

CAN A WOMAN BE MARRIED FOR HER BEAUTY?

Q: 7- "Some people insist that a Muslim, while selecting a woman for marriage should not pay any attention to her physical or facial appearance. He should only see whether she is a religious woman or not.

In this respect a Hadith is often referred to, wherein the Holy Prophet saw. is reported to have said,

"A woman is married either for her beauty or for her wealth or for her religious behavior. So you must try to choose the woman committed to her religion."

They argue that the considerations of beauty and wealth have been condemned in this Hadith, while the consideration of religion has been confirmed and stressed upon.

Please explain whether this Hadith is authentic and whether the above mentioned point of view is correct according to this Hadith.

A: The Hadith is authentic, but it does not mean that, when deciding to marry a woman, her physical appearance cannot be taken into consideration at all. The purpose of the Hadith is that it should not be the sole consideration.

Instead, her religious attitude should be given due importance. If a woman is very attractive in her appearance, but she does not care for her religious obligations or has a rebellious attitude towards them, she should not be preferred to a less attractive woman whose commitment to Islam is evident and who observes her religious obligations with sincerity and devotion.

However, if there are two women, both equally committed to Islam and equally observing the imperatives of Shariah, then, there is no bar on a Muslim if he prefers a woman who seems to him more attractive than the other.

In fact, one of the basic objectives of marriage, according to Islamic teachings, is that the spouses may run a chaste life and may fulfil their sexual needs with as much satisfaction as may help them refrain from indulging in an unlawful activity. This objective cannot be achieved unless they like each other, both in their appearance and in their inner qualities. That is why the spouses have been advised to see each other before entering into the pledge of marriage. The Holy Prophet saw not only allowed one to see the woman whom he wants to marry but emphatically recommended it for the Muslims. One of his blessed companions once told him that he had resolved to marry a woman from the Ansar. The Holy Prophet asked him if he had seen that woman. When the person replied in the negative, the Holy Prophet S said to him: "See her, it will help create a better union between you". (Tirmidhi)

It is obvious that merely seeing a woman cannot reveal anything about her except physical appearance. It is, therefore, evident that the appearance of a woman can be a valid

consideration when deciding to marry her. Had it been prohibited to marry a woman for her beauty (of course, in addition to her inner qualities), it would have been pointless to see her before marriage.

The correct position, therefore, is that the appearance of a woman is one of the valid considerations which may be kept in mind when deciding to marry her. But it should not be the only consideration, nor should it be.

Contemporary fatawaa