

## Introduction

### A. Why This Book?

Writers do not normally have to justify their subject. If they think that what they are writing will be useful to the people in their practical life or in their intellectual pursuit, then they feel no need to justify their work. The present book has both qualities: it is useful and of intellectual interest. But there are many people, even among the Muslims, who think that sex is a taboo subject in all religions. Therefore, it is very appropriate to begin with the question: *Is discussion of sexual morality allowed in Islam?*

To answer this question one has to look at the definition of religion from the Islamic point of view. Anyone who has studied Islam even on surface can easily know that "religion" in Islamic definition is "a complete system of life" which covers all aspects of human life from the day a person is conceived up to the day he or she is laid in grave.

Islam is not only concerned with the spiritual upliftment of human beings, it is equally concerned about their material and physical well-being. Islam guides its followers in financial and economic matters, in social and political affairs, and also in moral and personal spheres of human life. In moral and personal matters, Islam has specific dietary guide-lines, hygienic rules, dress codes, and also rules about marriage, divorce and inheritance.

The Islamic laws of marriage do not stop at how to marry and whom to marry, it also deals with the sexual morality of human beings. This sexual morality, as we shall see in the following chapters, has been discussed in the Qur'an, and by the Prophet and his Ahlu'l-bayt very thoroughly and openly. Thus there should be no doubt in the mind of anyone about the permission Islam has given for open discussion of sexual morality.

This was about the basic permission which Islam has given to discuss the sexual morality. But this explanation will not be enough for some people who will confront me with the next question: *"Is it necessary to discuss sex?"*

There are three reasons for the necessity of discussing sexual morality. The first reason applies to all

Muslims and the other two reasons are relevant to the Muslims in the Western world who are the primary audience of this book.

Firstly, all Muslims agree that it is the duty of every Muslim to follow the *shari'ah* Islamic laws; and the laws of Islam are not confined to prayers, fasting, pilgrimage, and other ritual acts. The shari'ah has specific rules about sex also. Therefore, if a Muslim wants to follow Islam fully, then he or she must know the sexual morality of Islam, just as he or she must learn how to perform the daily prayers.

Secondly, the necessity of learning the Islamic sexual morality for the Muslims who are exposed to the New Sexual Morality of the West cannot be over-emphasized. At present, the propagandists of the new sexual morality are presenting their ideas through all the available means of communication: books, magazines, television, movies and videos.

The Muslims in the Western world are, in one way or another, exposed to the unIslamic sexual norms of the West. (This is an understatement; in reality even the Muslims in the East are exposed to the Western culture! ) Therefore, it is absolutely necessary for them to know the Islamic views about sex so they may live an Islamic life.

Thirdly, children in the Western world have excess to sex education to an extent unimaginable by the previous generation, and therefore, it is very important for today's parents to be aware of the right and the wrong in this subject. Only an informed Muslim parent will be able to face this problem correctly and responsibly. These reasons should be a sufficient justification for this book to those who, in the Qur'anic expression, have 'a heart or give ear with a present mind.'

## **B. Sex Education**

The third reason given above does not necessarily mean that I am in total agreement with the way sex education is handled in the Western school systems. I have no problem with the basic ideas that children should be educated about sex. However, I disagree with the age at which sex education begins and with its contents. This issue by itself deserves a detailed discussion which is beyond the scope of my present study. Nonetheless, I will briefly mention my thoughts on these two issues.

### **Age**

Sex education should begin in mid-teens when the children become sexually mature. The aim of sex education at this level should be to help them in understanding that they are responsible and accountable for using their sexual organs.

They should be taught how to deal with sexual tension. (However, by looking at the proportionally high level of child sexual abuse in the Western world [which reflects the degree of its moral decay], I am prepared to accept those programs for young children which aim at educating them as how to protect themselves from sexual abuse. But this, in my view, is not sex education and therefore would not apply

to our present discussion.)

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In this permissive society, the emphasis on sex education is more on preventing unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. No serious attempt is made in making the youngsters aware of the virtue of chastity and abstinence till they get married. This is not just because the Western society is a secular, liberal society, it is also related to its consumer-orientated economy. If sex education means only how to prevent unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, then the students learn nothing but the importance of using pills, condoms and other contraceptive devices.

In other words, such sex education is nothing but a promotional program for the manufacturers of contraceptive aids! Germaine Greer, a famous feminist, wrote about promoting contraceptives in the Third world as follows, "The sex reformers, who exhibit no respect for traditional values and address themselves to sexuality without interest in or comprehension of the whole personality, are the bawds of capitalism."<sup>1</sup> I totally agree with her not only in relation to the third world but even in case of the sex education in the West.

The reason why sex educators are under pressure not to talk about the natural methods of birth control is not only because such methods are not hundred percent reliable (otherwise, even the condoms are not hundred percent reliable!), the real reason seems to be that if natural methods (like coitus interruptus or abstinence) which involve no expense become more popular, then who will buy the condoms and the pills?

In short I agree with the necessity of sex education for youngsters provided it exhibits respect for their religious and moral values, and addresses the issue comprehensively and not just end up as a promotional program for 'the bawds of capitalism'.

<sup>1</sup>. Greer, Sex and Destiny, p. 219.

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