

‘Love Is in the Air’

By Riyaz Ibrahim

All praise belongs to Allāh, and may the choicest salutations and blessings be upon the Final Prophet, Muḥammad ibn Abdillāh and his family, as is the right of blessings to be invoked upon them.

Love is spontaneous and, as the saying holds, ‘Love cannot be stopped, nor can it be controlled.’ It rules to the extent that it makes you surrender. Love or the lack of it can cause pain, bring happiness, cause sadness, or create unbridled joy.

Whether or not this love is acceptable to our Lord, Allāh Most High, depends on the foundations it’s built on. If love between two strangers - male and female, may I say, is created through the tradition of *nikāḥ*, it will be a blessed union and an act that pleases Allāh Most High. Likewise, if it is based on, for example, the motherly love a mother holds for her child, or brotherly or sisterly love a fellow Muslim has for another, then this act of love will be regarded an act of worship. What is abhorred in Islam is love that is misplaced; such an undertaking will be rendered useless and not *‘ishq* (ardent love) but blatant *fisq* (immorality).

Many a Muslim misunderstands the concept of love and, occasionally, go as far as claiming Islam has left a void in this department.

Our vague understanding of Islam is what makes us wrongly conclude that Islam is a harsh, listless and strict faith. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ says, ‘Religion is easy.’ (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*)

Both the *Qur’ān* and Sunnah are there to guide us.

Islam, in many instances, takes preventive measures to keep harm at arms length; for example, the verse, ‘And come not near adultery,’ (*Qur’ān*, 17:32) from the onset closes the door on any avenues that lead to adultery, such as eyeing someone, making a pass on them, flirting, and engaging in unneeded conversations with someone who is marriageable (*ghayr-maḥram*) from the opposite sex. Imam Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī ؒ writes:

‘If the first inward thought is not warded off, it will generate a desire, then the desire will generate a wish, and the wish will generate an intention, and the intention will generate the action, and the action will result in ruin and divine wrath. So evil must be cut off at its root, which is when it is simply a thought that crosses the mind from which all other things follow.’ (*Iḥyā’ ‘l-‘Ulūm al-Dīn*)

Once a couple is Islamically married, they become permissible (*ḥalal*) for each other in that they have the freedom to express their love for one another

absolutely. One would hope for this love to be preserved through the prism of care, compassion, mutual understanding and tolerance.

Love can be expressed in various ways and on different occasions. And, more so than other religions and customs, Islam has not only advised us to leave the artificial love we are invited towards by the West for the real love it recognises, but it also teaches us how to add sizzle to our marriage life through the *sunnahs* of our Beloved Prophet ﷺ.

After all, should we be imitating those who specify a certain day of the year to express love for their wives and partners, or would it be more wholesome to follow one's heart and make it a 'Valentine's' whenever one chooses to throughout the year?

We should be most forthcoming in love that has substance and not a brief romance exhibited through a customary bouquet of roses.

Take a moment out to ponder upon the reward for a small act of placing a morsel in the mouth of one's wife. One can only imagine the reward for other good deeds (with one's spouse). The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ says,

'And you shall not spend upon your family to please Allāh but that you are rewarded for it, even [for] the morsel of food that you place in the mouth of your wife.' (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*)

What a wonderful tip to incorporate a loving, romantic mood in the home of a married couple! Practical advice the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ gave some 1400 years ago!

This expression of profound love went as far as the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ putting his lips on the same place from which his chaste wife and the Mother of the Believers, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ﷺ drank. Such was the profound love that he would take her to the desert and race with her. (*Abū Dāwūd & Musnad Aḥmad*)

And, during his final illness, she chewed the *miswāk* and softened it for the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, who breathed his last soon after that between her chest and neck.

Dear readers, driving away to watch the sun set in a romantic setting, giving a gift to the wife when she least expects it, expressing love to her - verbally and through intimacy, having a bouquet of flowers delivered to the doorstep, or enjoying one another's company, is not limited or confined to Valentine's Day.

Many a routine of Valentine's Day can be practiced on any day; so why mark this day out as the 'Special One' and fall into sin, especially through practicing the forbidden acts prescribed for this day. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ says,

'Whoever emulates a group is from them.' (*Abū Dāwūd, Ṭabarānī*)

The myth of Valentine is no more than a fantasy and illusion of love. It is certainly not the key to creating a successful marriage or relationship.

Valentine's Day is celebrated in many countries throughout the year. It has Christian roots and was established to mourn the death of a Roman priest, St. Valentine and, according to some, it began as a pagan ritual started by Romans in 4th century BC to honour the god Luperus.

There are many stories and rituals associated with Valentine's Day, but what is certain is that it is founded on indecency, customs and unislamic activity.

Rituals such as assigning for a man a woman companion for their mutual entertainment and pleasure for the duration of a whole year took place on this day. Sometimes, they would later fall in love and marry.

The phrase 'From Your Valentine' is attributed to St. Valentine, who is said to have fallen in love with the daughter of a prison guard, Asterius, whilst sentenced to death for his role in marrying couples secretly – something against the law in the days of Calaudius II. He treated her well when she visited him in jail along with his many supporters who opposed the death sentence he received. He ultimately signed a farewell note before his execution with these very words - words that happened to live long. (Charles Panati, *Extraordinary Origins of Everyday Things* (1987) (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, p. 50-52).

Although these February 14th rituals remain no more - as Pope Gelasius outlawed them – this date is now known for 'romantic love' depicted with exchanging love notes, and via the symbols of cupids, hearts, red roses, laces, gloves, rings, lovebirds & doves and cards.

Sending (sometimes anonymously) any of the above to express romantic feelings to anyone other than one's spouse is impermissible and goes against the very meaning of the sanctity of *nikāḥ* and marriage.

Allāh Most High states, 'And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy.' (*Qur'ān*, 30: 21)

Our marriages transcend love and physical intimacy, for the ultimate foundation of this relationship is affection and mercy so that, if the marriage were to hit the rocks so to speak, the couple would be able to successfully navigate themselves to the shores of safety. We are bound to treat one another by virtue of good character and the positive teachings of Islam that

we are lucky to know about.

What is more romantic for married couples than exhibiting the best of manners, being there for one another, appreciating each other and helping one another to grow closer to the One who has created them?

True love can only be realised through the bond of marriage. Building a marriage on true love brings contentment to the heart, a quality that prepares one to overcome any potentially challenging circumstances. Through thick and thin, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and his Chaste Wives stuck together. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ؓ says that many moons would pass and they hadn't lit the fire, remaining content on the two black things: water and dates. *Allāhu akbar!*

May Allāh Most High grant all couples a successful marriage. May their relationship be founded on mutual love, understanding, tolerance and kindness. May Allāh make us steadfast on the true teachings of the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah* and safeguard us from introducing new ways and customs that has no basis in Islam in our lives. *Āmīn.*