20916 - Is it permissible for a Muslim woman to ask a Muslim man to marry her?

the question

Can a Muslim woman ask a Muslim man to marry her? Does the adeeth also refer to a woman asking a man?
The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: If there comes to you one whose religious commitment and attitude pleases you, then marry [your female relative who is under your care] to him, for if you do not do that, there will be tribulation on earth and much corruption. (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi and classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh Sunan al-Tirmidhi, 1084).

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

We are happy to congratulate you on choosing the path of the Prophets and of the wise, which is Tawheed, the belief in Allaah alone, and the testimony that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) is His Messenger.

With regard to the idea of a Muslim woman offering herself in marriage to a righteous man, that does not contradict the idea of modesty, so long as he is trustworthy with regard to his religious commitment and moral attitude. It was narrated that Thaabit al Banaani said: I was with Anas ibn Maalik and a daughter of his was with him. He said: “A woman came to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and offered herself in marriage to him. She said: ‘O Messenger of Allaah, do you want to marry me?’” The daughter of Anas said: “How little was her modesty. How shameless, how shameless!” Anas said: “She was better than you; she had a liking for the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) so she offered herself in marriage to him.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 4828.

Imam al-Bukhaari included this hadeeth in a chapter which he entitled: “A woman offering herself

in marriage to a righteous man.”

Al-Haafiz ibn Hajar said:

Ibn al-Munayyir said in al-Haashiyah: One of the subtle points of al-Bukhaari’s knowledge is that he from the specific story of the woman who offered herself in marriage to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) he derived a general principle; he understood that it is permissible for any woman to offer herself in marriage to a righteous man whose righteousness she admires, and if he likes her he may marry her subject to the conditions of marriage being fulfilled.

These two ahaadeeth – the hadeeth of Sahl and the hadeeth of Anas, both of which mention the woman who offered herself in marriage to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) – indicate that it is permissible for a woman to offer herself in marriage to a man, and to let him know that she has a liking for him, and there is nothing wrong with her doing so. And the one to whom a woman offers herself in marriage has the choice of either accepting or refusing, but he does not have to express his refusal outright, rather it is sufficient for him to remain silent.

Fath al-Baari, 9/175.

Al-‘Ayni said:

The words of Anas to his daughter: “She is better than you” indicate that it is permissible for a woman to offer herself in marriage to a righteous man, and to tell him of her liking for him because of his righteousness and virtue, or because of his knowledge and honour, or for some characteristic of religious commitment, and that there is no shame on her if she does that, rather that is a sign of her virtue. The daughter of Anas (may Allaah be pleased with him) looked at the externals and she did not understand this properly until Anas said: “She is better than you.” As for the woman who offers herself in marriage to a man for some worldly purpose, this is something that is abhorrent in the extreme.

‘Umdat al-Qaari’ Sharh Saheeh al-Bukhaari, 20/113.

But it is better for a woman to inform her wali (guardian) of her desire to marry a righteous man who is trustworthy with regard to his religious commitment and his moral attitude, without telling the man bluntly. This may be understood from what one of the two women did, when she said to her father – concerning Moosa (peace be upon him):

“And said one of them (the two women): ‘O my father! Hire him! Verily, the best of men for you to hire is the strong, the trustworthy’”

[al-Qasas 28:26 – interpretation of the meaning]

al-Qurtubi said:

With regard to the words of Allaah (interpretation of the meaning):

“He said: ‘I intend to wed one of these two daughters of mine to you, on condition that you serve me for eight years…’”

[al-Qasas 28:27]

Here the father offered his daughter in marriage to the man. This is an established custom whereby the righteous man of Madyan offered his daughter in marriage to a righteous man of the Children of Israel, ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab offered his daughter Hafsah in marriage to Abu Bakr and ‘Uthmaan, and the woman who offered herself in marriage offered herself to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). So it is good for a man to offer his female relative who is under his care in marriage, and for a woman to offer herself in marriage to a righteous man, following the example of the righteous salaf. Ibn ‘Umar said: When Hafsah became single (due to her husband dying), ‘Umar said to ‘Uthmaan: “If you wish, I will marry Hafsah bint ‘Umar to you.” This was narrated only by al-Bukhaari, 4005.

Tafseer al-Qurtubi, 13/271

But it should be noted that most of what happens nowadays, when a woman likes a particular man, is the result of haraam causes, such as a careless attitude on her part whereby she talks to

him and sits with him. A person who has evil motives may take advantage of such an offer to achieve some of his aims. So we must beware of this and protect our honour from anything that may besmirch it.

And Allaah knows best.