

Wrong Customs in Connection with Marriage

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Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei – the esteemed leader of the Islamic Revolution, has on various occasions pointed out a number of problems faced by the youth regarding marriage. The esteemed leader believes that cultural barriers which form considerable parts of the problems in connection with the marriage of the young people should be removed through the joint efforts of the authorities, families and the young boys and girls who need guidance in this regard. In a meeting with university students, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei remarked: “There are certain wrong ideas and wrong customs regarding marriage which form obstacles in the way of the marriage of the young people. These wrong ideas and customs should be removed and to my mind it is chiefly you – the youth who can and should make the efforts towards removing those improper customs and attitudes, because you are young, spirited and energetic, and have suggested the removal of certain useless and/or troublesome habits and customs so far.”

Below, your attention is invited to certain points emphasized by the esteemed leader in relation to marriage: Those who accept heavy *Mahr* (In Islam, a *Mahr* is a mandatory payment, in the form of money or possessions paid or promised to pay by the groom, or by groom's father, to the bride at the time of marriage, that legally becomes her property), for their wives are indeed harming the society by so doing, since such is the *Mahr* of *Jahiliyyah* (the period of the prevalence of wrong unIslamic customs), and abolished by the Holy Prophet(PBUH) of Islam. The proper *Mahr* is *Mahrusunnah*, which the Holy Prophet(PBUH) proposed, thus making marriage easy while the heavy *Mahr* discourages the young people regarding marriage, as we see the number of single boys and girls is increasing.

We should follow the example of our Prophet (PBUH) who himself was from an elite, well-known family of Quraish and though he was himself the head and leader of the society, made a small amount of money (*Mahrusunnah*) as the *Mahr* of his revered daughter – Her Holiness, Fatima(SA) - the greatest lady in both worlds, for her marriage with the noblest man, the Commander of believers, Imam Ali(AS). This is what our youth should know and follow. In fact, the less the amount of *Mahr*, the better, since it will be closer to the nature of marriage.

As a matter of fact, marriage is not dealing, it is not buying and selling, it is not renting and the like. Rather, marriage is the life of two human beings. As for *Mahr*, though there should be some *Mahr* in marriage as per the teachings of our Holy Prophet (PBUH), the *Mahr* should be a small amount and easy to pay by all. Some imagine that a heavy *Mahr*, (a *Mahr* of big amount of money), helps the preservation of the marriage bonds. This imagination is a wrong thought, because it has been proved that no amount of *Mahr* can keep a married life going on in case either the husband or the wife are God forbid!, ill-bred or wayward. Deciding a large sum of money as *Mahr* maybe (wrongfully) a means of pride and show off for the family of the bride or even for the family of the groom, but the fact is that such inclinations are far from Islam. A big *Mahr* has given happiness to no one. Those who imagine that their daughters will enjoy a happy marital life with a big *Mahr* are wrong. It has been proved that a marriage coupled with mutual affection, sincerity, honesty and proper behaviour by both the husband and wife will go on happily even with the least *Mahr*, and also that if a marriage is mingled with insincerity, dishonesty, disloyalty and the like, no amount of *Mahr* will be of any benefit to it; infact if the man is ill-bred and oppressive, he will manage to trample upon *Mahr* too..... So it is by no means advisable to make *Mahr* a large sum of money, because it is contrary to the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet of Islam and

infallible Imams. I do not mean to say that it is *Haram* or that invalidates the marriage. Rather, I mean to emphasize the inconformity of such unwise, unreasonable practices with the truly Islamic ones and to stress that such extravagant practices displease Allah and His Messenger (PBUH), more so under the present conditions when our society is in urgent need of proper conducts and avoidance of extravagance. As for the dowry (furniture and other things brought to the husband's house following marriage), it should be stressed that the simple, inexpensive dowry given by the Holy Prophet (PBUH) of Islam to his beloved daughter - Her Holiness Fatima (SA) should be regarded as the model dowry by all, and I do believe Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has set this model so the people will know how to base their lives and conducts and to be saved from problems resulting from wrong attitudes and extravagance. Unfortunately, we observe that some families trouble themselves a lot regarding the provision of dowry for their daughters; they spend too much money and often buy unnecessary luxury items if they are rich enough and if not, they resort to borrowing money, thus overburdening themselves with heavy debts in order to give a luxurious dowry to their daughter for her marriage and imagine that by so doing, they are contributing to their daughter's happiness in her marital life, while the fact is that such luxuries and unneeded items will be of no use for the couple's life and will also cause problems, such as resentment by the others who are not able to do the same, who may feel deprived or humiliated before the others for not having access to such luxuries. I advise all to never borrow money for such things and to content themselves with necessary things for a simple life. This is the right thing to do; marriage is a blessed event and should not be turned into a bitter one. If we see today families having got in trouble because of the expenses and ceremonies and extravagant wedding receptions for their sons and daughters, and/or we see many young people living in celibacy, which is discouraged by Islam, it is mostly

because of such wrong inclinations and wastefulness. The fact is that too much luxury is harmful for the society. This does not mean that people should be deprived of all luxuries. But it means that unlimited, unreasonable attachment to luxuries acts like harmful medicine or poisonous food to the body of the society. Of course, I am in agreement with spending some money on wedding ceremonies, for things such as sweets served to the guests, just as most people in the past used to do for making wedding ceremonies pleasant, but the spending should be kept within reasonable limits. In the past, wedding ceremonies were much more simple and much less expensive than they are today and yet those very simple ceremonies had their many blessings without putting financial and other pressures upon any. Unfortunately, today some families imagine that they have to hold the wedding ceremonies of their daughters and/or sons in expensive hotels, and think that it will be a sign of honouring the bride. This also is wrong and harms both their families and the society in various ways; many young girls and boys whose families are not rich enough to afford such luxuries may feel hurt and disappointed. It is forbidden by Islam to be so extravagant and luxury-conscious as to leave negative, harmful effects upon the emotion of the other people. I disapprove of any wastefulness, in particular since in many cases it involves the acquisition of haram money by the wasteful. Of course, I do approve of celebrating weddings and making merry on such occasions, but I disapprove of *Israf* (wastefulness), in anything, be it in shopping, reception, and so on. Spending within limits and having simple ceremonies will benefit all, especially the young people. Never forget that honour is to be gained in honesty, sincerity, high-spiritedness, proper conduct and piety, not through showing off and exhibiting costly clothings, ornaments, furniture and the like. If honour was to be found in such things as having a big *Mahr*, a luxurious dowry, a big wedding ceremony, costly clothing and jewellery, Allah would certainly have given them to Her Holiness Fatima(SA) most of all, since Allah has

Himself honoured her most. As we know, that most honourable lady had a very simple wedding ceremony and a very simple, yet most fruitful marital life with Imam Ali (AS).

Infact, a sweet wedding is not the wedding for which lots of money is spent; rather a sweet wedding is a wedding which has sincerity in itself. With sincerity, the wedding becomes sweet and pleasant, no matter how little money is spent on that. With piety true honour is achieved. It is also a pity that while wedding ceremonies can be very rewarding (as per the religion), some people make it sinful through extravagance and other haram acts.