



**SEXUAL PROBLEMS
OF THE YOUTH**
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Preface

Towards Awakening the Society

Parents are in a deep state of sleep, while the youth seem indifferent towards issues which will play a key part in their future destiny. It seems that the people, due to a feeling of fear, prefer to forget the issues which face them, rather than dealing with them head on. Perhaps the thought is that by waiting a problem out, the specific problem will disappear by itself. In the meantime, many generations of innocent youth are sacrificed at the altar of negligence, heedlessness, and ignorance, and ultimately, this has caused the society to become entirely corrupt and dysfunctional.

We find it strange that during the span of each year, there are thousands of conferences and seminars all around the world that are established to investigate various issues such as the biology of various marine animals, underwater mining, the direction of winds and typhoons, pests which infest the cotton plant, the extinction of the mountain goat, the decrease in the number of penguins, the anatomy of the firefly, and other such topics. Yet at the same time, almost no attention is paid to issues concerning the youth who are the most essential and precious treasures of our societies. Why is this the case?

Unfortunately, our present day world is not ruled by the intellect or wisdom, and oftentimes, something which is the reality is not taken into consideration and is actually ignored. The only issues which are dealt with are usually the result of personal, regional, emotional, or recreational impulses, rather than issues which affect the heart of the society. If this was not the case, then why should such issues related to the youth be utterly forgotten and ignored to such a large extent? The intellectuals and scientists of the world community have indeed fallen short of their human responsibility, but this shortfall should not lull parents and the youth into coming short in regards to their own personal and social responsibilities.

One of the most important and critical problems faced by the youth of today is that which is related to various sexual issues. Unfortunately, we have to admit that this problem is becoming even more complicated and serious due to various factors of modern day life, such as the technological advancements which are taking place in society, the long duration of schooling

and education, the availability of luxury items throughout all classes of society, and the lack of mutual trust between men and women.

We have openly and clearly discussed various problems throughout this book and we have also proposed various solutions. Although some people believe that there are no solutions to these problems, we have proven God willing, that this is not the case, and that there are actual solutions to the sexual problems of the youth. One of the most important factors towards solving these issues will be the willingness of parents and the youth to sit down and truly push for change.

We have furthermore discussed the issues related to sexual perversions and excesses and the practical ways of preventing and treating them. We trust that studying this section will prove useful for all young men and women towards carefully sidestepping such problems and if necessary, freeing themselves from them.

We pray to Allah, who has power over all things, to bestow success upon all of the youth in resolving their problems at this most critical stage in their lives.

This is our utmost desire,

Nasir Makarim Shirazi

The Holy City of Qum, August 1971

A Problem Called Marriage

Barriers to Spouse Selection: Every Youth Faces These Problems

Statistics have shown that the rate of marriage, particularly in recent years, has decreased considerably. In addition, the actual marriage age, especially in the bigger cities and places whose lifestyle matches such cities has increased considerably. This has resulted in the youth getting married at an age where their actual period of youth is practically at an end and the vitality and energy that is associated with this period of life has mostly faded away. This in essence means that the youth are getting married at a time when the prime age of marriage has actually ended.

This is caused by several various factors, of which the most important are as follows:

1. An extended period of education and schooling
2. The expanded possibility of illicit relationships
3. Heavy expenditures and material expectations related to marriage
4. A feeling of distrust between young boys and girls

Here, we will study in detail the first two points, which play a more significant part as a preventative factor in marriage.

Without really studying this issue in depth or trying to understand its causes, several social planners have proposed a plan by the name of 'Compulsory Marriage'. This plan in reality means that the state should impose a type of special tax on 'singleness' with the intent of pushing youth towards becoming married at an earlier age. Another idea for proponents of this plan include denying employment to single people in various institutions, as well as other types of similar punishment. Some youth have asked about my opinion in regards to such plans and whether it would be a both effective and proper solution.

We believe that if such measures were enacted in society, and for example, employment was denied to those who were single, then this would be at best effective in the short term but it would not constitute a permanent solution. In addition, it may even bring about certain undesirable side effects.

The words marriage and compulsion are two terms that are completely at odds with one another. Saying compulsory marriage is similar to saying compulsory friendship and affection. Is it really possible to impose true friendship and affection between two people by the utilization of the force of law?

Marriage, in its proper understanding, is a kind of spiritual and physical relationship which will help establish a peaceful life in society and one of its most important conditions is that of sincerity and honesty. Due to this reason, marriages must be established in a free atmosphere without any external impositions. Therefore, Islam repudiates any marriage contracts that are drawn up without the full agreement of both parties. Marriage cannot be seen as a sort of 'military duty' where one is sent off to a camp in order to learn various techniques under the force of compulsion.

It is strange that various social planners are trying to reform the present day condition of our society, which is itself the result of a series of social abnormalities, without paying the least attention to its actual causes. It is our opinion that even if such plans are workable, they will

prove to be only superficial fixes to the problems at hand. If we were to actually fix the root issues, then the abnormal and illogical present day situation of marriage would automatically resolve itself. Due to this reason, we have to undertake a deep study of each of the four aforementioned factors independent of one another in order to truly understand the problems that face us at a societal level.

The Extended Duration of Education: The First Great Barrier of Marriage

Although not all youths remain unmarried due to the long period of modern day education, it is the case that many of them do find this issue to be a significant factor. The educational period for most majors is approximately 18 years (and in some cases, it extends beyond this as well). When a young man or woman graduates from college they are about 22-25 years of age and it is at this point that they begin to look for an entry level job. The irony is that by this age the period of their youth has for the most part passed. Additionally, it seems very likely that as the extent of specialization increases, so will the period of education. At some point in the future, it is not unlikely that the age of study will lengthen until a well educated individual has reached the age of 35.

The main question here is whether marriage should depend upon graduation or not, even if the average age isn't further prolonged and extended. Or should this qualification be eliminated when it comes to marriage? Even if this qualification is removed as a social barrier to marriage, how would a young man be able to support himself in married life without the benefits of a college degree and a job. Is it possible to deny a link between marriage and graduation?

We believe that if we think openly about this topic and avoid baseless cultural imitation, then solving this problem will not be too difficult. Consider the following possibility: What if young men and women selected their partners through consultation with their parents and friends during the period of their education. After finding someone suitable, the young couple would then join together in a marriage bond free of any expensive or elaborate wedding ceremonies in order that they may become familiar with one another and understand that in the future they would be fully married. After the passing of some time and further preparation, they could then hold a simple wedding ceremony. The first advantage of this plan is that the youth can find spiritual tranquility and hope, and they can be saved from fears of a vague and lonely future which troubles many of the single youth of today. The second advantage is that it helps insure the youth against various moral deviations and it also saves them time in later having to go through the trouble of finding a spouse.

This is a plan that most youth are able to follow and if the parents are observant and careful, they could help guide this process and many future problems would be resolved in regards to marriage. With the legal engagement of the couple to one another (through the formation of a marriage contract) sexual needs can be met and such an arrangement offers many of the advantages of marriage while compensating for the sexual deprivation of youth, which is a major problem that they face. Through such an arrangement, the youth can secure themselves from sexual indecencies and deviations without the imposition of extra expenses on either of their families, as well as being free from the issues related to pregnancies or other similar issues during the period of their education.

Another alternative is an official marriage, meaning the completion of a wedding ceremony but at the same time, enacting a plan to prevent pregnancy through various available and lawful means. One of the main problems related to early marriage is that of pregnancy and the subsequent raising of children; this is a major problem for someone who is occupied with a college education. However, both of these plans are only possible if the wedding ceremony is celebrated simply and without any undue formalities. Obviously, the present day rituals and expenses (which are without any rational basis) must be put aside in the implementation of such plans.

This is the solution if parents and the youth are truly seeking happiness and prosperity. Waiting for one's graduation in order to find a suitable job and then attempting to buy a car, a home, and also pay the expenses of a high end wedding ceremony are all the causes of dozens of deviations found in the youth today, as well as delayed marriages which take place when one is 35 to 40 years of age. This is an age when one is nearer to retirement, rather than the age one should be getting married. Such a marriage is not only abnormal, but it also lacks in spirit and nobility, and it is not in harmony with man's natural instincts and the very system of existence.

A Decrease in Matrimony: A Major Social Tragedy

The decrease in marriage and the actual reluctance of youth in marrying and in preferring the unnatural life of bachelors is one of the great tragedies of our modern times. It is one of the negative impacts of a more automated lifestyle. Amongst the problems related to a decrease in marriage is that which results in negative population growth; if such a thing is sustained, then the actual nation is at risk of population extinction based on the simple fact that not enough children are born to meet the losses taking place. Besides this issue, another even more important danger is that unmarried individuals lag behind others when it comes to their

fulfillment of various social responsibilities. They do not feel like they belong to any community and they are in essence 'rootless'. They easily move from one place to another and when faced with problems, they feel as if they have no support and at times, will even commit suicide due to this feeling. According to statistics, the suicide rate is much higher in single people than in people who are married. The problem of 'brain drain' is also more commonplace in single people rather than those who have settled down and married in their country of origin.

In addition, most criminals are either single or they live alone. Marriage in fact prevents a man from thinking that he belongs to himself and that any decisions made will only affect himself personally. Contrary to this, marriage helps people understand that they are responsible for their family and their family is in reality a microcosm of the 'family unit' known as society. This lack of social responsibility has other negative consequences. The most important of these are the non utilization and non mobilization of all the powers and faculties that are present in human beings towards the improvement and development of one's life. It doesn't take much to provide for a single individual, but it is another matter when a family is concerned.

There is a reason why the life of single individuals is filled with more depression, laziness, and indifference when it comes to pushing forward in life and in the full actualization of their potential. Many single individuals who are considered as being weak and unable to earn their own livelihood are transformed through marriage into serious, decisive, and observant people. This is derived from the power of the sense of social responsibility. In this respect, we can compare single people to 'wandering gypsies' who never try to stay in one place and improve the lands in which they live, easily emigrating to other places.

From a moral perspective, the vast majority of single people will never reach human perfection because many moral traits, such as loyalty, forgiveness, manliness, affection, kindness, dedication, and gratitude are realized in the family setting where one is confronted with various challenges and issues in the relationship with one's wife and children. Those who are not placed in such a situation are never forced to face up to them and thus reach closer to human perfection.

While it can be said that undertaking the responsibilities of a joint life after marriage will be accompanied with various problems as well as obligations, it is also the case that perfection can only be found through facing various issues in life and safely learning how to navigate through them. In addition, there are certain natural needs of the body and spirit which have to be met; saying no to such needs will lead to various unfavorable mental and physical consequences. By understanding all of these issues as a whole, we would not be exaggerating if we were to call the modern day tendency towards singleness and the continuous decrease in the marriage rate as a social tragedy.

The question which continuously arises is how we shall deal with the issues that the youth face in fulfilling the natural and social obligations of marriage. Is it really possible to get young men and women married at an earlier point in time even in spite of the present day conditions of an automated lifestyle, various unreasonable life expectations, disagreements between parents and youth, educational conditions, unemployment of the youth, and the distrust present amongst them.

These points have to be carefully examined and the resolution of various social problems is impossible until this issue is first resolved. The reality that we must face is that the current dire situation of marriage and its related issues are something that we and our societies have created and in turn imposed upon ourselves. Such a dilemma did not come down from the sky or grow out of the earth; we are the ones who have established it as a result of selfish competition, ignorance, improper judgments, and involvement in a series of destructive customs and rituals. At the same time, just as this problem is a creation of our societies, we are also able to solve it and establish a better way of life based the realities on the ground and those things which have been divinely revealed to us. Such a way of life will be based on these realities and not based on various fictional and imaginary concepts. Such a solution will not require a miracle, just simple and sound thinking and planning.

The Possibility of Illicit Relationships: An Important Factor for the Decrease in the Marriage Rate

In most parts of the world today, social life is not in a normal and healthy form. This is evidenced by the decrease in marriage and the preference of wide swaths of the youth to a life of singleness rather than married life. We previously mentioned that in addition to the obvious problems in the lack of marriage, another tragedy is the feeling of a lack of social responsibility and a feeling of having no 'roots', which is a consequence of a long period of bachelorhood. If we factor in the social moral deviations which many single people fall victim to, then the significance of this social problem will become even more evident.

At this juncture, let us study the main causes of this dangerous social phenomenon:

Without a doubt, this issue isn't caused by one or two factors alone; however, it does have certain main factors which play a more major role. One of these major factors is that of the widespread occurrence of illicit relationships. Due to the easy availability of engaging in illicit

relationships in society, women have been relegated to a very low value commodity that is easily accessible by all. In this manner, women have lost their previous value, significance, and prestige and they simply do not have the same preciousness that they possessed beforehand.

The increasing nudity of women in the modern day world has contributed to an initial superficial attraction which soon fades because while it superficially attracts it also cheapens women and thus causes them to lose their value with men. This is something which seems opposite to the effect that such women are trying to inspire, but it is one of the many negative effects of immoral public dress. It is for this reason that there is no trace at all of the pure, sincere, and passionate love which existed in the past, and this is because man always finds fervent love in what is not easily accessible. With this being the case, how can a man love something that is so easily available and in public view.

It is for this reason that many licentious men ask why they should undergo so many restrictions and responsibilities in order to marry, while they have easy access to many women without any terms or responsibilities. They ask such a question because they are not familiar with the ominous consequences of such immoralities and they see women as only a means of satisfying their sexual desires. Through such a perspective, they see the acceptance of marriage with its resulting terms and responsibilities as being a foolish decision and so they spend a major part of their life in being single.

Through taking these facts into account, the effect of the easy availability of illicit relationships in regards to the decrease of marriage becomes much more clear. In western societies, where such freedom and laxity is more commonly found, the decrease in marriage is also more dramatic. In such societies, people marry when they have reached middle age and even these marriages are weak and short lived; they often dissolve for small and sometimes absurd reasons.

Do Illicit Relationships Have Victims?

In addition to the discussion mentioned above, there is also the additional aspect of prostitution in society. The free availability of such things also contributes to the decrease in the rate of marriage. The surprising number of such centers are clear proof of the unnatural ethical and moral state of these societies. In our discussion, the issue of prostitution can be considered as a major focal point of physical and emotional diseases with negative effects on marriage. In addition to these problems, there are also the problems that the actual prostitutes face as well. There have been many extensive studies and books on the subject of prostitution and these texts acknowledge that the issue of prostitution is one of the most grievous examples

of slavery in the modern era. Prostitutes overall are a group of lonely and really helpless women, who are typically used and abused in various gatherings of lust and sensuality, and who are finally left to die forsaken in the worst of conditions, with no one present for their burial.

What sort of morality authorizes the normality of this modern day slavery while claiming to have abolished the institution of slavery in its entirety? We can't forget this example of modern day slavery which is in reality an institution created by the void of delayed marriage and the easy availability of illicit sexual relationships. The same women who are bogged down in this line of work are often the same victims of illicit relationships who are gradually led to these centers. The story of these women is mentioned in various books and it is undoubtedly one of the most grievous tragedies of our modern times, as well as a blemish on their societies. Unfortunately, it is not studied and discussed as it should be.

Therefore, in order to prevent the dissolution of families, the decrease in the rate of marriage, and the freedom of these sexual slaves, it is necessary that the freedom given towards illicit relationships be curtailed, and such a thing is not possible without a proper plan of action. In the light of the aforementioned discussion, our beloved youth should take care not to fall for the well worn tricks of various people who try to pull them towards such types of immoral lifestyles.

Ironically, there are people who introduce prostitution as being a social necessity and attempt to reduce its obscene and ugly nature. They go as far as saying that this illicit institution is a means of guarding the chastity of families and the health of the youth; yet such a statement is completely wrong. Is the existence of a filthy swamp that results in the growth of immorality and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases something that will somehow protect families?

Shackles for the Youth

Some people ask that while many years have passed from the normal age for our marriage, still, how can we marry when we don't own a vehicle for transportation, we don't yet have a job, we haven't saved enough money to cover the heavy costs of marriage and gifts for the bride, we haven't found a good place to host our marriage ceremony, etc....?

In other cases, parents ask how they can agree to the marriage of their daughter while an ideal husband with sufficient income, a well paying job, and a home hasn't proposed yet. People feel that marriage to a young man without any of the above mentioned things will result in their societal disgrace. Such questions and concerns are in reality unreasonable and irrational pretexts that prevent a great number of youth from getting married. There is a saying which

mentions: 'Life has two parts. The first part is spent in wild hopes for the second part, while the second part is spent in sighs of regret for the first part.'

The issue of modern day marriage can be described in exactly this fashion. The youth waste the first half of their life hoping for an ideal spouse under ideal circumstances, and the other half in regret at the mistakes that they committed in the first part. The only way out of such false shackles is for the people to save themselves. Society has established an entirely illusory concept for married life and they have actually missed out on true happiness in order to strive towards an illusory one. We have to know that such false hopes will never actualize and bring one true happiness.

Such false hopes and cultural expectations only serve to shackle people and hinder them from marriage, which is one of the most important life events for the youth. Should the youth and their parents be decisive and brave enough to cut themselves free of such chains, they would find much freedom and happiness, beyond all of their expectations. Is it realistic to expect that someone would own a home, a car, and all of the other luxuries of life at the very start of their youth? When such a thing is considered impossible, why should we set it up as a standard of marriage for ourselves? With the exception of some very select people who inherit a great deal of wealth, the vast majority of society is unable to meet such impossible standards at the very beginning of their youth. Even those who have inherited such wealth have not undergone the trials of working towards their livelihood and thus, it is very possible they will not be able to maintain their wealth after a period of time due to their inexperience.

We believe that marriage with a simple ceremony is something very easy and even compatible with education, provided that both parties understand the proper concept behind marriage. They also have to understand that in the world of creation, everything gradually builds up and better life conditions are gained little by little. It seems that many of the youth are lost in various unreasonable hopes and ideals and they have forgotten that the most essential aspect of marriage is the combined life of two people who understand one another. Without such an understanding nothing else will bring them joy and happiness.

Our religion has not set any conditions on marriage except that of two individuals willing to live a joint, conjugal life; unfortunately this simple institution has been changed into a vastly complicated one. Another interesting lesson can be found in the simple life of seminary students and this could actually serve as a practical example for other youths. Around 99% of seminary students are married while undergoing their studies and even though their course load is very heavy, they are able to live with the utmost simplicity on the stipend provided for them, or through their own efforts farming, or various other jobs during the summers. As a result, they do not suffer from any feelings of loneliness and rather, they feel completely at ease and happy in relation to their marriages.

The Seven Challenges of Matrimony

We have to know that many things which are considered as unpleasant but inevitable necessities of life are actually the products of our illogical deeds and are in fact typically avoidable. Many of the problems that we face in life are in fact made by our own hands, yet people assume it is something that destiny has somehow preordained for them. It is due to our own excuses, obstinacies, and inflexibilities that many small issues become insurmountable disasters.

It has been mentioned in the form of legends that Rostam, the Iranian hero, decided to conquer some parts of Iran that no one had conquered ever before. During his journey towards the heart of the region, he faced 'seven great obstacles, each being more difficult than the last. He was able to pass through them only by his own strength and skill. This legend is a romanticized representation of the problems that men face in their own lives, as well as their inherent abilities in overcoming these problems.

Nowadays, the issue of marriage can be considered similar to the trials that Rostam passed through; the only difference is that the youth do not possess the bravery and power of the mythical Rostam, nor are they as determined as he is to overcome all obstacles. No other social issue has deviated from its original and normal form as much as that of marriage (with all of its harmful and disturbing consequences). The mainstay of the enormous cost of modern day marriages is mainly due to unnecessary formalities; otherwise, the marriage ceremony itself is something extremely simple and would not cause all of these enormous expenditures. During the modern era, marriage has become like mining gold from mines that are filled with impurities; many people consider the institution of marriage as not being worth the trouble. These impurities are in reality the wrong customs, the irrational competitions between families, and the false prestige that people are chasing after.

In our society, marriage has lost its luster due to the difficulties faced in fulfilling it. Additionally, few people dare to challenge the cultural impurities that have been mixed into it. In this respect, the educated classes are worse than the uneducated classes and people are unable to overcome the challenge that marriage has turned into. Some people satisfy themselves by reasoning that since marriage is only once, they should not hold simple celebrations; others reason that they should realize all of their whims and fancies during the course of this ceremony. They ignore that when such irrational reasoning becomes customary, it changes society and becomes the greatest hindrance to the marriage of the youth and their subsequent happiness and felicity. The youth have to overcome all of these obstacles and much like

Rostam's legendary adventures, there are seven trials which must be overcome. They are as follows:

1. Unrealistic expectations: the expectations of girls from boys, boys from girls, and those of the parents from both of them
2. Embarrassment: by the parents, families, relatives, and friends
3. Heavy dowries
4. Extra formalities: in the form of wedding ceremonies and dangerous family rivalries
5. Rivalry by the families towards marrying their social betters
6. Irrational love
7. Excessive expectations in the qualities of a spouse: as well as a lack of confidence and trust amongst the couple.

When we reflect on these seven issues, we see that most of them are not even about marriage itself, rather they are concerned with its various formalities and embellishments. For instance, consider the issue of being social equals or socially from a higher class; such a thing is a hindrance to a great number of youth, while it is oftentimes nothing more than a delusion.

A thirty year old man who introduced himself as an engineer in the oil industry stated that while he has a good salary, he had been unable to marry as of yet. He further mentioned that he couldn't select a wife from just any family and that he was looking for one from a prestigious and well known family. Yet he said that when he would find such people, they would propose such difficult conditions and exorbitant expenses for the marriage that it was only possible to calculate them using a calculator. It was mentioned to the engineer that if he meant sufficient education and knowledge by the term prestigious, then there were many families that could be introduced to him and who would be willing to marry him. If he meant girls with noble attributes and morality, then again, there would be many girls meeting such qualifications in the society. Unfortunately, this individual actually meant that he was looking for an extremely wealthy family who owned expensive homes and cars.

In such a case, the mistake was with the man for assuming that prestige was found in wealth and not in actual human values and characteristics. It was surprising that this individual had found himself unable to find his 'perfect match'. It is interesting to note that in the Islamic tradition, the issue of 'being equal in rank' was different than that which was found in the pre Islamic society of Arabia. This attitude was strongly condemned in the religious traditions and

Islam has introduced faithful women and men as being of the same 'rank'. For example, the following tradition is one which clearly defines this issue:

“المؤمن كفو المؤمن”

This tradition means that: 'The believer (from any family, race, or social class) is in the same rank and standing as any other believer.'

This clearly shows that if illusory ideas about class and social standing are eliminated, then both parties can see each other for their human attributes and characteristics based on solid, rational ideas, and not for the wealth or social positions of their families. The same thing can be said about many of the other hindrances of marriage.

Strict Parents

Such parents seriously endanger the future of their children!

Many parents, who themselves were youth at one point in time, are unaware of the storm existing in the hearts of the youth (both males and females). These parents tend to be very strict when it comes to the marriage of their children. Their coolness and lack of care seems to stem from the idea that a one year or even five year delay in the marriage of their children is just a 'short period of time'. Such parents don't understand that a delay of one month or even several days can be enough to tip their children over the edge. What is wrong with these parents and why do they not understand the realities of the period of youth? Can't they remember the passions of their own period of young adulthood before they were married? Why don't they place themselves in the place of their children. Such a lack of care is very dangerous and it usually ends up costing them dearly.

One of the major factors in youth suicide, disease, various perversions, and even their running away from home stems from a lack of attention to this reality. This is particularly true for the virtuous, chaste, and faithful youth; it doesn't only apply to those who are not as religious. The negligence of parents is both unfair and far from the reality. Sometimes, the difficulties of marriage cause parents to unknowingly ignore their understanding of their children's situation and the crisis of their sexual instincts; in some cases, they even convince themselves that their children do not yet wish to get married. Unfortunately, the consequences of this negligence can sometimes entangle the parents in a lifetime of pain and problems, some of which are impossible to remedy after the chain of events has already unfolded.

The strictness of parents in the selection of spouses for their children and their baseless and sometimes ridiculous terms and conditions originate from a lack of recognizing how necessary marriage is. When one has recognized the necessity of something, he begins imposing lesser terms and conditions for it and attempts to make the process of obtaining that necessity much simpler. On the contrary, a lack of recognition of something's necessity makes one inflexible and choosy. I read once in an article that some people even smell cars like they would meat or vegetables before purchasing. If an individual smells cars before buying them, what would they do when selecting a spouse for their sons and daughters!

Ironically, such parents are often trapped in various problems which they never expected, in spite of their choosiness and harsh standards. The reason behind this is that when an honest suitor comes to them, they find that suitor to be lackluster, since such individuals never boast or show off. On the contrary, they will end up accepting dishonest and ostentatious suitors due to their boasting, as well as the other games that such people will play.

While it is true that one should be careful in selecting their spouse, there is a big difference between taking care and being too restrictive. When the other party has all the necessary qualifications, and research and consultation have confirmed this, then one should take action without having any doubt and seek assistance from God alone. In such a case, the outcome will undoubtedly be a positive one. According to the body of Islamic traditions encouraging early marriage, and in line with the use of the intellect in selecting a spouse, all parents are advised to avoid undue restrictiveness in the marriage of their children and through such a policy, stay away from endangering their children.

We have to keep in mind that the sexual drive of the youth is so powerful that negligence and carelessness will end up causing them to deviate. The history of mankind and the day to day lessons that we see in our society are clear indications of these grave dangers.

Who Should Select: Parents or the Youth?

This was my selection and that was my parent's selection!

The following strange story was published in various newspapers and it appears that it is not an isolated incident: 'Right before the conclusion of the wedding ceremony, an eighteen year old bride pulled off her wedding dress and jumped from the window of the room she was in. She then escaped to a public bathhouse in Narmak (a neighborhood in Tehran, Iran), where she

tried to commit suicide by slitting her wrists. She was only saved from death by the quick actions of medical staff at the local hospital'. Later she explained her story to police: 'I was finishing my high school studies last year when I got engaged to a young man. Last year, I was reading a newspaper when I saw his photo and a story on how he had been arrested for stealing jewelry. I called his home and upon further investigation, I found out that it was true. Last month, one of my father's friends (whose wife had recently passed away) proposed to me. He was a wealthy man who was around forty years of age. I personally had no interest in him and had expressed my opinion several times but no one cared to listen. My father kept pressuring me to accept. Eventually, I found out that invitation cards had been sent for the wedding and so I had no other alternative but to escape and commit suicide.'

This story highlights the common misconception that either the family elders can choose a spouse without any consultation with the youth, or the youth can choose their spouse without any consultation from their elders. Let us first become familiar with both groups and then find what the proper way of selecting a spouse is through proper thought and introspection:

One group of youth states the following: Why should our parents select our spouses for us? Everyone should select their own life partners. A girl can seem like an angel to our parents, but if we don't like her, then it will be a miserable marriage for us. Various studies conducted by social researchers show that most of the marriages that end with divorce are those formed during young age through the selection of parents. In a nutshell, an adult doesn't need a custodian when it comes to marriage. Suicide and the running away of boys and girls from their families is the result of this massive mistake by parents and many examples of such behavior can be found in the newspapers. If in past times, the youth were not well equipped in understanding what was best for them, today the times have changed and they are well aware of many things before reaching even the age of puberty. The mentality of parents is oftentimes outdated and not compatible with the spirit of our times; due to this reason, they are unable to understand the preferences of young boys and girls. In brief, parents should not intervene in this critical issue and should leave it to the taste and ideas of their children.

On the other hand, parents state the following: 'Even Plato and Avicenna were not perfect in their youth'. This means that they are of the opinion that the youth are overly optimistic and simple minded, and that they are easily deceived by things of a superficial nature, due to their own innocence and sincerity. They don't understand that some people look very good superficially, but are in reality devils on the inside. There are many individuals who memorize the most beautiful words of love and repeat them in a masterful way to allure people of the opposite sex. Yet when the marriage is over, they display their actual devious self.

Even the most intelligent of youth need a guide for marriage and this is because it is their first time going through this process. Just as we seek help in other things from those more

experienced than us, so it should be with the issue of marriage. In addition, parents are never the enemies of their children and they always try to help and protect them, because they love them even more than they love themselves. Even illiterate and otherwise uneducated parents are experienced with the issues related to marriage and they are able to distinguish the realities that are there from those things which are illusory.

In addition to this issue, it's also not right from a moral point of view if a youth totally disregards his parents who have devoted their entire life in caring for them and not pay any heed to their feelings. The youth shouldn't only think of satisfying their own desires in this regard and forget the debt that they owe their parents. Therefore, we believe that none of these two views mentioned above are realistic: parents don't have the right to impose their ideas exclusively on the youth in relation to spousal selection, nor is it advisable for the youth to go through this critical process alone. The proper way is to go through this process understanding that the youth have the right of selection but that the consultation and advice of the parents plays an indispensable role.

Parents have to consider the reality that spouse selection isn't just an issue based on logic and reasoning; rather, personal taste also plays an important role. What's interesting is that the tastes of two brothers can be radically different and this is something which must be recognized and understood.

An imposed marriage is unlikely to last long and chances are that sooner or later, it will end up in divorce. The most dangerous situation is when parents put their own personal interests in selecting someone for their children. Such people are unequivocally wrong. On the other hand, the youth should know that the fervor inherent in their age tends to blind the vision and make them see nothing but the positives, all the while ignoring all the negatives. Parents and friends have the potential to help them through their detachment and experience.

Even very wise youths are not considered to be needless of the assistance of their friends, relatives, and parents in the various issues which they confront in their lives. If they disregard the advice of these people in this most critical issue, then they might lose the support of their advice in future issues that they will face. Due to this reason, it is vital for the youth to use their network of family and friends; it will benefit them in this issue, as well as future issues.

From an ethical point of view, the children should obtain the consent of their parents and it is a requirement for previously unmarried girls (virgins) to first obtain their father's permission. Of course, there are exceptional cases when the father wants to arrange a marriage against the interests of his child due to conflicting personal interests or when the father wishes to obstruct the marriage of his daughter against her personal interests. In such cases, his permission is not necessary for the marriage to go forward.

Infatuations: A Danger in the Life of the Youth

Many words have been said in expressing the concept of love and its splendor; for example Goethe said: 'Love is the officer of life and eternal felicity'. Heziah said 'Love is the architect of the world'. A number of famous eastern philosophers have gone as far as saying that any movement and motion, even the motion of the planets and the cosmos is caused by a type of love. If we understand this in its general sense meaning that all motion is caused by attraction, then it would be a true statement. Another group of writers and philosophers have attacked love and reviled it with deep disgust.

A well known eastern writer has said that love is a chronic disease like tuberculosis, cancer, and gout; a wise man would do well to avoid it. Others, like the famous astronomer Copernicus, have said: 'If we do not call love a sort of insanity, at least we can say that it arises out of imperfect minds'. Some like Carlyle have gone on to say that love is not only a sort of insanity, but it is actually a combination of several types of insanity.

Such contradictions on the view of love originate not from a contradiction of judgment of a reality but rather from the different points of view. That is to say that each of these writers has discussed one of the facets of love that they have encountered in their own lives. Due to this reason it must be said that if by love we mean a powerful and extraordinary attraction between two individuals or in general between two creatures (such as humans, animals, plants, and other lifeless things) towards the achievement of a greater goal, then is it really possible to imagine something that can be higher? Such a thing will bring out the power of creativity to such a high degree that it can overcome any hindrance and obstacle in the path towards perfection and development.

Love has been admired for this power and creativity, and many of the best works of literature and architecture have been created under its influence and drive. On the other hand, if we mean to say that love is the powerful attraction that pushes two individuals towards sin and other vices, then clearly it is something shameful and unworthy; moving past its resulting consequences will not be simple nor easy. If by love we mean the crazy attraction that completely overcomes the intellect and the rational mind, then it really is worthy of scorn and derision. This shows that love has various facets and it can be looked at from different points of view; therefore, both scorn and admiration are appropriate depending on which facet one is looking at.

Under the Cover of Romantic Love

It is noteworthy for all youth to know that during these times, many crimes and evils are being committed under the guise of romantic love. Anyone can pretend to be a true lover, and it is very easy to use this disguise towards deceiving the inexperienced youth. After realizing their goals, such people will forget about all the things that they had said and disappear. Therefore, we have to realize that the words of such people are completely empty and there is no trace of affection or love in their hearts; the only thing that remains from such relationships is that of regret and sorrow.

The youth should be aware and watch against such people who use their lies and deceptions in order to fool and hurt people. Some of these people even send the same love letter to multiple girls at once. This doesn't apply only to girls, but to boys as well; both should be careful against falling into such traps. Unfortunately, people who are deprived of affection tend to look for these things more than others; therefore, such people should be more careful than others. In the next chapter, titled the 'Pitfalls of Love', we will discuss additional issues related to this topic.

The Pitfalls of Love

As we have mentioned previously, love is defined as a powerful attraction between two individuals. It is one of the manifestations of the human spirit and an amazing masterpiece of creation. When the marriage of two individuals is based on such deep affection and attraction (not based on anything superficial or illusory), then it will surely remain steady. Such marriages are based on faithfulness and provide comfort and peace for the two partners. Such a love also differs from false and artificial love (which appear even more passionate from a superficial point of view) because such affairs are based on the illegitimate satiation of desires; the end result of such a relationship is that one or more of the partners will disappear once the desires are fulfilled. There are dangers apparent to even relationships based on real love and we should not be neglectful of any of these dangers.

The First Pitfall

It is true that ordinary emotions have a powerful 'whitewashing effect'; when this is true, then more powerful emotions will have even more extreme effects on our perceptions and how we understand the reality of various things. An individual in love only sees the positives, while someone in a state of hate and anger will only see the negatives. Both of these states are not conducive to properly understanding reality. If someone gives even gentle advice to someone in

love, it is likely that they will face a very harsh reaction; this is because their state is not based on rationality, but rather emotion.

It is interesting to note that people in love usually think that they have somehow achieved a deeper level of understanding through their state and that is why others can't see what they see. They furthermore believe that the judgment and advice of others are the results of their lack of awareness and improper understanding. In such a case, giving advice to someone will not only prove unfruitful, but it may even be dangerous. When the passion of such relationships is extinguished through sexual intercourse, then the veils are drawn aside and reality hits. It seems to the lover that they have just awoken from a long dream. Much of the apparent positive aspects of the relationship have changed and they no longer appear as they used to.

After this awakening, regret and depression cast their heavy shadow and a choking darkness covers their spirit. Sometimes, the shock of this rapid alternation is so great that people become completely lost and even so fearful as to commit suicide. It is not easy to prevent this state and its resultant side effects because people in love rarely listen to advice. Due to this reason, rational arguments hold no persuasion; their logic differs with that of others and the distance between their world and the world of others is so great that no common language exists therein.

Such people deal only with the 'language of love', while others are speaking to them with the 'language of logic and the intellect'; indeed, these are two languages completely at odds with one another. The best way to talk to such people is through slowly and indirectly broaching a subject. Through the art of gentle talk and indirect persuasion, it is possible that such a person would slowly and step by step awake from the path that they have embarked on. Through such a method, an individual in love will come to know of their mistakes and return with their own free will.

In addition, when people give such youth advice, it is always possible that they will accept it due to their great respect or love for those who are advising them. Even if they themselves do not understand this issue, it is possible that their various instincts will guide them (through the guise of respecting the elders and their friends) and such things will save them from themselves. It is also a good tactic to implicitly agree with a person in love in order to gain their confidence and over time, be there when they need advice the most. If an individual simply disagrees outright with everything the other person says, then their confidence will not be gained and they will not have the necessary trust when the time comes for giving advice. It is essential to understand that humiliating and blaming such individuals will have very negative effects and should strictly be avoided. In addition to its negative effects, it is also unfair to blame people who are in this dangerous situation.

Wild Love

When we look at love from its fairy tale point of view, we see that it does not recognize any limits or boundaries. It transgresses social obligations, disregards moral concern, and is incompatible with advice and caution. This is why it's said that when love enters from one door, wisdom escapes from the other. In various literary works, we also see how love and wisdom are at constant conflict. This is why Carlyle, the famous British philosopher, has condemned love by calling it a form of insanity or a combination of several types of insanity. Yet, when we look at love from other perspectives, we see it as a magnificent creative factor that is a positive force for change.

The problem and danger of love begin when the person in love does not accept any control and surrenders his whole being to it. When a person enters this state, the mind ceases to function and so many mistakes can be made. If sympathetic friends do not come to the aid of the love struck individual and guide him to a path that is moderate and rational, then such a person can make any blunder, because he is indifferent to everything except for the fulfillment of his love. Such a person doesn't think on the repercussions of what he is doing, nor his reputation, his friends, relatives, or the social and moral obligations that he is bound to. The end result of such a path will be the loss of everything that he has worked so hard for.

Yet, after such a person awakens from his sleep (this usually happens shortly after sexual intercourse), they feel a rush of grief and sorrow for what has been done and what has been lost. This regret weighs on their heart and mind, but it typically comes too late and is of no use. Our youth should be aware of this massive danger, which may sometimes begin with only a glance. They should control themselves at this most primary stage when it is easily controlled and avoid taking it to a later and more dangerous stage.

The best way to avoid such dangers is through choosing healthy entertainment and hobbies such as can be found in various educational, sport based, or other endeavors. The youth should also avoid associating with ignorant individuals who can kindle the fires of such dangers and they should think deeply about the dangers of what can happen to them in the future if they embark on such a path. It is at such a stage that friends and family play a crucial role in awakening them through friendly and well placed advice; if such an opportunity is not taken, the chance may be lost forever.

Love and Infatuation

Many cases of running away from home, divorce, and suicide are caused by infatuations

It should be noted that all youth are in danger of being overtaken by infatuation. Due to this reason, all of the youth and the parents should be careful against this potential danger. Contrary to other 'seedlings', love grows very quickly and it is possible that a seedling is changed into a strong tree in only an instant and with just a simple glance.

Love and Dreams

Nothing is as dreamy as love and relationships between two people have been recognized from time immemorial; those involved in this trap are always living in a dream based world that differs radically from that which exists in the real world. Everything in this dream world differs from the real world and normal language is unable to describe it; this is why love is often expressed through the metaphorical words of poets and writers. Interestingly enough, when these individuals attain what they seek, they see no trace of what they had imagined and so they understand that it was mostly an illusion. It is at this point that they are overcome by fear and it is at this junction that they begin to take drastic measures in order to distance themselves from this reality. These measures can include running away from home, divorce, suicide, as well as other very extreme reactions.

Love and its Expectations

When people in love finally find that the love that they sought has been fulfilled, they see that their expectations have been left unfulfilled and it is at this point that they begin to complain and become dissatisfied. A life that was sweet turns into a life that is increasingly bitter

Love and Revenge

One of the other grave dangers of infatuation is the awakening of a sense of gaining revenge in order to gain the object of their love. There are many cases in the modern day world and in past history where lovers have committed murders and in some cases even, the people they murdered were none other than the objects of their love. Turbulent love makes one worship the one he or she loves as long as the hope exists that they can attain that object of love. Yet, at the moment that they feel despair and consider it impossible in gaining that object of love, this same emotion is then transformed into its complete opposite. Such an individual then wishes to take revenge either on the object of his love or even upon himself (through suicide). These are some of the pitfalls of impulsive infatuations.

Money Based Marriages

It should not surprise anyone that there are several types of marriages. We have marriages based on money, those based on impulse, and those that are simply paper based, as well as several other types. Each of these marriages has its own distinctive features through which it can be recognized.

The main characteristic of a money based marriage is that of a large exchange of wealth that is given as the bridal dowry. Usually, there are two types of wealth that are exchanged in such marriages: 1. Visible wealth, and 2. Invisible wealth. Visible wealth refers to the precise calculations of wealth of both men and women, as well as the calculation of their near relatives (basically all those whom the bride and groom inherit from). In such money based marriages, the wealth of all of these people are studied in detail and after the transaction (the marriage), both parties wait to inherit the sum of wealth that will eventually reach them and this usually comes through the death of the various individuals in the family.

On the other hand, invisible wealth refers to the social capabilities and various positions of the near and distant relatives of both parties. These positions are calculated in order to see how far they can progress and advance in society. The value of invisible wealth is sometimes even more than that which is visible. The difference is that with this second category, the bride and groom always hope that their relatives are in good health and standing in order to benefit from their patronage and support. It goes without saying that in such money based marriages, human values, knowledge, or any other actual characteristics are not taken into account. Rather, the only things that are of importance are those of the visible and invisible assets of the individuals and the families.

In such marriages, the woman's personality falls to the level of merchandise and she is transacted just like any other commodity. Unfortunately, this type of marriage is fairly common in our society and many parents, along with some youth, actually believe in it. The other major problem with such marriages is that the reasons for their survival are the same as that of their occurrence; when the man or woman finds themselves needless of the other (meaning they gain more wealth through various means), then the situation immediately changes. Once the money is gained, then the marriage is thrown away, like something without any value.

A more pure love guarantees the survival of a marriage, but in a money based marriage this doesn't exist at all and people look at one another like a material commodity. Due to the frequency of such marriages, some youths have even taken to pretending to own wealth, all the while owning nothing to their name. It is only after the marriage, that it becomes clear that they are not wealthy and that is when the bitterness and arguments begin. This issue has been discussed in our religious teachings and such marriages have been condemned. Our religious

leaders have denounced marrying for wealth and property and they have labeled high dowries as an ominous sign for the commencement of a marriage. These leaders were satisfied with marrying their daughters to financially poor but spiritually rich individuals and they also set very low marriage dowries as an example to us all.

There is a tradition by the Prophet (ﷺ) where he said: 'One who marries a woman only for her beauty does not achieve his purpose, and one who marries a woman only for her wealth, God will leave him with only that. Try to marry faithful and pure women'. [1]

[1] Wasael al-Shiaah, 3, 6.

Marriages Based on Whim

Whims are one of the most dangerous foundations for a marriage. Whims should not be confused with legitimate sexual pleasure as the instinctive motive behind marriage. There is no doubt that most youth seek sexual pleasure in marriage and such a thing is actually based on their nature and they are allowed to go after it. Yet, basing a marriage on whim is something else; it refers to wishful fancies and unwise rationale mixed with emotions. This is because whims are based on transient, unstable, and foolish foundations and it is due to this reason that such marriages end up in divorce. When a marriage is based on a whim, it can also terminate based on a whim as well.

There are many reasons behind why people marry on whim. One aspect of this involves the media. Whimsical magazines and films are full of such portrayals where beautiful looking people marry based on very flimsy reasons. Such plots are romanticized to the full extent possible. Yet, we have to realize that all of these stories are illusory and based on fantasy. Unfortunately, some people are fooled by these movies and stories and so they base their entire lives upon them; in the end, the illusory bubble bursts, causing much suffering, discomfort, and pain.

Married to Football

Recently, there was a regrettable incident reported through the newspapers where a woman had filed a case against her husband. She complained that her husband loved football and attended all of the soccer matches that he could. If he was unable to get a ticket, he would watch the game on television or listen to it on the radio instead. When he was busy watching football on television, he would forget about everything else, including his dinner, sleep, wife, and even children. He would talk only about football and nothing else. His wife says that: 'He should have married football instead of me. I am completely tired of my life'.

Ironically, the reason behind the marriage of this couple was their enthusiasm for football. The husband himself mentions that when he had gone to watch a soccer match, he saw his future wife there cheering for the same team as him. Later, they got to know each other better and they finally married. It seems that the basis for their marriage was their support of one soccer team. When the husband heard of her complaints, he said that either she could tolerate how he was or else she would have to divorce him.

Superficial Marriages

Another example of whimsical marriages are those that begin in magazines and news dailies. For instance, we often see marriage ads in the dailies that state the physical specifications or salary amounts of men and women in the hopes of marriage. If people are married based on only such specifications, then they may soon find themselves unhappy because they had sufficed with only superficial markers, rather than deeper human characteristics. It is these deeper characteristics which sustain a marriage and not superficial ones.

Some marriages are a mixture of both impulse and material benefits; such marriages naturally contain the problems of both types combined. There are also marriages based on political alliances but a discussion on this type of marriage is outside of the scope of this text. Our religious leaders have stressed the spiritual, mental, and moral characteristics of the spouse and have considered dedication, kindness, sincerity, chastity, virtue, and faith as being amongst the most important factors in any marriage. One time, the Prophet (ﷺ) told his companions: 'Avoid the beautiful plants growing in the polluted lands.' The companions asked: 'What do you mean by these plants?' He answered: 'I mean those beautiful women who have been raised in impure environments and tainted families (meaning those lacking morality and other positive characteristics)'.

Sexual Deviations

The Youth and Sexual Deviations

We know that the period of youth is a period that contains the crisis of 'instincts', and in particular, the crisis of sexual instincts. If this instinct is not properly guided, then it would have the worst effect on the happiness of the youth. Their creative powers will be spoiled and their ingenuity and innovation (which is at its peak during this time period) will be wasted for sure.

Unfortunately, many youth fall victim to such dangers during this time period and we receive many letters from them revealing the various problems that they face as a result. Even we were not that aware of these problems, but since receiving these letters, we feel responsible to do our best in awakening the youth and warning them of these various dangers. We request the Almighty Lord to help both us and them in this regard.

Let us begin by quoting the exact text of some of these letters for you:

First Letter: 'Since you had written in your article that the youth can explain their problems to you, I decided to write this letter... The problem from which I am suffering and which is driving me to destruction is related to various sexual issues which I wish to explain to you. I am 23 years old and after the age of puberty, I became afflicted with a 'sexual practice' due to a lack of proper training and ignorance. Unfortunately, I continued with this practice for seven years.

Now, I am suffering from this problem and although I have tried hard to stop, it is of no use. In addition to studying the harms of this practice in various books, I find the physical effects in myself as well. I have weak eyes, a weakness in my nervous system, anemia, trembling, thinness, and fainting spells. Before this, I was blessed with many talents and I was busy completing my education. Yet at this point, I cannot understand my classes properly and continuing my education has become increasingly difficult. When I take up the pen to write, I find myself unable to write. I put my pen aside until I am later able to write again. I find myself blameworthy and my conscience bothers me.

I sit in a corner and weep until my eyes become red. I am distressed and miserable and I don't know where to turn for a solution! You might be curious as to why I don't quit this practice even though I know its many harms. I have to say that I believe it is now practically impossible to quit. When desire overwhelms me, I lose my willpower and when gain control over myself, I can only cry. I sometimes beseech God and ask the Imams (as) for their help, yet the more I pray, the less useful it is. Sometimes, I tell myself that God and the Imams (as) do not pay any

attention to dirty people like me. I cannot tolerate this situation anymore and I am sick of this world. Have pity on me and suggest a solution for me. If you know of a medical prescription and remedy, please inform me of it. May God reward you!

Another letter: 'I admire you for the sacred battle that you have initiated in guiding the youth. It is clear for me that your aim is the happiness and felicity of the youth. I am a 17 year old senior in high school. I was an excellent student throughout the entire period of my schooling, but after the age of puberty, I fell into a trap. I wasn't the only one who fell into this trap and many others who are of my age were similarly afflicted. During the first year of high school, I was afflicted with a sexual deviation and during the past four years, I have lost a large part of my mental faculties. I have repented tens of times and my mental faculties have continued to weaken.

I now feel that my nerves have weakened and my heart is no longer working properly. The worst part of it is that I have lost my willpower, I have an inferiority complex, speak too little, cannot exercise, and I can't even attend family gatherings. I know quite well that I can't have a good life like this but I am too weak willed to stop this dangerous activity. At this point, you may wish to ask why this is the case. The answer is that there are many photos of nude women in the hands of my friends. Our only hobby is watching pornographic films and pornographic books are available and quite cheap. Please guide me so that I can overcome this pain.'

These are some letters that we have received from various cities in Iran and we have quoted them in their entirety, only omitting the names of the writers and various phrases that were best left unpublished. These letters are direct from the youth and concern their immediate future. While there are many youth who have safely sidestepped such problems, there are also many youth who have become afflicted by them. If we ignore them and continue to be silent spectators, then the ones who have sidestepped these problems will also be at risk, while the ones who have been afflicted will face a very bleak future. Therefore, we hope to preserve the ones who have successfully sidestepped these issues and save the ones who have been afflicted through the following discussion.

The sexual problems that the youth face are quite dangerous due to the critical stage that such individuals are at in their lives. To fight against the unbelievable number of explicit movies, texts, and photos requires an unrelenting struggle and if we do not engage in this struggle, the only future waiting for our youth will be an evil and bleak one. We believe that by studying the situation of these victims, we can better learn about this issue and thus take various lessons about it.

The Fatal Consequences of Sexual Deviation

One of the most important issues that the youth face, methods of its prevention and treatment

In the preceding chapters, we mentioned some examples of how sexual deviation can transform the youth into feeble, abject, and sick individual and even take them towards insanity and death. Unfortunately during modern times, some writers try to represent the sexual deviations of the youth as something insignificant, or even worse, they try to make it seem as a necessity of life and a prerequisite of adolescence. Another group has made these things a means of making money and they prepare various provocative materials towards making more profits.

Just recently, a magazine by the name of 'Women' reported on a lady who wished to find a mistress for her husband; the magazine mentioned that this news had 'shocked all of Europe'! Such media sources select news (which is probably fabricated by themselves) as an effective promotional means towards increasing the circulation of their magazine. Such news has no benefit for society and it causes an increase in deviations and scandal. Such things have gone so far that some sociologists, psychologists, and medical physicians are even saying that such behavior is natural and even harmless.

Some people, although they try to resolve these issues, further fuel its fires. Rather than treating the afflicted, they teach them new things that they did not know of before! All of these factors have caused the issue of sexual deviations to become extremely complicated and it is now not so easy to eradicate this plague from society. The resolution of this issue calls for attention, money, and precise planning.

The Harms of Masturbation

It is necessary that the youth tear the veils of ignorance surrounding this issue through the use of their wisdom and intellect, and instead of moving away from reality, they review this subject and understand its consequences. We will first begin by narrating the testimony of various researchers and medical doctors who have investigated these issues in depth. We will then analyze the psychological and social causes of these sexual deviations and then describe the

ways of resolving such problems after they have already developed. A famous physician by the name of Dr. Hoffman narrates the observations of a number of other physicians in his text on the harms of masturbation in the following words: 'I saw a young man who was 23 years in age addicted to this evil habit since the age of 15. He had become so weak that his eyes were too feeble even to read a book. He had a headache and was hysterical in his disposition. He was dizzy like someone who was drunk and he felt a deep pain in his eyes.'

Observations by a Dr. Hutchinson have proven that most diseases related to the sexual organs, the retina, and the choroids are caused by masturbation. He has continued and said: 'The first result of this heinous addiction is that the eyes become weak and the face loses its color. The former energy and acuity that was present in the eyes are lost, and a gray circle surrounds the eyes. Afterwards, weakness and dysfunction are observed in various different organs. Forgetfulness, lack of appetite, indigestion, asthma, envy, grief, boredom, seclusion, and loneliness are all amongst the ill consequences of this perversion.'

Dr. Hutchinson continues by mentioning in his text that this act causes anemia, the weakening of physical and spiritual power, vertigo, imagining voices and noises, backache, forgetfulness, anorexia, weakness, indolence, as well as general debility, particularly in the eyes and ears. Addiction to this sexual perversion decreases the natural resistance of the body against diseases. Dr. Hutchinson goes on and says: 'Those afflicted with this heinous habit cannot escape death easily after contracting one of the more serious diseases'. He then quotes another writer who had mentioned: 'I knew a young man who was afflicted with this sexual deviation. After a period of time, he began to suffer from a fever and by the sixth day he had become so weak that he couldn't fight the illness and passed away.' The doctor narrates another story: 'An individual afflicted with this practice felt increasing weakness. He was losing weight and suffering from backaches. The continuation of this practice resulted in paralysis, and after six months of being bedridden, he passed away in a pitiful state.'

This habit is especially dangerous for the wounded and those who have recently been in an operation. According to the same specialist, this sexual deviation (which is discouraged from both the medical and religious point of view) results in the atrophy of the body and it also weakens the spirits of men.

Masturbation Is Uncontrollable

The harms of this practice are too many in number in order that all of them are included in this book. One of its most pervasive dangers is that it weakens the willpower and becomes uncontrollable after a certain point. It continues to develop until it recognizes no limits or

boundaries. It is certainly the case that excess in sexual relationships (even through legitimate ways such as marriage) contains numerous dangers. Apart from the basic differences between the natural and unnatural satiation of this instinct (which we will discuss later on), unnatural satiation will cause various other dangers as well which involve both the soul and the physical body.

Taking the above points into account and the vital importance of this issue in regards to the destiny and the future of the youth on the physical, mental, moral, social, and religious points of view, it is necessary that everyone pays detailed attention to the points that we are going to mention. These points will be vital in preventing this unnatural habit from taking form. In addition, those who are afflicted with this habit have to know that it is never too late to quit. The first step is to make a firm decision, while the second point is following the exact instructions that we are going to mention in the following pages. If the youth follow these two steps, then quitting this practice should not be too difficult.

A Big Mistake in Regards to Sexual Deviations

A Letter from a Youth in Mashhad, Iran

'I would like to weep bitterly, but there are no tears left in me. I would like to cry, but I cannot even sigh. I would like to think, but I cannot think. I am helpless and alone, wandering and lost, fearful and frightened of what I am and what I could be. I hate everybody, everything, and this tainted and disgraceful environment. I am 21 years old and I have spent ten years of the most critical period of my life alone. The adversities of life and the unpleasant aspects of society annoy me... I don't know what happened. A few years ago while reading a book I became familiar with this vile habit and over time I became accustomed to it. I am now physically and spiritually sick; I am losing my sanity and I constantly remain anxious and in a worried state.

Excuse me for this long letter. Such issues are not mine alone, for I know that many other youths are in the same state. Let me also confess that I attempted to commit suicide twice thus far, once when I was 16 and once when I was 17, but I was unfortunately not able to kill myself. Now I have become very weak and I lose semen involuntarily. I am wandering through this life lost, hoping that I will eventually die and thus be freed from this pitiful life.

Please save me! I request that you reply to me soon (if possible via mail). If you wish, you can also reply to me in the *Nasle JavAn* magazine at your earliest convenience. I pray to God for your good progress and health.

S.B. from Mashhad, Iran

The Important Issue

Unfortunately, some so called experts have made a mistake in saying that masturbation has no medical harm and that frightening people away from this act will have a negative effect on their spirit. This is in contrast to the words of many experts who have studied this issue for years, as well as the personal acknowledgement of a great number of people. Such so called experts continue and say that there is no difference between this act and sexual intercourse. Unfortunately, such remarks are half baked and result in the affliction of a great number of youth.

Doctors opposed to this act have mentioned the following essential point that according to many observations and the clear acknowledgement of many individuals, this practice is habit forming and it is a fatal addiction that pulls people easily towards itself, but does not leave them without difficulty. Smoking a narcotic may not be very harmful if tried once, but the risk of its addiction is always there. Specialists in this field have stated clearly that this evil deed is habit forming and they have warned the youth against it.

Another problem related to this practice is how easily it can be performed; it is something that can be performed everywhere and under any and all conditions. Sexual intercourse is not so easy to perform and due to this reason, it can become deeply engrained in the youth. Those who are in their early years of puberty (14-20) are especially at risk. Those people who have disregarded the harms of masturbation have forgotten the issue of 'addiction' and the other particularities of this act. Otherwise, how can anyone deny the reality that many afflicted youth continue this practice to the point of death, insanity, complete debility, paralysis, and the loss of everything valuable in their lives. Is it possible to deny such obvious observations? How can such people claim that they have no evidence for the harms of this practice while the proofs are so clear and evident?

Ways and Instructions for Prevention

The First Step

1. The first notable step for the afflicted is that they have to understand that this habit is 100% curable. According to physicians and other experts, this practice is curable just like any other habit or addiction, particularly if the correct methods are implemented. It is remarkable that most of the negative effects of this habit will be eliminated in a short period of time due to the energy and vivacity of youth. Just as wounds and injuries heal very quickly in the children and the youth, so will the ill effects of this practice be eliminated in a relatively short period of time.

The youth that are in despair over quitting this habit are completely in error because despair and hesitation are the greatest hindrances towards their recovery. Therefore, the most important factor towards recovery is the belief in the ability to stop it and to recover from its effects. When the first step is taken, it is at this point that we can go ahead towards the treatment of this disease with perfect faith and hope.

More Important than What is Thought

1. Physicians generally believe that in order to cure an addiction, the most important factor is that of a strong, decisive, and serious decision.

You may consider it insignificant, but we can tell you that this factor is more important and effective than what you may think. In order for an individual to make a proper decision, he must first reflect on the harms of the continuation of what he is doing, carefully going over the dangers several times and understanding the superior power hidden in all human beings. It is at this point that he can make a proper and firm decision.

I am sure at this point that many youth who have this problem would say that they have tried to quit many times but failed. We have to ask them the following question: Have you ever done this act in front of your parents, brothers, teachers, or any other individual? They will respond, saying that they have not. It is at this point that we ask them why? Their reply is that they don't do this act in front of anyone because it is such a disgraceful action. This shows that willpower has an enormous effect, otherwise the presence or lack of presence of these individuals would make no difference to these youth. The necessary willpower exists in everyone and all of the youth should make sure to utilize this hidden power and resource.

In addition to this, we have to keep in mind that God is present everywhere and he observes all of our deeds. Is it correct to perform this practice in his presence?

It is interesting to note that a man once came to Imam Ādiq (as) and said that a man he knew had been involuntarily afflicted by a 'sexual perversion'. The Imam (as) asked the man with anger: What do you mean? Does he commit this act in the presence of others as well? The man replied: No. The Imam (as) then said: Then this proves that he does it voluntarily and willingly.

As for those who say that they have attempted to quit multiple times and failed, we say that falling short in one's decision does not mean that they have to start at zero once again. Each one of those decisions will have built them up to a certain degree, making the final effort all the more easy. Let us review the following example: Many times, when we decide to climb a mountain, we may fail the first, second, and sometimes even the tenth time. After many attempts, we are finally successful in climbing the mountain. All of these attempts do not mean that we have not achieved anything during the initial failures. Rather, each time that we attempted the climb and failed, we learned various things and acquired certain abilities. All of these failures were the actual attempts which allowed us to finally succeed.

Another example can be found when we wish to memorize a poem. At first, we may need to go over it five times in order to memorize it; in spite of this, we may forget the poem after a period of time. Yet, it is at this point that we see that we are not at the zero point; rather, if we repeat the poem another five times, the poem will remain with us until the end of our lives. This is applicable to other issues related to our day to day lives.

Therefore, if you have made a decision ten times and you have broken each of them in turn, then prepare yourself for a serious and decisive decision towards quitting. Mobilize all of your spiritual forces, particularly your belief in God, and do not forget the words of our leader Imam Ali (as) who said: Faithful individuals are strong and enduring like a mountain. Now that you have made your final decision, you should observe the following instructions to the letter.

Ten Instructions

Explanation

As mentioned previously, the risks and harms associated with sexual perversion (and masturbation in particular) are undeniable and the practice soon turns in to an addiction.

According to the confessions of those who perform this act, they soon begin to perform it several times a day and it becomes very difficult to control. What is even more dangerous is the despair and pessimism that comes about as soon as this addiction develops; despair is the greatest hindrance towards forward development and this results in very negative spiritual effects in the afflicted.

Those who feel themselves addicted should know that if they make a firm decision, then they can overcome this habit without any doubt and even eliminate most or all of its effects within themselves in a given period of time. They should never tell themselves that the addiction will last until the end of their life or that the negative effects will remain forever. They should fight against this disease with full vigilance and resolve. Those who have been relieved from this dangerous practice should value their purity and freedom and be vigilant towards maintaining it. They should avoid any temptations from Satan and be very careful whom they associate with.

As we have previously mentioned, victory in the struggle against any negative habits involves making a firm decision based on faith and conscience. Even if the decision is broken tens of times, the individual should strengthen his resolve and renew his faith and hope in struggling against his habit. Without a doubt, the sooner the individual prevails, the sooner they are able to eliminate the effects of the practice from the body and soul. It goes without saying that if such an individual seeks to establish a close relationship and connection with his Lord and seeks divine assistance, trusting in the mercy of God, then such an endeavor will be more fruitful.

After following the aforementioned steps, the followed steps should also be observed carefully. These points may seem simple for some people, but in practice they have proved to have miraculous effects.

1. Avoiding All Artificial Stimulation

If the youth watch films with half naked women, spend time reading romantic fictions, browse through pornographic magazines, and stare at women in the streets, then they can't expect not to be tainted by all of these actions. Such artificial stimulation diverts the thought process of the youth from the basic issues of life and leads them towards the worst aspects of various sexual issues. Such people are constantly kept in a nervous and anxious state, the adverse effects of which dominate their entire lives. The continuation of constant stimulation destroys this period of the lives of youth, and this period can be considered as being one of the best periods in their lives.

All of the youth, particularly those who have deviant sexual habits, should strictly avoid watching such films, reading such books, and any sort of overt sexual thoughts. Such a manner of behavior will cause them to have a disturbed mental state and it will weaken their nervous system with constant excitement. In order for the youth to succeed in this, it is necessary for them to choose healthy recreations and hobbies and to prepare a suitable program with the help of their friends for this very purpose.

These recreations can include personal and group sports, walking, reading, gardening, handicrafts, collecting poetry, photos, stamps, and participating in various gatherings, such as scientific or theological conferences.

Υ. Preparing a Full Time Program

The youth should prepare a program for themselves that takes into account all the hours of day and night in order that they not have even one hour of idle time. We are not saying that they should study or work continuously, but they should have a program that includes the times for their recreation and sport, with no time left for idleness. The youth must know that the greatest misery for them is to have free time with no program of action. Even if a youth is unemployed and looking for work, he should still prepare a daily program including study, recreation, rest, etc...

It is also better if the youth pack their daily program with more programs than usual in order to prevent their mind from idleness, because being mentally busy is very effective in avoiding negative habits. It is often seen that people who smoke, smoke much more during holidays than during their working days. The difference is that on the latter days, their mind is busy, while on the holidays they have much more idle time. If those suffering from deviant sexual habits do not have a full time program, they cannot get rid of such habits easily. Preparing such a program is one of the most effective factors in quitting.

Υ. Focusing on Sports

It is well known that people who engage in sports tend to have less sexual desire because a large part of their physical and mental energy is directed towards those sports and naturally, less remains for other things. Due to this reason, it is very useful for the youth to focus on sports and include a multi varied sports program in their daily schedule. Those individuals who are afflicted with deviant sexual behaviors tend to be secluded, unsociable, slow, and dull. All of these factors tend to worsen and intensify their problems. If they change their state completely

and become more active, then it would be very effective towards their improvement and recovery.

Such people usually have a weak nervous system and many sports can play a significant role in strengthening them. They should assign their free time and free energy to playing various sports. To the same degree that an active life is useful to such people, isolation and seclusion are extremely dangerous, and they should avoid such things as much as possible. If you fully exercise each day then you will become tired by nightfall and you will sleep well and be safe from the evil of harmful thoughts and imaginations.

Σ. One Habit Replaced By Another

Psychologists have mentioned that for eliminating a bad habit, a good habit has to be there to replace it. For example, those accustomed to gambling cannot give it up despite understanding and experiencing all of its harms. They have mentioned that when an opportunity to gamble presents itself, an unseen force attracts them towards it, even though their mind tells them it is wrong. In order to overcome this negative practice, they have to replace gambling with another hobby (such as a sports match) in order to overcome it. In other words, the energy consumed by the habit has to be diverted elsewhere and consumed without leaving any undesirable reactions.

For people caught up in deviant sexual practices, the motivations are the same. By exchanging a negative practice with a positive one, the individual can free himself from that negative practice. Such activities can include: sports, intellectual pursuits, reading, mountain climbing, mountain biking, etc...

ο. Absolute Avoidance of Loneliness

Such individuals should avoid being alone. This includes staying home alone, sleeping alone in a room, and avoiding solitary places for study. If they feel lonely in any given place, they should leave that place immediately. Such individuals should not forget that this feeling is the first step towards falling into old habits; therefore, they should rise and engage in something else. The neglect of this warning sign will end up being very costly to them. Loneliness is the perfect condition towards breeding the germs of this addiction in the minds of the youth. All youth who wish to be healthy and secure from this great risk should avoid loneliness.

1. Marriage at the First Opportunity

In addition to all of the above advice, all youth who feel at risk for this practice should marry at the first opportunity. Even if they can become engaged, they should not lose this opportunity. This is because marriage has a significant effect in the life of the youth and it removes the need for such a practice. If marriage expectations are lessened and extra formalities are eliminated, then it would be a very easy task. Unfortunately, a series of wrong expectations and ideals have chained most of the people, and even the educated classes are afflicted.

Some of the youth who are addicted to this practice fear marriage, but their fear is baseless. By following the aforementioned instructions, it is easy to cure this addiction and succeed in all facets of marriage.

V. Suggestion and the Strengthening of Willpower

Suggestion plays a critical role in the struggle against this habit. Those who engage in this habit need to regularly suggest to themselves that they can give up this ugly habit. According to a French psychologist (Dr. Victor Pushe), the following should be enacted in order to increase and expedite the effects of suggestion: Everyday they should sit in a quiet place where nothing disturbs them and focus their mind. After focusing their mind, they should repeat the following phrase with conviction: I can give up this evil habit completely, I CAN!!! Repeating this simple suggestion has amazing impact and it plays an integral role in boosting morale and lessening the effects of withdrawal.

We should also read books on the psychology of character growth and development, and the strengthening of will power. This is because the first step in giving up this habit is in willpower and resolution.

A. Absolute Abstinence

One should also completely avoid associating with individuals who are afflicted with this vice. This is particularly important during the acute period when one is quitting the practice. Moreover, one should never neglect the fatal and painful consequences of this action and he should never listen to the words of others if they are supporting such behaviors. The role of bad friends in the continuation of this perversion is a very powerful one. In order not to feel that

such an act is a sin with harmful consequences, people attempt to convince others that it is not so bad, or that it is even something positive. The youth should never listen to such words and should know that they are completely false.

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A healthy diet that results in the nourishment and health of the body is very effective in the struggle against this habit. Bathing in cool water (when the weather is suitable) is also very helpful. In addition, tight fitting clothes should be avoided because they can cause unnecessary stimulation. Such types of clothing are generally harmful for all people.

۱۰. Seeking Help from Faith and Religious Conviction

The power of faith and religious conviction is the greatest aid in stopping this ugly habit. Such people should never consider themselves as being cursed or out of the mercy of God. They should rather trust in God's mercy and they should pray and supplicate to him for his assistance. Without a doubt, turning to God is the ultimate source of assistance. They should also consider God as being omnipresent and all seeing and thus be ashamed of committing such an act. We are certain that if the youth observe the above instructions for just one month, they will be relieved from this deviation.

Feedback from the Readers

We have received many letters regarding this book; we will suffice here by quoting just one of them for our dear readers.

In the Name of God

In the name of the Lord who created the youth and the Lord who created all human beings. Let me tell you my story so that you may relate it to the youth: I am a 19 year old youth. I was very interested in the Quran and the Ahl al-Bayt (as) from an early age. During that time I wouldn't stare at women and I saw it as being a great sin. When I reached maturity and entered high school, I underwent a change and Satan affected me, deviating me from the path I had been on. Staring at women became a habit for me. I acquired bad friends who caused me to develop a

habit that I continued for four years. I continued this habit until I was about to drop out of high school. Even though I had been an excellent student during my previous years, during this time I failed to pass some of my classes. I neglected God for four years and I lost my good health. I became thin, anemic, dull, and my eyes weakened.

During my last year of high school, I was awakened and I tried to desist from this action but it was not successful. I resisted the temptation for two to three days but at the end I failed. All throughout the summer I did my best and tried hard to quit, but I kept failing. I prayed to God and the Imams (as), and I listened to the Quran before the times of the prayer. I asked God for help and again I resisted for two to three days, but I again failed...

I saw my friends progressing but I was falling behind in my life. I was not able to gain entrance into a university as a result of my addiction. Still, God never forgets his servants. Through his mercy, I was able to find this book, 'The Sexual Problems of the Youth' and I bought a copy. It was through observing the instructions found in this book that I was able to finally free myself of this addiction. I thank God for his mercy and for saving me from a disgraceful life.

I read the entire book and I observed its instructions one by one and in the meantime, I prayed on time and invoked God to save all the youth addicted to this practice. I repeated the 'Verses of the Throne' in the Quran several times every day. Every time I felt the urge to do this sin, I would recite this verse and feel its effects very clearly. In addition, I recited the following two verses from the Quran:

[\[2\]](#) و اذا فعلوا فاحشه او ظلموا انفسهم، ذكروا الله، فاستغفروا لذنوبهم و من يغفر الذنوب الا الله، و لم يصروا على ما فعلوا و هم يعلمون

و

[\[3\]](#) ان الذين اتقوا اذا مسهم طائف من الشيطان تذكروا فاذا هم مبصرون

I would immediately forget what I had been thinking of; the recitation of these two verses is very effective.

The first thing I decided to do was to refrain from looking at girls (this proved very important). I prepared a busy daily program so that I would not have any time for this act. As instructed in the text, I strengthened my faith and prayed to God, which was the most important point. I believed in the phrase mentioned at the end of the book that said: 'We are sure that if the afflicted youth observe the aforementioned instructions carefully for a month, they will be relieved from this deviation'.

After resolving to quit this habit several times, I succeeded in quitting this habit and was saved. As I write this letter, it has been two months since I have stopped. You cannot imagine how glad I was when one month had passed. I performed a prayer of thanks. I ask that God will help all the sexually addicted youth in giving up this habit. If the youth performing this act knew what evil consequences await them and the destruction that it will bring, they would be very concerned. Yet at the same time, if they resolve to give it up and carefully observe the instructions of this book, they should be certain that they will be saved.

I would like to cry and announce to the people that I have been saved from a disgraceful misery and death. I like to now look at nature because it has become very beautiful. I like to talk more with my family and laugh with them, and this is something new for me, since I would speak and laugh but little before. I would like to thank God for not denying his mercy to me and for showing me the path of truth.

The youth have to know that they can also be saved from this habit. Even if you have failed many times, still make a firm decision and never lose hope. Never say that it has become too late. You shall indeed succeed with repeated efforts. In addition, the book 'The Best Way of Overcoming Various Anxieties' is also very useful (published by *Nasl Javan* Publications)

I pray that God will support all those who are trying to guide the youth and enable them to accomplish this godly action and let them to enter everlasting paradise.