

Question

I read that we are supposed to love the Arabs as a race and believe they are superior to others. My understanding is based on what the *fuqahā'* stated that a non-Qurashī man is not a match for a Qurashī woman, nor can a person of non-Arab descent be a match for a woman of Arab descent.

For example, the *sayyids* cannot match a person not sharing their lineage, no matter his profession and family status. These families (i.e., the *sayyids*) are suitable matches for one another since they share descent from the tribe of Qurayshī. Thus, marriages between them are correct and permitted without any condition as is stated in *Durr al-Mukhtār*:

“...and marriage compatibility in lineage. Thus, the Quraysh are compatible with each other, and the other Arabs are compatible for one another.”

The ruling relevant to non-Arabs is as follows: *“A non-Arab is not a match for a woman of Arab descent, even if he is a religious scholar or the ruler.”*

This troubles me as I struggle to understand why a universal religion favors one group of people over others. I am starting to feel Islam is a religion for Arabs. We must learn Arabic, take Arab names, and dress like Arabs too.

Answer:

Wa'alaykum al-Salām wa Raḥmat Allah wa Barakātuh.

In the name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful.

Islam is explicit in its universality for all races and nations. Virtue is based on *īmān*, *taqwā*, and *'amal ṣāliḥ* - which only Allah knows. Allah says: “*The most honored amongst you in the court of Allah is the most Allah conscious.*”ⁱ The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “*...There is no virtue for an Arab over a non-Arab, nor for a non-Arab over an Arab, nor white person over a black person, nor for a black person over a white person except in taqwā...*”ⁱⁱ Bilal (a non-Arab) was appointed as the *mu'adhdhin* of Rasulullah ﷺ. This was one of the most prestigious positions at the time. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “*Whoever's actions slow him down [i.e., in the race toward higher ranks in Jannah], his lineage will not accelerate him.*”ⁱⁱⁱ The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “*Allah does not look at your physical shapes and amounts of wealth; rather, He looks at your hearts and deeds.*”^{iv}

The motivation for the socio-legal issue of *kuf'* (compatibility) discussed in books of *fiqh* is to achieve the Qur'ānic objective of marriage: *sukūn*, which is tranquility in a marriage. A successful marriage - with *sukūn* being the cornerstone - requires that the spouses are compatible and suitable for one another by looking at societal norms and perception. For example, unfulfilled financial expectations often put a strain on, and even break, marriages. Hence, the *fuqaha'* consider *kuf'* in affluence. Similarly, social standing - which comes with ethics and etiquette - plays a vital role in a successful marriage between spouses and their families. Historically, Muslims societies - out of reverence and love for Rasulullāh ﷺ and the Khulafā' Rashidūn - held Sayyids and the families of the Khulafā' in high esteem. The impetus is to protect the marriage from issues due to apparent factors which could have been initially avoided. In any case, the *nikāḥ* will be valid even if it is outside of the *kuf'* - as per the original position of the Hanafi *madhhab*.^v

Learning anything beyond a basic amount of Arabic to perform one's *ṣalāḥ* is not obligatory. There is obviously much emphasis on being able to recite the entire Qur'ān in Arabic as that is

for one's own spiritual benefit. Islam and Arabic spread far and wide in the early generations to non-Arab lands. Arabic became - and continues to be - a means of uniting the ummah.

The guiding principle for keeping names is that a name should have a good meaning and should be common among Muslims - so that one may easily be identified as a Muslim. A non-Arabic name may be kept if it has a good meaning and is common amongst Muslims.

The guidelines for dressing are as follows:

- (1) The clothing must not be tight and/or revealing.
- (2) The clothing should not resemble dress unique to wicked people and non-Muslims.
- (3) The clothing should not be ostentatious.
- (4) Men must not wear silk.
- (5) Clothing that is specific to one sex should not be worn by the other.
- (6) There should not be extravagance in the price of clothing.
- (7) One should not wear clothing that would cause him to appear poor.
- (8) The clothing should be neat and tidy. White is preferred for men.^{vi}

And Allah knows best.

Hisham Dawood

Darul Ifta, Darul Qasim

ⁱ Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt (49):13.

ⁱⁱ Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, “Aḥādīth min Rijāl Aṣḥāb al-Nabī r, Ḥādīth Rajul min Aṣḥāb al-Nabī r” in *Musnad Aḥmad*, 1st ed. ed. Shua‘ayb al-Arna‘ūt (Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risālah, 1421/2001) 38:474.

...عن أبي نضرة، حدثني من سمع خطبة رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم في وسط أيام التشريق فقال: " يا أيها الناس، ألا إن ربكم واحد، وإن أباكم واحد، ألا لا فضل لعربي على عجمي (١)، ولا لعجمي على عربي، ولا أحمَر (٢) على أسود، ولا أسود على أحمَر، إلا بالتقوى أبلغت..."

ⁱⁱⁱ Abū Dāwūd Sulayman b. Ash‘ath al-Sijistānī, “Kitāb al-‘Ilm, Bāb al-Ḥathth ‘alā Ṭalab al-‘Ilm,” in *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Hamīd (Seida: al-Maktabat al-‘Aṣriyyah), 3:317.

«...عن أبي هريرة، قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: ...ومن أبطأ به عمله لم يسرع به نسبه

^{iv} Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī, “Kitāb al-Birr wa-l-Ṣilah wa-l-Ādāb, Bāb Taḥrīm Zulm al-Muslim wa Khadhli-h wa Iḥtiqāri-h,” in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, ed. Aḥmad b. Rif‘at and others (Reprint: Turkey, Dār al-Ṭibā‘ah al-‘Āmirah), 8:11.

...عن أبي هريرة قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: إن الله لا ينظر إلى صوركم وأموالكم، ولكن ينظر إلى قلوبكم، وأعمالكم

^v Muftī Riḍā‘ al-Ḥaqq, *Fatāwā Dār al-‘Ulūm Zakariyyā*, ed. Muftī Muḥammad Ilyās Shaykh (Karachi: ZamZam Publishers, 2017), 3:618-619.

Mawlana Khālīd Sayf Allāh, *Kitāb al-Fatāwā*, ed. Muftī Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh Sulaymān Muẓāhirī (Karachi: ZamZam Publishers, 2013), 4:258.

^{vi} *Fatāwā Dār al-‘Ulūm Zakariyyā*, 7:120-121.