

Islamic Guide To Sexual Relations



Muḥammad ibn Adam al-Kawthari



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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 Muḥammad, 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'ān 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-hamdulillāh*.

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'ān, 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 ḥadīth 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 Muftī 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'ān 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."

Muḥammad ibn Adam al-Kawtharī

Darul Iftaa, Leicester, UK

January 14, 2008 CE / Muharram 7, 1429 AH

PREFACE BY MUFTĪ ZUBAIR BAYAT

I congratulate the author, Muftī Muḥammad ibn Ādam (ḥafīzahullāh), 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-ḥamdulillāh.

Now, Muftī Muḥammad 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.

Muftī Zubair Bayat
Director: Darul Ihsan Centre
Durban, South Africa



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 (*akhlāq*).

Allah Most High says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السَّلَامِ كَافَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

“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’ān 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 Sharī‘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 Hanafī fiqh Manual, *Al-Hidāya*, 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 ḥadīth 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 *Shahih* from the Companion Salmān al-Farisi رضي الله عنه that some polytheists approached him saying:

لَقَدْ عَلَّمَكُمْ نَبِيُّكُمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّى الْخِرَاءَةَ

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

أَجَلُ ، لَقَدْ نَهَانَا صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنْ نَسْتَقْبِلَ الْقِبْلَةَ بِغَائِطٍ أَوْ بَوْلٍ ، وَأَنْ لَا نَسْتَجِبِي بِالْيَمِينِ ، وَأَنْ لَا يَسْتَجِبِي أَحَدُنَا بِأَقْلٍ مِنْ ثَلَاثَةِ أَحْجَارٍ ، أَوْ يَسْتَجِبِي بِرَجِيعٍ أَوْ عَظْمٍ

“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.” (*Shahih Muslim* 262 & *Sunan Abi Dawud* 7, the wording is of *Abu Dawud*)

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

إِنَّمَا أَنَا لَكُمْ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْوَالِدِ أَعَلَّمُكُمْ ، فَإِذَا أَتَى أَحَدُكُمْ الْغَائِطُ فَلَا يَسْتَقْبِلُ الْقِبْلَةَ وَلَا يَسْتَدْبِرُهَا وَلَا يَسْتَتِبُ بِيَمِينِهِ

“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 Abi Dawud* 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-Ghāzālī's *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, *Al-Tibb al-Nabawī* by Imam Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, Imam Ibn Qudāma's *Al-Mughnī*, Imam Nasā'ī's *Ishrat al-Nisā'*, Imam Abū 'l-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī's *Sayd al-Khātir*, the *Ghunya al-Tālibīn* by Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī 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 un-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 (*hayā'*), unaware that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself explained this subject in considerable

detail. Several ḥadīths 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 Bukhārī and Imam Muslim (may Allah have mercy on them) both record a ḥadīth in their *Ṣaḥīḥ* collections, related by Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه, in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was teaching his Companions رضي الله عنهم the rules of having a ritual bath (*ghusl*), when he said:

إِذَا جَلَسَ بَيْنَ شَعْبَيْهَا الْأَرْبَعِ ، ثُمَّ جَهَدَهَا ، فَقَدْ وَجَبَ عَلَيْهِ الْغُسْلُ

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

In this ḥadīth, 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 رضي الله عنهم also did not shy away from asking the Messenger of Allah ﷺ questions of a sexual nature. In a famous incident, Sayyiduna ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه 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’ān to answer his question. (See: *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 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 رضي الله عنها relates:

جَاءَتْ أُمُّ سَلِيمٍ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَتْ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ، إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ ، فَهَلْ عَلَى الْمَرْأَةِ مِنْ غُسْلِ إِذَا احْتَلَمَتْ؟ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: إِذَا رَأَتْ الْمَاءَ ، فَغَطَّتْ أُمَّ سَلَمَةَ تَعْنِي وَجْهَهَا وَقَالَتْ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ، وَتَحْتَلِمُ الْمَرْأَةُ؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ تَرَبَّتْ يَمِينُكَ ، فَبِمَ يُشَبِّهُهَا وَلَدَهَا؟

“Umm Sulaym رضي الله عنها 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?” (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 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 *Dīn*. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used this phrase himself when he prohibited anal sex, saying:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ ، لَا تَأْتُوا النِّسَاءَ فِي أَدْبَارِهِنَّ

“Allah is not shy of the truth; do not enter women in their anuses.”
(*Sunan Ibn Mājah* 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 Bukhārī relates from Mujāhid who said, “Sacred knowledge (*ilm*) is not gained by a shy person nor an arrogant one.” (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1:60)

Likewise, he relates from Sayyida ‘Ā’isha رضي الله عنها 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 overly explicit should keep in mind the words of Allah Most High, His Messenger ﷺ and the Companions رضي الله عنهم, “Surely, Allah is not shy of [expounding] the truth” (Qur’ān 33:53, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 130 and *Sunan Ibn Mājah* 1924). Whatever is discussed in this book is based directly on the Qur’ān,

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