



GUIDANCE ON THE NIKAH PROCESS and WEDDING and MARRIAGE RITUALS

Department of Rishta Nata

Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, United States of America

Salutations used:

- sas Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam 'May peace and blessings of Allah be upon him' is written after the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas).
- as Alaihis-salaam: 'Peace be on him' is written after the names of Prophets other than the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas).
- ra Radiyallahu anhu/anhaa/anhum: 'May Allah be pleased with him/her/them' is written mainly after the names of the Companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas) and Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah (as).
- rta Rahmatullah alaihi/ alaihaa/alaihim: 'May Allah shower His mercy upon him/her/them' is written after the names of those deceased pious Muslims who are not Companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas) or Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah (as).
- aba Ayyadahullahu Ta'alaa binasrihil-Aziz: 'May Allah the Almighty help him with His powerful support' is written after the name of the present Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba), Khalifatul-Masih V.

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WHAT STEPS MUST THE NEW COUPLE TAKE BEFORE THE NIKAH¹ TO ENSURE THAT THE NIKAH TAKES PLACE?

1. Complete the Nikah Forms (contact nikah@ahmadiyya.us for help).
2. File for Civil Marriage and obtain a Marriage License.
3. Undergo Premarital Counseling with a Jama'at Premarital Counselor.
4. Agree upon an appropriate Dower amount (Haq Mehr).
5. Complete and sign the "Binding Arbitration Agreement."

Civil Marriage

IS A CIVIL MARRIAGE REQUIRED BEFORE THE NIKAH?

In the United States, "civil marriage" is required for a marriage license, and this constitutes legal marriage. Therefore, the Jama'at requires that the civil marriage be done prior to Nikah, and the marriage certificate is provided with the Nikah Form. If the civil marriage cannot be performed before the Nikah, then written approval from the National Amir USA is required so that the Nikah can be performed without the civil marriage. This approval note should be submitted with the completed Nikah Forms to the National Headquarters.

To become legally married, both the prospective bride and groom must appear in person at the local city or town Marriage License Bureau or office of the County Clerk and apply for a marriage license (Civil Marriage). Marriage by proxy through a third party who attends and acts on behalf of the bride or groom is not allowed in most states. The couple should plan and submit the application for the civil marriage well in advance of the Nikah date as there may be a waiting period before the civil marriage.

Important: Civil Marriage laws vary from state to state, therefore, check well in advance requirements/waiting period in applicants' state before setting the date of the Nikah.

¹ Nikah is the Islamic marriage ceremony that formally unites a Muslim man and woman under a contract, requiring mutual consent in the presence of witnesses. This is a religious event that legitimizes the relationship of a man and woman as husband and wife in Islam.

Premarital Counseling

WHAT IS PREMARITAL COUNSELING AND HOW IS IT CONDUCTED?

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba), has made premarital counseling a requisite of the Nikah (National Majlis-e Shura, Jama'at USA, 2016). Counselors from the Rishta Nata Department discuss various premarital requirements with the bride and groom, and their parents, usually via virtual online platforms or in-person, where possible. These are done for the bride and groom and their families. The session lasts 1 to 2 hours. Topics addressed in premarital counseling are intended to highlight ways to manage the relationship according to Islamic teachings, and to enhance the marriage. Documents are made available to all parties in advance to review carefully, and then these are discussed during the session.

WHAT IF THE BRIDE OR GROOM IS NOT IN THE USA, IS IT STILL REQUIRED?

Any member of the US Jama'at who is getting married must go through counseling with his/her spouse, arranged and conducted by the Rishta Nata Department, USA. These Premarital Counseling Sessions are typically done via video (Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, etc.) at a time which works best for all parties (the counselors, bride, groom, and parents). If the bride or groom is not from the USA and premarital counseling is also provided by the other country (e.g., Canada, Germany, UK, Pakistan), the couple and their families have a choice to have this session arranged by the Rishta Nata Department, USA, or it can be conducted in other countries as well. Certification that a Premarital Counseling Session (PMC) has been conducted must be provided with the Nikah Form.

WHO ARE THE PREMARITAL COUNSELORS AND DO THEY HAVE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING?

Our counselors are missionaries and couples (husband & wife) on our team. They are not professional marriage counselors; they undergo internal training, have learned the material thoroughly, and are experienced in engaging in these discussions. A list of counselors can be found at <https://rishtanata.ahmadiyya.us/premarital-counseling/>. You may request a [specific counselor](#), although it is subject to his/her availability.

IN WHAT LANGUAGE IS THE COUNSELING DONE?

The counseling session is done in English. We also have counselors who are fluent in Urdu and Spanish, if that is preferred.

HOW AND WHEN SHOULD A PREMARITAL COUNSELING REQUEST BE SUBMITTED?

- The Premarital Counseling requests should be submitted at least **four weeks before the Nikah date** through the Rishta Nata website at rishtanata.ahmadiyya.us under the Nikah Process tab or by sending an email to PMC@Rishtanata.us
- The Premarital Counseling Certificate is issued by the Rishta Nata Department after completion of the counseling session and is emailed to the bride and groom. It must be printed and attached to each of the the four completed Nikah forms when they are sent to National Headquarters.

Haq Mehr (Dower)

WHAT IS HAQ MEHR?

Haq Mehr is the dower money given by the groom to the bride to ensure her security and rights in the marriage. It is an integral part of Islamic marriage and announced at the time of Nikah. The amount of the Haq Mehr should be agreed upon by both sides. The bridegroom must give the Haq Mehr to his wife as soon as possible, preferably immediately after the Rukhsati¹, and it is her right to receive it. (Fiqh Ahmadiyya, part 2, p. 43)

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE HAQ MEHR?

- The amount of 'dower' money (Haq Mehr) must be clearly stated in US dollars (or in the form of valuable goods, such as jewelry, property, etc.).

¹ Rukhsati is a traditional ceremony in South Asian Muslim weddings that signifies the bride's farewell to her family as she leaves her parental home to start her new life with her husband. It typically occurs after the Nikah (marriage contract) and marks the end of the wedding celebrations overseen by the bride's side.

Otherwise, please specify the currency (Pakistani Rupees, Canadian dollars, etc.). The dower (Mehr) is a mandatory gift from the husband to the wife. (The Holy Qur'an, 4:25). This sum should be proportionate to the husband's means.

- The dower amount is announced at the time of the Nikah ceremony. It can be given to the wife in full at one time or in incremental payments. Once given, it is solely the property of the wife, and she may use it as she pleases. The amount should be agreeable to both parties.

Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih II (ra), suggested that the amount of the Haq Mehr should be equivalent to the groom's income of 6 to 12 months. (Farmoodat-e-Musleh Maud (ra), p. 207; Al-Fazal, December 12, 1940, Vol: 28, No: 282, p. 1)

CAN THE BRIDE RELINQUISH HER RIGHT TO HAQ MEHR?

Once, a companion of the Promised Messiah (as) said, "My wife has forgiven me her Haq Mehr." The Promised Messiah (as) asked if he had placed it in her hand. He replied, "No." The Promised Messiah (as) said, "Go and place it in her hand, and then it is acceptable if she forgives it." When the companion returned the next day, he said, "I placed it in her hand, and she refused to give it back to me." The Promised Messiah (as) said, "I thought so, this should be the way." (Talkees Al-Izhar, lazwatul Khumar, p. 160).

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba), said: "There is another issue regarding Haq Mehr payment. Once a question was presented to the Promised Messiah (as) that a woman would not forgo her Haq Mehr (after the wedding, the in-laws wanted her to forgo it). The Promised Messiah (as) said, "This is a woman's right. It should be paid at the time of Nikah or soon afterwards. In the Punjab and India, it is [considered] a benevolent act on the part of women if they forgo their Haq Mehr to their husbands before or at the time of death. This is only a custom." (Friday Sermon, November 25, 2005/ Malfuzat, Volume 3, p. 606).

IF THE HAQ MEHR IS NOT GIVEN AT THE TIME OF MARRIAGE, BUT IS THEN PAID LATER WHEN THE VALUE OF CURRENCY CHANGES, AT WHAT RATE SHOULD IT BE PAID?

Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih IV (rta), said, “The Haq Mehr should be given at the time of the marriage. Its value can diminish over time. So, if the wife did not seek her right (of the Haq Mehr at the time of marriage) and the husband does not remember (to give the Haq Mehr on time), its value will diminish. The value of the Haq Mehr cannot be increased using inflation. It will remain the same (amount).” (Majlis-e-Irfan, March 19, 2000)

The National Umur-e-Amma (General Affairs) Department has prepared an information-packed document about Haq Mehr, available from your local President or Umur-e-Amma Secretary. Additional references include:

1. Tarbiyat Department’s information booklet on marriage:
(<https://spiritualfit.files.wordpress.com/2020/08/importance-of-the-haq-mehr.pdf>)
2. “Garments for Each Other” Published by Lajna Ima’illah, USA:
(<https://www.alislam.org/library/books/Garments-for-Each-Other.pdf>)
3. Domestic Issues and Their Solutions: Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba):
(<https://www.alislam.org/library/books/Domestic-Issues.pdf>)

IS JEWELRY GIVEN TO THE BRIDE AT THE TIME OF NIKAH PART OF HAQ MEHR?

Jewelry given at the time of Nikah can be considered part of the Haq Mehr and recorded as such on the Nikah form. If a marriage breaks down, these items are part of the Haq Mehr. Once a marriage is established, such jewelry becomes the asset of the wife.

(In case of Khula¹, Haq Mehr may be returnable to the groom. If a marriage has not been consummated, then half of the Haq Mehr is due by the groom to the bride in the event of Talaq (divorce).

WHAT ABOUT MARRIAGE GIFTS?

Additional jewelry, clothes, and other items given at the time of marriage are considered gifts and become the property of the person receiving them. If a marriage breaks down, there should be no expectation that gifts will be returned. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) has likened taking back a gift to eating one's own vomit (Sahih Muslim 1622g).

WHAT ABOUT DOWRY?

Dowry is not to be confused with Haq Mehr. Dowry is what the bride brings with her to the new home. When the Holy Prophet (sas) arranged the marriage of his daughter, Hazrat Fatima (ra), he gave her a dowry of a few kitchen utensils and bedding. This establishes broad parameters for us to follow. The dowry should be within the means of the bride's family. There should be absolutely no pressure or expectation from the groom's side. The dowry must be completely voluntary and not offered to impress others. Both sides should be comfortable with the size and content of the dowry.

The dowry should not be extravagant based upon any notion of the bride's parents that they cannot trust their son-in-law to provide adequately for their daughter. Some marriages break down later, when the son-in-law feels that he was treated like a pauper, incapable of providing for his family.

Once a man came to Hazrat Hakeem Noor-ud-Deen, Khalifatul Masih I (ra), and said, 'I am a Sayed, and my daughter is getting married. Assist me on this occasion.' Hazrat Hakeem Noor-ud-Deen, Khalifatul Masih I (ra), was very generous and open-handed, but at times he had a natural tendency to focus on a particular aspect. He said, "I am prepared to give your daughter on her wedding all goods and items which the Holy Prophet (sas) gave to his daughter,

¹ Khula is the term given to divorce initiated by the wife, who returns the Haq Mehr or part of it to the husband at the time of separation.

Hazrat Fatima (ra). Upon hearing this, the individual spoke out helplessly: ‘Do you want me to be disgraced?’ Hazrat Hakeem Noor-ud-Deen, Khalifatul Masih I (ra), then asked the man if his honor was greater than that of the Holy Prophet (sas). He added that your respect is in being a Sayed, so if the Holy Prophet (sas) did not feel any disgrace at the time of giving such a dowry, then how could you feel any sort of disgrace?” (Hayyat-e-Noor, pp. 529-530)

IS PRENUPTIAL AGREEMENT ALLOWED?

There is no concept of prenuptial agreement in Islam outside of the Nikah Form and Haq Mehr declaration.

In the Rishta Nata USA’s “daftari mulaqat” (literally: office meeting; refers to official departmental meeting with the Khalīfatul Masih) with Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba), instructed in response to a question about a woman’s right to put a condition upfront at the time of her Nikah that a husband will not have a second wife that this condition can be explained verbally and can be included in the instructions for the Nikah forms. Regarding this condition, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah (as), stated:

“Women have the right to lay down the condition that the husband will, in no circumstance whatsoever, marry another woman. If this condition is laid down before marriage, the husband will be guilty of breach of contract if he goes on to marry another woman. But if a woman does not prescribe any such condition, and is content with the law as it is, an outsider has no right to interfere. In such a case, the proverb seems relevant: If the spouses are happy, the Qadi [Judge] has nothing to do.’ [Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Chashma-e-Ma’rifat, Ruhani Khaza’in, vol. 23, pp. 246-248].

IS DOWRY REQUIRED?

If the bride’s side is unable to provide dowry because of financial difficulties, arriving from another country, or for any other reason, it should be understood and accepted sincerely by the groom’s family. It will be unwise to proceed with marriage if it may be a point of rancor later.

Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih II (ra), states that: “In this matter, sometimes such irrational talk takes place, and such wrong

conditions are made that it is astonishing. For example, some people make demands and conditions of the dowry, saying that the marriage will only proceed on the condition that such and such goods, utensils, and appliances be given in the dowry. This is all wrong. To correct this practice, I have frequently, for years, been bringing this matter to the community's attention. If members of the Jama'at pay attention to this matter, then this can be corrected quickly. If they take an oath to say: should any side in a wedding have such demands or conditions, then we will not attend such a wedding, then you will see that in a short time, they will feel ashamed and repent, which would stop them from such shameful practices. Moreover, what can be more humiliating than treating girls akin to making deals for material items and putting them in the market to increase their value? So, members of our community (Jama'at) must save themselves from such shameful habits and promise that they will not take part in such weddings, even if they are of their blood brothers or sisters" (Al Fazal, April 18, 1947).

Binding Arbitration Agreement

WHAT IS THE BINDING ARBITRATION AGREEMENT?

The "BINDING ARBITRATION AGREEMENT" is intended to facilitate the timely and proper resolution of concerns related to Haq Mehr. When properly executed, this agreement is enforceable in a court of law in the USA. It should only be used when the parties are expected to reside in the USA.

Signed copies of the Binding Arbitration Agreement form along with the completed Nikah form should be kept at a safe place both by the prospective husband and wife.

WHO NEEDS TO COMPLETE THE BINDING ARBITRATION AGREEMENT?

Both the bride and the groom must complete the "Binding Arbitration Agreement" and have this form notarized. A note should be added if one party is outside of the US that the "Binding Arbitration Form" will be completed as soon as both parties are in the US.

This note should be signed by the bride and/or groom, whoever is in the US. Make sure that the "Binding Arbitration Form" is completed as soon as both

parties are in the US and submit the completed form to the National Headquarters through the Rishta Nata Department. Please keep in mind that this is a legal document that needs to be notarized.

The Nikah Forms

IS THE NIKAH FORM A LEGAL DOCUMENT?

Yes, the Nikah form is considered a legal document. For example, if the Nikah is performed outside the USA, then the Nikah form is the only proof of marriage. Both parties (the bride and the groom), the witnesses, and the Jama'at President should read all instructions carefully. Since the Nikah form is a legal document, do not alter it in any way (e.g., white-out or cross-out and writing over existing text).

HOW MANY COPIES OF NIKAH FORMS NEED TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS?

After the Nikah announcement, all four completed originals of the Nikah forms (with appropriate signatures) must be submitted to the National Headquarters for registration.

CAN THE NIKAH FORM BE SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY OR ONLINE?

The completed Nikah forms cannot be submitted electronically or online. The completed Nikah forms with ink signatures should be mailed to the National Headquarters at:

Attn: Office of Rishta Nata USA
15000 Good Hope Road
Silver Spring, MD 20905-4120

WHO SUBMITS THE NIKAH FORM TO NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS?

The missionary (or the person performing the Nikah) submits all four completed forms to the National Headquarters (Attn: Office of Rishta Nata USA, 15000 Good Hope Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905-4120). The National Headquarters registers the Nikah and sends two copies back to the person who submitted the forms. This person then provides one copy each to the bride and

groom for their records. Written acknowledgement should be obtained from both parties that they have received the fully executed forms. The other two copies of the forms are kept in the Office of the National General Secretary.

WHAT IS THE MINIMUM PROCESSING TIME FOR VERIFICATION FROM HEADQUARTERS?

The minimum processing time for headquarters' verification is seven (7) days from the date of receipt of a completed form. Allow at least another week for mailing. If you plan to bring the form for verification by hand, please call (301) 879-0110 and make an appointment before coming to the Baitur Rahman Mosque, Silver Spring, Maryland.

I NEED MY NIKAH FORMS QUICKLY. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

The US Jama'at sends signed forms via USPS first-class mail, which can take 5 to 7 business days to receive the completed Nikah forms within the 50 contiguous states of the USA. If you wish to receive the signed Nikah forms urgently, please include a prepaid FedEx label for overnight delivery when you submit forms for signatures.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE SUBMITTED WITH THE NIKAH FORM?

A completed Nikah form must be submitted with the following documents:

1. Marriage certificate issued by the government authority.
2. Fully executed Binding Arbitration Agreement.
3. In case of prior divorce, a Legal Divorce Decree (or Jama'at Divorce/Khula Certificate).
4. Premarital counseling (PMC) certificate issued by Jama'at USA or another Jama'at

WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF SIGNATURES ON THE NIKAH FORM?

Presidents: Do not sign a Nikah form if the person does not belong to your Jama'at.

The Jama'at President is responsible for ensuring that all information in the Nikah Form (Section 4 - The Bride Section and/or Section 6 - The Groom Section) is correct and accurate, including but not limited to the names, Jama'at member codes, addresses, and Haq Mahr amount, etc.

Either party (bride or bridegroom) can initiate the process of completing the Nikah form. Four copies of the Nikah forms must be completed with original signatures on each form; photocopies of the signed forms are not acceptable.

The bride, bridegroom, and the guardian (Wali) should sign the Nikah forms in the presence of witnesses, and the date of the witness signatures must be the same as the date of the signatures of the bride, bridegroom, and the guardian, respectively.

The Jama'at President should include the official local Jama'at stamp in addition to his signature. If the stamp is not available, the President should print his full name, phone number, and the name of the Jama'at.

If one party is from a country outside of the US, the signature of the National Amīr of that country, as well as the signature of the National Amīr USA, is required on each of the four Nikah forms.

NAMES ON THE NIKAH FORM

Names on the Nikah form should match those on official documents, such as a passport or driver's license.

If the civil marriage ceremony has been held and the bride has changed her last name to match her husband's name, even then, the Nikah documents should use the bride's maiden name (name before the civil marriage).

DATE FORMAT FOR NIKAH FORM?

When writing dates on the Nikah form, please spell out the month. For example, instead of writing 5/1/2025, write May 01, 2025, to avoid confusion.

ARE PHOTOCOPIES OF SIGNATURES ACCEPTABLE?

All signatures must be original on all four copies of the Nikah Forms; stamps or photocopies of signatures are not acceptable.

Writing should be clear and readable. No overwriting/strikeout, or use of white-out is allowed on the form. In the event of an error, a new form should be completed.

HOW SHOULD HAQ MEHR BE INDICATED ON THE FORM?

The amount of Haq Mehr shall be written in both words and digits.

Currency of Haq Mehr shall also be mentioned in the Nikah form (for example, Dollars, Pounds, Euros, Rupees, Etc.)

If the Haq Mehr has already been paid (in whole or in part), then this fact shall be clearly mentioned on the Nikah form.

HOW MANY WITNESSES ARE NEEDED FOR THE NIKAH FORM?

Two male adults (18 years or older) should be the witnesses. The bride's guardian (Wali) is **NOT** permitted to be a witness. The same two individuals can serve as witnesses for both the bride and the groom.

WHO CAN SERVE AS THE BRIDE'S GUARDIAN (WALI)?

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah (as), says:

"Islam does not approve that a woman shall marry someone without a guardian (Wali); the guardian should be either father, brother, or any other next of kin." (Chashma Ma'arifat, Ruhani Khaza'in, Volume 23, p. 289).

The biological father of the bride has priority over all relatives to serve as Wali (guardian). No one else can serve as Wali if the father is alive and able to serve. If he is deceased or incapacitated, then the bride's relatives in the following order can serve as the guardian (according to Fiqh Ahmadiyya, part 2, p. 41):

1. Bride's paternal grandfather
2. Bride's biological brother
3. Bride's stepbrother
4. Bride's paternal uncle (the brother of the bride's father)

If, for any reason, the bride desires to have someone other than her true guardian (Wali) as her guardian (Wali), then prior to the announcement of Nikah, further guidance should be obtained from the National Headquarters. For this purpose, the woman shall apply with her own signature. This application shall be duly signed by two witnesses, which shall then be attested by the Jama'at President.

The proposed guardian (Wali) shall also submit his consent in written format.

If the guardian (Wali) is unable to be present at the Nikah ceremony, he shall then appoint someone as his representative (Wakil). But the Nikah form will be signed by the guardian (Wali) himself, and witnesses of the guardian's signatures shall be from the place of his residence.

Written consent and signatures of the representative (Wakil) on the Nikah form are also required.

Dates of the signature of the man/woman and his/her witnesses shall be alike.

Important note: If none of the above guardians are available, a request should be submitted to Khalifatul Masih to appoint a guardian. **No one else** has the authority to appoint a Wali (guardian) for the bride.

Does a Divorced or Widowed Woman Require a Wali?

Yes, according to Fiqh Ahmadiyya, any woman, whether maiden, divorced, or widow, needs the permission of the Wali for her Nikah. However, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba), instructed that if a widow or a divorced woman wishes to remarry, the Wali should not prevent her

unnecessarily but should respect her will and marry her according to her wishes.

(Answers to Everyday Issues – Part 47: Cremation, 'iddah, wali of a widow or a divorcee, Fiqh-e-Ahmadiyya, nubuwwat and mujaddidiyyat (alhakam.org))

- **For a female convert to Islam-Ahmadiyyat**, the guardian can only be appointed by Khalifatul-Masih. This request should be submitted at least **60 days** prior to the Nikah date through the office of the National Amir in the USA.

WHO ANNOUNCES THE NIKAH?

- A Nikah must be announced by a Missionary (Murabbi-e-Silsila)
- If a Missionary is not available, written permission must be obtained from the National Amir to appoint someone to announce the Nikah (It is usually the Jama'at President, but this should not be assumed, so permission should always be sought).

ARE THERE ANY SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS IF THE BRIDE OR BRIDEGROOM RESIDES OVERSEAS?

- The signature of the National Amir is required if either the bride or the bridegroom reside outside the US, or if the Nikah will be performed overseas. Nikah forms for this situation must be sent to the Office of the General Secretary at the National Headquarters USA, for the signature of the National Amir Jama'at USA.
- It is important that one party should complete their part of the Nikah forms in full before sending it to the other party. This includes all original signatures, dates, attestation by the local Jama'at President, and verification by National Amir.

ARE THERE ANY SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS IF THE NIKAH IS TO BE PERFORMED IN INDIA?

Yes. US Nikah forms are not valid if the Nikah is to be performed in India. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at in India requires the following documents in such cases:

1. Nikah forms must be obtained from Qadian, India, as they have a unique serial number.
2. In addition to the above-mentioned general instructions, a verification letter from the National Amir USA is to be attached to a completed Nikah form. The National Headquarters will issue the said letter within two weeks of receiving a completed Nikah form. It is the responsibility of the party concerned in the US to ensure that the verification letter is kept along with the Nikah forms, as the Nikah may not be announced without it.

WHAT IS THE WAITING PERIOD FOR NEW CONVERTS?

- In the case of a male convert to Islam-Ahmadiyyat, a waiting period of one year should be observed before the Nikah can be performed.
- In the case of a female convert to Islam-Ahmadiyyat, there is no waiting period.
- In the case of the Nikah of a male Ahmadi Muslim to a non-Muslim female, permission must first be obtained from Khalifatul Masih.
- Nikah/marriage of a female Ahmadi Muslim to a non-Ahmadi Muslim/non-Muslim is not permitted. (Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Al Hakam Volume 12, No. 27, pg. 1-27, Dated April 14th, 1908; Malfuzat vol. 5, p. 525). In exceptional circumstances, she may write to Khalifatul Masih for permission.

WHAT IF THE BRIDE OR BRIDEGROOM IS A DIVORCEE?

- In the case of a **divorced man or woman**, a copy of the divorce decree/certificate must be attached to the Nikah form.

- The party (whether groom or bride, if previously divorced) must submit the legal Divorce Decree or Jama'at Divorce/ Khula Certificate.
- If the divorce included a decision by the Qadha Board (Judicial Board of the Jama'at), verification by the Department of Umur' Amma regarding the implementation of the decision is required before the Nikah can be announced.

WHAT IF THE FORMS ARE COMPLETED AND SIGNED, BUT THEN THE NIKAH GETS DELAYED? DOES IT ALL NEED TO BE REDONE?

- If the Nikah is delayed by more than three months from the date of the completed forms, the forms will need to be redone and signed again.

ETIQUETTE OF MARRIAGE RITUALS

(Refer to Friday Sermons of Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba), delivered on September 25, 2009, and January 15, 2010; in *“Garments for Each Other: Selected Excerpts of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V relating to Marital Harmony”* (<https://www.alislam.org/book/garments-for-each-other>))

DISTRIBUTING MITHAI (CONFECTIONERY) AT AN ENGAGEMENT

“Sweets are distributed at engagement ceremonies to celebrate an alliance/union, for the purpose of notifying other people and the community at large, so as to avoid any problems later. However, the essence of this celebration has been lost and replaced by mere ritual and additional practices. It is paramount that this is not declared as a mere ritual, as it's an important ceremony to legitimize an alliance. Do remember, Sharia does not ever object in matters which are beneficial for mankind, as the purpose of Sharia is to bring benefit to mankind.” (Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Malfuzat, Vol. 2, p. 310).

The Mehndi

IS A 'MEHNDI' GATHERING ALLOWED, AND IS IT OBLIGATORY?

A Mehndi function can be held if desired but is not obligatory. It should be held in the bride's home and be limited to the bride's female relatives and close

friends. The noise level must be such that it does not leave the confines of the home and be heard outside. Even the backyard deck should not be used. No sound system or excessive lighting should be utilized. If the home is small, permission may be requested from the National Amir to rent a space. Only female members of the groom's family may be invited.

WHAT TO AVOID AT THE 'MEHNDI' FUNCTION?

To keep matters as simple as possible, money should not be wasted on:

- a. Multiple celebrations over a number of days, well before the wedding day.
- b. Lavish decorations of the stage and the bride's seating for each day.
- c. A large variety of food.
- d. Printed invitation cards just for the Mehndi party.
- e. Expensive and excessive clothing for the bride, groom, and other family members.

The selection of songs to be sung by the bride's friends should be decent and avoid any indecent language. The songs should not promote the concept of "shirk" (association of anyone or anything with Allah) or concepts of other religions.

Sound Systems should not be used for songs. Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba), said: "In the permission that I gave for the rituals of Mehndi to be inside the four walls of the house and just with the friends of the bride, it should be considered that voices should not be so loud that they reach outside the house. I have found out that stereo systems are also being used nowadays. No sound system should be used at weddings. Voices should not reach outside the house. In the same way, lights should not be used gratuitously." (Letter dated 22/01/2010)

WHO PROVIDES THE HENNA FOR THE 'MEHNDI'?

Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih IV (rta), stated: "[The Function of mehndi (Henna)] in itself is not offensive if the bride's friends gather and celebrate and keep it at a decent level, but if it is made into a ritual that the

groom's family brings the Mehndi then of course you can tell that this is an unnecessary innovation just to show off. The bride's Henna should be prepared at her own house, as assembling a small family escort for this will cause other indecent customs. On such an occasion, for the groom's side to come in the form of a group and to make lavish foods as an accessory becomes an innovation; it then becomes a burden on the society." (Al-Fazal (Urdu), p. 4, Col: 3, June 26, 2002)

The Wedding (Shadi)

CAN SPEECHES BY FAMILY MEMBERS OR GUESTS BE MADE AT THE WEDDING RECEPTION?

The Islamic tradition at the wedding consists only of the recitation of the Holy Quran and a poem, followed by a collective silent Du'a (supplication). Lengthy speeches should be avoided, and families should be made aware of this in advance.

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba), stated: "If non-Muslims or non-Ahmadi Muslim guests are present (at the marriage ceremonies), if you say something from a preaching perspective about the process of marriage in Islam, then that is a different matter. It may be done to educate them; otherwise, such things are all useless" (Circular to the Canada Jama'at on October 17, 2020).

IS SINGING AND/OR DANCING ALLOWED AT A MEHNDI CEREMONY OR ANY OTHER WEDDING RELATED EVENT?

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba), stated: "There is a problem with women dancing even if they are amongst women only. As far as singing is concerned, if the women are singing decent songs at the occasion of a wedding, then there is no problem with this" (Khutbat-e-Masroor, vol. 2, p. 94).

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba), also stated: "I admonish you that you should save yourself from these frivolities and useless things. Then there is dancing. Sometimes, inappropriate music plays, and dance performances take place on top of that, with relatives who have gathered joining in these performances. This cannot be allowed under any

circumstances. Sometimes, after bidding farewell to some of the guests, they organize these programs with their close/special guests, and the same vain practices continue in which the members are swaying and dancing too. It does not matter if there are only women present or only men, they are dancing to such kind of music which is so full of filth that they are unbearable” (Khutbat-e Masroor, Vol.3 pp. 687-688).

WHAT IS THE GUIDANCE ON WEDDING INVITATION CARDS?

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba), stated: “People lavishly spend on wedding cards. In Pakistan, one can print an invitation card for a single rupee, and even here in the UK, one can print cards for as little as 5-7 pence; you are simply sending an invitation, not displaying the card. However, needlessly expensive cards are printed; when asked, they say they were quite cheap, and the cost was only 50 rupees. Now, if we print 500 cards, it would cost 50,000 rupees in Pakistan, and if a poor person is given 50,000 rupees for his wedding, he is overwhelmed with happiness and thankfulness.” (Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khutbat-e Masroor, vol. 3, p. 334).

IS A RONAQ (CELEBRATION) ALLOWED?

“Ronaq” (celebration) from the groom’s side is very strongly discouraged.

WHAT ARE THE PREREQUISITES OF A WEDDING RECEPTION?

Purdah must be strictly observed with separate seating areas for men and women. Money should NOT be wasted on:

1. Expensive and fancy bridal dresses for the purpose of showing off or to impress others.
2. Expensive wedding invitations, excessive decoration of the house, the stage, and the bride’s seating.
3. A large variety of foods.
4. The rental of expensive cars or limousines.

On the matter of wasting money on weddings, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah (as), has said: "In our nation there is a bad practice of wasting hundreds of rupees on weddings, but they must remember that for the sake of showing off and false pretenses and distributing bhajis (type of fritter) in the community to be taken and eaten are both Haram according to Sharia, and wasting money on fireworks, fornication and the exhibition of vulgar dances and songs, all this is absolutely Haram; this is unnecessary waste of money and adds to sinful behavior. Moreover, the Sharia only instructs that after the Nikah, the groom must do a Walimah, that is, arrange for some food and invite some friends and family for a meal." (Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Malfuzat vol. 5, p. 49).

CAN SONGS OR MUSIC BE PLAYED AT A WEDDING CEREMONY?

Music should not be played during the wedding celebrations. Decent songs can be sung at weddings. Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih II (ra), mentioned that: "According to the Sharia, singing songs at a wedding is allowed but with the condition that the songs are unharmed or religious. For example, there is no problem with such songs that are sung at weddings that are humorous and completely harmless because they are only songs for amusement, they have no harmful effect on one's character." (Al-Fazal 20/01/1945). He also stated: 'On wedding occasions women can recite pure and chaste verses or couplets. There is no harm if the women reciting them are not a professional.' (By professional, it means someone who charges a fee to sing). He also stated: 'If women play the daff (a frame drum or a tambourine) and sing pure songs whilst being in the company of only women then this is not forbidden.'

CAN THE GROOM WEAR A GOLD WEDDING RING?

Any ring given to the groom, or worn by any Ahmadi Muslim man, should not be made of gold. (Sahih Muslim, Book of Clothes and Adornment)

WHAT ABOUT GIVING MILK OR HIDING THE GROOM'S SHOES DURING THE CEREMONY?

"Some other bad practices, such as presenting milk to the groom and hiding his shoes, should be ceased and caution every member of the Jama'at that if I

receive any complaint of someone about these practices in the future, then punitive action will be taken against them.” (Letter from Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba), dated January 22, 2010).

IS A MALE PHOTOGRAPHER ALLOWED ON THE FEMALE SIDE?

Only a female photographer/videographer is permitted on the women’s side when purdah-observing women are present. Men should not come to the women’s side for this purpose if non-family women are present.

Non-family men are not allowed to videotape at family events.

IS THE GROOM ALLOWED ON THE FEMALE SIDE?

- Yes, only after purdah-observing non-relative women have been informed.
- The groom and his male friends/relatives should not be called to the women’s side when purdah-observing women are present.
- An announcement should be made so that they can put on their purdah or leave the gathering.

CAN MALE SERVERS SERVE ON THE WOMEN’S SIDE?

Only women servers should be used on the women’s side. This arrangement can be made beforehand if /when a caterer is selected.

WHAT ARE THE PURDAH INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE BRIDE?

The bride should observe Purdah when she arrives at the women’s side and when she leaves with her husband. A large ‘chador’ (a long, loose cloak worn over other garments) can be used for purdah.

IS IT PERMISSIBLE TO HOLD THE HOLY QUR’AN OVER THE BRIDE’S OR GROOM’S HEAD?

The Holy Qur’an should never be held over the bride’s head to have her walk under it at the time of Rukhsati (formal giving away of the bride to the groom

and the couple's departure), nor over the groom's head. This is a Bid'at (an undesirable innovation in religious belief or practice).

WHAT ARE THE INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING 'JAHAIZ'?

- Showing off the *Jahaiz* (clothes/jewelry/household items given to the bride by her parents) should not be practiced. *Jahaiz* originates from the culture of the Indian subcontinent (not in Islam), given by the bride to the bridegroom.
- Gifts, money, or any form of *Jahaiz* from the bride's family should not be expected or demanded by the groom's family. Giving gifts to the groom's family or relatives from the bride's family is an acquired custom from other religions/cultures and should not be practiced.

The Walimah

WHAT ARE THE INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING WALIMAH?

- At the wedding (Shadi), Tilawat, Nazm, and Du'a are done. But at the Walimah, only Du'a is done. (Circular from Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba), to Canada Jama'at on October 17, 2020).

Other than this, the same principles apply as prescribed for the Wedding ceremony.

- Mixed gatherings are never allowed.
- It was a Sunnah (practice) of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) to serve food at the Walimah, but it is not necessary that it should be a lavish feast or on a large scale. The scale of the Walimah should be according to one's own means. (Sahih Muslim, Book of Marriage)

CAN THE SHADI AND WALIMAH BE COMBINED INTO ONE EVENT?

There is a growing custom where, instead of hosting a Rukhsati event from the bride's side and a Walimah function from the groom's side separately, the bride and groom both combine their funds and hold just one function in very expensive hotels or wedding halls and in this way the Shadi and Walimah are

being combined and given the name “Shaleema”. Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba), instructed:

“This is wrong according to Sharia. The Walimah cannot happen until the husband and wife are not in “*Khalwate Sahiha*” (which means that after the Rukhsati, husband and wife go to some place alone where no one is allowed to enter without permission).

(Circular to USA Jama'at from Tabshir, Islamabad, UK on February 19, 2024).

CAN THE BRIDE'S FAMILY BE ASKED TO HELP WITH EXPENSES RELATED TO THE WALIMAH?

The bride's family should not be asked to contribute to the expenses of the Walimah. It is the responsibility of the groom's family.

WHAT ARE SOME OTHER INNOVATIONS (BID'AT) TO AVOID?

Here are a few innovations (*bid'at*) from non-Islamic cultures that should be avoided:

1. Gift Registry
2. Bridal Shower
3. Requesting “no box gifts” (i.e., requesting monetary gifts only)
4. The father walking the bride into the women's side or the bridegroom receiving the bride on the women's side when non-family women are present.
5. Bride and groom cutting the cake together.
6. Mixed gatherings are not permitted in any function. Purdah should always be observed.
7. Dancing, at any event, is not allowed.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SEE ANY FORBIDDEN OR INAPPROPRIATE CUSTOMS OR ACTIONS TAKING PLACE?

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba), has instructed all Ahmadi Muslims, and especially Jama'at office holders, to abstain from attending inappropriate functions or gatherings. If, while attending a function, any Ahmadi Muslim sees inappropriate action occurring, they should approach the relevant individuals in charge and attempt to put a stop to it. If such actions continue, then it is the duty of sincere Ahmadi Muslims to immediately leave that function and report such inappropriate behavior to their relevant Jama'at officeholder.

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