

ISLAMIC FIQH SERIES

**SEXUAL
RELATIONS
BETWEEN
SPOUSES**

An Islamic perspective

SHAIKH MIR ASEDULLAH QUADRI

SEXUAL RELATIONS BETWEEN SPOUSES

AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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Sahih Iman Publication

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PREFACE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام على سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين

Islam is a complete religion that guides us on every aspect of our lives. There are many issues related to marriage and sex which are generally misunderstood by people. Thus, Islamic rulings in these issues is often a subject of debate among people. The primary cause of these debates is related to certain misconceptions about these rulings. We have attempted to clarify misconceptions in this book. We hope our readers will benefit from these clarifications.

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SEXUAL RELATIONS BETWEEN SPOUSES

Islam is the perfect religion. It covers all aspects of human life, including spouses' sexual relations. The husband and the wife are free to choose their sexual activities within the parameters set by Quran and Sunnah with mutual love and respect for one another. In this context, following points are important.

- (i) Sexual relations are for the pleasure of both the husband and the wife and for the procreation of children.
- (ii) Nothing should be done that is offensive or harmful or unacceptable to your spouse. Each has a duty to be sexually available to the other, but neither has the right to force, disgust or injure the other, physically or psychologically.
- (iii) Sexual pleasure is not limited to vaginal penetration, as it includes other forms of caressing, love making, such as kissing and fondling of various kinds.
- (iv) With a few exceptions, the couple can engage in any activities that they like, in any manner and in any position. Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) rewards permissible activities as surely as he punishes sinful activities.

It is in Quran - نِسَاؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَّكُمْ فَأْتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّى شِئْتُمْ وَقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ - وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ مُلَاقُوهُ وَبَشِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ [Your wives are the bearers of your seed; so, approach your tillage however you wish and send good ahead for yourselves. Act in due reverence for Allah, and know that you are to meet with Him; and give glad tidings to the believers.] (**Al-Baqara - 223**)

Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) explains what is lawful in sexual relations. It is lawful to have vaginal sexual intercourse and absolutely unlawful to have annul intercourse.

What is the meaning of نِسَاؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَّكُمْ فَأْتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّى شِئْتُمْ [Your wives are the bearer of your seed, so approach your tillage however you wish']? It means that you can only enter and plant your seed at the location reserved for reproduction. The verse specifies the exact location of intercourse (vagina), in most clear terms.

What is the meaning of - وَقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ [and send good ahead for yourselves.] It means that do not think your marriage is only for sexual gratification. As a matter of fact, marriage is your investment for your progeny. You are investing in your off springs who are required to be chaste believers.

MENSTRUATION

It is forbidden in Islam to have vaginal intercourse while the wife is menstruating.

It is in Quran - وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ قُلْ هُوَ أَذًى فَاعْتَزِلُوا النِّسَاءَ فِي الْمَحِيضِ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوهُنَّ حَتَّىٰ يَطْهُرْنَ فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ فَأْتُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ [And they ask you (O' Prophet ﷺ) about menstruation. Say, 'It is a mild harm, so keep apart from women during menstruation and do not approach them until they have purified themselves. But once they have purified themselves, then go to them in the way that Allah has enjoined on you.' Allah loves those who turn back from wrongdoing and He loves those who purify themselves.] (Al Baqara - 222)

There were two groups of people during the time of Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم).

One group believed that a woman is so unclean during her period that her husband cannot have sexual relations with her, eat with her or even stay with her in the bedroom. Even the children were separated from their mothers during menstruation. Women were confined to a room within her home and people looked at her as an out caste during menstruation.

The other group believed that menstruating woman is like any other woman, and there is no reason to abstain from sexual intercourse with her during this time.

Islam showed the right middle path to humanity.

Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) says that menstruation is '**mild harm**'. What is the meaning of 'mild harm'. It means that it is harmful for spouses to engage in sexual activity during this time. During menstruation, the vaginal and cervical areas become restless, itching and get prone to inflammation and growth of harmful bacteria. These harmful microbes may flourish or be transferred to the man if intercourse takes place during this time.

The hormonal changes during menstruation makes a woman irritated. She feels weak and fatigued. This is the reason women are allowed to skip prayer and fasting and keep rested during this time. During menstruation, women often have mood swings. The husbands should give due consideration to this natural phenomenon. However, a man and his menstruating wife can give one another pleasure so long as the woman's genitals are avoided. On such occasions, women should not remove their lower garment (pajama).

It is in Hadith - Narrated Ummul Momineen A'isha (رضى الله تعالى عنها): "The Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) used to recite the Quran with his head on my lap while I used to be in my periods (having menses). (**Bukhari, Volume 9, Book 93, Number 639**)"

It is in Hadith - Ummul Momineen Maimuna (رضى الله تعالى عنها) reported: "The Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) contacted and embraced his wives over the waist-wrapper when they were menstruating. (**Muslim, Book 003, # 0579**).

It is in Hadith - Ummul Momineen A'isha (رضى الله تعالى عنها) reported: "When anyone among us (among the wives of the Prophet - صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) menstruated, the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) asked her to tie a waist-wrapper over her (body) and then embraced her. (**Muslim, Book 003, # 0577**).

SODOMY

Anal intercourse (sodomy) is forbidden in Islam – Period. It is the worst kind of sexual practice, not done even by wild animals.

It is in Hadith - "Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) does not look at one who comes to his wife in her anus". (**Nasa'I, Tirmidhi and Ibn Hibbaan**).

It is in Hadith - Cursed are those who come to their wives in their anuses." (**Abu Dawood, Ahmad and others**).

SEXUAL POSITIONS

The Quran and the Sunnah are generally silent as to the various positions during fondling/love making. Most Ulema consider that it is up to the husband and wife, in love and mutual respect, to decide how to physically and emotionally express their sexual desires. What goes on in bedroom, is a private matter between spouses and should not be discussed or revealed to other persons unless there is some necessity, such as health or safety.

It is in Hadith - Abu Hurairah (رضي الله تعالى عنه) narrates that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) said this about people who reveal and discuss openly their sexual practices: "Do you know what those who do this are like? Those who do this are like a male and female devil who meet each other on the road and satisfy their desire while the people look on."

It is in Hadith - The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) said "The most evil of the people to Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) on the Day of Resurrection will be the man who consorts with his wife and then publicizes her secret. (Muslim).

THE GAP IN SEXUAL RELATIONS

If the husband is absent from his wife because he is traveling for a legitimate purpose or other legitimate excuse, in this case the husband should try not to be absent from his wife for too long. The husband is obliged to treat his wife in a kind manner, which includes sex. The majority of scholars set the time limit beyond which it is not permissible for the husband to forgo intercourse at four months. However, Ulema agree that there is no time limit; the husband should have intercourse with his wife according to her emotional and physical requirements.

It is in Hadith - Imam Bukhari reported from ‘Abd-Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aas, who said: “The Apostle of Allah (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) said: ‘O ‘Abd-Allah, have I not heard that you fast all day and stand all night in prayer?’ I said, ‘Yes, O Apostle of Allah (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) .’ He said: ‘Do not do that. Fast and break your fast, stand in prayer and sleep. For your body has rights over you, your eyes have rights over you, and your wife has rights over you.’ (Bukhari)

In the commentary on this Hadith in Fath al-Bari, it is said : 'The husband should not exhaust himself in worship to an extent that he becomes too weak to fulfill his wife's rights(i) intercourse (ii) providing her a good living by earning.

ORAL SEX

Touching and caressing the genitalia of partners by hands is allowed. In this case, hands and private parts should be cleaned thoroughly to avoid infections.

For oral sex (genital contact by mouth), some Ulema consider it forbidden as sexual fluids are najis.

Some Ulema consider it 'tolerated' provided all precautions are taken to prevent sexual fluids from entering the mouth. For example if the couple are only kissing each other's genitalia without any fear of likelihood of consuming sexual fluids it may be considered as a form of foreplay, similar to kissing other parts of the body and so tolerated, but still disliked.

The famous Hanafi Fiqh reference book, **Fatawa Hindiyya** (Fatawa Alamgiri), states that if a woman takes the penis of her husband in her mouth (as an act of stimulation) some Ulema said that it is disliked (makruh) while others hold that it is tolerated. (**Al-Fatawa al-Hindiyya 5 : 372**).

Medical research has established that the partners who regularly and excessively perform oral sex on each other, have found to suffer from various kinds of mouth and cervical diseases. Therefore, it is advisable not to indulge in it.

MASTERBATION

There are differences of opinion among scholars in this context. The scholars who consider it forbidden cite the following Quranic verse.

It is in Quran - وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَفْئُوتِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ - إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ - فَمَنْ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ [Those who guard their sexual organs except with their spouses or those whom their right hands possess, for (with regard to them) they are without blame. But those who crave something beyond that are transgressors.] (**Al-Mu'minoon : 5-7**).

They consider that masturbation falls under the category of those who seek fulfillment of their sexual desires outside the framework of marriage, and as such, it is a transgression. This view is held by the followers of the Shafi'i school of thought.

Other scholars believe that the transgression meant in the aforementioned verse refers to extra-marital relations and what falls under the category of adultery. They consider masturbation does not fall under the meaning of transgression described in the above verse. This view is close to view held by the followers of Hanafi School of thought who say that masturbation is basically forbidden, but it may be permissible under certain circumstances, like (i) If the person is unmarried, (ii) If he/she fears that momentary masturbation will help him/her avoid possible Zina, and (iii) If the masturbation is to release the sexual tension resulting from natural stimulation and not for fulfilling sexual desires.

It is in Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) Hadith that those who cannot afford to marry (financially), they can control their desires by keeping fasts till they are able to sustain maintenance of a family.

Masturbation, surely is a bad habit. Those who masturbate as a habit need to stimulate themselves with wild sinful thoughts. This is very dangerous as it may lead to actual sinful acts. In addition, there are many health hazards involved in regular masturbation. Thus, to consider that Masturbation should be avoided is surely a healthy and sin free option.

As per Hanafi school of thought, mutual masturbation between husband and wife is permissible. Ibn Abidin states the permissibility of mutual masturbation between the husband and the wife, quoting Mi'raj al-Diraya as saying 'And it is permitted to masturbate with the hand of one's wife'. (**Radd al-Muhtar, 2:400, 4:28, al-'Ilmiyya**).

Radd al-Muhtar ala ad-Dur al-Mukhtar (رد المحتار على الدر المختار) is a book on Islamic jurisprudence by 18th century Islamic scholar Sayyid Muhammad Amin ibn Abidin ash-Shami. It is widely considered as the central reference for fatwa in the Hanafi school of thought.