Allah loves those who are most repenting, and loves those
who keep themselves pure and clean.” (Qur'an 2:222)

Sayyiduna Abu Malik al-Ash'ari ﷺ relates that the Messenger of
Allah ﷺ said:

“Purity is half of faith...” (Sahih Muslim 228)

As such, a Muslim must remain pure and clean at all times, and even
more so when it comes to marriage.

It is regrettable that some women do not see the importance of
remaining clean at home in front of their husbands, yet when they
attend public gatherings or visit friends they ensure that they clean
and adorn themselves. Others make great efforts to beautify themselves
before marriage, but once they find their soul mate and get married,
they neglect this important factor.

This is actually contrary to the teachings of Islam. A wife must first
and foremost adorn herself for her husband, and is rewarded for doing
so. To beautify oneself in order to attract the attention of non-Mahram
men (non-family members) is absolutely unlawful and a great sin.
She should try her utmost best to remain clean at home in front of
her husband. If she is in an unclean state due to household chores,
she should clean herself as soon as she has finished her work. It is
unbecoming for her to linger around in an unkempt state for long
periods after completing her work.

For a healthy sexual relationship, anything that causes disgust or is
offensive should be completely avoided. The wife should ensure that
she does not have bad breath or any other body odours as this can be a
major “turn off”. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ even forbade people from
entering the Mosque if they had a bad mouth odour. Sayyiduna Jabir
ibn ‘Abdullah ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

من أكل لوزا أو بصل فطعروا و قال فطعروا مسجداً ولعبود في بيت

“Whoever eats garlic or onion should keep away from us.” Or he
said, “He should keep away from our Mosque and remain in his
house...” (Sahih al-Bukhari 817)

Sayyiduna Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah ﷺ also relates from the Messenger of
Allah ﷺ that he said:

الظهرور شتر الإيمان

“He who ate of this plant, i.e. garlic” – and once he said, “He who
ate onion and garlic and leek – should not approach our Mosque,
for the angels are harmed by the same things as the children of Adam.” (Saḥīh Muslim 564)

The above hadith demonstrates that bad smells offend both humans and angels. To avoid offending one's spouse is even more important for obvious reasons, so the wife should ensure that she avoids dirt, filth and bad odour of the mouth and body. She should bathe and change her clothes regularly. The teeth and mouth should be brushed as frequently as necessary in order that her spouse is not harmed when they kiss each other. She should always aspire to present herself in a clean manner in front of her husband.

If one has a genuine medical problem with body odour, one should resort to medical treatment. There are many simple and effective treatments for this condition. A medical diagnosis is not usually necessary for bad odour, but where the problem persists despite all efforts to treat it, it may be worth getting a medical opinion.

2) Adornment and Beautification
A key part of preparing for sexual relations is to ensure that the wife beautifies herself for her husband. Human beings are highly visual creatures that enjoy seeing and experiencing things that are beautiful. This is why Islam encourages its adherents to adorn themselves whenever they attend public gatherings such as the ḫumā'a and 'Īd prayers. If Muslims should appear pleasant in front of their fellows, then this is considerably more important where spouses are concerned.

As such, the importance of a woman adorning herself in preparation for sexual relations with her husband cannot be overstated. Allāh Most High describes the maidens of paradise known as “ḥār al-aṣyā'” or “wide-eyed virgins”, by saying:

“Kāfirūn al-ʿawdat wal-madājan” (Qur’ān 55:58)

This indicates that adornment is a means of attracting the attention of one's spouse. A woman who is desirous of a healthy sexual relationship, and by extension a healthy marriage, should endeavour to beautify herself for her husband. In this way, the husband will also be saved from casting lustful glances at other women.

Unfortunately, some Muslims consider that it is inappropriate for a practising Muslim woman to adorn herself in a captivating manner for her husband. This is far from the truth. Not only is it permissible for a woman to use the various means of beautification for her husband, but rather she is rewarded for doing so. Part of being a pious and practising Muslim is to live a life of chastity, and anything that is a means to this is encouraged, provided it is not specifically prohibited by Shari‘a.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also encouraged women to adorn themselves and maintain a good appearance for their husbands. Sayyida ʿA‘isha ﷺ relates:

“A woman made a gesture from behind a curtain to indicate that she had a letter for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ withdrew his hand and said, "I do not know if this is a man's or a woman's hand." She said, "But rather, a woman." He said, "If you were a woman, you would have made changes to your nails, meaning with Henna." (Sunan Abī Dāwūd 4163)

Sayyida ʿA‘isha ﷺ also relates that Hind bint ʿUthāa said to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, "O Prophet of Allah! Accept my allegiance (bayʿa’)." He replied:

“La ʿalayka ḥizzu ḫumā'a ʿalaykum kāf'in kāf'in”

“I shall not accept your allegiance until you change the palms of your hands, for they look like the paws of a beast of prey!” (Sunan Abī Dāwūd 4162)

Sayyida ʿA‘isha ﷺ also relates:

“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ received some jewels presented by Negus (norash) as a gift to him. They contained a gold ring with an Abyssinian stone.” She says, “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ, turning his attention away from it, took it by means of a stick or one of his fingers, then called Umânâ, daughter of Abû al-‘Âs and daughter of his daughter Zaynab, and said: “Adorn yourself with this, my dear daughter.” (Sahih Al-Bukhârî 4232)

The wife’s beautification, therefore, contributes to a healthy sexual relationship, and is a key element of the physical preparation for sexual relations. Some of the important things in this regard are as follows:

a) The wife should ensure that she removes unwanted hair from her body, should her husband want her to do so. The hadith recorded in Sahih Al-Bukhârî and Sahih Muslim has already been quoted wherein the Messenger of Allah ﷺ considered “shaving of the pubic hair” as part of a wife’s preparation for her returning husband. Removing body hair is completely permissible, rather it is recommended and rewarded if the intention is to please the husband.

A woman may remove unwanted hair from her arms, legs, and the rest of her body, with special emphasis to the pubic, underarm, and facial hair. The only exception is of shaping the eyebrows, which is not permitted according to the Prophetic hadith.

Some women may experience excessive growth of hair on their cheeks and other parts of the face. It is recommended for them to remove such facial hair, as this will prevent them from resembling men. Imam Nawawi, whilst commenting on the hadith in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ forbade women from removing facial hair, states: “This action [of women removing facial hair] is not permitted unless a woman grows a beard or a moustache, in which case it is not unlawful to remove it, rather it is recommended according to us […] The prohibition [in the hadith] is of shaping the eyebrows.” (Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim P: 1604)

Removing unwanted body hair is permitted through the various means available, such as waxing, using cream, powder and a razor. It is also permitted to bleach the hair instead. There also seems to be no Shari‘a impediment from permanently removing body hair, since the aim is to remove unwanted hair, whether temporarily or permanently.

However, a condition is stipulated that her nakedness (‘awra) is not exposed, even in front of Muslim women. A Muslim woman’s ‘awra in front of other Muslim women is from her navel up to and including her knees. As such, it is not permitted for a woman to expose the area in between the navel and knees for hair-removal, even before other Muslim women. Similarly, a Muslim woman’s ‘awra in front of non-Muslim women is the whole body with the exception of the face and hands. Therefore, she cannot expose other parts of her body before non-Muslim women. (Al-Hâfiz 4:651 & Radd al-Muhîr 6:371)

b) A woman may adorn herself for sexual relations with her husband by dressing up in appealing, seductive and revealing clothing. It is not against religious propriety (’adab) and modesty (haya) to wear clothing such as luxurious lingerie and alluring underwear, provided it is only for the husband and that there is no third person with the couple. In fact, as mentioned earlier, if the intention is to keep herself and her husband chaste, she will be rewarded, In shâ’Allah.

It should be noted, however, that the stronger and more precautionary view in the Hanafi school is that it is necessary (wajib) for both men and women to cover their essential nakedness (from navel to knees) even when alone. The exception to this is when there is a need, such as taking a shower, relieving oneself, changing one’s clothes or having sexual relations with one’s spouse. (Radd al-Muhîr 1:404)

As such, the wife should ensure that she covers the area between her navel and knee properly when she is alone at home. She should only dress up in the types of clothing described above in the presence of her husband and, ideally, restricted to the bedroom setting.

c) A pleasant scent can have a significant impact on others. Beautiful fragrances please the sense of smell, and it is part of the natural disposition (fiter) to take pleasure in delicate scents. This is why applying perfume was the practice of all the Prophets of Allah. Sayyiduna Abû Ayyûb Al-Ansârî relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

أَرْجِعُ مِنْ سَنَنِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ: الْحِيَابَةِ، وَالْفِتْرِ، وَالْعُسَّافَةِ، وَالْتَّكَاهُ.

“Four things are from the ways of the Prophets: modesty, applying perfume, using a tooth-stick (siwak) and marriage.” (Sunan al-Tirmîdhi 1080)

The beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ also loved perfume, and encouraged it. Sayyiduna Anas ﷺ relates that:
Secondly, it is not permitted for women to go out wearing perfume, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ firmly forbade it in rigorously authenticated (Ṣaḥīh) hadiths. Sayyiduna Abū Mūsā ﷺ relates from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that he said:

إِنَّ اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ عَلَى النَّفْسِ عَلَى الْمَكَحَلِّ ، وَلَيْسَ لَكُمُ النَّفَاتُ وَلَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ ۖ وَمَا أَحَدُ أَهْلِ النَّارِ يُذْعَفُ عَنْهَا.

“If a woman wore perfume and passed by a group [of men], and they smelt her perfume, she is such and such.” The narrator says, “He ﷺ used stern words.” (Ṣaḥīh Abū Dāwūd 4170)

As such, the wife should only wear perfume when she is inside of her home, and must ensure that she washes it away before going out.

d) Adornment and beautification can also entail the wife wearing gold, silver and other types of jewellery, and applying make-up to the face and applying lipstick. It is superior for her to apply henna to the hands and feet, and kohl to the eyes if she so desires, since they have been specifically permitted through the Sunna. She should also adorn her hair by regularly combing, arranging and taking care of it. Dyeing the hair is also permitted provided the ingredients used in the dye are hala. The explanation given above on mainstream perfumes and deodorants will also apply to hair-dyes.

It can be seen from the above that Islam generally does not lay too many restrictions when it comes to a woman adorning herself for her husband. After all, adornment is a means of both the husband and wife maintaining their chastity and staying away from the unlawful.

However, certain so-called means of adornment that distort one’s image are prohibited, even if done for the husband. These include: cosmetic surgery for the purpose of beautification, shaping eyebrows, wearing tattoos, piercing the body other than the ears and nose, and wearing hair extensions and wigs made out of human hair. As such, these things must be avoided.

e) Part of a woman’s adornment for her husband is also keeping fit, in shape and healthy. The wife should look after her body-figure and maintain its beauty as much as possible. Not only will this be a means of her husband being attracted to her body, it will also help her remain healthy.

3) Feminine Behaviour
As part of her psychological preparation for sexual relations, a woman must realise that what attracts her husband towards her is her softness,
gentleness and generally her feminine behaviour, and that roughness and masculine traits are normally a "turn off" for men.4

Allah Most High has created a natural attraction and charm in a woman's voice that is capable of sexually arousing a man. This is a reality which cannot be denied. Many psychologists also agree, stressing that the voice of an individual plays a great role in arousing sexual desires.

This is the reason why Allah Most High commanded the wives of the Messenger of Allah in particular, and all Muslim women in general, to abstain from conversing with non-mahram men in a soft and sweet tone. Allah Most High says:

"O wives of the Prophet! You are not like other women, if you are God-fearing. So do not be too soft in your speech, lest someone having a disease in his heart should be moved with desire." (Qur'an 33:32)

The above verse commands women not to speak too softly with non-mahram men, and when talking to them, both the content and manner of conversation must be appropriate and free of anything exciting. This is because conversing with a member of the opposite sex in a soft, provocative and flirty way is a means of falling into something unlawful, and as such, the means itself has also been prohibited.

As such, the husband will be significantly drawn towards his wife through her softness and feminine behaviour.

While the guidance mentioned above is applicable for all times, it is even more essential when the couple intend to engage in sexual relations. In order to set the mood and an atmosphere of romance, the wife should use various ways and means of seducing her husband. She may flirt, talk and behave amorously in order to arouse her husband's sexual interest, avoiding anything that may be distasteful or a "turn off". In this way, the scene will be set for a passionate and enjoyable session of husband-wife union, In shā' Allāh.

4 The renowned Hadith master (hadīth) and Hanafi jurist Imam Badr al-Dīn al-'Aynī, in his commentary of the hadith in which the Messenger of Allah cursed men who assume the traits of women, and women who assume the traits of men (Sahih al-Bukhari 5,547) explains that assuming the traits of the opposite gender is done intentionally and unintentionally. The blame and curse in the hadith is only when it is intentional. (Urdu at al-Qari Shabb Sahih al-Bukhari 1,555)
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primordial and natural disposition of a man known as fitra, which are from the ways of all the Prophets of Allah, particularly Sayyiduna İbrahim (peace be upon him), and sound human nature is naturally inclined towards them. Sayyida 'A'isha  relates that the Messenger of Allah  said:

"عَشَرَ مِنَ الْعُقُولَ: فَصُبُّ الشَّارِبُ، وَأَخْفَى الْخُمُسَةَ، وَالْسَّوْكُ، وَالْأَمْرَانَةَ، وَقَصُّ الْأَطْفَالِ، وَنَفْغُ الْمَرَاجِعِ، وَقُطُّ العَطَفَ، وَخَلَقُ النَّفَثَ، وَانْتَقَفَ الْعَلَامَةَ، وَقَالَ رَبِّي: قَالَ مَعْصِبُ، وَبَسَطَ العَلَامَةَ أَنْ تُكُنِّ تُضُرُّ الصَّمْعَةَ

"Ten matters are from upright natural disposition (fitra): Trimming the moustache, letting the beard grow, using the tooth-stick, rinsing the nose, cutting the nails, washing the joints, plucking the hair under the armpits, shaving the pubic hair and cleaning one's private parts with water (istinja)." The narrator said, "I have forgotten the tenth, but it may have been rinsing the mouth." (Sunah Muslim 261, Sunan Abi Dawud 59, Sunan al-Tirmidhi 2757, Sunan al-Nasai 9286 and Sunan Ibn Majah 293)

As such, in terms of personal hygiene, the husband should keep the following points in mind:

a) The husband should ensure that he remains clean by avoiding dirt, filth and bad odour. After relieving himself, he should clean his genital area properly with water (istinja). The Messenger of Allah  included istinja amongst the ten matters of upright natural disposition (fitra), as mentioned earlier.

Sayyida 'A'isha , addressing Muslim women, said:

"مَا نَفَّدَ الْحَرْبِ وَالْحَمْرِ وَالْحَيْمَ، وَلَاتُفْنِيًا فَايْتَمَّ أَسْحَبْهُمُّ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ يُفْعَلَ

"Tell your husbands to wash their private parts with water, for I am too shy to tell them so. The Messenger of Allah  used to do that." (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 19)

The hands should be washed thoroughly after one relieves oneself, preferably using soap until all traces of ritual impurity (najasa) are removed. After urinating, a man is required to ensure that drops of urine are completely removed from his urine passage (istibra).

b) The husband should make sure that he avoids anything that causes distaste or is a "turn off" for his wife. He should take special care that he does not have bad breath or body odour.

In order to remove bad body odour, the husband should have regular baths, especially when intending to have sexual relations with his wife. Applying perfume ("fin" is a Sunna of the beloved Messenger of Allah  and it should not be neglected. There are many natural scents that can be used, such as Musk, Ambur and Oud. The Messenger of Allah  is reported to have said, "Musk is the most pleasant of scents." (Sunah Muslim 2252) One may also use mainstream deodorants and body-sprays, provided they are halal.

Likewise, in order to remove bad odours from the mouth, the husband should brush his mouth and teeth thoroughly. Mouth rinsing (madhmadha) is one of the ten matters of natural disposition (fitra). The mouth should be washed in order to remove all traces of food that stick to the teeth and damage them. A mouthwash may be used provided it contains no hara ingredients. Using the siwak was also mentioned as one of the ten matters of fitra.

Sayyiduna Hudhayfa  relates:

"كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا أَمَاتَ فَيَوْدُدُ يَسْوَى فَالْيَسْوَى

"Whenever the Messenger of Allah  got up [for prayers] at night, he would clean his mouth rigorously with the siwak." (Sunah Muslim 255)

Imam Nawawi, in his commentary of Sunah Muslim, states that using the siwak to brush the mouth and teeth is recommended at all times, but especially so when one has a bad odour of the mouth. He states that bad odour of the mouth has many causes, including abstaining from eating and drinking, consuming something that has an offensive smell to it, prolonged silence, and talking too much. (Al-Minhaj Sharh Sunah Muslim P. 334)

Ensuring that the mouth is clean and fresh is extremely important when the couple intend on having sexual relations. Surely, it is wrong for the husband to kiss his wife passionately without having washed his mouth and brushed his teeth properly. Smokers and anyone who habitually consumes distasteful things should take extra precautions, as it can kill the passion and desire of the spouse.
c) The husband should also pay attention to his attire and external appearance by dressing neatly and wearing clean and ironed clothes, for Allah Most High is beautiful and likes beauty. He should change his clothes regularly and keep them neat and tidy. It is surely wrong for the husband to walk around in filthy and unwashed clothes. Some husbands fail to give due importance to this and engage in sexual relations with their wives even in their work-clothes! Not only is this a "turn off" for the wife, it also reflects shallowness on the part of the husband.

Sayyiduna Jâbir ibn `Abdullâh ﷺ relates:

وَزَاَىَت رَجَالٌ أُخْرِجَ رَأىٰت ٌ ثَابِتَةٌ وَسَحِيْةٌ فَالَّذِي أَمَامُهَا كَانَ مَا يُنْسَى مَا يُخْلَى

"...And he (the Messenger of Allah ﷺ) saw another man wearing dirty clothes and said, "Could this man not find something to wash his garments with?" (Sunan Abî Dâwûd 4059)

Sayyiduna Abû al-Dardâ’ ﷺ said to Sahl ibn al-Hanzaliyya ﷺ, recorded by Imam Abû Dâwûd in his Sunan as part of a long hadith, "[Tell us] a word which benefits us and does not harm you." He said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say:

إِنَّكَ قَدْ أَذْكَرَتْنَا عَلَى إِخْوَاتٍ فَأَصْلَحْنِي عَلَى أَصْلَحُكَ وَأَصْلَحْنِي لَأَسْكَمْ حَتَّى تُكُونَ إِلكَمْ شَوْمًا فِي الْأَزْمَاتِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهِ لَا يُحِبُّ الَّذِينَ يَنْسُونَ وَلا الْمَكْسُوحُينَ

"You are on your way to meet your brothers, so fix your saddles and tidy your dresses, until you appear distinct among people as a beauty mark [on a beautiful face]. Allah does not like roughness and rough manners." (Sunan Abî Dâwûd 4086 & Musnad Ahmad 4:180)

Sayyiduna `Abdullâh ibn Ma’ûn ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

لا يَنْسُو حَجَّةُ أَبْنِيَّـنَا مِنْ كَانَ فِيهِ مَقَالٌ دَرَوْرٌ مِنْ كَبْرِ كَانَ رَجُلٌ أُرِجَّهُ أَبْنِيُّنَا لَيْكَ حَسَّةً لِلْحَمْطَةِ فَقَالَ أَمَأَ كَانَ هَذَا يَزَالُ مَا يُكَشَّفُ بِهِ شَرَابُكَ؟

"He who has in his heart the weight of a mustard seed of pride shall not enter Paradise." A man asked, "A person may like his dress to be nice, and his shoes to be nice. He ﷺ said, "Verily, Allah is beautiful and loves beauty. Pride is to reject the truth [out of arrogance] and have contempt for the people." (Sahîh Muslim 91)

As such, the Sunna is to remain clean, wearing neat clothing and smelling good. A man should dress neatly, even with friends and relatives. His attire should be clean and elegant, not ugly and unsightly. If he looks good in clean clothes, he will be pleasant to look at and people will enjoy his presence. If he is the opposite, people will look down upon him and not give him any importance. This is even more important where a husband-wife relationship is concerned.

Imam Ibn al-Jawzi states in his Sayd al-Khâtîr that staying filthy is a cause of the wife disliking her husband. She may feel uncomfortable discussing it with her husband, but it will result in her losing interest in him. In remaining clean and pure, the wife will be drawn towards her husband. Women are but sisters (or the other half) of men (shaqâ’iq), and just as a husband may dislike something of her, she too may dislike something of him. (Sayd al-Khâtîr P. 141 & 142)

d) Keeping the hair, whether it is the hair of the head or the beard, clean and neat is also important. The husband should oil and comb his hair. If he is unable to maintain the hair of his head properly, he should have it trimmed or shaved. The beard should be combed, kept neat, and oiled if possible.

Sayyiduna Abû Ḥurayra ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

مَنْ كَانَ لَهُ شَفَرُ تَلْكُمُّ مَكْحَلُ

"He who has hair should take care of it." (Sunan Abî Dâwûd 4106)

Sayyiduna Jâbir ibn `Abdullâh ﷺ relates:

آَنَّا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم وأَرَى رَجُلًا شَجَّعًا فَذِلَّ عَرَقُ شِعرَهُ فَقَالَ أَمَأَ كَانَ

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ came to us, and saw a dishevelled man whose hair was disordered. So he said, "Could this man not find something to arrange his hair with?" (Sunan Abî Dâwûd 4059)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would also look after the hair of his head and beard. Sayyiduna Anas ibn Mâlik ﷺ relates:

كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَكْرُرُ ذِي رَأْسِهِ وَنَزْعِجُ حَيْثُ يَكْرُرُ

"He who has hair should take care of it." (Sunan Abî Dâwûd 4106)
“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would often oil his hair, comb his beard and frequently use Qīnā [a cloth placed on the head to wipe off and absorb oil], so much so that his cloth was similar to the cloth of an oil-seller.” (Shamā'il al-Tirmidhi 33)

It is also permissible, rather recommended, for a man to dye the hair of his head and beard, provided the ingredients used in the hair-dye are hādd. The best form of hair dye to be applied to the head or beard is henna. Sayyiduna Abū Dhar ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِنَّ أَحْرَسَ مَاْ عُطِّرَ بِهِ الشَّيْخُ الْمَيْتُ وَالجَمِيعُ

“The best dye to change [one's] old age (grey hair), is henna (a red plant dye) and kātn (a type of grass).” (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 1753 & others)

However, using pure black hair-dye is not permitted or at least disliked according to most Hanafi and Shāfī'i jurists (fuqahā'), even for the purpose of adornning oneself for one's wife. (Radd al-Muhātir and Al-Majmū') The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,

وَاجْتَنِبْوا السُّوْادُ

“...Abstain from using black dye.” (Sahih Muslim 2102)

The hair which grows on the cheeks or throat of a man is not considered to be part of his beard, for a beard is that which grows on the jawbone. As such, it is permitted for a man to remove hair from the cheeks by shaving or trimming it. (Radd al-Muhātir 6:407 and Al-Fatawa al-Hindia 5:338)

The husband should also ensure that he shaves or at least trims his moustache. In the hadith quoted earlier regarding the ten matters of Fiqh, “trimming the moustache” was also included. As such, shortening the moustache is an agreed upon Sunna, and to keep the moustache long to the point that it covers the top of the upper lip is blameworthy. It is considered to be unhygienic because food and other undesirable things are likely to get stuck in such a moustache. This becomes more important for a husband, since a long moustache may prove to be uncomfortable, to say the least, when couples kiss one another.

After agreeing that a man must shorten his moustache, scholars have disagreed about the extent to which the moustache should be trimmed. Is it better to completely remove one's moustache, or is it enough to shorten the moustache such that it no longer covers the top of the upper lip? This difference of opinion stems from the fact that the hadiths of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ mention two things. Some mention “Shortening the moustache” whilst others mention “Removing the moustache”.

From the Hanafi School, Imam Abū Ja’far al-Tahawi explains in his Sharh Mā‘āni al-Âthār that it is recommended (mustahab) to shave the moustache completely, and this is better than shortening it, affirming that this was the position of Imam Abū Ḥanifa and both his main students. He also reports, with his authentic chains of transmission, that this was the practice of great Companions, including 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Abū Hurayra, Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī, Abū Usayd al-Sa‘īdī, Rāfi’ ibn Khādijah, Jābir ibn Abdullah, Anas ibn Malik, and others ﷺ. (Sharh Mā‘āni al-Âthār 2:230-231)

Imam Bukhārī reports that ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar ﷺ used to trim his moustache so short that the whiteness of his skin could be seen. (Sahih al-Bukhārī 5:2068)

According to Imam Malik, it is detested to shave the moustache completely, rather the Sunna is to shorten the moustache such that it does not cover the top of the upper lip. (Musnad ‘Ali 2:507)

Imam Nawawi of the Shāfī’i School states that the Sunna is to trim the moustache from above the upper lip, without shaving the moustache completely. (Al-Majmū’ Sharh al-Mu’addibah 1:159)

In the Ḥanbali School, both shaving the moustache completely and shortening it are from the Sunna. As such, a man can choose between shaving his moustache completely and trimming it without shaving. (Ibn al-Qayyim, Zād al-Madī‘īd 1:173)

Regardless of this minor difference of opinion between the various jurists (fuqahā’), what is clear is that all the jurists are unanimous on the impermissibility of keeping one’s moustache long to the point that it covers one’s upper lip. This is so because Zayd ibn Arqam ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

من لم يأخذ من شاربه فليس منا

“Whosoever does not take from his moustache is not one of us.” (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 2761 and Musnad Ahmad. Imam Tirmidhi said that this is a rigorously authenticated hadith)
Those who have a habit of keeping long moustaches must take heed from this. It is wrong to leave the moustaches long and thick, since the warning in the Prophetic hadith is quite stern. Not only is shortening the moustache the way of the Prophets, it also helps maintain one's beauty and elegance.

Finally, the extended parts of the moustache, i.e. the hair between the moustache and the beard, are considered part of the moustache, and thus it is permitted to remove them. There is also nothing wrong in leaving this hair untrimmed. (Al-Fatāwa al-Hindiyya, 5:358)

e) The husband should also make sure that he removes his pubic and underarm hair regularly. Untrimmed hair in the pubic area and armpits is a cause of bad body odour, as dirt and sweat may gather there. Removing underarm hair and shaving pubic hair are both included in the ten matters of fitra. As such, it is disliked to leave hair on these areas to the point that the hair becomes long.

It is recommended to remove the pubic and armpit hair weekly, ideally on a Friday. It is not disliked to delay this to two weeks. However, it is blameworthy beyond that, and sinful beyond forty days. (Al-Fatāwa al-Hindiyya 5:357-358)

In a similar manner, the husband should clip his nails and not let them grow too long, given that dirt is easily gathered under the nails. Clipping the nails is also from the matters of fitra. As such, it is blameworthy to leave the nails uncut beyond two weeks, and sinful beyond forty days. (Ibid)

Sayyiduna Anas ibn Malik & relates:

وَقَاتِلْنَا فِي غَزْيَةِ الْبَيْضَةَ وَلَا يَكْفُمُ الْأَذْنَابَ وَلَا يَمْرِقَ الْأَبْطَالَ وَلَا يَكْفُمُ الْأَعْمَالَ وَلَا يَكْفُمُ الْأَمْرَاءَ وَلَا يَكْفُمُ الْأَمَامَاتَ وَلَا يَكْفُمُ الْأَرْدَاعَ وَلَا يَكْفُمُ الْأَرْجَعَ

“A time-limit was prescribed for us [by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ] for shortening the moustache, clipping the nails, plucking armpit hair and shaving the pubic hair, that it should not be left for more than forty nights.” (Saheeh Muslim 258)

2) Good Treatment and Seduction
A very important aspect of a husband’s psychological preparation is preceding sexual relations with good treatment, kind words, playfulness and affection. Islam generally commands the husband to treat his wife honourably at all times, let alone when the couple intend on engaging in sexual relations. Allah Most High says:

“We should spread upon them kindness and humanity, and treat them with a smile and speaking well of them, for Allah rejoices with doers of good.” (Qur’an 4:19)

“Live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If you take a dislike to them it may be that you dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good.” (Qur’an 4:19)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ emphasised, both verbally and in action, the importance of treating one’s wife kindly. Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra & relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

أَكْلُ الْعُوْزُوْنَ إِبْنَيَّا أَخْصَصْنَاهُمْ فَخَلَقْنَاهُمْ خَلَقاً وَخَلَقْنَا كَهْرُوبَنَاهُمْ خَلَقاً

“The most perfect of believers in belief is the best of them in character. And the best of you are those who are the best to their women.” (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 1162 with a rigorously authenticated chain of transmission)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was a living example of how a husband should treat his wife. He was extremely gentle and kind toward his wives, and treated them in an amicable manner. He was affectionate, humorous and considerate towards them. Many examples of the Messenger of Allah’s ﷺ treatment of his wives can be found in the books of Prophetic narrations.

Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah ibn Abbás & relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

خَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُ كُلٍّ لَّنَا وَإِخْبَارُكُمْ إِلَيْهِ

“The best among you is the one who is best to his family. And I am the best among you to my family.” (Sunan Ibn Majah 1977)

As such, treating one’s wife kindly is a general ruling of Islam, and is essential when one intends to have sexual relations. How a couple treat one another outside the bedroom will have a direct impact on their bedroom behaviour.

To set the scene, the husband should be gentle and affectionate, expressing his love for her with words that will seduce her. He should remember that women get “turned on” by what is said and the meaning behind the words. It is all about how his words make her feel. It’s a set
of actions, and every small thing the husband does matters, and will help contribute to a healthy sexual encounter.

There is a subtle indication of this in the Qur’an also. Allah Most High says:

"Your wives are tilage for you to cultivate. So approach your tillage from where you wish, but do some good act for yourselves beforehand; and fear Allah." (Qur’an 2:223)

Some exegetes of the Qur’an say that the phrase “but do some good act for yourselves beforehand” refers to the importance of things that come before sex itself, such as having a correct intention, reciting the appropriate Du’ā, and foreplay in increasing interest and making the matter easier. (Tafsir Abi al-Aswad 1:223 and Tafsir al-Kashf 1:294)

In a hadith, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ describes how disgraceful it is for a husband to treat his wife cruelly and then have sex with her. He ﷺ said:

"...One of you beats his wife as he would beat a slave, and then he may have sex with her in the evening!" (Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 4658 and Saḥīḥ Muslim 2855, the wording is of Bukhārī)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is displaying astonishment at a man who mistreats his wife and then has the audacity to engage in sexual relations with her. This is why in another narration he said:

"How can one of you beat his wife like a stallion is beaten and then sleep with her?" (Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 5695) In other words, how can a husband treat his wife harshly and aggressively and then expect her to be responsive to his sexual advances?

Muslim husbands really must take heed of this. Some men, outside of the bedroom, fail to treat their women with warmth and affection, but when it comes to sex, all of a sudden, they become caring and compassionate. Not only is this selfish, it also shows what the wife actually means to the husband.

The Sunna is to precede sexual relations with tenderness and affection. The husband should use the appropriate means to seduce his wife, through his words and actions. In this way, the wife will also be extremely receptive to his sexual advances.
FOREPLAY

Once a couple are psychologically and physically prepared and in the mood for sex, the union should begin with foreplay. Foreplay comprises all the sexual activity that precedes actual penetration. Verbal expressions of love and desire that the couple exchange between each other are included in this; however, this section will only examine the physical aspects of foreplay.

IMPORTANCE OF FOREPLAY

Engaging in foreplay is immensely important and a vital constituent of a happy marriage, and as a consequence, it should never be disregarded. Both spouses should take the means to arouse one another, as it will result in a more pleasurable union.

Although foreplay is important for both spouses, it is of greater importance for the husband to sexually arouse his wife before having sex. Women generally take longer to become fully sexually aroused. If the husband has sex with her when she is unprepared, he may fulfill his need, but not hers. This will result in the wife becoming frustrated and is detrimental to the marriage.

The husband should take his time in arousing his wife. Only when he sees that she is ready, prepared, and desirous of him, should he engage in having sex. It is egotism on the husband's part to fulfill his own sexual need and leave his wife unsatisfied and discontented. Husbands like this do not truly love their wives, but are only concerned about their own gratification.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also encouraged foreplay between the spouses. Sayyiduna Jābir ibn ‘Abdillah ﷺ relates:

"I was in the company of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in a battle... The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said [to me], "Did you marry?" I answered, "Yes." He said, "A virgin or a non-virgin?" I said, "A non-virgin." He said, "Why not a virgin so that you may play with her and she may play with you?..." (Salāḥ al-Bukhārī 1991)

Imam Tirmidhi reports with his own chain of transmission to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that he said:

"...Every game a Muslim plays is futile (bāṭil) except for archery, training one's horse and playing with one's wife, for they are from praiseworthy acts."

(Sunan al-Tirmidhi 16:37, Sunan Ibn Mājah 28:14 and Musnad Ahmad 17:483, the wording is of Tirmidhi)

Imam Ghazālī in his Iḥyā’ Ulūm al-Din and Imam Daylamī in his Musnad al-Firdaws both record a narration on the authority of Sayyiduna Anas ibn Mālik ﷺ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said: "None of you should come onto his wife like an animal; but rather there should be between them a messenger. It was said, "What is the messenger O Prophet of Allah?" He replied, "[Foreplay of] kissing and words." (Ḥāfiz al-Sādāl al-Muttaqīn bi Sharh Iḥyā’ Ulūm al-Din 6:175, with a weak chain of transmission)

This hadith does not in any way conclude that one should not marry non-virgins. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself married many non-virgin women. His beloved first wife Sayyida Khadija ﷺ was not only a non-virgin, but much older than him too. As such, there is nothing wrong whatsoever Islamically in marrying non-virgin women and widows. In this hadith, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was addressing the issue from another angle. This is why, in the narration of Sāhib Muslin (715), Sayyiduna Jābir ﷺ said to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, "I have sisters; so I was afraid that she [a non-virgin woman] might come between me and them, whereupon he ﷺ said, "Well and good, if that is so. A woman is married for her religion, her wealth and her beauty. So you should choose one with religion, may your hands cleave to dust."
FOREPLAY

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ kissed one of his wives and then left for prayer without performing ablution." Urwa [the narrator from ‘A’isha] says, “I asked ‘A’isha, “It must have been you.” [Upon hearing this] ‘A’isha smiled.” (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 86, Sunan Abi Dāwūd 181 and Sunan al-Nasā‘i 170)

This hadith indicates that kissing one’s spouse is recommended, and it demonstrates the importance of kissing one’s wife whenever one enters or leaves the house. This was the Sunna of the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ and it is inappropriate for a man to leave his house without greeting his wife affectionately with kisses or to return home questioning first whether the food is ready, or whether someone had called!

Passionate kissing (or French kissing) is also a Sunna of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Sayyida ‘A’isha ﷺ relates that:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم كَانَ يُسْلِمُهَا وَهُوَ صَامٌ وَيُميِّنُهَا

“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would kiss her whilst he was fasting, and he would suck on her tongue.” (Sunan Abi Dāwūd 2378)

In this way, both spouses should kiss each other passionately during foreplay, and there is nothing wrong if saliva is exchanged. Licking or sucking each other’s tongues is not only allowed, but a Sunna of the beloved of Allah ﷺ. One may also suck the lower or upper lip of one’s spouse. Biting softly on the lip is also allowed, provided the spouse is not hurt or harmed by it.

b) Kissing is not restricted to the lips and mouth. One may also kiss other parts of the body such as the cheeks, forehead, tip of the nose.

6 Note that according to the Hanafi and most other jurists, kissing one’s spouse passionately to the point that it results in the exchange of saliva invalidates one’s fast, necessitating both a make-up (qadd) fast and expiation (kaffarah). (Munavvi al-Falāḥ P. 567)

As far as this hadith is concerned, in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ kissed his wife passionately whilst fasting, scholars explain that, firstly, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would ensure not to swallow her saliva. The sucking on the tongue was very restrained and not to the point where saliva was exchanged and swallowed. Secondly, it is possible to interpret it, so that sucking on the tongue is not connected to fasting. As such, the meaning of the hadith is that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would kiss Sayyida ‘A’isha whilst he was fasting, and normally when he kissed her, he would kiss her passionately and suck on her tongue (but not necessarily whilst fasting).

behind the ear or suck on the earlobe, the eyelid, back of the neck, palm of the hand, fingers, wrist, forearm, waist, stomach, navel, chest and breast, spine, behind the knees, thighs and the leg. In other words, it is permitted to shower one’s spouse with kisses all over. Just as kissing these body parts is permitted, it is likewise allowed to lick them.

As for the area close to the genitalia, one must ensure that no impurity comes into contact with the mouth, since consuming impurities is explicitly forbidden. It is best to avoid getting too close to the genital area with the mouth. This will be explained in more detail in the section pertaining to “oral sex”  

\( \text{In shâ’Allah.} \)

c) Biting or sucking hard on one’s spouse’s body can leave marks, or love bites, particularly on the neck. These bruises are the result of burst blood vessels beneath the skin and last between 4 to 5 days, depending on the individual.

From an Islamic perspective, public display of affection is not permitted. Likewise, anything that hints at a sexual encounter is frowned upon. Islam emphasizes modesty and dignity, and prohibits acts that could lead to immorality.

Sayyiduna ‘Abdullâh ibn ‘Umar  relates that the Messenger of Allah  passed by a man of the Ansâr who was reprimanding his brother regarding shyness (hayâ’), so the Messenger of Allah  said:

\[ \text{“Leave him, for modesty is from faith (imân).” (Šâhîh al-Bukhârî 24) } \]

Sayyiduna Abû Sa’îd al-Khudrî  relates that the Messenger of Allah  said:

\[ \text{“The most evil of people in the sight of Allah on the Day of Judgment is the man who has sex with his wife and she has sex with him, then he reveals her secret.” (Šâhîh Muslim 1437) } \]

Based on this, if a love bite is left on a part of the body that is normally covered, such as the stomach or back, then this is permitted. However, leaving a mark on an exposed area so that people can conclude what took place between the spouses is not permitted. If a mark is left on the neck, proper care must be taken to cover it until the mark disappears.

It is contrary to Islam to show off that their spouse left a mark on their body. This is unlawful behaviour.

d) Kissing, licking, sucking and generally fondling the wife’s breasts is not only permitted, but is one of the most effective ways of sexually arousing her. As such, the husband should not neglect this.

However, according to the Hanafi School, contrary to some other Schools, a man is not permitted to drink his wife’s milk, and it is sinful to do so intentionally. Imam Haskâfî states, “It (milk) is a part of a human being and to make use of it without a real need to do so is unlawful.” (Radd al-Muhtâr 3:211)

This indicates that deriving benefit in any manner from a part of a human being without a genuine need is unlawful. The baby’s drinking of the mother’s milk is an exception, based on textual permission, due to the real need (qawārî) to do so.

Consequently, if the wife has milk in her breasts and it is feared that milk will enter the mouth, then the husband should avoid sucking on them. Whilst sucking, if milk does enter the mouth, it is necessary to spit it out straight away.

It is important to note that while it is unlawful to drink one’s wife’s milk intentionally, one’s marriage is not affected by it. Some individuals mistakenly believe that drinking the wife’s milk nullifies the marriage. The rulings of sucking (ra’dâ), which would entail the woman becoming a foster-mother, apply only to children who are breastfed in the period designated for it, and are of no significance after this.

Sayyida ‘A’îsha  relates:

\[ \text{“Once the Messenger of Allah  entered my house whilst a man was with me. He said, “O ‘A’îsha! Who is this?” I replied, “My foster-brother.” He said, “O ‘A’îsha! Be careful in determining who your foster-brother is, for sucking is only valid if it takes place in the suckling period.” (Šâhîh al-Bukhârî 2504 & Šâhîh Muslim 1455, the wording is of Bukhârî.”} \]
Both spouses should explore each other’s “erogenous zones”, areas of heightened sexual sensitivity in the body. The location of these areas varies with the individual and can include any part of the body, but there are common erogenous zones that exist in most people. The penis in men and the clitoris in women are both sensitive erogenous zones.

Areas of heightened sensitivity include the ears, the nape, the breasts and nipples, the inside of the thighs, behind the knees, the buttocks, the soles of the feet, toes and obviously the male and female genital areas. One should gently massage and stroke these areas to sexually arouse one’s spouse. Be mindful that giving pleasure to one’s spouse is an act of virtue, for which one will be rewarded, In sha’ Allah.

b) There is nothing wrong in touching, stroking and fondling the genitals of one’s spouse. In fact, as part of foreplay, it is encouraged to stroke and play with each other’s private parts. The wife may stroke her husband’s penis, while the husband may fondle her vagina. It is an effective means of preparing one’s spouse for sexual intercourse. In this regard, it is important to stimulate the woman’s clitoris, a small sensitive and erectile part of the female genitals at the front of the vagina, as this will result in a more profound sexual response.

It is stated in Al-Fatawa al-Hanafiyya, a renowned Hanafi Fiqh reference work, that Imam Abū Yūsuf said, “I asked Imam Abū Manṣūr regarding a man who strokes his wife’s vagina and she strokes his penis in order that he get an erection, do you see any wrong in that?” He replied, “No, rather I am confident that one will be rewarded for doing so.” (Al-Fatawa al-Hanafiyya 5:328. The same has been recorded by Imam Khaṭīb al-Shirbini of the Shafi’i School in his Muğnī al-Muhtāj 3:181)

c) Moreover, it is permissible for the husband to use his hands and fingers to make his wife reach orgasm, and likewise the wife to use her hands to masturbate her husband. It is particularly encouraged for the husband to practise this on his wife, since women take longer to reach an orgasm.

The renowned Hanafi jurist, Imam Ibn ʿAbidin, clearly states the permissibility of mutual masturbation between the spouses in his Radd al-Muhtrār. He states quoting Miḥāj al-Darrāya, “And it is permitted to masturbate with the hand of one’s wife.” (Radd al-Muhtrār ala ‘l-Durr al-Muhtrār 2:399)

Imam Ibn ʿAbidin details the difference between this and masturbating with one’s own hand, which is clearly forbidden. In the former
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case, one is satisfying oneself with that which is permissible to gain satisfaction from, namely a part of one’s spouse, and one is entitled to seek sexual satisfaction from her entire body, whereas in the latter case, one is not. He notes that the prohibition of masturbating with one’s own hand likewise applies to masturbating with one’s own thighs, a wall or any other object. (Ibid)

In the chapter pertaining to legal punishments (kitāb al-Hudūd), the author of the original work Al-Durr al-Mukhtār states, “If a man allows his wife to stroke his penis and heejaculates, it is disliked but there is nothing on him.” Commenting on this, Imam Ibn ‘Abīdīn, explains that dislike here means “slightly disliked (karāha tanzih)” without it being sinful, and then refers to what he discussed earlier in the chapter of fasting that it is permitted to masturbate with the hand of one’s wife. (Radd al-Mukhtār 4:27)

Based on this reasoning and the explicit text mentioned above concerning the permissibility of a man masturbating with his wife’s hand, it can be concluded that the reverse is also permissible, namely the wife masturbating with the husband’s hand.

Imam Ghazālī of the Shafi‘i School also permits the husband being masturbated with his wife’s hands. (See: Iḥṣāḥ al-Sādāt al-Muṣafīn bi Shahr Ḥiyā’ Uṣūl al-Din 6:179)

d) As for the spouses looking at each other’s private parts, this is also, by and large, permitted in all Schools, though superior to avoid. Through the union of marriage, Shafi‘a permits both the husband and wife to glance at any part of each other’s bodies, which includes the private parts.

Sayyiduna Bahz ibn Hakim Ḥ says that my father related to me from my grandfather [Mu‘āwiyah ibn Hayda], who said, “I said, O Messenger of Allah! Which of our nakedness is allowed to be exposed, and of which must we be careful?” The Messenger of Allah Ḥ said:

احفظ عورتك إلا من روجيك أو من ملكك نبينك...

“Guard your nakedness (awra) except from your wife or your slave-woman…” (Sunan al-Tirmidhī 2769 and Sunan Ibn Majah 1920)

Imam ‘Abd al-Razzaq al-San‘ānī in his Al-Musannaf and Imam Tabarānī in his Al-Mi‘jam al-Kabīr both record a hadith related by Sa‘īd ibn Ma‘ṣūd al-Kindī Ḥ who says:

FOREPLAY

"Ummān ibn Mau‘ūn Ḥ came to the Messenger of Allah Ḥ and said, “O Messenger of Allah! I feel shy that my wife sees my nakedness (awra).” The Messenger of Allah Ḥ said, “Why should that be when Allah has made you a garment for them and them a garment for you…” (Al-Musannaf 6:85 and Al-Mu‘jam al-Kabīr 9:37)

Imam Burhān al-Dīn al-Marghinānī of the Hanafi School states in his work Al-Hidāya that a man may look at the private parts of his wife since it is permitted for him to look at her whole body, with and without desire (shakarat). He mentions that this ruling is based on the hadith in which the Messenger of Allah Ḥ said, “Lower your gaze except from your slave-woman and wife” and also on the fact that touching the wife’s private parts and sex are both permitted, hence merely looking is even more worthy of being permitted. However, he says, it is superior for each of the spouses to avoid looking at the other’s private parts. (Al-Hidāya 4:461)

It is stated in Al-Fatāwa al-Hindīyya that ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar Ḥ would say, “It is better for the husband to look at his wife’s private parts during sex, so that it helps in achieving full gratification.” (Al-Fatāwa al-Hindīyya 5:328. Imam ‘Āyni states that this report is not authentically established from Ibn ‘Umar. See: Radd al-Mukhtār ’alá ‘Uddur al-Mukhtār 6:267)

Imam Khatīb al-Shirbīnī of the Shafi‘i School also mentions the permissibility of looking at the spouse’s private parts but mentions that it is disliked to do so without need. He then quotes Sayyida ‘A‘ishah Ḥ who said, “I never saw the private parts of the Messenger of Allah Ḥ and he never saw mine.” (Recorded by Ibn Mājah in his Sunan 1922, Imam Ahmad in his Musnad and others)

He further states that the hadith, “Looking at private parts may result in blindness” is deemed weak (da‘if) or fabricated (nawal’d) by the scholars of hadith, such as Imam Ibn Ḥibbān and Imam Ibn al-Jawzī. (Mughni al-Muhtār 3:181)

The Maliki and Hanbali schools also agree with the Hanafi and Shafi‘i position on the permissibility of looking at the private parts of

e) Finally, it is permitted for both spouses to be completely naked. Shaykh Muhammad Kanān, a contemporary scholar, writes in his book Al-Muʿāṣira al-Zawjyya, “It is inappropriate for a husband to have sex with his wife whilst they are both wearing clothes. Rather, it is better for both spouses to be naked before sex even if completely, for this is better for them [...]” (P: 64)

It is stated in Al-Farābī al-Hindīyya quoting Hanafi Scholars that it is allowed for the couple to be naked during sex if they are within their room [i.e. no one is able to see them]. (Al-Farābī al-Hindīyya 5:328)

Scholars mention, however, that the couple should place a cover or sheet over their naked bodies. Imam Ghazâlî states, “The husband should place a sheet over himself and his wife.” (See: Ithāf al-Sadiqat al-Muttaqin bi Sharh Iyyâ’ Ulūm al-Dīn 6:174)

This is due to the hadith recorded by Imam Ibn Majah his Sunan from ʿUtbâ bîn ʿAbd al-Sulamî who relates that the Messenger of Allah said:

إذا أتى أحدكم النهاردة فأمهل فليس وليد جرد الغيبين

“When any of you has sex with the spouse, let him cover himself. One should not be completely naked like the nakedness of two wild asses [mating in public].” (Sunan Ibn Majah 1921)

The great hadith master (ṣaḥīḥ) Zayn al-Dīn al-Iraqī (may Allah have mercy on him) states that this hadith’s chain of transmission (iṣnād) is weak and unreliable (daʿīf). (See: Ithāf al-Sadiqat al-Muttaqin bi Sharh Iyyâ’ Ulūm al-Dīn 6:175)

Another hadith scholar Imam Muhammad Shafi’i Uthmani states, “If one ejaculates by rubbing against the hands and other parts of the wife due to need, then this is permitted without even being disliked. Cases of need include the wife being on menstruation or postnatal bleeding and the husband has a need to fulfill his sexual desire. If this is done without need, then it is [still permitted but] slightly disliked.” (Istidâl al-Mufta 2:585)

This returns us to the principle that the union of marriage allows each spouse to derive pleasure from the other. As such, it is permitted for either spouse to rub their private parts against the body of the other to reach an orgasm. However, it is superior to avoid this if there is no need for it. One must also remember that the means of stimulation must be one’s spouse’s body, and not self-stimulation, otherwise it will be considered unlawful masturbation.

OTHER CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF FOREPLAY

We have discussed the general Islamic guidelines concerning foreplay. However, there are new methods of foreplay and sexual stimulation, and it is important to understand the Islamic viewpoint concerning them.

1) Using Sex Aids and Toys
A sex aid is an object used to trigger or enhance sexual arousal or orgasm that a couple can use in masturbation or other sexual activity.
Some of the most common are dildos, vibrators, clitoral stimulators, extension condoms, vaginal balls and various creams and lotions.

Among Muslim couples, the use of sex aids is an increasingly common method of enhancing sexual performance, but Islamically, certain things need to be considered.

a) The Shari'a does not permit one to harm oneself. As such, if a sex aid harms either of the two spouses, it is not permitted to use it. It is necessary that the aid not cause any harm whatsoever to either spouse.

b) Certain aids are figures in the form of animate life. Such aids are not permitted to use, as picture-making (taswīr) is unlawful.

c) Using lubricants, lotions, gels and creams is permitted, without dislike, provided they cause no harm.

d) Using an aid such as a vibrator to stimulate any part of the body except the private parts, or to stimulate the outer private parts of the wife, including her clitoris, is also permitted. The proviso here is that it must be used by one’s spouse and not by the person themselves. To use such aids alone as a means of alleviating one’s loneliness is sinful, and would be considered a form of masturbation. As such, if it is feared that using aids with one’s spouse would lead one into using them when alone, then they must be avoided.

e) Inserting a vibrator or a dildo into the inner-private parts of the wife for her to have an orgasm is not permitted, even if the husband uses it on her. Likewise, it is not permitted for the husband to use aids such as masturbators and realistic vaginas to ejaculate, even if he is accompanied by his wife. The Shari'a allows the couple to derive benefit from any part of each other’s bodies, as explained earlier, but does not permit them to masturbate in front of each other using another object. It is akin to a woman holding an object for her husband to masturbate with until he ejaculates. Clearly, this is not permitted.

Using sex aids can have adverse effects on the relationship. The man can become lazy, it may prevent husband-wife bonding that natural sexual relations provide, and it can cause the wife to consider her husband incapable of satisfying her naturally and lose respect for him. As such, it is best to avoid using sex aids altogether, whether the intention is to spice up one’s relations or even to use it as a last resort.

2) Bondage and Flogging
Bondage is a sexual practice in which “pleasure” is gained by means of one partner being physically restrained or tied up. It can be a way of defining active and passive sexual roles. Restraints used include handcuffs, ropes, shackles, belts, chains, blindfolds and collars. Flogging is the act of whipping, spanking and generally inflicting pain on one’s partner for sexual arousal.

Islamically, these acts are to be avoided as they go against sound human disposition (fitra). Islam instructs the husband to be extremely gentle and tender towards his wife, let alone inflict pain on her. The Mercy to both worlds forbade men from being cruel to their wives and hurting them saying, "One of you beats his wife as he would beat a slave, and then he may have sex with her in the evening!" (Sahih al-Bukhari 4658 and Sahih Muslim 2855).

Moreover, the basis of marital relations is that they are to be lived “in a good way” (bi‘īma rāfī), as Allah Most High tells us in the Qur’an. Each spouse strives to give the other their rights – including the fulfillment of their sexual needs – but within the boundaries of what can be considered to be “in a good way”.

3) Showering with One’s Spouse
It is permitted for a husband and wife to bathe and have a shower together as part of their intimacy and foreplay, because the spouses are allowed to look at each other’s naked bodies, as discussed earlier.

It is established that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ bathed with his wives. Sayyida ‘A‘ishah ﷺ relates:

“كَانَ أَخْلَصَنَا اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمُ عَنْهُمَا وَخُفِّفَ مِنْهُمَا وَحَدَّى عِنْدَهُمَا مَنْ بَلَغَ مِنْهُمَا، فِي طِرْقِهِمَا، فَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمُ عَلَيْهِ مُسَلِّمًا، وَأَتَتْ مَنْ بَلَغَ مِنْهُمَا مُسَلِّمًا."

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ and I used to take a bath from a single pot of water, and our hands used to go in the pot after each other in turn." (Sahih al-Bukhari 258)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is also reported to have bathed with Maymūna and Umā Salama. Imam Taḥāwī (of the Hanafi School), Imam Qurṭubi (of the Mālikī School) and Imam Nawawī (of the Shāfi‘i School) all relate the agreement of the scholars on the permissibility of a man bathing together with his wife from a single pot. (Al-Tāhil al-Munawwar ‘alā Muwatta’ Muhammad 1:142-244)

4) Sexually Provocative Dancing
As a general rule, dancing, sexually provocative or otherwise, is unlawful and sinful if accompanied by music. Listening to mainstream music is
decisively prohibited according to all four Sunni schools of Islamic law, and results in many personal and societal ills.

Musical instruments designed exclusively for entertainment and dancing, and which are capable of captivating the listener, even when unaccompanied by the human voice, such as the drum, violin, guitar, fiddle, flute, lute, mandolin, harmonium and piano, are all prohibited to use and listen to. The only exception is the daff, a plain tambourine without jingles attached to it. This has generally been unanimously agreed upon since the era of the Companions (saḥāba), their followers (talī’u, jurists (fiqhā) and scholars. (Badā’i al-Sanā‘i 6:269, Muğnir al-Muḥtāj 4:429 and Al-Mughni 12:39)

Sayyiduna Abu Malik al-Ash‘ari relates that he heard the Messenger of Allah say:

ّيَكُونُ مِنْ أَيْنَ أَقُومُ بِسُحْبَانِ الحَرْثِ وَالْحَمْرِ وَالْفَضْرِ...” (Sahih al-Bukhari 5268)

“There will appear people in my Ummah, who will hold fornication, silk, alcohol and musical instruments to be lawful...” (Sahih al-Bukhari 5268)

There are numerous hadiths about the prohibition of music. Ibn Hajar al-Haytamī, the Imam of the Shafi’i school (may Allah have mercy on him), gathered all these hadiths, approximately forty, in his excellent work Kaff al-Rā‘ a’ an Muharramāt al-Labah wa‘l-Sana‘a’; and then said, “All of this is explicit and compelling textual evidence that musical instruments of all types are unlawful,” (2:270)

As such, it is sinful for a wife to dance in any way to “music”, since listening to music is prohibited. This prohibition remains, even if she is dancing for her husband’s pleasure in the privacy of their own room.

As for dancing in front of one’s spouse in private without music, this is allowed provided it is innocent and decent dancing (even if sensual or provocative), and not associated with the corrupt and immoral such as lap-dancing, pole-dancing and belly-dancing. A believer must avoid acts that are distinguishable those of the corrupt, immoral and shameless. (See: Muğnir al-Muḥtāj 4:573, Radd al-Muhtār 4:259-260 and Al-Fitanwa al-Hadiththaya P. 298)

The ruling on the husband and wife dancing together is the same, in that if it is accompanied by music, it is unlawful, and permitted without music, provided one avoids imitating the lewdness of those corrupt and immoral.

5) Watching Pornography

Is it permitted for a couple to watch pornographic material to stimulate sexual arousal before sex? The answer to this question is an absolute and emphatic “no”.

Pornography, whether in the form of motion picture films, movies, novels, plays, pictures or photographs, is without doubt unlawful, shameful and sinful. Islam clearly forbids looking at nudity or watching others have sex. Allah Most High says:

قل لِلْخَوْزَةِ بِغَضِبٍ مِّنْ أَصَابِرِهِمْ وَيَهْدُونَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَرْزُقُكُمْ لِيَبْصِرُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيْنَا وَيَصْنَعُونَ وَقْلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِغَضِبٍ مِّنْ أَصَابِرِهِمْ وَيَهْدُونَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَرْزُقُكُمْ لِيَبْصِرُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيْنَا (Qur’an 24:90-91)

“Say to the believing men that they must lower their gazes and guard their private parts; it is more decent for them. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what they do. And say to the believing women that they must lower their gazes and guard their private parts [...]” (Qur’an 24:90-91)

In these verses, both men and women are ordered to lower their gazes to avoid seeing the nakedness of others. Even if one’s gaze were to fall unintentionally on the nakedness of another, one would be required to look away instantaneously. Sayyiduna Jarîr ibn ‘Abdullâh relates:

سَأَتَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِيمُ عَنْ تَفْجِيْرِ التَّفَجِيْرِ فَأَمَرَبَثَ أَصْرَعَ بِضَيْرٍ (Sunan Abi Dawâd 2596 & Sunan al-Tirmidhi 2776, the wording of al-Tirmidhi)

“I asked the Messenger of Allah about an accidental glance, and he commanded me to avert my gaze.” (Saḥih Muslim 2159)

Imam Nawawi, in his commentary of the above hadith says, “The meaning of an “accidental glance” is that a person’s glance unintentionally falls upon a non-mahram woman. There is no sin on him for the first glance, but he must avert his gaze immediately. If he averts his gaze immediately, then there is no sin on him, but if he continues looking, he will be sinful due to this hadith, since the Messenger of Allah commanded the Companion to avert his gaze, and Allah Most High says, “Say to the believing men that they must lower their gazes and guard their private parts.” (Al-Munawwir Sharh Sahih Muslim P. 1618)

Moreover, Sayyiduna Abu Sa‘îd al-Khudrî relates that the Messenger of Allah said:
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“A man must not look at the nakedness of another man, and a woman must not look at the nakedness of another woman…”

(Sunan al-Tirmidhi 2793)

Jarhad al-Aslami relates that the Messenger of Allah passed by him whilst his thigh was exposed. The Messenger of Allah said:

غطِّي فتحراً لها من العورة

“Cover your thigh, for the thigh is from the nakedness [which must be concealed].”

(Sunan al-Tirmidhi 2798)

Pornographic films do not help a couple’s sex life, rather, they destroy it. Pornography is a highly addictive disease that leads invariably to the vice of self-abuse and masturbation. Watching nudity makes men and women incapable of being stimulated from one another naturally. They find it difficult to be aroused by their spouses, whilst they are easily aroused by pornography. This is why pornography is the most common cause for psychological impotence in the world. Muslim couples accustomed to pornography must realize that habitually watching porn will eventually lead to problems in their sex lives. As such, they must at once stop this disgraceful, perverted and immodest habit, if they are to have a prosperous marital life.

6) Cross-Dressing and Transvestism

Cross-dressing basically means dressing in the clothing, under-clothing and sometimes make-up associated with the opposite sex. If cross-dressing is for sexual reasons, it is called “transvestism”. A transvestite derives sexual pleasure from dressing or masquerading in the clothing of the opposite sex. In most cases, the motivation behind transvestism is a form of fetishistic attraction to the clothing and accoutrements of the opposite sex, but it may also have to do with an attraction to the gender role of the opposite sex, symbolised by their clothes. As such, a husband who wears his wife’s clothes or underwear, or a wife who dresses up in her husband’s clothing or underwear is known as a transvestite.

There is no place for cross-dressing or transvestism in Islam. Playing the role, assuming the character-traits, and wearing the clothes of the opposite gender is severely frowned upon and cursed.

FOREPLAY

Sayyiduna ’Abdullah ibn Abbás relates:

غنِّي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم المتعتة من الرجال بالنساء، والمتعتة من النساء بال رجال

“The Messenger of Allah cursed those men who imitate women and those women who imitate men.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 5546)

‘Abdullah ibn Abbás also relates:

غنِّي النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم المتعتة من الرجال بالنساء، والمتعتة من النساء بالرجال.

“The Messenger of Allah cursed effeminate men and masculine women, and said, “Throw them out of your houses.” He [Ibn Abbás] said, “The Messenger of Allah expelled so and so, and Umar expelled so and so.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 5547)

Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra relates:

غنِّي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم المتعتة من الرجال بالنساء، والمتعتة من النساء بالرجال.

“The Messenger of Allah cursed the man who wears women’s clothes, and the woman who wears men’s clothes.” (Sunan Abū Dawūd 4095)

Imam Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani states in his commentary of Sahih al-Bukhari that it is unlawful for men to imitate women in their dress, adornment, manner of speech and body movements, and vice versa. As far as dress is concerned, he states, this depends on the customs of one’s city. Some cultures may not distinguish between men and women’s clothing but rather women are distinguished with their hijab and outer cloak [as such, wearing such unisex clothing would be permitted]. As far as the manner of speech and body movements are concerned, only someone who does this deliberately is to be blamed, whilst someone who was created in such a manner is not to be blamed, but he is expected to gradually change his behaviour. If he fails to try and change himself, then he is to be blamed, especially if he is content with such behaviour. Yes, despite trying, if he is unable to change himself, then he is not to be blamed. (Fathi al-Bari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari 10:409)
It is clear from the above that it is sinful to intentionally dress like the opposite gender or to assume the character traits of the opposite gender. The evil of such behavior affects both the individual and society at large, and is a rebellion against the natural ordering of things. There are men and there are women, and each gender has its distinctive characteristics. If men become effeminate and women masculinized, the natural order is reversed and will disintegrate.

Therefore, during sexual relations and foreplay, it is sinful for a husband to act the role of the wife by dressing in her clothes or underwear, and vice versa. The man should be a man and play the role of a man, and the woman must remain a woman and play her own role. Reversing the roles during sexual foreplay is not only sinful and degrading, but it will have a direct influence on the couple’s relationship outside of the bedroom.

7) Urolagnia
Urolagnia is an abnormal sexual fetish in which participants derive sexual pleasure from urine and urination. It is a “sexual” act, used as a means of foreplay, which involves one partner urinating “golden shower” over the other partner. Some even go to the extent of drinking their partner’s urine!

A sound, normal human being cannot even imagine anyone deriving pleasure from urine and filth. It is a sick and perverted fetish that can never be allowed in Islam. The basis of Islam is cleanliness and purity (tahara). The collections of hadith and books of fiqh are filled with pages dedicated to the rules of avoiding filth. Tahara is the first issue that is addressed in almost every hadith and fiqh work. Purity is half of one’s faith and the key to prayer. A believer must remain pure and love pure things, and avoid and dislike impure and filthy.

As such, urinating over one’s spouse as part of sexual foreplay is, without doubt, impermissible and sinful. Not avoiding splashes of urine is a cause of punishment in the grave.

Sayyiduna Abdullah ibn Abbas ﷺ relates:

“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ once passed by two graves and said, “They [in the grave] are being punished not for a great thing to avoid” Then he added, “Yes, [they are being punished for a great sin], for one of them used to go about with calumnies, while the other never saved himself from the splashes of urine.” Ibn Abbas says, “Then he took a wet green leaf and split it into two pieces, then placed one piece on each of the two graves and said, “Their punishment may decrease until these two pieces become dry.” (Saheeh al-Bukhâri 1312)

Sayyiduna Abu Hurayra ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,

“Avoid [the splashes of] urine, for indeed the punishment of the grave is generally due to it.” (Suurah al-Dareeqaah 1:128)

According to the jurists of the various schools of Islamic law, it is obligatory to avoid filth except when there is a need, such as cleaning the filth after relieving oneself. This is even more important in the case of urine, since it is decisively filthy and impure. One must avoid smearing oneself with filth in general and with urine in particular. (Hanafi: Tahir al-Masâq al-Falaq P. 132, Al-Falâq âl-Falâq P. 143, and Al-Falâq âl-Darâq P. 126, Al-Shâfi’i: Al-Mugni al-‘Asha’irah P. 115, and Al-Haâshiyah P. 120, and Al-Mugni al-Mugni P. 116)
ACTUAL PLAY

Once a couple spend sufficient time in foreplay and feel they are ready, they may engage in actual sex and penetration. There are many rules and etiquettes that need to be understood in this regard.

1) Privacy
   a) It is of extreme importance that the spouses are alone when engaging in sexual relations. This is necessary not only during actual intercourse but even during foreplay. The couple must take measures to ensure that they are away from the gazes of others, including small children. Ibn al-Hajj al-Maliki mentions in his Al-Madhkhat that Abdullah ibn Umar would even eject a small breast-feeding child from his room when intending to have sex with his wife. Some scholars state that it is disliked to have even a cat in the room when intending to engage in sexual relations. (Uṣul al-Ma’āshara al-Zawajiyah P: 67)

   In this regard, care must be taken to close and lock the doors, so that no one is able to enter upon the couple, even by mistake. The windows should be shut with the curtains drawn properly, so that neighbours are unable to see in, even if inadvertently. This is more important in a multi-storey apartment complex or on a densely populated street. Couples failing to give due importance to this will give others an opportunity to see them engaging in sexual relations. This is a shameful and sinful act that can never be allowed, as concealing one’s nakedness in front of others, especially when having sex, is an important obligation of Shari'a.

   It is clear that there is no place for exhibitionism or voyeurism in Islam. Some people derive pleasure from displaying their bodies or their sexual acts in front of others. Islam completely rejects and condemns such perverted practices of sexual gratification. As such, it is absolutely unlawful and sinful to have sex in public places where there is a possibility of being seen, such as in gardens, public parks, cars, beaches and patios or balconies outside of apartment buildings. Sex in public is also against the law in most countries, so not only would one be breaking the law of Allah, but also the law of one’s country and presenting oneself to disgrace and possible arrest for indecent exposure.

   b) The couple have to be careful to conceal their act of sex so that others do not hear it. Imam Ghazali records a hadith in his Ihyā’ Ulum ad- Din: “The Messenger of Allah would cover his head, lower his voice and say to his wife, “Remain calm.” Hafiz Zayn al-Din al-Iraqi states that this hadith is reported by Khatib al-Baghdadi from Umm Salama with a weak chain of transmission. (See: Ithbaf al-Salat al-Muhtaj in Sharh Ihyā’ Ulum ad-Din 6:74)

   As such, both the husband and wife must avoid making any noise during sex that may be heard by others. It is part of the etiquettes of sexual relations that the couple abstain from talking excessively and making loud noises. This becomes even more important when there may be others, such as parents, in the next room. Some couples do not care if their family members or neighbours hear them having sex. Not only is this sinful, but it also shows a lack of dignity. Couples who, despite trying, are unable to control the noises they make during sex, should avoid making love when others are close by. They should take means of going to a place where no one is able to hear them. The jurists state that it is unlawful to have sex even in the presence of a blind person, as he is able to hear them having sex. (See: Radī al-Muhtār 3:208 and Al-Mugnu’t 8:153)

   c) It is unlawful for a man who has two wives to have sex with both of them simultaneously as a threesome, or to have sex with one wife in the presence of the other, even if they both give their consent to it. This is due to two reasons:

   Firstly, it is impermissible for a woman to look at the awra of another woman even if she is her co-wife. The awra of a woman in front of other Muslim women is from her navel up to and including her knees. (Al-Hidaiq 4:461) The Messenger of Allah said in a hadith quoted earlier, “…and a woman should not look at the nakedness (awra) of another woman” (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 2793), without distinguishing between a co-wife and another woman.

   Secondly, sexual relations are to be kept private between the two people involved. Islam prohibits the husband and wife from discussing
the details of their sexual behaviour with others. A hadith in this regard was quoted earlier in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “The most evil of people in the sight of Allah on the Day of Judgment is the man who has sex with his wife and she has sex with him, then he reveals her secret.” (Saḥīḥ Muslim 1437) Revealing the details of one’s sexual behaviour could not be more direct than actually having sex in front of another person. As such, this practice is unlawful and sinful.

This is why it is stated in the Hanafi Fiqh reference work, Al-Fatatwa al-Hindiyah, “It is prohibitively disliked (i.e. not permitted) to have sex with one wife in the presence of the other. So much so that if the husband demands that she has sex with him [in the other’s presence], she does not have to make herself available, and by refusing she is not considered a rebellious wife.” (Al-Fatatwa al-Hindiyah 1:3141)

Imam Ibn Qudāma of the Hanbali School states in his Al-Mughni, “If the two wives agree that the husband have sex with one of them while the other watches, it is not allowed, for this act is immoral, absurd and doing away with the sense of honour (mu‘āra). As such, it is not permitted even with their consent.” (Al-Mughni 8:137. See also: Muḥtār al-Muḥtār 3:334 and Sharḥ al-Khaṭ discs al-Mukhtasar al-Kharāj 4:6)

d) As for having sex in front of small children, if the child has reached an age of discernment (tamāṣ), and so has the sense to comprehend what is taking place in front of him, even if only partially, then it is prohibitively disliked and sinful for the couple to have sex in his presence (Radd al-Muhtār 3:208).

Some Muslim couples are very careless in this regard and display their sexual acts openly in front of their young children and other family members. Islam is very clear when it comes to public display of affection. It prohibits the display of intimacy and other sexual acts such as kissing, hugging and caressing before others, including young children.

Allah Most High says:

وا أطِلَبْ أَمَا مَكْتُبْ أَنْ تَأْتِيْنَ أَهْلَكُما وَلَدْيُنَا فَلَا تَقْتَلَنَّ أَبْناَكَمْ وَلَدْيُنَا مِنَ الْخَمْسَةِ مِنْ مَنْ تَأْتَوْا مِن فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّجْرَغٍ وَجَبِيكَ ذَلِكَ نَفْرًا مِّنْ رَزْقِكَ وَلَا تَذْهَبْ مَنْ أَعْلَمَ مِنَ الْظَّفَرِ وَمَنْ بَعْدَ مَنْ ضَلَالَةُ عَمَّا ذَلَّتْ عَلَيْهِمْ

“O you who believe, the slaves owned by you, and the [children] among you who have not reached puberty, must seek permission [before they come in your presence] on three occasions: before

Fajr prayer, and when you take off your clothes at noon, and after the 'Ishā' prayer. These are your three times of privacy.” (Qur’ān 24:58)

In verse 27 of the same chapter (ṣūrā), Allah Most High laid down the rule that no person should enter the house of another without seeking permission. This verse exempts children and slaves living in the same house from this rule, and so have permission to enter the houses without specific permission. However, there are three times of privacy in which they too are required to seek permission. Imam Ibn Kathīr states, “Servants and children are commanded not to intrude upon the adults of the household at these times of privacy, for fear that the man may be having sex with his wife or involved in other acts of sexual intimacy.” (Tafsir al-Qur’ān al-Azīm 3:404)

It is worth noting here that Sharia instructs children to seek permission before entering lest they see something of that which takes place between the spouses. If this is the case, then how dishonourable would it be to do such things openly and deliberately in front of them?

Nāfīḥ relates from Sayyiduna ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar ﷺ that when his child would reach the age of discernment, he would have him removed [from his room], hence he would not be allowed to enter except with his permission.” (Al-Adab al-Mufrad of Imam Bukhārī 1058)

Mūṣa ibn Talha says, “I tried entering my mother’s room with my father. He went in and I followed him. He turned and pushed me in the chest so that I fell on my bottom. Then he said, “Are you entering without permission?” (Al-Adab al-Mufrad 1061)

Muslim parents who display sexual acts in front of their children must realise they are making a grave mistake. They are wrong in thinking that these are merely young children without the capability of understanding such matters. In fact, this has an extremely negative effect on their children’s upbringing. Children are created with this natural instinct to imitate their parents in all their affairs, so it is possible that they may try to imitate their parents, even though playfully, and do the same things with other children. The destructive consequences of this are clear.

In addition, doing such things openly is contrary to modesty and decency. Islam teaches its followers to be dignified, and prohibits them from engaging in any action that would lead to an immoral atmosphere.
The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was a practical example of modesty and bashfulness. Sayyiduna Abū Sa'īd al-Khūdri ﷺ relates:

كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يأبى حمًا من النساء في جلوسها، وكان إذا كرّم نبيًا غرمت في وجهه.

“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was more bashful than the virgin behind her curtain [or in her private quarters], and when he disliked something, we recognised it from his face.” (Saḥḥah Muslim 2320)

As such, couples must avoid having sex or displaying their intimate and sexual acts such as kissing, hugging, caressing and fondling one another in the presence of young children. If the child has reached an age of discernment, then this is sinful.

As for sexual relations in a room where a baby is sleeping, this too should be avoided wherever possible. It was mentioned earlier that the predecessors (salaf) would avoid sexual relations in a room where a small child of the age of breastfeeding, less than two years of age, or an animal was present. As such, it is somewhat disliked to engage in sexual relations in their presence, but not unlawful (haraḍ) per se.

e) Recently a question was posed to the author about the permissibility of a couple taking intimate pictures of each other or recording themselves having sex, and then looking at the photos or watching the video.

Regardless of the difference of opinion amongst contemporary scholars about the ruling on photography, and even though the position taken by many scholars is that photographs fall under the rubric of picture-making (taywūr) of living creatures and humans, which is explicitly forbidden in over 20 authenticated hadiths, taking nude pictures of one’s spouse or recording sexual relations and then looking at the images cannot be considered permissible at all.

The reason for this is clear. By taking such pornographic images, one is potentially giving others the opportunity to see one’s nakedness, and this is impermissible. The sexual images could be misplaced or lost and come into the hands of a stranger. Imagine the reaction if the images or videos found their way into the hands of the couple’s children!

Even if the images are secured and hidden, the possibility still remains that someone may see them, even if all precautions are taken.

Some unusual occurrence can transpire making it possible for a third person to get hold of the images. Preventing an evil before it actually happens is a well-established principle of Islamic jurisprudence.

In addition, such practices contradict the modesty that Islam commands. The couple are only permitted to look at each other’s naked bodies because of the need for it during sexual relations, and even then, it is superior for them to avoid doing so.

In conclusion, it is not allowed for the couple to take nude images of themselves for viewing later on. This is disregarding the fact that many scholars hold photography to be impermissible.

2) Covering up the Qur’ān
One of the etiquettes of sexual relations is to cover up or put away copies of the Qur’ān, verses of the Qur’ān hanging on the wall and other Islamic literature such as hadith collections and books consisting of invocations (dā’ā’ and aḥkār), if possible, without undue hardship. There is no sin, however, for not doing so.

Imam Haskafi states in his Al-Durr al-Mukhtār, “There is nothing wrong with having sex in a room in which there is a copy of the Qur’ān, because it is generally difficult to avoid.”

In his commentary of the above text, Ibn Abīdīn states, however, that it is superior to cover up the Qur’ān. (Radd al-Muḥtār ala‘i‘ Durr al-Mukhtār 6:423)

3) Reciting the Supplication (dā’ā’)
One of the objectives of sexual relations is to produce pious and righteous offspring. As such, it is important that the couple supplicate to Allah Most High before commencing sex, asking Him to keep Satan away from themselves and their potential offspring.

Sayyiduna ‘Abdullāh ibn Abbās ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

لا أحسَنَمَإِذَا أهَدَى أَرَادَ أَن يُبَيِّنَ لأَهْلِهِ قَالَ: بِاسْمِ اللَّهِ الْحَمَدَ لَيْلَهُ وَمَا رَحَمَهُ عَلَى مَعْمَانَاءِكَ لَكَ لَا تَوَلَّضَكَ مَعَيَ لَا تَتَرَكُّوا لَهُ مَرَاحَمَةَ أَيْما

“When approaching one’s spouse, if one says, “In the name of Allah, O Allah! Protect us from Satan and protect what you grant us [i.e. the coming offspring] from Satan” then if it is destined that they have a child from that intercourse, Satan will never be able to harm it.” (Saḥḥah al-Bukhārī 141 & Saḥḥah Muslim 1434, the wording is of Muslim)
Thus, it is recommended prior to penetration for both spouses to first pronounce the name of Allah Most High saying:

Transliteration:
Bismillāh

Translation:
In the name of Allah

Or

Transliteration:
Bismillah ar-rahmān ar-rahīm

Translation:
In the name of Allah, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.

Thereafter, recite the following supplication:

Transliteration:
Allahumma jannibnashi-shaytān, wa jannibish-shaytāna ma raqaqtana

Translation:
O Allah! Protect us from Satan and protect what you grant us from Satan.

It is important to recite the above-mentioned supplication (du‘ā), since firstly, it is from the guidance given to us by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and secondly, one’s potential offspring may not be saved from the evils of Satan if the Du‘ā is disregarded.

4) Avoiding Facing the Qibla
One of the etiquettes of sexual relations is to avoid facing the direction of the Qibla, because one’s nakedness is normally exposed in such a state. Imam Ibn ‘Abīl‘in of the Ḥanafī School, Imam Ghazzālī of the Shāfi‘ī School and Imam Ibn Qudāma of the Ḥanbali School all mention that it is somewhat disliked (makhrah tanzih) to face the Qibla whilst having sex [although not sinful].

Imam Ibn Qudāma states, “One should not face the Qibla during sex, for Amr ibn Ḥazm and Ḥāfiẓ both disliked it.” (Al-Mughnī 8:136, also see: Radd al-Muhitār 1:341 and Ithāf al-Sālihāt al-Muttaqīn bi Sharh Hiyāq [Ulūm al-Dīn 6:174])

5) Talking During Sex
Talking during foreplay is not only permitted, but rather encouraged, as outlined previously. It is recommended that both spouses exchange kind words that express their love, longing and desire for one another. There is nothing wrong even if both spouses use sexually arousing language during foreplay, provided there is nothing specifically wrong or sinful in the nature of their conversation and provided others are not able to hear them, as discussed earlier.

As for talking during actual sexual penetration, classical scholars generally state that it is disliked (makhrah) to do so excessively, because:

a) Sexual relations are based on concealment;

b) The Messenger of Allah ﷺ commanded for proper manners to be observed during sex, whilst excessive talking is contrary to proper manners, and;

c) It is similar to when one is in the toilet or bathroom where talking is Makhrah due to one’s nakedness being exposed. (See: Radd al-Muhitār 6:318 & Al-Mughnī 8:136)

Having said the above, the renowned Ḥanafī jurist of recent times in the Subcontinent, Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Shāfi‘ (may Allah have mercy on him) states that talking during sex is disliked when it is with others. As far as the couple talking with each other, there is nothing wrong with that. (Imād al-Mufīt P: 1032)

6) Sexual Positions (ways in which spouses physically position themselves for sex)
When it comes to selecting a suitable position for sex, Islam grants the couple a general permission to choose whatever position they mutually agree upon, provided it is vaginal sex and not anal sex – which is clearly forbidden, as will be discussed later. A couple may find a particular method of having sex to be more comfortable and pleasurable, whilst another couple may feel at ease with a different position altogether. As such, it is left to the couple to decide on the position most suited to them, taking into account physical comfort, satisfaction and enjoyment.

Allah Most High says:

بَنَاءُكْمُ خَرَبْنِيَّةٌ حَرَكُوا حَرَكَّمُي أَيْ بَيْنَهُمْ وَكُنَّا لَأَفْسَضِكَمْ وَأَقْفَاا لله
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"Your wives are tillage for you to cultivate. So approach your tillage from where you wish, but do some good act for yourselves beforehand; and fear Allah." (Qur'an 2:223)

In this verse, Allah Most High uses the expression *harth* which means tillage or place of cultivation. The analogy between women and tillage indicates that it is only permissible to have sex with one's wife in her vagina, since this is the only way for the seeds to be cultivated and for her to conceive. However, in order to reach that place, any position or side can be adopted, whether from the front, the back or her prostrating and facing the ground (Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim P. 108.3).

Moreover, there are many reports found in hadith literature that explain this verse, and mention its circumstance of revelation (sahih al-nuskh). Some are presented here:

Sayyiduna Jābir ibn ‘Abdillāh ∞ relates:


The Jews used to say, "If a man were to approach his wife from behind [but] in her vagina, the child [that she conceives] would be born cross-eyed, so the verse was revealed: "Your wives are tillage for you to cultivate. So approach your tillage from where you wish." (Sahih al-Bukhārī 4254; Sahih Muslim 1435 & Sunan al-Tirmidhī 2978, the wording is of Muslim)

Sayyiduna ‘Abdullāh ibn Abīs ∞ relates:


Umar ∞ came to the Messenger of Allah ∞ and said, "O Messenger of Allah! I have been doomed." He said, "What is it that has doomed you?" He said, "I changed my saddle last night [referring to having sex with his wife from behind but in the vagina]." The Messenger of Allah ∞ did not say anything until this verse was revealed unto the Messenger of Allah ∞: "Your wives are tillage for you to cultivate. So approach your tillage from where you wish." So he said, "Approach her from the front or back, but avoid the anus and [the period of] menstruation." (Sunan al-Tirmidhī 2980 and Nasā’ī in his Isbrat al-Nīsā’ 94)

Sayyiduna ‘Abdullāh ibn Abīs ∞ relates:

"Ibn ʿAbīs, ʿAbdullāh ibn Abīs ∞ related, saying: ‘When I was young, I was given the responsibility of an army. I was so thorough in my responsibilities that I learned all the secrets of women’s secrets, and I was so knowledgeable that I knew all the secrets of the secrets of women’s secrets."

"Ibn ʿAbīs, ʿAbdullāh ibn Abīs ∞ related, saying: ‘When I was young, I was given the responsibility of an army. I was so thorough in my responsibilities that I learned all the secrets of women’s secrets, and I was so knowledgeable that I knew all the secrets of the secrets of women’s secrets."

"...This clan of the Ansār, who were idolaters [before Islam], lived in the company of the Jews who were the people of the Book. They [the Ansār] accepted their [i.e. the Jews] superiority over themselves in respect to knowledge, and so followed most of their actions. The people of the Book [i.e. the Jews] used to approach their women on one side alone [i.e. lying on their backs], because this was the most concealing position for the woman. So the clan of the Ansār adopted this practice from them. This tribe of the Quraysh, [however], used to uncover their women completely, and seek pleasure with them from the front, from the back and laying them on their backs. When the Muhājirūn (the immigrants) came to Al-Madīnah, one of them married a woman of the Ansār. He wanted to do the same kind of things with her [i.e. what the Quraysh were accustomed to], but she objected and said, "We were only approached on one side [i.e. laying on the back], so do that otherwise stay away from me." This matter of theirs
spread widely, and reached the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. So Allah Most High revealed: “Your wives are tillage for you to cultivate. So approach your tillage from where you wish.” Meaning from the front, from behind or laying on the back. But this verse meant the place of the delivery of the child [i.e. the vagina].” (Sunan Abi Dawud 2157)

Umm Salama ﷺ relates from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ regarding the verse: “Your wives are tillage for you to cultivate. So approach your tillage from where you wish” that:

“It means one opening only [i.e. the vagina].” (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 2979)

The verse of the Qur’an and the explanatory hadiths clearly indicate that the couple are permitted to have sex in any position they wish, without restriction. The examples of sexual positions cited in these hadiths indicate diversity and not limitation. As such, any other position the couple choose is perfectly fine. However, the condition is that it is vaginal and not anal sex, as this is absolutely unlawful.

As far as specific positions are concerned, books written on sexual etiquettes mention the following:

a) The Man-on-top Position
The man being on top is the most common and natural sexual position. One form of this is when the wife lies on her back with her legs spread, while the husband lies flat over her in a manner that he covers her body with his. In this position, however, the husband should take care of not forcing all of his weight on his wife, since this can be uncomfortable for her. He may support some or all of his weight on his elbows, hands or knees.

Scholars state that a subtle indication of this position can be found in the Qur’an. Allah Most High says:

"أبلى الذين خلفكم من ستة واحدة وجعل منها رومها يكسرون إليها فلا تغلبوا حُملت حملًا حدية فضربتهم فلا تملكن الله إبلاً ولهما وهو يكره، فيما آتاهما صاحبًا جملًا حلا له شريكًا فيهما آتاهما ضعفًا فأطيع الله ما يشركون.

"It is He Who created you from a single soul, and out of him created his wife, in order that he may find comfort in her. So when he covers her with himself, she bears a great burden and carries it about. Thereafter, when she grows heavy, they both pray to Allah, their Lord, [saying] “If you bless us with a perfect child, we shall be grateful. But when We bless them with a perfect child, they ascribe partners to Him in what He blessed them with. Indeed Allah is much higher than what they associate with Him.” (Qur’an 7:189-190)

This verse refers to the creation of Sayyiduna Adam and Sayyida Hawa’ (peace be upon them). It also discloses the mindset of the infidels from their progeny, in that when one of them has sex with his wife by covering her completely and she conceives a child, they ask Allah to bless them with a sound and perfect child, but when the child is born, they ascribe to their invented deities. (See: The Meanings of the Noble Qur’an 1:315)

The expression in the verse “When he covers her with himself” indicates the position of the husband lying over his wife, covering her completely with his body.

In a similar position, the wife lies on her back with her legs drawn up toward her chest and her knees raised high, while the husband enters her in almost a sitting or squatting posture.

This position has been implicitly mentioned in the following hadith: Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إذا جلس بين مسجحها الأبج وهو جعلها قد رى وجب عليه الفصل

“When a man sits amidst her [i.e. the wife] four parts and then exerts pressure on her, a ritual bath (ghsal) becomes obligatory upon him.” (Sahih Muslim 3:48)

Imam Nawawi states, “The scholars have disagreed about the intended meaning of the “four parts (shu'ab al-arbat’).” Some said that it means the arms and the legs, while others have said that it refers to the legs and thighs, and others said it means the legs and the edge of the pubic area. Qadi Iyad chose the meaning of the four areas surrounding the vagina […].” (Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim P. 400)

As such, one of the interpretations of the “four parts” is the woman’s legs and thighs. This seems to refer to the position in which the wife, while on her back, folds her knees and the husband enters her in almost a sitting posture, so that her thighs and calves form the “four parts”.

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There are many other forms of the man-on-top position, mostly with minor differences. Scholars and experts alike mention that the man-on-top position is the most effective in terms of the wife conceiving. It also allows a great deal of body contact, and the spouses are able to kiss and embrace each other at the same time. (Al-Tibb al-Nabawi P: 182)

b) The Rear-entry Position
This is when the husband enters the wife when she has her back to him. This position was explicitly allowed in some of the hadiths cited earlier. In one narration the expression used to describe the wife is “mujabat” which basically means she is facing down in a posture of prostration. The wife may also get on her hands and knees whilst her husband kneels behind her. There is no doubt in the permissibility of this position.

It should be remembered, however, that the rear-entry position is not anal sex, as discussed earlier. In the rear-entry position the husband enters the vagina when the wife has her back to him, whilst in anal sex the husband enters her anus, which is completely forbidden in Islam.

c) The Side-by-side Position
In this position, the spouses lie on their sides facing each other, or they lie on their sides and the husband enters the vagina from behind. This position is also unquestionably permitted, and convenient during later stages of pregnancy to accommodate the woman's belly.

d) The Standing Position
The great jurist (faqih) of recent times in the Indian Subcontinent, Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanawi, in response to a question about the permissibility of showering while standing up, states that the Qur'anic exeges have generalised the implication of the Qur'anic verse “So approach your tillage from where you wish” to include the sitting and standing positions. So to take a shower standing up is even more worthy of being permitted, for it is lighter than having sex. [In other words, when sex with one's spouse is permitted in a standing position, then taking a shower in such a state would without doubt be permitted]. (Indeed al-Fatwaan 1:18)

It is permitted to have sex in a standing position, whether both spouses stand or just one of them. Both spouses may face each other or the wife can have her back towards her husband with him entering from behind into the vagina.

Having said that, both scholars and experts caution against having sex regularly in a standing position, as it may be harmful medically. Although there is not enough medical evidence to prove this, but theoretically, there is a risk of increased back pain, sciatica, vaginal and rectal prolapse. This is only from a medical point of view. As far as the Islamic ruling is concerned, the standing position is permitted, as stated earlier.

c) The Sitting Position
Engaging in sexual relations with one's spouse in a sitting position is also perfectly allowed in light of the Qur'anic verse: “So approach your tillage from where you wish.”

f) The Woman-on-top Position
Islamically, the sexual position where the wife is on top of her husband is also permitted due to the general purport of the Qur'anic verse quoted more than once in this book. This includes the husband lying on his back whilst the wife sits on top of him or she lies with her whole body over his.

However, scholars and experts state that the woman-on-top position is unhealthy and harmful. Imam Ibn al-Qayyim explains in his Al-Tibb al-Nabawi that when the wife is on top, the husband's sperm can be impeded from fully exiting, which may harm him. It is also possible for the wife's fluids to enter the husband's sexual organ resulting in him being infected with illnesses. (Al-Tibb al-Nabawi P: 183)

Once again, this is all from a medical point of view, and medical opinions can change over time. As such, it would be worthwhile for couples intending to have sex in such positions to take sound medical advice and act accordingly.

Finally, there is nothing wrong with the couple changing their positions, even if many times, during one sexual encounter. Furthermore, diversity and versatility in sexual positions does not contradict religious propriety, decorum and decency. It is wrong to assume that such behaviour is a sign of lack of modesty, for Allah Most High Himself has permitted legally married couples to engage in various sexual positions without restriction. As such, couples need not feel guilty or uneasy in this regard.

7) Fantasising
Fantasising of another person in a sexual way during sexual relations with one's own spouse is unlawful (harâm) and sinful. It is a form of fornication (zina') of the heart and mind to deliberately fantasise about sexual relationships with other than one's spouse. Allah Most High says:

As far as role-playing is concerned, during which a couple act out a fantasy involving dressing up as specific characters, a teacher, pupil, doctor, nurse, patient, boss and secretary, and so on, if this is done with someone specific in mind, then it is unquestionably unlawful as stated earlier. If a fantasy role is acted out without someone specific in mind, then this too is not permitted, for one will be fantasising about having sex with a stranger who is a doctor or a nurse. If the thought is that one’s spouse has taken the role of that character, such as pretending that one’s husband is a doctor, then this is also best avoided although not completely unlawful, since it could easily lead into thinking that one’s spouse is someone else, resulting in fornication of the heart and mind. Couples should be happy and content with their partners for who they are and what they are. Dressing up to become someone they are not can be a very dangerous game and is ultimately detrimental to the marital relationship.

8) Orgasm and Sexual Climax
Among the obligatory rights of marriage is that each spouse’s sexual needs are fulfilled through the other. In this regard, it is of utmost importance that the husband discharged this right of his wife when having sex with her, and only fulfils himself after she has achieved fulfilment, given that women generally take longer reaching an orgasm.

The husband should hold back from ejaculating until his wife is fully satisfied and achieves sexual fulfilment. If he achieves climax before her, he should not withdraw until she has an orgasm and achieves sexual climax. This is absolutely essential for the well-being of one’s marriage, and failing to give this due importance can result in the wife becoming frustrated and in having animosity in her heart for her husband. It can lead to disputes and argumentation between the spouses and, in some cases, even to divorce. A husband who is solely concerned about his own satisfaction is selfish and must change his ways and give consideration to his wife’s needs.

Imam Ibn Qudama states: “It is recommended (mustahab) for the husband to engage in foreplay with his wife before actual sex in order that her sexual desire is aroused so that she experiences the same pleasure from sex that he experiences [...] If he was to climax before her, then it is disliked (makrūh) for him to withdraw before she achieves sexual climax, because of what Anas ibn Mālik related that
the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “When a man has sex with his wife, he should strive to satisfy her. Then when he fulfills his need, he should not hurry [in withdrawing] until she fulfills her need.” [Recorded by Abū Ya’la al-Mawsili in his Musnad 4201] And also because in it [withdrawing prematurely], there is harm upon her and preventing her from fulfilling her sexual need.” (Al-Mughni 8:196)

Imam Ghazâlî in his Ihya’ Ulum al-Din and the commentator of his Ihya’, Allâma Murtada’ al-Zabidi in his commentary Ihaf al-Sâdât al-Muttaqîn both explain that after achieving sexual climax, the husband should wait for his wife to also achieve climax, since sometimes she may be delayed in having an orgasm. For the husband to withdraw from her in such a state will harm her and may be a cause for her to hate him. Of course, if he knows that she has had an orgasm, then there is no need for him to wait.

They further state that the husband achieving sexual climax before the wife causes hatred and dislike in her heart, and that climaxing together is the most pleasurable and satisfying for her, because in this way she will not be shy from having an orgasm, since her husband is also occupied with his own sexual climax. However, climaxing together is rare. It is not problematic for the wife to reach orgasm before her husband, as the most that will occur in this situation is that she will be fatigued and feel the weight of her husband over her, but it will be easy for her to exercise patience (sabr) with this, contrary to when the husband withdraws before she has an orgasm, as this is detrimental and harmful for her. (See: Ihaf al-Sâdât al-Muttaqîn bi Sharh Ihya’ Ulum al-Din 6:176)

In light of this, it can be said that it is best for the spouses to try and achieve sexual climax together, as that is most satisfying for both. If this is not possible, then the husband should wait and allow his wife to have an orgasm before he ejaculates himself. He should try his best to avoid ejaculating before she has an orgasm, and if he was to ejaculate before her due to not being able to control himself, then he should not withdraw until she achieves sexual satisfaction.

A problem faced by some men is premature ejaculation which is to climax too early. Some husbands ejaculate as soon as they enter their wives, and some even before that, during foreplay. This can be troublesome and problematic for both spouses, since they would love to prolong their session of intimacy before achieving climax.

In order to delay his ejaculation, the husband should do the following:

- Avoid having his sexual organ stroked or caressed during foreplay. The less contact made between his sexual organ and the wife’s body, the easier it will be for him to control himself.
- When having sex, divert his attention to something else, so that it helps him control himself.
- Both spouses should avoid excessive movement during the actual act of sex, because excessive movement will result in him ejaculating early. (See: Usul al-Mu’assara al-Zawiyya P: 71-72)
- ‘Allâma Murtada’ al-Zabidi states in his commentary of the Ihya’ that the most beneficial remedy for someone affected by premature ejaculation is to avoid having sex before foreplay. He should sexually arouse his wife by playing around with her, kissing her, stroking her breasts, embracing her and the like. Then, when he sees that her colour has changed and her eyes have become red [out of desire for him], and he feels that she is ready, prepared, and desirous of him, only then should he initiate sexual intercourse. (See: Ihaf al-Sâdât al-Muttaqîn bi Sharh Ihya’ Ulum al-Din 6:176)
- Du’a when Ejaculating

It is recommended for both spouses to recite the following supplication (du’a) in their hearts at the time of ejaculation, as was the practice of Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah ibn Mas’ud ﷺ:

اللَّهِ أَنْ لَّا تَجَّلَّ لِلنَّاسِ دَاءَ الشَّيْءِ مَا زَادَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ نَبِيٍّ

Transliteration:
Allahumma la ta’j al-li ash-shayti fi-nna ra’aza-ndan nashhan
Translation:
O Allah! Do not grant the Satan a share in what [children] You bless us with. (Related by Imam Ibn Abi Shayba in his Al-Musannaf fi ’Alahadîth wa ’Lâkhrît 3:402)

Shaykh Muftü Taqi Uthmâni states in his book Radiant Prayers after recording this supplication: “From these two prayers [i.e. the supplication before commencing sex and the supplication at the time of ejaculating], it can be deduced that exactly at the time when one is busy gratifying one’s carnal desires and engaged in an act even the mention of which is considered a matter of shame, one has been taught to keep one’s relationship with Allah Most High foremost in the mind, and not to hesitate supplicating before Him. Thus, what was a sensual act has been turned into an act of worship.” (Radiant Prayers P: 65)
"Other Forms of Sex"

In the last few pages, matters relating to actual play have been discussed in considerable detail, from privacy up to ejaculation. There now remains certain other forms of sex, so it is important to understand the Islamic viewpoint on them.

1) Anal Sex

It was discussed earlier in the section on sexual positions that it is permitted for the couple to choose any position they like for sex, but subject to one condition, that it must be vaginal sex.

As far as anal sex is concerned, it is categorically forbidden in Islam and is a major sin by consensus because of the explicit texts clearly establishing this. There are also grave spiritual and established physical and psychological harms in anal sex. It is an unnatural and repulsive act that simply has no place in a Muslim’s sex life. It is a practice of those whose nature has been distorted to prefer that which is filthy to that which is pure. Not only is anal sex sinful and harmful, it also violates the right of the wife, who is entitled to having offspring through vaginal sex with her spouse.

Allah Most High says:

"وَمَا لَكُمْ فِي الْمَخْضُوقِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَسْجَلُوا السَّنَاءَ فِي الْمَخْضُوقِ وَلَا تَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَطَهُّرنَكُمْ إِنْ كَرَمَ اللَّهُ الرَّحْمَنَ يُحَبِّبَ الْمَخْضُوقَ بِالْبَيْنَةَ وَيُحَبِّبَ الْمَخْضُوقَ بِالْمَطَابِعَ بَشَرِّيْنَكُمْ حَرَضْتُمْ فَأَخْرَجْتُ أَيْنَ أَنْتُمْ وَقَدْ عَلَمْتُنَا أَنْكُمْ مُّطَإْفِئُونَ وَبِشَرِّيْنَ" (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 1165)

Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah ibn Abbas  relates that the Messenger of Allah  said:

"لا ينظر الله إلى رجلٍ يدخل أو تمزق في التنور"

"Allah shall not [even] look [with kindness] at any man who enters another man or a woman in the anus." (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 1165)

Sayyiduna Abu Hurayra  relates that the Messenger of Allah  said:

"مُطَأْفِئٌ مَنْ أَيْنَ اً لِلْمَرَأَةِ فِي الدَّوْرَ" (Sunan Abi Dawud 2155 and others)
The meaning of “being cursed (mad ṭūn)” is that one is distant from Divine Mercy, and an object of Divine Dislike. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ cursed certain matters so that we take heed and avoid them.

Suyūdina Khuzayma ibn Thābit ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لاَ يَسْتَحِي بِنَى الْحَيْبَةِ ۖ كَلِثْرَ مَرَّاتٍ ۚ لَا تَأْتُوا النَّاسَ فِي أَبْدَارٍ

“Allah is not ashamed of the truth [saying this thrice]. Do not enter women in their amuses.” (Sunan Ibn Majah 1924, Musnad Ahmad & others)

Suyūdina Ábu Ḥurayra ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

لَا يَتَّبَعُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ زَاحِلَ جَامِعَ النَّارِ فِي دُرُّهَا

“Allah shall not look [with kindness] at a man who enters his wife in the anus.” (Sunan Ibn Majah 1923, Musnad Ahmad and others)

These, and many other, evidences are clear in the prohibition of anal sex even with one’s own wife. This is in addition to the fact that anal sex causes undue pain and is a source of many diseases widespread in today’s promiscuous society.

As such, it is unlawful and sinful for the husband to penetrate in his wife’s anus. However, it is permitted for him, under normal circumstances, to touch the surrounding and outside area of the anus, even by rubbing his penis in between her buttocks or groin, as long as there is no penetration and as long as that area is not soiled with filth. The husband is permitted to touch and caress any part of his wife’s body which includes the area outside of the anus. This, however, is only permitted if he is certain of avoiding penetration, otherwise abstaining from that area altogether is necessary. (See: Musnad al-Muhaddithin 3181, Ḥashiyah al-Daraj al-falah li-Shah al-Kubei 2:342 and Usūl al-Ma’ārjara al-Zawiyya P: 82)

2) Oral Sex

The spread of pornography has increased the prevalence of oral sex, and it is now commonly practiced by many couples. Muslims are frequently asking about the Islamic viewpoint on oral sex. Unfortunately, some people shy away from discussing this matter altogether, while others regard any discussion of it to be offensive. Both these approaches are incorrect. In order to ensure that one’s sex life is in harmony with Islamic teachings, it is important to discuss the Islamic perspective on oral sex in detail.

Oral sex is the use of the mouth or the tongue to stimulate another person’s genitals. Oral stimulation of the male organ is called fellatio, whilst oral stimulation of the female genitalia is known as cunnilingus. The term oral sex covers a wide range of activities, from simply kissing the genitalia to the actual taking in and swallowing of sexual fluids. As such, the Islamic ruling will depend on what exactly is entailed by this term.

a) If oral sex entails inserting the penis into the wife’s mouth to the extent that she swallows or takes impure or filthy substances such as semen (mazm) or pre-ejaculatory fluid (mardhī) into the mouth, or the husband placing his mouth onto the wife’s vagina to the point that he takes her discharge in his mouth, then this is sinful. If there is fear of this, and this fear is at the level of likelihood, then it is also impermissible.

It is unlawful to intentionally swallow filthy and impure substances or to introduce them into the mouth. This includes all male and female genital excretions and sexual fluids such as urine, pre-ejaculatory fluid, semen and swady, a thick white, cloudy, fluid that exits either before or after urinating. Even though semen is not considered impure according to some scholars, for example the Shāfi‘, contrary to the Hanāfīs, they nevertheless hold its oral intake to be prohibited. As such, swallowing or consuming all forms of sexual fluids of the wife or husband is forbidden.

Imam Nawawī of the Shafi‘ school states in his Al-Majma‘: “The correct well-known opinion is that it is forbidden to consume semen because it is filthy (mustakhbath), [even though not impure]. Allah Most High says: “...And He (Allah Most High) makes unlawful for them filthy things (khabīth) [Qur’an 7:157].” (Al-Majma‘ Sharh Al-Muhadithin 2:397)

b) If oral sex is practiced and all precautions are taken to prevent sexual fluids from entering the mouth, for example if the couple are only gently kissing each other’s genitalia without any fear or likelihood of consuming sexual fluids, then it is permitted, although disliked and improper. It may be considered as a form of foreplay, similar to kissing other parts of the body and so permitted, but disliked, as placing one’s mouth on one’s spouse’s genitalia is against religious propriety.
The famous Hanafi Fiqh reference work, Al-Fatawa al-Hindiyya, states: “If a man inserts his penis into his wife’s mouth, it has been said that it is disliked (nahra), and others hold that it is not disliked.” (Al-Fatawa al-Hindiyya 5:372)

This clear passage in one of the major Hanafi Fiqh reference works indicates that there is a scholarly difference about the permissibility of a man inserting his penis into his wife’s mouth. According to some scholars it is disliked, whilst others permit it. It should be remembered that both, those who allow it and those who consider it disliked, stipulate that no sexual fluids enter the spouse’s mouth as mentioned earlier. Normally, this is difficult to avoid. Because of this, and because it is generally considered contrary to the proper conduct of a Muslim, most contemporary scholars hold this practice to be disliked, even if the transfer of sexual fluids is avoided.

The mouth is a noble part of one’s body and is the means of reciting the Qur’an, remembrance of Allah (dhikr) and sending salutations on the blessed Messenger of Allah (salatul). It follows, then, that it is offensive to use it to stimulate the spouse’s genitalia, and unlawful if filth enters the mouth.

Finally, if one’s spouse demands oral sex, it is not obligatory to consent to it, even if precautions are taken to avoid sexual fluids coming into contact with the mouth. The wife is only obliged to make herself available for sex, whilst the husband is required to have sex with her enough to maintain her chastity.

3) Phone Sex with One’s Spouse
Phone sex consists of sexual conversations between two people over the telephone, with the objective of arousing each other. The point of phone sex is to help the partner in achieving an orgasm through masturbation. “Phone sex” is frequently put in quotation marks because sex is usually associated with at least touching each other.

As for the Islamic ruling concerning married couples indulging in phone sex, there are two situations:
a) If the objective is to arouse one’s spouse and help them masturbate to the point of having an orgasm, then this is not allowed. Masturbation is prohibited and causes many personal and societal ills, and as such, it is not permitted for either spouse to masturbate and play with themselves during the course of a telephone conversation. It cannot be called mutual masturbation, since this only occurs when satisfaction is gained through a part of one’s spouse’s body.
b) If during a phone conversation, the objective is not to masturbate, but rather the spouses are merely intimate, then this is permitted.

There is nothing wrong in such intimate conversation taking place between the spouses whether they are together or apart, provided one does not fear masturbation or any other unlawful act. If masturbation is avoided, but one experiences an orgasm by simply talking intimately with one’s spouse, then this also does not seem to fall within the ambit of unlawfulness, provided the objective was not to masturbate or have an orgasm.
AFTER PLAY

Islamic teachings with regard to sexual relations do not end at the termination of intercourse between the spouses, they go much beyond that. The time after having sex, which could be termed as "after play", is as important as foreplay and sex itself. There are many important rulings and etiquettes that need to be kept in mind in this regard.

1) Being Affectionate

After achieving sexual climax, both spouses should remain in their positions for a while before separating from one another. Islam teaches couples to be considerate and compassionate to one another at all times, and not only whilst having sex. A husband who is insensitive and unresponsive after sex will appear to his wife as though his interest in her is only in sexual gratification. As such, he should ensure that there are kind and affectionate exchanges, even after having sex.

2) Cleanliness and Purification

After having sex, both spouses should clean their genital areas with clean pieces of cloth or tissue. If they had placed a sheet or cloth below them before having sex, which is recommended, that may be used in cleaning themselves, otherwise a separate cloth may be used.

Imam Ibn Qudama states in his Al-Mughni, "It is recommended (mustahab) for the wife to keep a piece of cloth with her that her husband can use after having sex and wipe himself with it, as Sayyida 'A'isha said: "An astute woman should keep a piece of cloth with her. After her husband has sex with her, she should give it to him, so that he may wipe himself and she may wipe herself with it." (Al-Mughni 8:136)

Cleanliness after sex is of utmost importance. Some Muslim couples are extremely negligent in this regard, ignoring the fact that their bed-sheets and clothes may have become impure. It is strongly encouraged to lay a separate sheet of clothing specifically for sex, which can be put in the washing afterwards. If sexual fluids have come into contact with one's clothes or body parts, they must be purified with water before praying, otherwise, one's prayer will be invalid. The bedding should also be changed after having sex if sexual fluids have come into contact with it.

Couples need to remember that pre-ejaculatory fluid (madhi) is impure according to all the classical scholars. Madhi is "A thin white fluid that exits without force from a man or woman when sexually aroused but is not accompanied by an ejaculation". It can often be released without one being aware of it, and is more prevalent in women than men. Madhi only necessitates a ritual ablution (wudu) but is legally considered impure (najis), and so has to be washed if one's body or clothing is affected by it. Imam Nawawi states that the whole Muslim Ummah are in unanimous agreement that Madhi is impure. (See: al-Tahawi, al-Ma'ani al-Falah P.100, Al-Majmū' Shawh al-Muhaddithin 2:395 & Al-Mughni 1:162)

As far as semen (mansi) is concerned, it is defined with respect to men as "A thick white fluid that gushes out with force from the penis causing it to slacken and reduce in size." With respect to women, it is the thin and yellow ejaculatory fluid. Mansi is the fluid with which Allah Most High Creates human beings. Allah Most High says:

أَحْضِبُ النَّاسَ أَنْ يَتَرَكُّواْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ يَدَاءً مِّنْهُ مَيْتِينَ كَانَ عَلَيْهِ فَعَلَّهُ فَقَعَتْ عَلَيْهِ

"Does man think that he will be left unchecked? Was he not an ejaculated drop of semen (mansi)? Then he became a clot of blood, then He [Allah] Created [him] and made [him] perfect, and of him He made two sexes, male and female. Has he no power [then] to give life to the dead?" (Qur'an 75:36-40)

There is a difference of opinion between classical scholars in regards to whether semen is impure or not. The Hanafi and Maliki schools consider it impure and require it to be cleansed from one's body and clothes. Conversely, the Shafi'i School and also the Hanbali School [according to the more authentic position related from Imam Ahmad] consider semen to be pure. However, all the Schools agree that the emission of semen necessitates a ritual bath (ghusl) for both the man and the woman.
3) Urinating
It is recommended from a medical point of view to urinate after having sex. This allows the remaining drops of semen to come out of one's system. One should avoid using exceedingly cold water when washing the private parts, since this can be harmful. (See: Ihyā' Ulūm al-Din with its commentary Ihtif al-Sādūt al-Muttaqin 6:184, and Adab-E-Muhaddis P. 28)

4) Ritual Bath (ghusl)
a) It was mentioned earlier that all four Sunni Schools of Islamic law agree that the emission of semen (mazq) with sexual desire from a man, and ejaculatory fluid upon orgasm from a woman necessitates a ritual bath (ghusl). As such, after having sex, one is in a state of major ritual impurity (janāba) and is termed a junub. A Junub is prevented from praying, reciting or touching the Qur'ān, entering a Mosque, and other forms of worship until one purifies oneself. Allah Most High says:

\[
\text{إِنَّ كُنْنَا جَنْبًا قَاطِرِيُّا}
\]

"...If you are in a state of major impurity (janāba), cleanse yourself well [by taking a bath]." (Qur'ān 5:6)

Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

\[
	ext{حَتَّى كِتْبَ شَفَةَ جَنَّةٍ}
\]

"Beneath every hair is an impurity (janāba), hence wash the hair [of the body] and clean the skin. (Sunan al-Tirmidhī 106 & Sunan Alī Dāwūd 252)

Apart from the emission of semen, major ritual impurity also comes about through penetration, with or without ejaculation, necessitating a ritual bath. Once the head of the penis enters the vagina, a ritual bath is necessary. In other words, emission of semen and sex are both independent causes of major ritual impurity and both necessitate the ritual bath. If semen is discharged without sex, but with sexual desire, or sexual intercourse takes place without ejaculation, a ritual bath is necessary in both situations.

In terms of sex without ejaculation being a cause of janāba, the following Prophetic narrations are reported:

Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

\[
	ext{إِذَا جَزَّارَ الْحَمْلَةِ وَحَتَّى الْمَرْضَةٌ}
\]

“When a man sits amidst four parts [of the woman] and then exerts pressure on her, a ritual bath becomes obligatory upon him.” And in the hadith reported by the narrator Marāj, there is a further addition, “Even if he does not ejaculate.” (Saḥīh al-Bukhārī 287 and Sahīh Muslim 348, the wording is of Muslim)

Sayyida ‘A‘isha ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

\[
	ext{إِذَا جَواَرَ الْحَمْلَةِ وَحَتَّى الْمَرْضَةٌ}
\]

“When the [man’s] organ goes beyond the [woman’s] organ, a ritual bath becomes necessary.” (Sunan al-Tirmidhī 109 and Musnad Ahmad)

Amm ibn Shu‘ayb relates from his father, from his grandfather ﷺ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

\[
	ext{إِذَا نَقَّيَ الْحَمْلَةِ وَمُؤَكَّرَ الْمَرْضَةٌ}
\]

“When the two organs [of the man and woman] meet, and the top part of the penis is hidden, a ritual bath becomes necessary.” (Sunan ibn Mājah 611 and Musnad Ahmad ibn Shu‘ayb 1:112)

Imam Nawawi states in his commentary of the [first] hadith recorded by Muslim: “The meaning of the hadith is that the necessity for the bath is not restricted to the ejaculation of semen, but rather, when the head of the penis becomes hidden into the vagina, a ritual bath is necessary on the man and woman. There is no difference of opinion on this today. Some of the Companions and those after them disagreed, but then a consensus (ijma) was reached on what we just stated.” (Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahīh Muslim P. 400)

In regards to the emission of semen without sex being a cause of janāba, the following Prophetic narration is reported:

Sayyiduna ‘Ali ﷺ relates:
and the position of other schools, sexual gratification (shahwa) and forceful emission (da'f) of semen at the time of its exiting the private parts are not conditions for the obligation of a ritual bath, provided the initial cause was sexual climax, and not due to lifting a heavy object etc. The condition of the initial cause being sexual climax is specific to the Hanafi school.

According to the Shafi'i school, whenever semen exits, a ritual bath is obligatory, regardless of the initial cause. Given this, the discharge of semen remaining in the passageway after completing a ritual bath, requires another bath.

However, according to the Hanafi school, if semen is discharged after urinating, sleeping or excessive walking, it is not necessary to repeat the bath, as these movements are considered to have cleaned the passageway and halted the dripping of all semen. As such, any semen discharged after this is not attributed to the initial gratification and is considered to have exited without sexual climax. However, a new ablution (wudhu) is necessary, since something has come out of the private parts. As for the prayers, they are valid because they were performed in a state of purity, given that the bath was invalidated after the prayer.

If a woman sees fluid exiting from her after taking a ritual bath, then if she is confident that these are her own fluids, and not those of the man, the ruling mentioned above applies. If, however, she is in doubt, she does not need to repeat her bath or any prayers that she may have performed. This is the position of the Hanafi school.

According to the Shafi'i school, if she achieved orgasm during sex with her husband, it is obligatory for her to repeat her bath. This is because her “achieving an orgasm” is a strong indication that it is her own sexual fluid, and so it is necessary for her to repeat the bath. However, if she did not achieve an orgasm, she does not need to repeat her bath, but it does invalidate her ablution, because what is exiting from her is her husband's semen and not her own fluid. (See: Al-Hidayah 1:31, Radd al-Muhtâr 1:159-161 and Mughni al-Muhtâr 1:117-118)

In light of all of this, it is best for both spouses to make a habit of urinating before taking the obligatory ritual bath. This will help avoid problems later on, In shâ’ Allah.

5) Sleeping in a State of Major Ritual Impurity (janâba)

a) It is recommended for the couple to hasten in having a ritual bath after sexual relations. One should endeavour to end one’s state of Janâba as soon as possible, as it releases one from the restrictions of ritual impurity.
Sayyiduna 'Ali ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

لا ندخل المنزلين يأباهبا صورة ولا حب ولا جنب

"The angels do not enter a house in which there is a picture, a dog, or a person in a state of major ritual impurity [a junub]." (Sunan Abi Dawud 229)

This hadith is referring to an individual who unnecessarily remains in a state of major ritual impurity for a considerable length of time to the extent that the obligatory (fard) prayers are delayed. In such a case, one is sinful; otherwise it is not obligatory to have a bath directly after sexual relations. It is permitted, without dislike, to go to sleep in a state of janēba, even though having a bath is superior.

Sayyida A'isha ﷺ relates:

كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يأباهبا وهو مجهل وهو جنب ولا يصر ما

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would sleep while he was in a state of major ritual impurity without touching water." (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 118, Sunan Abi Dawud 230 and Sunan Ibn Mâjah 581)

The author of the commentary of Sunan al-Tirmidhi, Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi, states: "In this hadith, there is proof that it is permitted for a junub to go to sleep before having a bath and before performing an ablation." (Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi bi Sharh Jami' al-Tirmidhi 1:307)

Ghudayf ibn al-Harith relates:

قلت لعائشة: أريت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم كان يأباهبا في أول الليل أو في أخرهما، قال: رحمه الله وأعست في أول الليل ورجمه وأعست في آخره، قلت: إنما أرى الحسن لابن الذي جعلت بالأمسة

"I asked 'Aisha, "Have you seen the Messenger of Allah ﷺ having a bath of janēba at the beginning of the night or at the end?" She replied, "Sometimes he would have a bath at the beginning of the night and sometimes at the end." And as I said, "Allah is Most Great. All Praise be to Allah Who put case in the matter..." (Sunan Abi Dawud 228 and others)

Imam Nawawî states, "The conclusion of these hadiths is that it is permitted for a junub to eat, drink, sleep and have sex before having a bath. This is something that is agreed upon by all the scholars [...] The meaning [of the hadith in which it is mentioned that the Messenger of Allah would sleep without touching water] is that on a few occasions, he would not touch water at all in order to indicate permissibility of going to sleep in such a state. Had the Messenger of Allah ﷺ continuously used water, it would have been presumed that using water is necessary, and Allah knows best." (Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahîh Muslim P: 372-373)

b) If one wishes to sleep without having a bath, one is encouraged to perform a ritual ablation (wudū').

Sayyida A'isha ﷺ relates:

كان النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم إذا أراد أن ينام وهو جنب حصل خلع وجهة ووضع الماء

"Whenever the Messenger of Allah ﷺ intended to sleep in a state of major ritual impurity, he would wash his private parts and perform ablution like that for the prayer." (Sahih al-Bukhari 284 and Sahih Muslim 305, the wording is of Bukhari)

Sayyiduna 'Umar ibn al-Khattab ﷺ asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, "Can any one of us sleep while in a state of major ritual impurity?" He replied:

نعم إذا توضأ أحدكم فلم يفعل وهو جنب

"Yes, if one performs ablution, one can sleep while in a state of major ritual impurity." (Sahih al-Bukhari 283, Sahih Muslim 306 and Sunan al-Tirmidhi 120, the wording is of Bukhari)

Sayyiduna 'Umar ibn al-Khattab ﷺ mentioned to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that he becomes junub at night. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to him:

نوضأ واعسل ذكره ثم

"Perform ablution and wash your private parts, then go to sleep." (Sahih al-Bukhari 286 and Sahih Muslim 306)

With the exception of the isolated position of a handful of scholars, such as Dâwûd al-Zahiri and Ibn al-Habîb al-Maliki, the general body of scholars (jâmîh) hold that performing ablution before going to
sleep is recommended, not obligatory. In other words, one would be 
rewarded for performing ablution but not sinful for omitting it.

This is supported by the narration recorded by Imam Ibn Khuzayma 
and Imam Ibn Hibbān in their respective Sahih collections that 'Umar 
ibn al-Khattāb ﷺ asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: "Can any one of us 
sleep while in a state of major ritual impurity?" He replied:

یتَامِي وَيَوَضُّوًّا إِن شَاءَ

"Yes, he may sleep, and perform ablution if he so wishes." 
(Sahih Ibn Khuzayma 211)

Likewise, the hadith of Sayyida 'A'isha ﷺ quoted earlier that "the Mes-
enger of Allah ﷺ would sleep while in a state of major ritual impu-
ritiness without touching water" is a proof that performing an ablution 
is not obligatory. Imam Nawawī states, "It is recommended to perform 
ablution and wash one's private parts before these matters [i.e. sleep-
ing, eating, drinking and the like] [...] Our scholars have clearly stated 
that it is somewhat disliked to sleep, eat, drink and have sex before 
performing ablution, and these hadiths would indicate that. However, 
there is no difference of opinion according to us that this performing 
of ablution is not obligatory (waḥīb). This is the opinion of Imam Mālik 
and the majority of scholars..." (Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim: 372)

If one is unable to perform a ritual ablution, one should at least clean 
and wash one's private parts, as mentioned in the hadith of 'Umar ibn 
ak-Khattāb ﷺ recorded by Imam Bukhārī. This is the last of the three 
stages. However, in this case also, there is no sin for not washing one's 
private parts, since it is reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ retired 
to bed "without touching water".

In conclusion, there are three stages here: The optimum is to 
perform the ritual bath and then sleep; if that is not possible, a 
ritual ablution should be performed; and if that is not possible, one 
should at least wash one's private parts. However, if none of the 
above three actions are performed, one will still not be guilty of 
committing a sin.

6) Successive Sessions of Sexual Intercourse

a) Islam permits the couple to have sex more than once in one given 
period of the day or night, provided no harm is feared. Imam Ibn al-
Qayyim al-Jawziyya mentions in his Al-Tibb al-Nabawi that one should 
only have sex when sexual desire is at its peak and the man has a full 
naturally gained erection which is not dependent on thinking about 
something or looking at something. It is improper to try and force 
sexual desire (shahād) upon oneself. (Al-Tibb al-Nabawi P. 181)

As such, if there is a genuine desire to re-engage in sexual relations, 
the couple may do so, otherwise it may be better for them to wait until 
they are fully revitalised. Both spouses should be extremely mindful 
and respectful of their partner's physical condition in this regard, lest 
one is forced into something one is not ready for.

b) There is complete agreement of the scholars that it is not necessary 
to have a ritual bath in between two successive sessions of sexual 
intercourse. The preferred habit of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was to 
have a separate bath each time, but he is also reported to have engaged 
in successive sessions of intercourse having one bath only at the end.

Sayyiduna Anas ﷺ relates that:

أنّ النبيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم كان يطوف على نسائه ببغل واحد

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to engage in sexual relations 
with his [various] wives with a single bath." (Sahih Muslim 309, 
Sunan al-Tirmidhi 140, Sunan Abī Dāwūd 220 and others)

The meaning of this hadith is that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would 
engage in sexual relations with more than one of his wives and then 
have one bath at the end. This is clear proof that having a bath in 
between two successive sessions of sexual intercourse, whether with the 
same wife or a different wife, is not necessary.

However, it is superior and recommended to have a separate bath 
for each sexual encounter. Sayyiduna Abū Rāfī' ﷺ relates that:

أنّ النبيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم ططأ ذات يوم على نسائه ببغل واحد وعند هذا 
فقال: فلا، يا رسول الله، لا ينبغي عقلاء واحداً؟ قال: هذا أركب وأطيب وأطيب

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ engaged in sexual relations with his 
[various] wives one day, and had a [separate] bath by this one and 
that one. He (Abū Rāfī') says, "I said, 'O Messenger of Allah, Why 
do you not just have one bath?' He replied, 'This is cleaner and 
better and purer.'" (Sunan Abī Dāwūd 221, Sunan Ibn Mājah 590 
and Musnad Ahmad, the wording is of Abū Dāwūd)

c) As far as performing a ritual ablution in between two successive 
sessions of sexual intercourse, this is strongly encouraged, but also not 
necessary.
Sayyiduna Abū Sa‘id al-Khudrī relates that the Messenger of Allah said:

إِذَا أَتَى أَحَدُكُمْ أَهْلُهُمْ ثُمَّ أَزَادَ أَنْ يَقْبَضُوا

“When anyone amongst you has sex with his wife and then intends to re-engage, he should perform ablution [between the two acts].” (Sahih Muslim 308, Sunan al-Tirmidhī 141 and Sunan Abī Dīwān 222, the wording is of Muslim)

According to the general body of scholars (jurahār) which includes the four schools, the command to perform ablution in this hadith is a recommendation, not an obligation. The same hadith is recorded in Sahih Ibn Khuzayma with the following addition, “because it [performing ablution] gives him more energy for the second time.” (Sahih Ibn Khuzayma 221)

Moreover, Imam Tahawi relates with his own chain of transmission to Sayyida ‘A’isha, who says: “The Messenger of Allah used to have sexual relations, then re-engage without performing ablution [...]” (Sharh Ma‘ani al-Ardh 774)

d) If one is not able to perform ablution, one should at least wash one’s private parts before having sex for the second time. Imam Nawawi mentions that if one intends to have sex with a different wife, then washing the private parts is greatly emphasised. (Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim P: 372)

7) Secrets of Sexual Relations
Allah Most High has made the husband and wife garments for one another, for He Most High says:

أَحَلُّ لِكُمْ لِلِّيْلِ الْيَتِمَّةَ الْأَفْتَرِيَّةٌ إِلَى بَيْنِكُمْ مُنْ لَيْسَ لَكُمْ وَلَيْسَ لَهُمُ الْيَتِمَّةُ

“It is made lawful for you, in the nights of fasts, to have sex with your women. They are your garments and you are their garments...” (Qur’an 2:187)

It is known that if a garment is not long, complete or loose-fitting, and not free of holes and tears, it is not fit to cover one’s nakedness. In a similar manner, the spouses are garments for one another, and if they fail to conceal each other’s secrets, they will not be fulfilling their duties. Marital relationships are based on trust and secrecy, and as such, each spouse is duty-bound to conceal matters that are revealed to them by their spouse under this trust.

Concealing secrets is more important when it comes to intimate issues. It is categorically forbidden (harām) for the husband and wife to reveal their sexual secrets to others. It is a shameful and sinful practice that has been emphatically condemned by the Messenger of Allah. Sayyiduna Abū Sa‘id al-Khudrī relates that the Messenger of Allah said:

إِنْ مَنْ أَتَّمَّ النَّاسَ عَنْدَ اللَّهِ سَلَّمَهُمْ الْفَتْنَةَ الْجَالِلَةَ يُقِيِّمُ الْمَسَاءَةَ وَيَقْبَضُ إِلَى الْمَأْمُوَّةَ وَيَبْقَى مَتَّخِذًا

“The most evil of people in the sight of Allah on the Day of Judgment is the man who has sex with his wife and she has sex with him, then he reveals her secret.” (Sahih Muslim 1437)

The warning against revealing sexual secrets is not only for men, but rather it includes women too. It is unlawful to discuss with others what takes place in the bedroom. Sexual matters are private and must remain that way. Sharing them brings such thoughts to the minds of others, potentially leading to fornication of the heart. It is also a means of harming one’s spouse, as he or she would not want details of their sexual behaviour revealed to others.

Sayyida Asma bint Yazid relates:

فَكَأَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمُ الْرَّجُلُ وَالْبَنْسَاءُ فَقَالَ: عَسِى رَحْلُ يَخْدِعُهُ بِضَوءِ روَآءِهِ وَلَهُمَا فَقَالَتْ: أَيُّ اللهُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، أَنَّ أَمَامَكُوُّ وَلَيْنَ أَفْعَلُانِ

“We, as men and women, were sitting in the company of the Messenger of Allah. The Messenger of Allah said, “May a man be talking [with others] about what goes on between him and his wife, and may a woman be talking [with others] about what she
does with her husband?" The people remained quiet and did not answer. So I said, "Yes, by Allah, O Messenger of Allah! The men do that, and the women do that too." He said, "Do not do that, because doing that is like a male devil (shaytān) meeting a female devil (shaytānā) in the middle of a road, and having sex with her whilst people are watching." (Al-Mujām al-Kabīr of Tabarānī 24:162-163. A similar report is recorded in Sunan Abī Dāwūd and Musnad Ahmad)

A tendency exists in some people to relate graphic details of their sexual encounters to friends. Some men boast about their performance in bed and what their wives do with them, whilst some women enjoy boasting about their sexual relationship with their husbands. The above hadiths should suffice in deterring such people. They should realise that they are answerable to Allah Most High on the Day of Judgement, and must completely shun such shameless behaviour.

This prohibition of revealing intimate secrets pertains to normal situations. However, if there is a genuine need to discuss one’s marital affairs, such as when seeking religious guidance or counselling; or when one is a victim of injustice and is complaining to those in authority, then the prohibition is suspended. However, in this case too, graphic details that do not need to be mentioned must not be disclosed. (See: Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim, commentary on hadith 1437)

10 -

SUMMARY OF RULINGS AND ETIQUETTES OF SEXUAL RELATIONS

As an overview of the issues that have been discussed in this book, the following is a summary of acts that are Islamically recommended (mustahab), disliked (makhrah) and prohibited (haram):

RECOMMENDED ACTS
1) Engaging in sexual relations with correct intentions and objectives in mind.

2) Approaching sexual relations with moderation.

3) Engaging in sex in a state of relaxation and temperamental balance.

4) Preparing for sexual relations both psychologically and physically.

5) Ensuring cleanliness and personal hygiene.

6) The wife adorning herself for her husband.

7) The wife exhibiting feminine traits in front of her husband.

8) The husband exhibiting affection towards his wife and preceding sex with kind words.

9) Foreplay between the spouses before having sex.

10) Covering up copies of the Qurʾān and other Islamic literature during sexual relations.
11) Reciting the various supplications.
12) The husband waiting for the wife to achieve sexual climax.
13) Being affectionate and considerate towards one's spouse after sex.
14) Cleanliness after sexual relations.
15) Having a ritual bath, or performing a ritual ablution, or at the least washing one's private parts before sleeping, eating or re-engaging in sexual relations.

**PROHIBITED AND DISLIKED ACTS**

1) The wife refusing to make herself sexually available for her husband without a valid reason.

2) The husband depriving his wife of her right of sex without a valid reason.

3) Sex during menstruation and post-natal bleeding.

4) The husband intentionally drinking his wife's milk [according to the Hanafi School].

5) Using food during foreplay [disliked].

6) Using sex aids during foreplay [disliked, but in some cases prohibited].

7) Bondage and flogging.

8) Sexually provocative dancing accompanied by music.

9) Watching pornographic material for stimulation.

10) Cross-dressing.

11) Deriving sexual pleasure from urine and filth.

12) Public display of affection, and sex in front of others.

13) Couples taking intimate pictures of each other.

14) Fantasising about another person during sex.

15) Anal sex.

16) Oral sex [disliked when sexual fluids do not enter the mouth, and prohibited when it involves sexual fluids entering the mouth].

17) Self-masturbation via phone-sex with one's spouse.

18) Revealing secrets of sexual relations to others.
ETIQUETTES AND FIQH OF THE FIRST NIGHT OF MARRIAGE

The first night of marriage (kaylat al-zufaf) is probably the most important night of a couple's marital life. Failing to observe correct moral ethics and etiquettes in this night can have a long-lasting negative impact on one's spouse, since the first impression is often a lasting impression.

Both spouses will be starting a completely new chapter in their lives, not knowing what the future holds for them. Naturally, they will be nervous, apprehensive and anxious. At the same time, they will be excited and eager to get to know one another and start their marital life with bliss. In an ideal situation, both will almost be strangers to each other, having had no intimate contact previously. As such, bashfulness and a feeling of strangeness is to be expected.

In such circumstances, it is extremely important for both the husband and wife to try their utmost to make matters easy for one another. They should treat each other with extreme gentleness, compassion and tenderness. The wife will naturally be more nervous, bashful and even fearful, hence the husband has added responsibilities to play his role of a husband on the first night. He should ensure that she feels at ease by creating a friendly and courteous atmosphere. He should be kind and extremely gentle with her by engaging in light-hearted conversation.

1) Greeting with Salām and Reciting the Du‘ā
When the newly married couple enter the bedroom, after greeting one another with the traditional Islamic greeting “Asalām alaikum Wa Rahmatullah Wa Barakātuh” (may the peace of Allah descend upon you and His Mercy and Blessings), the husband should place his hand on his wife's forelock (front part of the head) and recite the following supplication:

Allāhumma inni as'ābuka khayyaha wa khayra mā jaballaha ’alayhi wa a’ūdhu bika min sharrīha wa sharri mā jaballaha ’alayh.

Transliteration:
Allahumma inni as'aluka khayyaha wa khayra mā jaballaha 'alayhi wa a'udhu bika min sharriha wa sharri mā jaballaha 'alayh.

Translation:
"O Allah! I ask from you the good of her and the good with which you have created her, and I seek refuge with you from the evil in her and the evil with which you have created her.” (Sunan Abī Dāwūd 2153, Sunan Ibn Mājah 1918 and others, the wording of the Du‘ā is from Sunan Abī Dāwūd)

Although, this supplication (du‘ā) is addressed to the man, it implicitly includes the woman also. Any Du‘ā which refers to women in a specific way can also be inverted to refer to men. As such, the wife may also recite the supplication when she sees her husband for the first time, but the wording will be slightly changed to accommodate the male gender, as follows:

Allāhumma inni as'ābuka khayyaha wa khayra mā jaballaha ’alayhi wa a’ūdhu bika min sharrīha wa sharri mā jaballaha ’alayh.

Transliteration:
Allahumma inni as'aluka khayyaha wa khayra mā jaballaha 'alayhi wa a'udhu bika min sharriha wa sharri mā jaballaha 'alayh.

Translation:
"O Allah! I ask from you the good of him and the good with which you have created him, and I seek refuge with you from the evil in him and the evil with which you have created him.” (See: Radiant Prayers by Mufīr Taqi Uthmāni; P. 64)

The reason behind this supplication is that all human beings, with the exception of the Prophets (peace be upon them), are prone to the whisperings of the Devil and have a propensity for evil, and so the couple are encouraged to pray for the good in each other and seek protection from each other's evil. It certainly does not mean that one's spouse is evil, but rather, this supplication refers to the possibility of evil in one's spouse, be that the husband or wife.
2) Offering Prayers
Abū Wâ'il relates that a man once came to Sayyiduna 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ûd and said, "I married a woman, but I fear discord [between us]." He replied, "When you bring her to you, offer two Rakâts of prayer [and in another variation he said, "When you enter upon her, ask her to offer two Rakâts behind you"] and then say, "O Allah! Bless my family for me, and bless me for my family. O Allah! Unite us with good, and separate us, if you do, with good." (Tabarânî in his Al-Ma'âlim al-Kabîr 9:209, and 'Abd al-Razzâq in his Al-Mudawwar 6:83)

In this way, the couple should first perform two Rakâts of prayer, preferably in congregation, with combined intentions of night vigil prayer (tahâjjud), thanksgiving prayer (shukr), and prayer of need (hâja). If the couple is in need of renewing their ablution, they must first perform the ritual ablution. After the prayer, they should praise Allah Most High and send blessings on His Messenger, and thank Allah for blessing them with this great gift of marriage. They should ask Allah to bless their union with goodness, prosperity, mutual love and the birth of pious offspring. Remember, the best of supplications are those that are made from the heart, out of neediness, with recognition of one's standing as a slave of Allah.

3) Light-hearted Discussion
After praying and making Du'â, the couple should try to get to know each other more closely and assess each other's feelings by initiating a light-hearted discussion. It is recommended that they first engage themselves in some religious talk such as discussing the aims and objectives of marriage in Islam. They should make a firm resolution of living their lives in accordance with Islamic teachings and always to obey Allah Most High and His beloved Messenger. They may even read some Islamic literature together, if they so wish. The husband should regard this moment as an opportunity to show his consideration for his wife's tender feelings, and treat her with love, affection and warmth. The wife, in turn, should not play "hard-to-get" but respond to his tenderness with love and compassion of her own.

4) Sexual Relations
It is important to note that engaging in sexual relations on the first night is not necessary. The husband should not hasten in taking his wife's virginity, but rather he should approach the matter with extreme calmness, even if it takes a few days. The newly married couple have all their lives before them for sexual relations, and there is no need to make haste in this regard. Much of the time during the first night should be spent in getting to know one another, sharing each other's outlook on life and how their marital life should be lived in accordance with Islamic teachings. They may, however, begin to be intimate with one another, if they feel comfortable.

If intimacy does lead to sexual relations and actual sex, then the husband needs to be extremely gentle during penetration. A virgin undergoes considerable anxiety and pain during sex, and the husband must keep this in mind. Scholars mention that a husband's inability to penetrate on the first night is not a sign of his weakness or sexual impotency, since it is natural for men to be bashful or anxious on the first night, affecting their sexual potency. The couple may try on another occasion, and it may even take a few days. Both spouses will need to approach this delicate issue with forbearance and tolerance, helping one another in making matters as easy as possible. (Usul al-Mu'âshara al-Zawjiyya P: 69)

Likewise, the husband should not expect his wife to respond fully to his sexual advances on the first night. A woman is more bashful than a man and will naturally be reserved in her response. The husband should take one step at a time, and the wife should respond to him in each step that he takes, eventually leading to full sexual relations. (Ibid)

5) Evil Suspicions
One extremely important point of caution for the husband is never to doubt his wife or have evil suspicions if it appears that she is not a virgin. Baseless suspicions and evil thoughts about others are categorically forbidden in Islam and a major sin. Allah Most High says:

\[ بَٰلَٰيِّنَكُمْ أَنْ تُعَجِّبُواَ كَبِيرَةً مِّنَ الْطَّيِّبَاتِ ﷺ. \]

"O you who believe! Abstain from much suspicion. Some suspicions are sins...." (Qur'an: 49:12)

A woman's hymen, the fold of tissue that partly covers the entrance to the vagina of a virgin, can be broken in many ways, including heavy menstrual flow, prolonged illness, falling, jumping excessively, horse-riding, cycling and certain sporting activities. In fact, in the Hanafi School, a woman is considered an "effective virgin" if people consider her a virgin, even though she may have had sex in the past without this being presently known about her. This is because virginity is something of great social weight in Islamic society, and to stain her honour for a
past sin, from which the woman has presumably repented, would be wrong. *(Radh al-Mubta)*

If the first night is spent in accordance with the above guidelines, it will serve as a perfect start to a blissful and happy life of marriage, *In shā'Allāh.*

- 12 -

**CONCLUSION**

In the preceding pages, an attempt was made to shed light on issues concerning the sexual relationship of a husband and wife in light of the Qur’ān, Prophetic statements and texts of both classical and contemporary scholars. It has not been easy to discuss such a delicate topic in an open and frank manner, given the nature of the topic and given the natural bashfulness of a human being.

However, upon seeing many of our classical and contemporary scholars not only discussing these issues but explaining the finer details of it too, I embarked on this journey keeping in mind the statement of Allah Most High, “Surely, Allah is not shy of [expounding] the truth” and keeping in mind the statement of the Tābi‘ī, Mujahid, “Sacred knowledge is not gained by a shy or an arrogant person”. I felt it was of paramount importance that Muslims seek Islamic knowledge relating to all areas of their lives, and that they do not shy away from certain aspects of it because of cultural taboos or constraints.

I hope I have gone some way towards achieving what I had set out to do. I pray this work is a source of much benefit for married couples, *In shā’Allāh.* I ask Allah Most High to make it purely for His sake, and that He forgive me for any mistakes that may have been committed, *Amin Ya Rabb al-Alamin.*
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ISLAMIC GUIDE TO SEXUAL RELATIONS
MUHAMMAD IBN ADAM AL-KAWTHARI

FULFILMENT OF SEXUAL DESIRE and needs is essential in sustaining a harmonious marital relationship. However, in today’s society, sexual boundaries are being pushed further and further, and often, sexual deviance is openly practised. In such circumstances, there is a need to identify which sexual activities are permissible in Shari'ah.

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SHAYKH FARAZ RABBI, SEEKERS GUIDANCE, WWW.SEEKERSGUIDANCE.COM

This guide essentially aimed at Muslims reveals a surprisingly liberal view on sexuality considering many of the rules and etiquettes for matrimonial relationship were established 1400 years ago. Modern psychosexual medicine has been a relatively young member of the field of medicine and echoes much of the Islamic view contained in this book. Muslims will no doubt be surprised by some of the legal rulings regarding intimate relationships between the married couple which has in essence removed many cultural conceptions that have distorted the original concepts. This is a thorough and essential guide for scholars, doctors and other practitioners of psychosexual health care as well as couples and answers thoroughly many scenarios pertinent to conjugal relations in the modern day.

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