

# Can a Muslim man marry ANY ahle-kitab (People of the book) woman?

*By Khurshid Imam*

## A. Introduction

It is widely believed by most of Muslims that a Muslim man can marry **any** woman from *ahle-kitab*. *Ahle-kitab* is Arabic word which refers to *people of the book* or people who were given previous scriptures by Almighty God. The general understanding about *ahle-kitab* is that it refers to Jews and Christians.

So Muslims believe that a Muslim man can marry **ANY** jew or Christian lady. However this is an incorrect and incomplete belief.

Wait..... Don't open your fatwa bank. Just read the complete article.

## B. Reason of the misconception

As usual; this misunderstanding is also because of not believing and pondering over the Quran. Quran is the uncorrupted and final message of Almighty God for the mankind. Though God has time and again commanded in the Quran to strongly hold it and take decisions as per the guidance of Quran but Muslims – as a whole - have failed to do so. Practically majority of Muslims prefer Quran to their set of scholars.

So even on the issue of marriage with Ahle-kitab; people don't ponder over the Quran to seek guidance and blindly follow their set of scholars. Some Muslims believe that marriage with **ALL** jew / Christian lady is allowed even though she is a mushrik!!! Some Muslims believe that today marriage with Jew / Christian is **NOT** allowed at all!! So we see the different and contradictory ruling on the same matter because of abandoning Quran.

*Note: Mushrik refers to a person who associate partner with Almighty God.*

## C. Revisiting basics

Though Muslims day and night swear that “Quran is the word of Almighty God, we should follow the teachings of Quran into our life, we should rule by Quran” - but when it comes to seeking guidance then first thing people do is set aside Quran and look at other sources.

*" The month of Ramadhan in which was revealed the Quran, a guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion ..... " [Quran, Surah Baqrah 2: 185]*

Please mark the purpose of Quran.

It is for whole mankind. Quran is not exclusive property of any particular sect, religion, group of race.

Quran contains clear proofs. The proofs given by Quran are self explanatory.

Quran is for guidance purpose. We MUST seek guidance from Quran.

Quran is the criterion – it means in any matter Quran will have the last say; what is right and what is wrong – what Quran decides will be final.

Those who don't follow rulings from Quran are *kafir* and *fasiq* and *zalim* as per Quran.

*It was we who revealed the law (to Moses): therein was guidance and light. By its standard have been judged the Jews, by the prophets who bowed (as in Islam) to Allah's will, by the rabbis and the doctors of law: for to them was entrusted the protection of Allah's book, and they were witnesses thereto: therefore fear not men, but fear me, and sell not my signs for a miserable price. **If any do fail to judge by what Allah has revealed, they are Unbelievers (kaferoon).** [Quran, Surah Maida 5:44]*

*We ordained therein for them: "Life for life, eye for eye, nose or nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth, and wounds equal for equal." But if any one remits the retaliation by way of charity, it is an act of atonement for him. **And if any fail to judge by what Allah has revealed, they are wrong-doers (Zalemoon).** [Quran, Surah Maida 5:45]*

*Let the people of the Gospel judge by what Allah hath revealed therein. **If any do fail to judge by what Allah has revealed, they are those who rebel (Faseqoon).** [Quran, Surah Maida 5:47]*

*To you We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety: **so judge between them by what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that hath come to thee.....;**[Quran, Surah Maida 5:48]*

*And this (He commands): you **judge between them by what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, but beware of them lest they beguile thee from any of that (teaching) which Allah hath sent down to thee. And if they turn away, be assured that for some of their crime it is Allah's purpose to punish them. And truly most men are rebellious.** [Quran, Surah Maida 5:49]*

Above ayah of Quran make very clear that if we judge against the guidance of Quran then it is kufr / zulm / fisq / absolutely wrong. See how much emphasis Allah has given on judging from what he has revealed.

#### **D. Marriage with mushrik is NOT allowed**

Quran – the word of Almighty God guide us on this issue in following ayah:

1. Quran, Surah Maida 5:5 – “*This day are (all) things good and pure made **lawful** unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. (Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but **chaste women among the People of the Book**, revealed before your time,- **when you give them their due dowers, and desire chastity, not lewdness**, nor secret intrigues if any one rejects faith, fruitless is his work, and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good).*”

2. Quran, Surah Baqrah 2:221 – “***Do not marry mushrik*** (One who associates partner with GOD) ***women , until they believe***: A slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman, even though she allures you. Nor marry (your girls) to mushrik until they believe: A man slave who believes is better than an unbeliever, even though he allures you. Unbelievers do (but) beckon you to the Fire. But Allah beckons by His Grace to the Garden (of bliss) and forgiveness, and makes His Signs clear to mankind: That they may celebrate His praise.”

Going by above two ayah it becomes crystal clear that:

1. Marriage with mushrik (One who associate partner with GOD) is not allowed – both for men and women. In no any case one can marry a person who associate partner with God. Quran 2:221

2. Marriage with women from people of the book is allowed. Quran 5:5 . Also please note that 5:5 emphasize on marriage with **CHASTE** women among people of the book.

**Combining both ayah we realize that ONLY those women from people of the book are lawful for marriage who are NOT mushrik**

The mistake many people make is that they read 5:5 in isolation and think that marriage with ALL jew or Christian lady is allowed even if she is a mushrik. This disastrous misunderstanding is because of not taking into consideration all similar ayah of a quran on any particular issue. Let me make it simple.

If you ask a scholar – “Quran, Surah Miada 5:5 makes it lawful to eat food of people of the book. So can a Muslim eat pork made by a jew or Christian?” The reply would be – “No”. Why? Because we need to look at other ayah over the issue of food and then understand 5:5. When we read Quran then we find that Almighty God prohibits pork in 4 places:

Surah Baqrah 2:173

Surah Maida 5:3

Surah Anam 6:145

Surah Nahal 16:115

So the proper understanding will be that pork is prohibited – no matter it is prepared by Muslims or Non Muslim. Rest of other halal food made by Ahle kitab is permitted.

So 5:5 gives general ruling over food of ahle kitab and marriage with Ahle kitab.

2:173, 5:3, 6:145, 16:115 – makes clear that pork is prohibited in all cases.  
2:221 – makes clear that marriage with mushrik is prohibited in all cases.

So Quran makes ample clear that only those ladies from Jews and Christians are lawful for marriage who don't associate partner with God. It may possible that an Ahle-kitab lady does not believe in Prophet Muhammad or life hereafter but she does not associate partner with God – then marriage with her is allowed. However if she believes:

- a. Prophet Jesus to be son of God.
- b. Prophet Jesus to be God.
- c. Trinity i.e. unification of 3 gods

..... or such thing that makes her *mushrik* then marriage with such ladies is NOT AT ALL allowed.

Practically speaking today – very few women will fall under this category with whom marriage is allowed.

## **E. Conclusion**

1. It is a misconception to believe that Islam permits marriage with ANY *ahle kitab* or Jew / Christian.
2. Marriage with any *mushrik* is not allowed. No matter, male or female – marriage with them is not allowed in any case.
3. Marriage of Muslim man with ahle-kitab woman is allowed ONLY if she is NOT a mushrik. If she believes:
  - a. Prophet Jesus to be son of God.
  - b. Prophet Jesus to be God.
  - c. Trinity i.e unification of 3 gods..... or such things that makes her msuhrik then marriage with such ladies is NOT AT ALL allowed.
4. Even if very few ladies (among ahle kitab) will fall under such category with which marriage is allowed, one MUST stick to the commandment of God.

*Note: Does Ahle-Kitab means ONLY Jews and Christians? Answer is – No. Wait for the article on this topic in future inshallah.*

*\* If you don't agree with the mail then instead of giving fatwa of deviation / kufr / shirk / biddat - have faith in Allah and leave it to him to judge.*

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*The article can be found at <http://khurshidimam.blogspot.com/2011/12/marriage-with-ahle-kitab-women.html> and same has been attached in the mail.*