

# Educating the Couples Rights and Obligations of Marriage for National Unity and Integration in Nigeria

<sup>1</sup>Akanni, Mutahir Ayinla (Ph.D.) and \*Bashar, Sa'adu Isa

<sup>1</sup>Department of Islamic Studies, Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, Nigeria.  
Email: akannijoju@gmail.com

\*Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Sokoto State University,  
Sokoto, Nigeria

\*Corresponding Author E-mail: mmbashar1984@gmail.com

**Abstract:** Marriage, apart from being a devotional act, is also perceived to be to be an avenue for enhancing unity and integration that is needed for the development of the contemporary nations. Thus couples need to be educated on their individual rights and obligations for building the spirit of peace, national unity, integration and development. This is due to the marriage's power and ability to disseminate peace, love, affection, mercy, unity, wealth and children among the members of the society. The objective of this paper is to justify the concept of marriage, the spiritual significance of marriage, the roles of marriage in building national unity and integration, and the rights and obligations of the couples. Therefore, by applying the qualitative methodology, the paper recommends, that people should see marriage as a means of social unity and integration not just a means of social enjoyment; people should marry with sincerity of purpose and see it as a devotional act with which one acquires the pleasure of almighty Allah; for peace to reign in the matrimonial homes of the couples and in the wider society, the couples must preserve each other's rights and obligations. Finally, marriage should be imbibed as a means of cementing cordial relationship among the diverse cultural, religious and racial differences of the Nigerian populace and the global world in general.

**Keywords:** Educating, Couples, Rights, Obligations, Marriage, Nation, Unity, Integration.

**Citation:** Akanni, Mutahir Ayinla and Bashar, Sa'adu Isa. 2018. Educating the Couples Rights and Obligations of Marriage for National Unity and Integration in Nigeria. International Journal of Recent Innovations in Academic Research, 2(7): 252-261.

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## Introduction

Marriage apart from being a devotional act is also capable of facilitating the unity and integration of a nation that is needed for the development of the contemporary nations. School thus needs to foster the culture of marriage among its students because, apart from its devotional attributes, is also capable of bringing about national unity and integration especially in country of diverse religious, ethnic and social backgrounds like Nigeria. Based on this, the paper intends to educate the couples the rights and obligations of marriage for enhancing national unity and integration in Nigeria. This is done by defining the basic concepts, justifying the Islamic stance on marriage, the rights of the couples; and the roles of marriage in building national unity and integration. It ends with conclusion and recommendations.

### Conceptual Clarifications

The term marriage has been given various definitions by different scholars. According to Encarta Encyclopedia (2009), marriage is a socially recognized and approved union between individuals (man and woman) who commit to one another with the expectation of a stable and lasting relationship. Similarly, marriage is understood as “the state of being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law (Merriam Webster, 2003). Marriage is also perceived by Collins Dictionary (2014) as “the state of relationship of living together in a legal partnership or a legal union or contract made by two people to live together.” Moreover, Oxford Advance learner’s Dictionary (2015) described marriage as “a legal relationship between a husband and wife.” All the definitions point unto the fact that a marriage is a legal union or relationship between a man and woman living together as husband and wife for the purpose of comforting each other and for the purpose of giving birth to children.

National integration according to Aisha (2012) is the awareness of a common identity among the citizens of a country. This by implications means that even though the country is made up of different tribes, languages, religions and regions, the citizens recognize the fact that they are one and thus struggle for building a strong and prosperous nation. Moreover, Alapiki (2012) perceives national integration as “a process that attempts to erode the presence of micro-nationalities in a place of spirit of nationhood which could be achieved by breaking down ethnic barriers, elimination of primordial ethnic loyalties and the development of a sense of common identity”

From the preceding definitions, national unity and integration could be understood as a state of a nation having a united citizenry despite their religious, tribal, language, cultural and regional diversities towards actualizing a common national goal.

### Marriage from the Islamic View-Lane

Marriage is a legal phenomenon in Islam. That is why many verses of the glorious Qur’an and many traditions of the holy prophet came to buttress its legitimacy. In Qur’an 4 verse 2, Allah says: “And if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphan-girls, then marry (other) women of your choice, two or three or four; but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with (them), then (marry) only one or (the slaves) that your right hands possess. That is nearer to prevent you from doing injustice”. In another place, Allah says: “And indeed We sent Messengers before you (O Muhammad) and made for them wives and offspring. And it was not for a Messenger to bring a sign except by Allah’s Leave. For every matter there is a decree (from Allah)” (Q13:38). Also Allah says in Q30:21: “And among His signs is that He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find repose in them, and He has put between you affection mercy. Verily, in that are indeed signs for a people who reflect”.

Imam Al-bukhari reports that the Apostle of Allah said: “O the generality of youths! Whoever among you has a means should marry. For it is (the only thing that) covers your sight (most from committing eyes fornication) and protects your private chastity (from committing great zinah [adultery or fornication]); but whoever has no means, I enjoy him to keep to fasting, for it’s a protection (from evils). Similarly, Imam Alghazali reported that the messenger of Allah said: “marriage is my Sunnah; who so ever is displeased with my Sunnah is certainly displeased with me”. This portrays the status of marriage in that it reached the state of whoever loves it loves the prophet and whoever hates it has surely hates the prophet. God forbids!

In the same vein, Imam Ahmad and Tirmidhi quote the messenger of Allah saying: “Four things are among the traditions (Sunnah) of the Allah’s Apostles: bashfulness, perfuming, chew-sticking, and marriage...” This implies unambiguously that whoever has a bashful character in all his dealings such a person has one of the apostles’ attributes, so also the attributes of massing perfumes for having good smells, chew-sticking for healthy teeth and marriage for chastity protection. Thus, if anybody tries to imitate a caliber of people, such will surely be resurrected with them in the day of judgements. So if you are bashful in your dealings, use perfumes regularly, brush your teeth and marry a wife to revive the tradition of the prophets; you shall be in their umbrella in the last day. Allah says: “And whoever follows (the commandments of) Allah and (follows the commandments, traditions of) the Apostle; such are those that (will be) together with those whom Allah has bestowed His Grace, of the prophets, the siddiqun (followers of the prophet), the martyrs and the righteous; and how excellent these companions are!” (Q4:69).

All the verses and sayings of the prophet quoted here are sufficient to justify the status of marriage in Islam. However, the prophet has married, gave out his daughters to marry and he also enjoined and advocates for marriage because it remains the only way of ensuring a pure and sacred family tie in the community.

### **Wives’ Rights and Obligations towards Peace Building in the Family**

Islam has enjoined men to ensure that they provide the following rights to their wives in order to build peace and tranquility in the family and nation at large:

**i. Giving her dowry:** It is her legal right that must be given to her before any sexual engagement. Allah says: “and give to the women (whom you marry) their dowry with a good heart; but if they, of their own good pleasure, remit any part of it to you, take it, and enjoy it without fear of any harm (as Allah has made it lawful). (Q4:4).

**ii. Feeding, clothing and providing her with shelter:** It is compulsory upon a husband to feed his wife whenever she is hungry, provide her with clothes to cover her nudity and cater a place for her to live. This is understood from the wordings of Allah in Q65: 6-7. Also Allah explained that men are superior over women for they are the ones that are in position of spending for them in terms of feeding, providing them with their needs and everything (Q4:34). One of the companions also asked the apostle of Allah (PBUH): what are the rights of one’s wife over him? He replied: “feed her whenever you fed (yourself), clothe her whenever you clothed, and do not beat her face, and do not insult her, and do not turn-away from her except in the room...” (Abu Dawood & Nasa’i).

**iii. Educating her:** It is necessary for a Muslim to teach his wife how to worship Allah first. Then followed by any other worldly education that might benefit her and her society. Allah says: “O you who believe! ward off yourselves and your families from a Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who disobey not (from executing) the Commands they receive from Allah, but do that which they are commanded” (Q66: 6). Also Allah says: “And enjoin the prayer on your family, and be patient on it, We ask not of you a provision: We provide for you. And the good end is for the pious” (Q20: 132).

**iv. Making good relationship with her:** It is paramount for a husband to see that he relates well with his wife (s) by living with her peacefully and honorably. It is even recommended that one should, apart from satisfying her basic needs, give her some gifts with which she will

be happy. Allah says: “And live with them honorably. If you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing and Allah brings through it a great deal of good” (Q4: 19). However, in a tradition of the holy Prophet, it is reported that the apostle of Allah says: “Every morning two angels say: O Allah! Give compensation to whoever gives out (his resources to others in form of gift and help) and give destruction to whoever held his hand (from helping others)...” (Albukhari).

**v. Admonishing, guiding and counseling her:** It is enjoined by Islam that a husband should be preaching to his wife whenever one sees her doing something wrong. One should also be guiding his wife to do righteous acts and offer her advises whenever it is due or whenever she demands for it. Allah the Almighty says in Q4:36: “...As to those women, on whose part you see ill-conduct, admonish them (first)...”

**vi. Sleeping with her:** A wife, as a human, has some sexual desires which she might need to be satisfied. Therefore the husband has to do everything humanly possible to prepare himself towards satisfying the sexual demands of the wife. This is because Allah says: “...and they (women) have rights (also, over their husbands as regards living expenses) similar (to those of their husbands) over them (as regards obedience, respect, etc)...” (Q2:228).

**vii. Giving her chance to visit her family:** A husband has to understand that part of living honourably with a wife is his ability to allow her visit her family and relatives whenever the need arises such as in the instance of giving birth or illness of one of the kinship members of her family. This will solidify the love she has in him and will thus better their matrimonial relationship. Allah the almighty says in Q4:19: “And live with them honourably” as He also said in Q2:228: “...and they (women) have rights (over their husbands) similar (to those of their husbands) over them...”

**viii. Establishing justice between the wives:** It is compulsory for a husband to ensure justice between or among all his matrimonial wives. Justice here means equalizing opportunities between or among the wives without preferring one over another in terms of feeding, clothing, time and awards. Justice in terms of feeding is to feed all the wives the same food he gave to one wife without any discrimination. Justice in clothing signifies that a husband must clothe his wives with similar clothes without any differences. Justice in sleeping tenure means that a husband must allocate equal number of times or days to all of the wives. If he allocates one or two days for one of the wives, it must be same for each and every one of them without any disparity. Justice in awards implies that the wives must be given equal awards by the husband without any physical discrimination. “And if you (do justice, and) do all that is right and fear Allah (by keeping away from all that is wrong), Allah is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Q4: 129).

**ix. Concealing her privacy:** A husband must keep the secrets of his wives especially those related to her privacies. On no occasion should a husband publish the sex-related stories of his wife (s) to a third party. This is because it is a disgrace to her and anything that can disgrace a Muslim, is not permissible in Islam. The messenger of Allah is reported to have said: “Indeed, the man that has the worst place in the sight of Allah in the day of judgement is him who sleeps with his wife and then publishes her privacies.” (Albukhari)

**x. Endurance with her:** One must be patient with his wife because they are weak in nature and sometimes have wicked manners. It is related that: “whoever patiently bears the bad traits

of his wife, Allah shall award him a reward similar to that of Prophet Ayyub (Job): Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him..." (Alghazali).

### **Husband's Rights and Obligations towards Peace Building in the Family**

Islam also enjoins women to preserve the rights of their husbands over them for building peace and tranquility in the family and nation at large. Some of those are:

**a. Respecting and being obedient to him:** A wife is obliged to respect and offer total obedience to her husband in whatever he commands her to do if it is not a sinful act. If it is a sinful act, she must not be loyal to him as the prophet says: "no obedience to any of the creature in what is disobedience to the Creator (Allah)." (Albukhari). Allah says in the glorious Qur'an: "...Therefore the righteous women are (those that are) devoutly obedient (to Allah and to their husbands), and guard in the husband's absence what Allah orders them to guard (e.g. their chastity, their husbands' property)..." (Q4:34). In a tradition that was narrated by Abu-Hurairah (RA), the Prophet says: "if a woman prays her five daily prayers, fasts her month (of Ramadan), guards her chastity, and complies with the commandments of her husband, shall definitely enter the paradise of her Lord." (Ibn Hibban).

**b. Satisfying his sexual demands:** A woman must answer the invitation of her husband whenever he wants to sleep with her. This is compulsory provided that she has a sound health and is not in her menstrual period or birth session. The Messenger of Allah says: "if a man calls his wife to his mattress but refused to come to him, the angels will keep-on cursing her until the next morning..." (Bukhari & Muslim). Also the prophet says: "if a man invites his wife to his demand, let her accept the invitation even if she (works) on the oven..." (Nasa'i & Tirmidhi). These traditions show how important it is for a woman to attend to her husband while he is in need of her. This is because when he is compelled by his sexual urge, the only solution for him is to satisfy that desire with his legal wife whereas if she refused him, it can push him to committing evil (adultery). To prevent the occurrence of such evil act, a wife ought to accept the invitation of her husband so as to get his pleasure, and Allah's pleasure at the same time.

**c. Taking excuse from him:** A wife is tasked with the responsibility of taking excuse from her husband before doing anything including the supererogatory acts of worship. A wife therefore has also no right to get out of her matrimonial house in the name of visiting her relatives, going to the market, going for work, etc without the prior permission of the husband. She has to seek permission first; if it is granted she go ahead, but she should stop, if the permission is not granted. The Messenger of Allah says in what was reported by Imam Attabrani: "When a woman get out of her matrimonial house (without the husband's permission), such will be accursed by angels until she comes back or repent (to Allah and to the husband)." Imam Azzahabi also stated in his book that "any woman that goes out of her house without the prior permission of her husband, that shall be accursed by the angels till she comes back." Again, Anas bn Malik relates that "A person set out on a journey and told his wife not descend downstairs from the up. Later, the father of the wife fell sick, and the father was in the downstairs. The wife sent to the prophet demanding him to excuse her to visit the father. Then the Apostle of Allah said: "be obedient to your husband." The father died and she re-sent to the Prophet seeking to be granted excuse to see the father (before his burial). The Prophet replied her that "remain obedient to your husband." After the burial, the Prophet sent to her that "Allah has forgiven her and her father too due to her obedience to her husband." (Attabrani).

**d. Being grateful to him:** A wife has to be appreciating the efforts of her husband towards her. This is in terms of her shelter, feeding, clothing etc. she should not be ungrateful to him as this attracts Allah's anger to her. Imam Albukhari and Muslim reported that the Messenger of Allah said: "I had a glance over the hellfire; I eventually saw that women compounded it most". Then they (the women) said: "why, O Messenger of Allah?" He said: "because they do curse (people) most, and are ungrateful to their husbands." In another tradition, the Prophet said: "Allah does not look at a woman that is not grateful to her husband." (Nasa'i).

**e. Concealing his privacies:** A wife must also keep all the secrets of her husband especially those related to his private or sexual issues. On no occasion a wife should publish the sex-related stories of her husband to a friend, brother, sister, neighbour etc. This is because it is a disgrace to the husband and anything that can disgrace a Muslim is not permissible in Islam. The messenger of Allah is reported to have said: "Indeed, the man that has the worst place in the sight of Allah in the day of judgement is him who will sleep with his wife and then publish her privacies." (Albukhari). This Hadith even though it talks about men who publish the stories or information of their wives, scholars say it also implies to women who do the s.

**f. Being patient with him:** A wife must be patient with her husband for some of his bad manners towards her. In this case, she is required to guide him, counsel him, admonish him and preach to him if possible. On no account should a wife make an attempt to challenge her husband, attack him, fight him or take retaliative measures against him. It is related in Al-Ihya' of Imam Alghazali that: "any wife that endures with the bad manners of her husband, Allah will award her with a reward similar to that of Asiyah- the wife of the Pharaoh."

**g. Guarding herself and his property:** A wife must guard her chastity from any man that is not her husband. She must not allow anybody enter her husband's house, make an intercourse with her, sleep on his bed, or take his property. Allah says: "...the righteous women are (those that are) devoutly obedient (to Allah and to their husbands), and guard in the husband's absence what Allah orders them to guard (e.g. their chastity, their husbands' property)..." (Q4:34). Also, in a hadith narrated by Abuhurairah (RA), the Prophet also said: "if a woman prays her five daily prayers, fasts her month (of Ramadan), guards her chastity, and complies with the commandments of her husband, shall definitely enter the paradise of her Lord." (Ibn Hibban).

**h. Confining herself at home:** Islam demands that a wife should confine herself in her matrimonial home and do not frequently expose herself on the streets except on the ground of necessity. Allah the Almighty says: "And stay in your houses, and do not display yourselves like that of the times of ignorance, and establish Prayer, and give Charity, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah wishes only to remove Ar-Rijs (evil deeds and sins) from you, O members of the family, and to purify you with a thorough purification." Also Allah says in another verse: "And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts) and do not show off their adornment except only that which is apparent and to draw their veil all over their juyubihinna (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms)..." (Q24:31).

### **Marriage as a Tool for National Unity and Integration**

Apart from the spiritual relevance of marriage, there are also other mundane areas of its significance which in one way or the other come-up to build unity and integration among people of diverse social and cultural backgrounds. Some of those roles are hereby discussed viz:

Ab-initio, everyone knows that national unity and integration are never possible until when peace, tranquility and stability prevail among the members and citizens of a particular nation. Marriage therefore has come to initiate peace and tranquility among the humanity for national integration, unity and progress. This is confirmed by the verses of the glorious Qur'an where Allah says: "And among His signs is that He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find repose in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy. Verily, in that are indeed signs for a people who reflect" (Q30:21). This demonstrates clearly that one of the sources of peace and tranquility is marriage. With peace and tranquility, the couples, the children, the family, the immediate community, the state and federation will live a happy life; thereby showing empathy and sympathy to one another for house, community, state and federal progress and development.

Marriage brings about love, affection and mercy to one another. With love and compassion, unity and integration can be possible in a nation. With these, people would be tendering their affections to their fellow human beings and without which people would hate each other thereby creating chaos and crises in the society. Also with crises and disputes, no nation will prosper. Therefore one of the main objectives of marriage is to ensure love, affection and compassion among humanity ranging from their micro homes to their macro societies. Qur'an 30:21 corroborates with this fact as it says: "And among His signs is that He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find tranquility in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy. Verily, in that are indeed signs for a people who reflect"

Unity is a prerequisite for national integration and development. "With unity we prosper and with disunity we perish". To be united means to have a harmony of opinion, feeling or interest for achieving a common goal. Marriage plays a significant role in bringing about harmony and oneness of feelings, interests and opinions among the married couples. This extends to the family members, immediate community and the wider nation. When a person of a particular tribe, religion or social identity married a person of another tribe, religion or social identity, such couples will become a united couple and no one shall wish a calamity to befall one another. Again, none of the members of either of the couples will wish to harm or disgrace a person of a particular religion, race, or tribe of the couples in question. This will strengthen the relationships between members of diverse religious faiths, tribes, races and social or ethnic backgrounds. This is understood from the divine explanation thus: "O mankind! We have created you from a male and female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other..." (Q49:13).

National unity and integration could be facilitated, solidified and enhanced by wealth. With wealth almost everything will be possibly provided and supplied for both the recurrent and infrastructural development of a nation. To achieve this, marriage plays a very significant role in expanding the wealth of the people of the couple in particular and that of the society or nation in general. In a prophetic narration, it is said that: "woman is (being) married for her wealth, her beauty, her genealogy, and for her religion..." (Bukhari). This portrays that one of the reasons why women are married by men is to get attached to their wealth and the vice-versa. This attachment will make the wealth circulate among different category of people in the name of business and other financial transactions for its multiplicity and proliferation. This will thus boost the economy of the house of the couples and that of the community, state and country in general. If the economy is boosted, people will have a sense of entrepreneurial services for their self-reliance and for the country's integration and development.

Children contribute immensely in building national unity, integration and the overall development of all sectors of the economy of a nation. Children are the leaders of tomorrow. A nation without children is a declining or even a collapsing one. This is because as time flows the present ones will be ageing and eventually die. If there are no upcoming generation the nation will just be an object of history without future. Marriage thus tries to ensure the continuous production and multiplicity of human creation through which children are made available for shouldering future challenges of the nation. The prophet ordered that: “marry women of your interest who can give birth (to children); for I shall be proud of you in the day of judgement”. Population of human resource in a particular nation helps in building its economy and military strength and manpower development. To ensure this, marriage is incessantly enjoined by Islam.

### Conclusion

It is worth concluding that marriage is a significant avenue of bringing humanity closer to their Creator because, it is a completion of the half of one's religion, it is a means of protecting one's chastity from all sorts of vices such as adultery, fornication, sodomy and lesbianism; it brings about multiplicity of rewards of good deeds of the couples; it makes the prophet happy and proud of this ummah in the day of accountability. Marriage also brings about national integration in a country of diverse social background. This could be manifested through its ability to disseminate love, affection, mercy, unity, wealth and Children. Therefore, couples need to know the each other's' rights and obligations for them to preserve them in order to attain the divine glory, and promote the spirit of peace, love, and affection among people of diverse cultural, religious and racial backgrounds for cementing unity and national integration.

### Recommendations

From the foregoing, it is worth recommending that:

- i. Schools need to promote the culture of marriage through adequate sensitization and religious programmes.
- ii. People should see marriage as a means of social unity and integration not just a means of social enjoyment.
- iii. People should marry with sincerity of purpose and see it as a devotional act with which one acquires the pleasure of almighty Allah.
- iv. Women should employ extra care in choosing “who to marry” so that they should not fall in marrying those that are naturally forbidden for them by the Islamic law.
- v. Men need to carefully determine the caliber of women they are to marry so that they will be able to build peace-oriented family leading to a united and peace-loving nation.
- vi. For peace to reign in the matrimonial homes of the couples, both of the couples need to see to the preservation of each other's' rights and obligations.

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