

The Fifth Talk

1. The Dowry (From The Bride)

One of the worst practices of our times is the custom of huge dowries. By this I mean the dowry which is against the *shariah*, the dowry which amounts to extravagance, the dowry which poses a hindrance to marriage. The result is that the girl has reached thirty years of age, but her father is unable to get her married because he cannot give her the dowry her friends or neighbors were given. The girl is twenty years old, and is getting many proposals, but the father is making excuses. He thinks that if he accepts a proposal, from where he will get the dowry. He is in such a position that he cannot even give a minimum dowry. Dowry should be given, but how much and what should be included in the dowry. The dowry should be given by the father if he can, if he cannot the Islamic government should give the dowry, failing which it is the duty of the people to provide the dowry. Only the essentials of life should be included in the dowry, which was the dowry the Prophet (s) had given to Sayyida Fatima Zahra (a.s.).

When the marriage of Sayyida Fatima Zahra (a.s.) was fixed, the Prophet (s) sent out two men and a lady to the bazaar to acquire the necessities for the dowry. They purchased 17 things costing a total of 63 Dirham. Included in these 17 things there was a *chador*. We should note that there was only one *chador* and not many! The *chador* was neither too expensive nor such that it wouldn't properly cover a lady's body. There was also a *burqa* (clothing worn by ladies over their dress when they go out of doors) and there was a dress. Hadhrat Fatima (a.s) gave away this dress to a needy person and went to Imam Ali (a.s.)'s house in the dress that she was using at home! In the morning the Prophet (s) visited her. He asked, "What have you done to your new dress?" She replied, "I have given it away for the sake of Allah!" The Prophet (s) asked her, "Why didn't you give away the old dress in charity instead of the new one?" She replied, "Allah says that when you want to give something in charity for my sake, give that which you like, so I gave away my new dress for the sake of Allah." As a part of the dowry there was a tanned skin of a goat to be used as a spread for sitting on the floor and a comforter filled with the peelings of dates. There were also some earthen pots and an earthen jug for water. When the Prophet (s) saw the dowry, there were tears in his eyes.

The ladies are requested to view this dowry with the eyes of their hearts. Then the Prophet (s) prayed to

Allah, “O Allah, make this dowry, which comprises mostly of earthen products, felicitous.” Dowries should be according to necessity. How can we rid the society of this evil that we practice today? If the brides’ suitcase is not overflowing that night is like the first night in the grave for her mother. On the other hand when the mother-in-law sees that the brides’ suitcase is not full, she creates a hue and cry. Sometimes matters reach such a stage that the dowry is sent back. This is the reason that the daughter is thirty years old, but is unable to go to her husbands’ house. I appeal to the well-off people that when they give dowry they should not create difficulties for the society. There was a time when the television, washing machine, fridge, and freezer were not a part of the dowry. Then someone added one item to the list, and another added another item. Now things are such that it is even difficult to think about marriage. If you want to give, by all means do so, but only after the girl has already gone to her husband’s house and do it quietly, so that nobody comes to know. For Gods’ sake do not give rise to these troubles in the society. Don’t do things which result in daughters of poor families remaining unmarried. Let her also see her husband’s house. When you give such dowries you think it to be good, but neither is it good nor felicitous. Especially if the bride is stingy, she will allow no one to use her dowry, with the result that still only the old things are used in the husband’s house. She creates an uproar if someone even tries to touch her things, she wants her dowry to be preserved for the next hundred years, so that they are included among antiques.

Another major problem is a house. These days from the cities to the villages, we find that the father, son, brother, sister are not willing to stay together. The daughter-in-law doesn’t want to live under the same roof with the mother-in-law and the mother-in-law does not want to live with the daughter-in-law! The house must be separate, even if it is a rented premise! This is a major deterrent for young men who then avoid getting married. In most cases their earnings are not sufficient to set up a separate household. When proposals are received from eligible boys, the first question that comes up is whether they own a house for independent living.

The question whether the boy is pious or not is never raised. If the boy is not pious and has poor *akhlaq*, then tomorrow this very house will become a prison for the bride. The issue of a house is a major one. In older days this was never an issue. Four daughters-in-law used to live together in one house – and happily. Nowadays a separate house is required, because people want easy comfort. This is one of the problems of modern age.

One of the leading clerics of Isfahan told me that once a youth came to him and said that his parents were not getting him married. He requested the cleric to persuade his parents to consent to his marriage. One early morning the cleric went to the home of the youth and gave a long sermon to the parents about the importance of matrimony. In conclusion he very strongly recommended that they give their consent to their son marrying and settling down to a happy conjugal life. After hearing the talk the mother of the youth said, “As long as I am alive, no daughter-in-law will cross the threshold of this house!” In utter dejection the cleric turned towards the youth and said, “The only solution for you now is to pray for the death of this old lady!” The things have reached such a pass that the mothers don’t want

to welcome daughters-in-law in their homes and the girls are not willing to marry into homes they will have to share with the mothers-in-law!

Our society is riddled with so many problems. There is one problem followed by another, and then another. This chain seems never-ending. Can something not be done about these issues? Can these problems not be solved?

After overcoming all these hurdles, if a marriage takes place, then fights erupt between the husband and wife – a major cause of which is a desire for a luxurious life. When we analyze the causes of differences between man and wife, we find that the wife expresses her unwillingness to continue using the dresses available in her wardrobe. She wants to change her dress every few hours. She refuses to wear the same dress for two different occasions. If she has to attend more than one function on the same day, she wants to change the dress before going to the second party. If there are several functions on the same day, she wants as many changes of dress as there are parties. Thus starts a fight between the man and the wife. The husband says, “It would have been better if your father had given many expensive dresses with the dowry!” The wife rebuffs, “My father has given me in marriage to you. Now it is your duty to make dresses for me. Not even a month has passed since their marriage and the bride is demanding clothes and gold from her husband. Within this first month of marriage, the girl demands her savings bond (*Wathiqa*). She says that she will sell the bond to buy new clothes and gold. She says that she is the owner of the bond, and thus has the right to use it as she pleases – and if she wants to sell them in order to buy articles of beautification, why should her husband object? If the matter ends with the redemption of the bond, even then it is alright. But the demands don't stop here. They just keep increasing. Our day-to-day life is such that when a person marries, he feels as if burdened with a calamity. He regrets getting married. What I have presented in front of you today is just a glimpse of the difficulties we have created in the society today, which are like a cancer for the society.

The remedy of these evils is simple. There are a couple of verses of the Holy Quran. If our society follows these, the malady will disappear.

وَ عِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا

The (faithful) slaves of the Beneficent are they who walk upon the earth modestly, and when the foolish ones address them answer: Peace! (Sura Al Furqaan, 25: 63)

And

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا

And those who, when they spend, are neither prodigal nor grudging: and there is ever a firm

station between the two(Sura Al Furqaan, 25: 67)

The selected men of God are those who tread the land with humility! When the ignorant talk in ignorance, they wish them peace. When they spend, it is neither with extravagance nor with stinginess. Their expenses are always moderate. They are the *Mu'minin* who are neither extravagant nor are they misers!

'Wa kaana baina zaalika qawwama' – If man refrains from extravagance, if he guards himself against luxuries, then he will be safe from many a calamity. In such circumstances a youth can get married while he is still studying, which is not normally the case. This is because there are a lot of problems in the society. The society is ill with diseases like extravagance and the like. If there is no extravagance, no reckless spending, but a middle path of modest spending is adopted, the youth can pursue a university education and even get married

2. Miserliness

People should not be miserly in their expenses. Islam looks down upon miserly persons with contempt. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ هُوَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ بَلْ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَّهُمْ سَيُطَوَّقُونَ مَا بَخُلُوا بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَ لِلَّهِ مِيرَاثُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

Let not those who act niggardly with any of His bounty God has given them consider it better for them; rather it will be worse for them: they will be charged on Resurrection Day with anything they were so niggardly about. Allah holds the inheritance of Heaven and Earth, and Allah knows what you do. (Sura Ali Imran, 3: 178)

Those who have been bestowed by Allah with some wealth should not be miserly in spending it. They should not remain under the impression that their miserliness will do them any good. On the contrary, they will regret this attitude because on the Day of Judgment, this wealth will be turned into a noose that will be fastened round their necks. Whatever wealth exists in the universe belongs to Allah and He is aware of what men do in this world! The Holy Quran tells us that those who do not spend their wealth on their family and children, and do not keep them in comfort are not doing something good. On the contrary they are doing something bad. It then informs us that the wealth, the miser saves through his stinginess will be put around his neck in the form of a noose on the Day of Judgment. He will be brought to the grounds of Judgment wearing this noose and will have to stand there ashamed, with this noose around his neck. If, besides this verse of the Holy Quran there is no tradition condemning stinginess, even then this verse is deterrent enough. A person should, besides his family, help those in need in the society. Do we want Allah (s.w.t.) to convert our wealth, property, and belongings into a noose on the Day of Judgment and put it around our necks, while we are humiliated? Dear brothers, miserliness is a

bad deed. But, on the other hand luxury and extravagance is also wrong. The Quran says that a society riddled with unwise spending and luxury is on its way to destruction and evil.

It is mentioned in the book *Meraj al Sa'adat* that once there was a miserly person. He used to tell his children to touch the bread with the bottle of the clarified butter from the outside and eat it. One day he traveled out of town and had locked the bottle of the clarified butter in a closet. The children were about to eat their bread by touching it to the door of the closet when the father arrived. He picked up a stick and hit them saying, "Can't you live without eating the clarified butter even for a day?!" A miserly person is never at ease. He doesn't even get peaceful sleep at night.

The Holy Quran says:

وَإِذَا أَرَدْنَا أَنْ نُهْلِكَ قَرْيَةً أَمَرْنَا مُتْرَفِيهَا فَفَسَقُوا فِيهَا فَحَقَّ عَلَيْهَا الْقَوْلُ فَدَمَّرْنَاهَا تَدْمِيرًا

And when We would destroy a township We send commandment to its folk who live at ease, and afterward they commit abomination therein, and so the word (of doom) hath effect for it, and We annihilate it with complete annihilation. (Sura al-'Isra', 17: 16)

For example there are storms and earthquakes that destroy huge populations and towns. But the evil of luxurious living that our society is afflicted with today is more dangerous than these storms and earthquakes. Reckless spending, according to the Quran, is harbinger of a sad and bad end!

وَأَصْحَابُ الشِّمَالِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الشِّمَالِ

فِي سُمُومٍ وَحَمِيمٍ

وَظِلٍّ مِّنْ يَحْمُومٍ

لَّا بَارِدٍ وَلَا كَرِيمٍ

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ مُتْرَفِينَ

وَكَانُوا يُصِرُّونَ عَلَى الْحِنثِ الْعَظِيمِ

And those on the left hand: What of those on the left hand?

In scorching wind and scalding water

And shadow of black smoke

Neither cool nor refreshing.

Lo! Heretofore they were effete with luxury

And used to persist in the awful sin. (Sura al Waqiyah, 56: 41 –46)

Amongst the people of the past there are those who carry their book of deeds in their left hands. It is a pity that the people of the left hand will suffer in the fire of Hell! They will be engulfed with boiling waters and dense black smoke of Hell. It will neither be cool for them nor will it be comforting! These are the people who lived in luxury in the world and indulged in immoral acts. The people of the left hand will face a painful torment in Hell. Because of their immoral and luxurious ways, they committed sin after sin. The Holy Quran says that the Prophets (a.s.) of the past had warned such men against their evil ways. About such men the Holy Book says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ

And We sent not unto any township a warner, but its pampered ones declared: Lo! We are disbelievers in that which ye bring unto us. (Sura Saba, 34: 34)

Whenever Allah sent a warner to any people, it was the people who were indulging in luxuries who refuted the commandments communicated to them. If there was no other verse condemning extravagance, this verse of the Holy Quran should be sufficient for people to abstain from their wasteful ways.

A question then arises as to what constitutes the life of moderation and equanimity? Such an ideal life is one in which one has enough to eat, he should have a modest abode and dress to wear. Such a life is really comfortable. It is narrated that the Prophet (s) was once traveling with his companions. He came across a shepherd during the journey and asked for some milk. The shepherd refused to give any milk. The Prophet (s) said, “May Allah bless you so much that you are not able to account for your possessions!” When the entourage proceeded further, they came across another shepherd with his flock. This person, when asked for some milk, offered all the stock that he had with him. The Prophet said, “May Allah give you sufficient sustenance that you don’t have to depend on others for their help!” In surprise the companions asked the Prophet (s), “O Prophet of Allah! Your prayer for the person who refused to part with his milk appeared better than the prayer you offered for this generous shepherd!” The Prophet (s) replied, “No! In plenty there is nothing more than trouble and headache! A life in which a person is contented with his modest earnings is better than a life of luxury. Such people will never have any psychological ailments.” Amir al Mu’minin (a.s.) has said that life should be one of contentment and not of opulence. Opulence takes people towards unhappiness and oppression.

3. Summary Of Discussion

The summary of our talk is that we have to revolutionize our lives, we have to bring about a change in our lives. We need to take stock of our ethics. The first step in this direction is to bring about changes in our system of marriage so that gradually we can shake off these evil practices from our society. Our lives should be constructive and definitely not one of luxury that brings about ruin. When does a Muslim lead a truly happy life? It is when he has a house of his own, then buys one for another. When he leads a middle class existence, he helps others to lead a middle class existence too. Dear brothers! As we are in need of material things, so do we need spiritual contentment! We should strive to fulfill our material needs and live happily. But more important than this is our spiritual needs. Spiritual needs are not satisfied by having good food, good housing or a good spouse. Our spiritual needs are satisfied by helping the oppressed and helping the needy. Every individual must give a helping hand in the marriage of at least one couple in a year. There is the august example of Lady Fatima Zahra (a.s.) before us – that she preferred to wear a used garment with patches and gave away the new one to the needy! Amir al Mu'minin (a.s.) used to continue wearing old dresses and gave away the new apparel to others. Fatima Zahra (a.s.), despite being the owner of the Garden of *Fadak*, preferred wearing clothes made out of rough yarn.

It is famous that a trader visited Ayatullah Sadr (r.a.) with his spouse. The trader went to the chambers of the Ayatullah and the wife went to the ladies' quarters and knocked at the door. The Ayatullah's wife came to the door and opened it. Seeing her in very ordinary clothes, the trader's wife thought she must be one of the servants in the house. She said, "Where is the lady of the house? I wish to meet her." The Ayatullah's wife felt shy to tell that she was the lady of the house. She said that she was not at home. The trader's wife went away. At this moment the Ayatullah came to the ladies' quarters and found that his wife was rather upset. When he asked her to tell the reason for her bad mood she recounted to him what had transpired with the trader's wife. The Ayatullah told her, "Yes, when you say you are not a lady, you are really not one! The real lady was one who wore a shawl of two patched pieces of cloth and dedicated the produce of the Garden of *Fadak* for the poor and needy! Similarly, a master is not the person who spends his life in false luxury but one who helps the persons in need and clears the debts of others! A true lady is not one who drapes herself in expensive shawls. A true lady is one who has four or five shawls out of which she keeps one for her own use and gives away the rest to needy women who have none to cover their heads!"

For the sake of Allah's pleasure, for the sake of our children, for the sake of a better hereafter, for the sake of Islam, for the sake of *Imam Zamana*, ponder over these points a little. Do not say that the points are good, but what can I do?

O Allah! Give us better sense and a right spirit for the sake of the sacrifice of *Bab al Hawajj Hadhrat Abbas (a.s.)* who didn't quench his thirst on the bank of the river remembering the thirst of the little children of Imam Husayn (a.s)! O Allah! Give us the spirit of sacrifice in our lives! (Ameen)

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