



well enough to see if the couple are suited and the marriage is likely to be a success. They should realise that they must never refuse permission simply because of differences of, for instance, race, religion or background. When the parents give their wholehearted support to a marriage, it has a much greater chance of success.

### The Marriage Ceremony

Ideally, once approval has been given, the marriage should take place within 3 months. The Bahá'í marriage ceremony itself is very simple. All that is required is that the bride and groom each say, in front of witnesses, "We will all, verily, abide by the will of God". Everything else is left to the couple's choice and can reflect the culture of the area or of the participants. Usually the couple will choose prayers and readings and will have their friends and relatives sharing the ceremony. In some countries it is necessary to have a civil ceremony first, in others the Bahá'í wedding is accepted as a legal ceremony. If a Bahá'í marries someone of another religion, then usually ceremonies will be performed in both religions.

### Making A Marriage Work

"Bahá'í marriage is the commitment of the two parties one to the other, and their mutual attachment of mind and heart."

The couple must learn to live together in harmony, and to work together as a team. They should share their concerns and the events of their lives and always show affection to one another:

"Nourish continually the tree of your union."

Neither has the right to impose their wishes on the other:

"There are, therefore, times when a wife should defer to her husband, and times when a husband should defer to his wife, but neither should ever unjustly dominate the other."

The Bahá'í teachings on the equality of men and women must be put into practice in the home.

They must be absolutely faithful and loyal to each other, spiritually as well as physically.

Most importantly, husband and wife should pray together, especially when they face problems or difficulties.

"The love between husband and wife should not be purely physical, nay rather it must be spiritual and heavenly. These two souls should be considered as one soul. How difficult it would be to divide a single soul!"

### Children

Apart from the spiritual companionship already described, the main purpose of marriage is the rearing of children. This is a very important and difficult task and a great responsibility. It can place a great strain on the marital relationship if the couple have not prepared themselves for this. Husband and wife should study the guidance in the Bahá'í writings on the raising of children. They should discuss their aims and objectives and ensure that they both treat the children in the same way.

### Solving Problems

"Lay the foundations of your affections in the very centre of your spiritual being."

Differences of race, religion and culture should not be allowed to become a problem. Bahá'ís revere the Founders of each of the world's religions and cherish the different cultures of the world. Unity in diversity is a keynote theme in the Bahá'í Faith and gives beauty to a marriage and enriches the couple.

When problems arise or decisions need to be made, the couple should pray and then consult together as to the solutions. Consultation is one of the most important laws of the Bahá'í Faith. When practised in a spirit of prayer, solutions will be found much more easily.

#### Divorce

Marriage is considered such an important bond that, although divorce is allowed between Bahá'ís, it is to be avoided if at all possible. It should only be contemplated if the couple develop a real dislike for one another.

"The foundation of the Kingdom of God is based upon harmony and love, oneness, relationship and union, not upon differences, especially between husband and wife."

If the couple have differences which they cannot solve between themselves, their parents and families will try to help. They should also turn to their Local Bahá'í Assembly for advice and guidance. They may also wish to seek professional advice. However, if the couple reach the point where they feel that they can no longer live together, they must announce their intention to divorce and then live apart for one year. During this year all efforts will be made to help the couple to be reconciled. But, if all attempts fail, at the end of the year the marriage will be ended.

#### A Happy Marriage

"The Lord, peerless is He, hath made woman and man to abide with each other in the closest companionship, and to be even as a single soul. They are two helpmates, two intimate friends, who should be concerned about the welfare of each other. If they live thus, they will pass through this world with perfect contentment, bliss, and peace of heart, and become the object of divine grace and favour in the Kingdom of heaven."

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