



Cultural Perception of Marriage among Muslims

Sheikh Muhammad Kamaludin

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This is a clear introduction to Muslim marital practices filled with positive advice.

In his articulate disquisition, Sheikh Muhammad Kamaludin illumines and expounds the organizational structures of traditional Muslim marriages. *Cultural Perception of Marriage among Muslims* serves as a thorough introduction to Muslim marital practices and Islamic thought and ethics.

The book begins by defining marriage as a social institution that's guided and safeguarded by scriptural authority. Koranic, Hadith, and Sunnah verses are quoted heavily in support of the author's point of view on marital issues.

Specific chapters stipulate the respective roles and obligations of husbands and wives in traditional marriages. Legal consent, sexual etiquette, and divorce are among several topics explored. The author's own observations, commentary, and advice help personalize some of the drier exegesis.

The writing style is clear and solid. Hardly an ounce of ambiguity can be found within these pages. Opinions tack to a conservative view on marriage and repeatedly criticize "biddah," that is, the "innovation" of Islamic law. Such hard lines reinforce patriarchal power structures. For example, the author argues that a woman must enter marriage through the consent of a male guardian called the "walli," typically her father or close Muslim male relative. The marriage is considered void for those who stray from this custom.

But both content and diction are more open-minded and inspiring when addressing sex and power relations within traditional marriages. The most beautiful passages use scripture to underscore the exemplary love and harmony that should exist between husband and wife. Never should a husband treat his wife like a servant, the book states.

Though they've been prescribed different roles through Islamic teachings, husband and wife are equal domestic partners and must treat each other with respect, tenderness, and affection at all times. The text warns against anger, abuse, and mistreatment of one's spouse.

Five chapters revolve around case studies of actual Muslim couples, whose names have been kept anonymous, including a recently divorced couple. These chapters are a great counterpoint to the volume's proselytizing sections. Formatted like interviews, the dialogic passages provide both female and male perspectives on marriage. They elicit religious, legal, and social challenges Muslim couples may face. At the same time, they demonstrate the care and devotion of the participants, as guided by their faith.

Cultural Perception of Marriage among Muslims was written for Muslim readers, specifically those preparing to enter marriage who desire traditional mores and scriptural guidance. But the book may also interest non-Muslim readers who want to know more about the faith and customs of Islam. And the positive, self-help advice contained in many chapters is applicable to all relationships.

SCOTT NEUFFER (November 7, 2016)

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