66621 - Does a wife have the right to refuse intimacy with her husband during Ramadaan for the purpose of worship?

the question

What is the ruling on a wife who refuses intimacy with her husband during Ramadaan because she is preoccupied with worship and drawing close to Allaah?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

The month of Ramadaan is an important occasion for worshippers to increase their worship and for sinners to give up their ways and reconcile themselves with their Lord by giving up their sin and doing more acts of worship and obedience, so that they may turn over a new leaf and start a new life.

There are saheeh ahaadeeth which speak of the virtue of fasting, praying qiyaam and observing i'tikaaf. And in Ramadaan there is a night – Laylat al-Qadr – which Allah has made better than a thousand months.

Based on this, the one who wants to spend the days of this month in worshipping his Lord cannot be denounced. People are psychologically prepared to read Qur'aan and obey the Most Merciful, whether they are men or women.

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever spends the nights of Ramadaan in prayer out of faith and in the hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven." Narrated by al-Bukhaari (37) and Muslim (760).

Secondly:

Women should understand that their husbands have great rights over them. It is not permissible for a woman to refuse her husband these rights, or to refuse them for the sake of naafil acts of worship.

It was narrated that ‘Abd-Allah ibn Abi Awfa (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “By the One in Whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, no woman can fulfil her duty towards Allah until she fulfils her duty towards her husband. If he asks her (for intimacy) even if she is on her camel saddle, she should not refuse.” Narrated by Ibn Maajah (1853); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Targheeb, 1938.

What this means is that women are urged to obey their husbands, and that they should not refuse them even in this situation, so how about in other situations?

Haashiyat al-Sindi ‘ala Ibn Maajah.

Because of the importance of husbands’ rights, women are enjoined to ask their permission before doing some acts of worship which may conflict with their rights, such as the following:

1 – Observing naafil fasts.

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “No woman should fast when her husband is present except with his permission. Narrated by al-Bukhaari (4896) and Muslim (1026).

Al-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: This is to be understood as referring to voluntary and recommended fasts for which there is no specific time. It is understood as meaning that this is haraam, as our companions stated. The reason for that is that the husband has the right to intimacy with his wife on all days, and his right is to be implemented immediately, and cannot be deferred because of voluntary acts of worship or because of an obligatory deed that may be done at any time. End quote.

Sharh Muslim, 7/115.

2 – Going out to the mosque

It was narrated from ‘Abd-Allah ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “When the wife of any one of you asks for permission to go to the mosque, do not forbid her.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (4940) and Muslim (442).

Thirdly:

The husband has to fear Allah with regard to his wife, and not burden her with more than she can bear. Many men keep their womenfolk busy all day with cooking, and at night with making sweets, so the woman’s days and nights are wasted and she cannot make the most of her fasting days or her nights by doing acts of worship. One of the wife’s rights over her husband is that she should have a share of the worship of this month. So he should not prevent her from reading Qur’aan, or praying qiyaam. There should be understanding between them so that there will not be any conflict between his rights and her worship of her Lord. This, of course, has to do with naafil acts of worship; with regard to obligatory acts of worship, the husband has no right to stop his wife doing them.

The way of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) with his wives was to encourage them to worship and obey Allah, especially in the last ten days of Ramadaan.

It was narrated that ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: “When the (last) ten nights began, the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) would tighten his waist-wrapper (i.e., strive hard in worship or refrain from intimacy with his wives), stay awake at night and wake his family.”

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (1920) and Muslim (1174).

If both husband and wife understand their rights and duties, they will avoid difficulties and arguments in most cases. If they understand that such occasions will only recur a few times during their lives, this should make them keener to make the most of the days and nights of Ramadaan.

We ask Allah, may He be blessed and exalted, to reconcile your hearts and to help you to obey Him and worship Him properly.

And Allah knows best.