

Question: Is it permissible to attend or host 'baby showers'?

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Answer: Respected Sister in Islam,

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Your concern in this regard is both justified and commendable.

A careful review of the event referred to, and described in your query has highlighted certain grievances associated with such a custom and practice:

- Islam is very sensitive about maintaining its purity, as well as the unique identity of its followers. Islamic laws and teachings go to extra lengths to ensure that this ideal is not compromised in the least. Muslims have been forbidden from emulating the modes of worship, appearance and practices of non-Muslims and Western civilisations. Since this type of celebration has its roots in western and modernist cultures, our faith demands that we abandon and shun such a practice and custom.

- Islam has always considered the exchange of gifts to be a purely voluntary act of kindness, which is acknowledged and appreciated irrespective of size or value. The age-old adage 'It's the thought that counts' refers to it. Such events advocate a different philosophy though, since it is considered almost obligatory to take a gift along, which is required to be of a certain standard. The gift is then compared to others that have been received, and is viewed in light of whether it is an adequate recompense for a gift that the mother-to-be or her family members had given the giver on a previous occasion. This would no doubt stir the emotions of disappointment, embarrassment, anger, greed, pride, inadequacy, amongst others, in the respective parties concerned.

- Pregnancy is a time of extreme sensitivity, when the mother-to-be is encouraged to be mindful of both the physical and spiritual effects of her behaviour on the innocent foetus she is carrying in her womb. The negative effects of excessive laughter, backbiting, attempting to comply with childish dares, etc. cannot be underestimated.

- History bears testimony to the great achievements of women in various spheres of Islamic life, through appropriate usage of their acumen, imagination and insight. Apart from being an unconstructive usage of time, such events and celebrations are a great injustice to the female fraternity, as their valuable abilities and resources become occupied with fickle decorations, petty competitions and frivolous extravagances.

- It is a tragedy that under the constant barrage of commercial and cultural propaganda by the forces of globalisation and the relentless media machine, modern and 'Westernised' Muslims have begun to embrace such events and practices. However, the tragedy is further compounded when Muslims who come from religious homes and backgrounds allow themselves to be pressurised into considering these events and celebrations as acceptable practice, to the extent that they are drawn into a moral and religious debate over something which, in reality, does not deserve the slightest consideration or attention. If this has become the norm in fairly religious and orthodox households, one can gauge the level of moral and religious decay that has engulfed the Muslim Ummah today.

In light of the above, the hosting and attending of `baby showers` and other similar events, parties and celebrations should be strictly avoided. However, if a concrete and reasonable fear exists that the refusal to accept an invitation of a close relative would be deemed as offensive, and lead to a strained family relationship, then attendance would be permitted.

However, care should be taken to avoid all vain and unnecessary talk, as well as backbiting, while any opportunity to initiate constructive conversation or at least, steer the direction of the conversation towards matters related to Deen should be grasped. Furthermore, at a later stage, whenever it is deemed appropriate, one should make one's standpoint, and the reasons for it (as enumerated upon above) clear to all concerned parties, ie. both inviters and invitees, whether individually or collectively, with the hope and Dua that each of them may also adopt a similar stance and abstain from the attending and/or hosting of 'baby showers' or other similar events, parties and celebrations in the future.

Allah Ta'ala knows best.

Mufti Radha-ul-Haq

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