

Hadrat Fatimah's Marriage

Many of us have probably placed ourselves and even others in difficult conditions and unnecessary expenses only to pass through the regular routines of life. Interestingly enough if we think clearly, many of these hardships we put ourselves through are rootless, and derive only from an unnecessary norm and culture that have found its way into society affecting our lives either willingly or unwillingly.

During the era of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) there lived a rich man by the name of Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf, whom as the custom of the pre-Islamic era believed a large dowry (1) to present a woman's value and her husband's superiority in society. Abd al-Rahman visited the Prophet and said, "If you give Fatimah's hand in marriage to me, I will put as her dowry a hundred camels covered with expensive Egyptian cloth followed by a thousand gold Dinars!!(2)"

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) asked, "Do you think I am the servant of wealth and money that you try to impress me with these things?"

Other than Abd al-Rahman, there were many other men from the companions of the Holy Prophet who would ask Hadrat Fatimah's (A.S.) hand in marriage for reasons ranging from her well-known virtues to her relation to the Prophet and a noble family. However, all suitors were refused for as the Holy Prophet had said, Hadrat Fatimah's (A.S.) marriage had been decreed by Allah (3). And alas with the descent of the angel of revelation, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) had been commanded to marry Hadrat Fatimah to Ali ibn Abi Talib (A.S.) (4).

Although it is true this marriage is a divine marriage, however Hadrat Fatimah's (A.S.) character and in general women rights in Islam for choosing their own husbands provided that Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) not proceed to this act without having his daughter's word in this matter. When Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) discussed Ali ibn Abi Talib's (A.S.) proposal to her, he clearly explained his characteristics. Ali ibn Abi Talib (A.S.), a man whose worldly goods and wealth were to the least, and who did not meet the criteria for marriage that the pre-Islamic era required of him, had however a character that was full of faith and religious virtues. This time, unlike the previous cases Hadrat Fatimah (A.S.) agreed. Once Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) saw Hadrat Fatimah's (A.S.) agreement in marriage, he asked Imam Ali (A.S.) if he has anything to place as his wife's dowry.

Imam Ali (A.S.) replied, "May my parents be sacrificed for you, you are well aware that my belongings are nothing more than a sword, a shield, and a camel."

The Holy Prophet, who believed a small dowry to increase a woman's value as opposed to a large one (5), replied, "You are correct. You will need your sword for battles with the enemies. And with your camel you must water the palm trees and travel with it on your trips. Thus you can only give your shield as her dowry."

The Holy Prophet ordered to sell Imam Ali's (A.S.) shield. He divided its money into three sections. He gave a part of it to Bilal to purchase a decent perfume, and he spent the other two to purchase some household items and clothes for Hadrat Fatimah (A.S.). Obviously with the money from the shield the material that could be bought were very cheap and simple! (6)

Hadrat Fatimah's (A.S.) simple dowry and its usage for purchasing necessities of the home can be the biggest lesson for decreasing our expenses and remaining satisfied with what we are capable of purchasing.

A marriage so divine, yet so simple? What are its criteria? Where then can virtues be found? And amidst all these, how should we act? Let us be the judge.

Selection taken from "The Biography of Hadrat Fatimah Zahra (A.S.)" by Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi

Footnotes:

1- Dowry, also known as Sidaq refers to a wealth that a husband offers his wife as a gift to show his true intention. He can also choose to accept the option of offering this dowry the moment his wife asks for it. The issue of dowry can also be seen in other religions and cultures. However, the way it has been defined in Islam has some differences.

2- The basic unit of money in the time of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.).

3- Kashf al-Ghummah, vol. 1, chapter on marriage of the master of women of the two worlds.

4- Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) has said in this regards, an angel came to me from Allah (SWT) and said, "The Lord sends his greetings unto you and has said, I have wedded your daughter Fatimah in the heavens to Ali ibn Abitalib; you too therefore wed her to Ali!"

5- Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol. 14, p.216

6- History has recorded the material that were purchased with the money consisted of the following items: a large scarf for four Dirham, material for a dress for seven Dirham, a bed made of wood and leaves from a date palm, four pillows made from sheep skin and filled with leaves from an aromatic plant, a woolen curtain, a small mat, one hand mill, a leathern sac for water, one copper flatwash, a container for milking the cow, and a pitcher made from clay.