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Dignity of Labour

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Tomorrow all nations will be observing Labour Day, to remind them-selves that a laborer deserves to be respected because he earns his bread by his sweat. The example set by the religious leaders of Islam have established the dignity of labor beyond any doubt.

Holy Prophet (S.A.) himself worked for Khadija for years. When the Prophet's mosque at Madina was being built, the Holy Prophet participated fully in every work. He carried the stones, mixed the mortar, built the walls. In journeys, the Holy Prophet insisted to share in all the works involved in camping: He pitched the tent, picked wood for fire, carried water etc. In short he never considered any lawful work as beneath his dignity.

People often came to Hazrat Ali (A.S.) to solve their religious problems and found him working as a laborer in farms of other people. He never felt any embarrassment, because dignity of labor was an established way of Muslim life.

And here are two episodes from the life of Fatima, (A.S.) the daughter of the Holy Prophet (S.A.). Once she was given some wool to spin and some barley as its wages. The work was to be completed in three days; so she divided the wool and the barley in three parts each. First, she spun one-third of the wool, and only then used one-third of the barley for her bread. He same routine was repeated the second and the third days.

The lesson to be learnt here is this Fatima (A.S.) could have reversed the procedure, using barley first, and spinning the wool afterwards, because there was no condition attached; but she did not use the wages before finishing the work of the day. In simple words, looking forward to the unearned wages is not liked in Islam.

This was Fatima's (A.S.) way of life as a worker. Now let me describe her attitude as an employer. Fizza was her servant. When she came to work for Fatima (A.S.) the Holy Prophet (S.A.) told his daughter: "Fatima, (A.S.) one day Fizza shall do all the domestic work while you would rest; next day you will do all the work, while Fizza would rest; because she is as much a human being as you are".

This mutual regard between an employer and his employee is a beacon to guide this troubled world where the employer and the workers both want to exploit and deceive one another.

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