

Jowaiber and Zalfa

"How beautiful it were if you could marry and establish a family, ending this forlorn and isolated life? You could fulfill your natural urges and also she could help you in your temporal and spiritual needs and goals."

"O Messenger of Allah, I have neither wealth nor beauty; nor I have a noble descent or lineage. Who will marry me? And which woman likes to be wife of a poor, short, black and ugly man like me?"

"O Jowaiber! God has changed the individual's worth through Islam. Many people were high-placed in the pre-Islamic society and Islam brought them down. Many were despised non-entities and Islam bestowed them with honor and high rank and brought them up. Islam abolished the un-Islamic discrimination and pride of lineage. Now all people irrespective of their color and origin are equal. Nobody has superiority over others but through piety and obedience to Allah. Among the Muslims, only that person would be higher than you whose virtues and deeds are better than you.

Now do as I tell you."

These words were exchanged one day between the Prophet and Jowaiber when the Prophet came to see the people of "Suffa"

Jowaiber was a native of "Yamamah" where he came to know about the Prophet and the advent of Islam. He was poor, black and short, but at the same time intelligent truth seeking and a man of determination. He came to Medina to look at Islam from near; in a short time he embraced Islam. Since he had neither money, house nor any friends, he temporarily was accommodated along with other poor Muslims in the Mosque by permission of the Prophet. When it was revealed unto the Prophet that the Mosque was not a place of habitation, it became necessary to shift them elsewhere. The Prophet selected a site outside the Mosque and erected a shed for them. The place was named as "Suffa" and the residents were known as "Ashab-e-Suffa" – all of them poor from places far away from Medina.

The Prophet came to visit them one day. Noticing Jowaiber among them he decided to bring him out of this forlorn life. It was beyond the fancy of Jowaiber to own a house and have a wife in his condition.

And that was why he replied to the Prophet as to how it was possible for anyone to accept him in matrimony when the Prophet advised him to marry. But the Prophet removing his doubts, explained to him the changes brought about in the social outlook of the people by Islam.

After bringing Jowaiber out of his inferiority complex, he directed him to the house of Ziad ibne Lubaid to request him for his daughter's hand in marriage.

Ziad was one of the wealthiest persons of Medina and commanded high respect among his tribes. When Jowaiber entered his house, he was surrounded by his relatives and some of his tribes- men. Jowaiber took a seat, paused for a moment and then raising his head said, "I have brought a message from the Prophet. Do you like to hear it confidentially or openly?"

Ziad: ; "A message from the Prophet is an honor to me, better you tell it openly."

"The Prophet has sent me to request you for your daughter for myself"

"Did he himself make this suggestion to you?" "I don't speak on my own accord. Every-
body knows me, I am not a liar"

"Strange! We don't give our daughters to per- sons of unequal status nor outside our tribe. You go back I shall go to the Prophet and have a talk with him myself."

Jowaiber left the house murmuring, "By God, whatever the Qur'an teaches and whatever is the purpose of the prophet-hood of Muhammad is totally against what Ziad says"

Those nearby heard the murmurings of Jowaiber.

Zalfa, the lovely daughter of Ziad, and the beauty-queen of Medina, heard these words of Jowaiber. She came to her father and asked: "Father, what was that man who just went out saying? And what did he mean?"

"He had come to ask for your hand in marriage and was claiming that the Prophet had sent him for this purpose."

"Isn't it possible that he had really sent him, and thus your rejection may amount to disobedience of the Prophet's order ?"

"What do you feel about it?"

"I feel you should bring him back before he reaches to the Prophet, and then go yourself to find out the truth."

He brought Jowaiber back to his house with due respect, and then himself hurried up to the

Prophet. When he saw him he said:

"O Messenger of God, Jowaiber came to my house and brought such and such a message from you. I would like to inform you that our custom is to give our daughters to persons of equal status and belonging to our tribe, who are all your helpers and companions."

"O Ziad, Jowaiber is a Faithful man. That dignity and honor which you are talking about has now been abrogated. Every believer man is equal (for marriage purpose) to every believer woman."

Ziad returned to his house and explained the matter to his daughter. She said, "Please do not reject the proposal put by the Prophet. This matter concerns me. I accept Jowaiber whatever his condition may be. If the Prophet is pleased with it, I am also pleased."

The wedding was duly solemnized. Ziad paid "Mahr" (Marriage) from his own wealth and offered good articles to the pair. They asked the bride– groom, "Have you got a house where to take the bride?" He said, "No, I had never thought that I would get a wife and settle in domestic life. It was the Prophet who came suddenly and had a talk with me and sent me to Ziad's house."

Ziad arranged for him a house equipped with complete house–hold effects, and transferred the bride superbly adorned with ornaments and perfumes.

Night came. Jowaiber did not know where the house was meant for him. He was guided to the house and led to the bridal–chamber. When he saw the house and its equipments and looked at the dazzling bride, his past came to his mind and he said to himself, "How poor I was when I entered this city. had nothing – neither money nor beauty, neither any lineage nor family – now God made these affluences available to me through Islam. Indeed it is Islam that has brought such changes in the social outlook of the people beyond any imagination. How grateful I am to God for bestowing upon me all these Blessings!"

In spiritual ecstasy he went to a corner of the room; spent the night in recitation of the Qur'an and prayer. It was dawn when he came to himself and then decided to fast in gratitude to God. When women came to see Zalfa in the morning they found her untouched. They kept the matter secret from Ziad. Two nights and days passed in the same manner. He was fasting during days and praying during nights. The women of the family of the bride were worried. They thought perhaps Jowaiber was impotent and had no need for a woman. At last, they put the matter before Ziad. He informed the Prophet; the Prophet; called Jowaiber and asked, "Don't you have any desire for woman?"

"Incidentally, I have very intense desire of that kind:"

"Then why didn't you go near your bride?"

"O Prophet of God, when I entered the house I found myself amidst that affluence. A state of gratitude and devotion took me over. I thought it necessary to offer thanks and prayers to Allah before doing

anything. Tonight I shall go near my wife."

Jowaiber and Zalfa lived a most happy life. When the call for a Jihad (Holy war) came, he participated in it with the enthusiasm typical of a brave Muslim, and achieved martyrdom under the banner of Islam.

After his martyrdom, Zalfa was the most sought after woman for a wife and people were eager to pay the greatest Mahr for her.

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