88125 - She got to know him on the internet and he proposed marriage to her but they are not getting along

the question

I have been working for two years far away from my family (during which I suffered from being away from my family and working too hard, and my outlook on life was affected greatly). Now I am working in a village that is about 150 km from my town, i.e., it takes an hour and a half to get there and an hour and a half to get back. My life revolves around my family, study and work. I have no friends and I only visit my relatives and acquaintances rarely. I hardly ever go out of the house except for necessities, or to take a trip with my family, or to go to work or to attend some courses. Sometimes I go to a health club with my mother (for health reasons and to keep fit). I grew up in a family that is decent and fairly religiously committed; we pray regularly and do what Allaah has enjoined upon us. Because of my work, and being away from my family, and my position among my siblings (I am the eldest), I got used to being independent and self-reliant, and to having others respect my opinion. My parents are the closest friends I have, and I do not hide any of my secrets from them. I got to know the internet in 1422 AH, and I looked at many websites, with the aim of improving my English and developing a way of teaching it. I looked for different sites that had to do with women, the family and married life. Six months ago whilst I was on a website for practising English, I got a private message from someone who want to talk to me about some issues that had to do with teaching English and the difficulties faced with female students, especially since he was a graduate from the English language college. He was looking for work and he is two years younger than me. After two or three exchanges on this website and via brief e-mails, he asked me some personal questions such as how old I am, where I live and the customs of my family. Finally he told me that he wanted to propose marriage to me, so I gave him my father’s phone number, simply to find out if he was being honest. In fact he called my father and about two weeks later he and his family visited us. At first our families were hesitant, especially since they were concerned about the way we had got to know each other, and because of our customs and traditions and the differences in customs and traditions (as I am from an

ordinary family and he is from high-status family). After a few visits from his family and discussions with my family, he and I were able to make them accept this matter. Praise be to Allaah, my fiancé has been appointed in a village that is close to his city, and soon he will get approval from the bank for a muraabahah loan so that he can complete the plans for our wedding. After we had been engaged for a while, we began to speak on the phone (I know that we did wrong on this point, especially since the marriage contract had not yet been done) and through these conversations we got to know one another better, and I noticed a few things about him: some positive things (he prays regularly) which encouraged me to go ahead and marry him, especially since I had refused some people before him for one reason, which was that they did not pray or were careless about it; he is religiously committed and does not listen to music; he does not smoke cigarettes or the narghile, which also encouraged me because I had refused people before him for one reason, which was that they smoked; he is good natured and uncomplicated; we have a great deal in common and hold similar views on various issues; we are both teachers; we both work; we have similar hopes for the future with regard to the family, children and continuing to study.

On the negative side, I feel that his religious commitment does not stem so much from conviction but from his upbringing and his family's traditions. He wants to impose some things on me, not because they are part of Islam so much as for social appearances, so that he will appear to be a religious person who is strict; the way he and his family look at me and my family – they think that we are not religiously committed and are not modest enough, and that our womenfolk are dominant and controlling and direct the men according to their whims, although I think that most men in the world do what their wives want even if they show the opposite. They regard us as being of an inferior lineage to them, and one of the hardest things in a marriage is if one party looks down on the other or does not think that the other is able to fulfil the duties of married life. He wants me to devote myself and my life fully to him and his children, and to stop working and forget myself completely and give up all my dreams of completing my studies, improving my work performance or doing any other activities, or even going to the health club. If I exercise that will be a favour from him because the time that I spend on these things belongs rightfully to him and his children!

I am not against marriage or taking care of the children or serving the husband, but I believe that it is the wife’s right to have her own interests and privacy.

He thinks that housework is one of my duties, and if I employ a servant it must be at my own expense, because she will be doing my job. He objected strongly to my father’s condition of providing a servant in the marriage contract, and he thinks that this will make him look bad in front of his family, and that my conditions are impossible to fulfil. Don’t the daughters of the tribes and high-status families have difficult conditions or demands too? Please note that my family only stipulated that because they feared I might face problems that happen to working wives with their husbands because of having servants, and because the men in our society forget that housework is the husband’s responsibility according to Islam, and he is free either to do it himself or bring servants; if his wife does it, it is a favour on her part. Please note that I do not like to have a servant in the house, and with a little cooperation between the spouses and children, and using machines, and using external sources of help such as sending the clothes to the laundry and putting the children in daycare when one is at work, one can do away with the need for a servant and avoid the evils and problems that servants may bring. Men nowadays are no better than the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) who served his family and did housework.

He wants me to stop listening to music and not watch movies and soap operas, and not to wear pants, and to wear the abayah that comes down from the head, even though I have told him about my opinion on these matters. As for music, I am not bothered about it and I will give it up at the first opportunity. As for watching films and soap operas, I do not think it is haraam, and with regard to studying English it is a means of practising listening to the English language. As for soap operas, I only watch those that serve a purpose and are useful. With regard to wearing pants, I told him that I am a smart person and I know how to dress according to the time and occasion and the people I am going to meet. When I am at school and there are official visits, or I visit people I do not know, I do not wear pants, but I like to wear them on days off or trips out, because they are more covering for me as I move a lot. With regard to the abayah that comes from the head, I do not wear it because there is basically no specific way for Muslim women to wear hijab, and based

on my experience I have found that it does not suit me. The abayah that comes from the shoulders and is closed in front, with a lose headscarf and a cover for the face is better for me and more covering, especially if I am carrying things or carrying children, or I am walking a long way. He thinks that all the places I go on trips to with my family (markets, trips to the seaside, leisure centres, even the corniche) are places of mixing and he cannot take me there. I have tried to understand his protective jealousy, but to be honest I am afraid that he is going to keep me locked up in the house, and I will only go out to visit family and relatives which I do not like very much, especially because of the gossip, destructive envy and grudges that happen among women. He says that I do not know how to communicate with him, and my approach is dry and I often offend him. I hope that you can teach me, because I have doubts about my abilities and I feel deep regret when I see that he is hurt by me.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

When we answer questions, we usually draw attention to mistakes from a shar'i point of view that appear in the questions, some of which may have to do with the question itself and others that do not. But it is very important for us to highlight to the questioner what he has got right, so that we will be fulfilling our duty to offer sincere advice (naseehah) as Allah has enjoined upon us.

Secondly:

We may sum up the things that are contrary to sharee'ah in the question, whether they have to do with the wife or the husband, as follows:

1.Travelling without a mahram.

We understand this from what the sister says in her question: "Now I am working in a village that is about 150 km from my town, i.e., it takes an hour and a half to get there and an hour and a half

to get back.”

If this is the case, and there is no mahram travelling with her, then she should note that “It is not permissible for a woman who believes in Allah and the Last Day to travel without a mahram.” It is not sufficient to have a group of women – as some scholars think – for a woman to travel without a mahram; each woman in the group must have a mahram with her.

For more information on this subject, please see the answers to questions no. 3098, 45917 and 4523.

2.Corresponding with a stranger (non-mahram) via the internet

This is what has happened between you and a man who is a non-mahram. Although this non-mahram has proposed marriage to you, there are thousands who have not done so with the women whom they have caught in their traps. The marriages that are built on such foundations may be susceptible to doubt, suspicion and accusations, and the marriage may be doomed to failure.

We have discussed the prohibition on correspondence between the sexes in the answer to questions no. 26890 and 10221.

3.It may be understood from the word muraabahah that there is a riba-based loan involved.

This is when you say of your fiancé, “soon he will get approval from the bank for a muraabahah loan so that he can complete the plans for our wedding.”

The fact that most people call this transaction a loan is calling it by its proper name; the banks try to trick people by calling it muraabahah, when it fact it is a riba-based loan that involves interest.

For more details on this issue please see the answer to question no. 36408.

4.Talking to one another during the engagement period.

You said in your question, “After we had been engaged for a while, we began to speak on the

phone (I know that we did wrong on this point, especially since the marriage contract had not yet been done)."

It is essential to avoid being alone with one's fiancée, or going out with her, or mixing too much with her and talking to her, especially on the phone, and when there is no mahram or other person present.

See the answers to questions no. 7757, 2572 and 20069 for the limits on the relationship between a man and his fiancée.

5.Conditions in marriage

You say "Don't the daughters of the tribes and high-status families have difficult conditions or demands too?"

The answer is: No, not necessarily, because stipulating difficult things for the husband is something that complicates married life, because it may go beyond what the husband can afford, and that will have a negative effect on his psychology and his life, and on how he interacts with his wife and her family.

Moreover, stipulating difficult things and making demands on the husband is not indicative of sound reason or high status. Faatimah (may Allah be pleased with her) was one of the noblest women in the world, and the daughter of the leader of the Messengers, and she did not impose any difficult conditions on her husband, or make many demands of him. The same may be said of all the daughters of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the daughters of his companions who were of noble descent, religiously committed and wise.

It was narrated that 'Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) gave Faatimah a trousseau of a piece of velvet cloth, a waterskin, and a leather pillow stuffed with idhkhir fibres.

Narrated by Ahmad (644) and al-Nasaa'i (3384); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani.

There are reports in the Sunnah which point to the opposite of what you think, which is encouragement to make things easy when getting engaged and keep down the cost of marriage:

It was narrated from ‘Aa’ishah that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “One of the good signs in a woman is if her engagement is made easy and her dowry is made easy.”

Narrated by Ahmad (23957) and classed as hasan by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Jaami’ (2235).

6.Wife serving her husband

You say “the men in our society forget that housework is the husband’s responsibility according to Islam, and he is free either to do it himself or bring servants; if his wife does it, it is a favour on her part.”

Although this is the view of the majority, it is a weak view. A woman’s service in her home is not a favour on her part, rather it is undoubtedly her duty, but it is to be done according to her ability and strength.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

She is obliged to serve her husband based on what a woman like her customarily does for a man like him, which may vary according to circumstances. What a Bedouin woman does is not like what a town-dwelling woman does, and what a strong woman does is not like what a weak woman does.

Al-Fataawa al-Kubra (4/561).

Shaykh ‘Abd-Allah ibn Jibreen (may Allah preserve him) was asked:

I read in one of the newspapers here a fatwa by one of the scholars which says that a wife’s serving her husband is not obligatory upon her, rather the marriage contract allows him to be intimate with her only. As for her serving him, that is part of kind treatment. He said that the husband has to bring servants for his wife if she does not serve him or serve herself for any reason. Is this correct? If it is not correct, then praise be to Allah that this newspaper is not widely

circulated, otherwise some husbands would become like bachelors when some of their wives read this fatwa.

He replied:

This fatwa is not correct and should not be followed. The women of the Sahaabah used to serve their husbands as Asma' bint Abi Bakr narrated that she served (her husband) al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwaam, and Fatimah al-Zahra' used to serve 'Ali (may Allah be pleased with them). It has remained the custom of the Muslims that the wife serves her husband, preparing food, washing clothes and dishes, and cleaning the house, as well as tending and milking livestock, working the fields and so on, each according to her abilities. This has been the custom from the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) until the present day, with no objections. But she should not be burdened with that which will cause hardship, rather it depends on her abilities and what is customary. And Allah is the Source of strength.

Fataawa al-Mar'ah al-Muslimah (2/662, 663).

See also the answers to question no. 12539 and 10680.

7.Ruling on soap operas and watching movies

You say "As for watching films and soap operas, I do not think it is haraam". This is undoubtedly wrong. Films include many evils such as women going out unveiled, stories of haraam love, drinking alcohol, haraam relationships, promotion of crime and transgression against good morals.

For more details please see the answer to questions no. 21227 and 13956.

8.You say "He wants me to stop listening to music and not watch movies and soap operas, and not to wear pants, and to wear the abayah that comes down from the head".

With regard to music and singing, please see the details of the ruling that they are haraam, in the answers to questions no. 43736, 5000 and 5011.

See the answer to question no. 8555 for the ruling on women wearing the abayah that comes from

the shoulders.

With regard to movies and shows, we already mentioned the questions in which the ruling on that is discussed.

Thirdly:

To be fair, you mention something in your question that your fiancé dislikes but it is something that is permissible for you according to sharee'ah, which is your father's stipulating that you should have a servant, as you say in your question: "He objected strongly to my father's condition of providing a servant in the marriage contract".

But there are rulings which apply to having a servant in the house, and it may bring some negative consequences. Please see the answers to questions no. 22980 and 26231.

Fourthly:

There are some things which your fiancé is asking for that are valid, and you have no right to object to any of them. These include:

1.

You say "He wants me to devote myself and my life fully to him and his children, and to stop working and forget myself completely and give up all my dreams of completing my studies, improving my work performance or doing any other activities, or even going to the health club".

For a woman to devote herself to her house, children and husband is one of the greatest deeds that a woman can do. It is a deed that cannot be surpassed in length of time and importance even by the material benefits gained by the husband's work outside the home.

There are many women's voices in the west calling for women to go back to the work that she does well, which protects her character and honour, which is working in the home, for which there are not enough hours in the day and night, so how about if she is distracted by going out of the house all the time for work?

2.

You say: “He wants me to stop listening to music and not watch movies and soap operas, and not to wear pants, and to wear the abayah that comes down from the head.”

We have referred to these issues above.

3. You say: “He thinks that all the places I go on trips to with my family (markets, trips to the seaside, leisure centres, even the corniche) are places of mixing and he cannot take me there”.

He is correct in saying that these places are mixed, but it is possible to avoid mixed places in some of them, and to choose a suitable time and place for such trips.

You should note that his motive in not taking you to these places is his protective jealousy towards you, which is something praiseworthy in a husband. It is not bad jealousy like that which is accompanied by doubt and suspicion, rather it is a praiseworthy kind of protective jealousy that you should encourage. You can be subtle in choosing suitable places and times for visiting those places or some of them.

See the answer to question no. 8901, in which there is a fatwa from the scholars of the Standing Committee on the ruling on going to leisure venues in which there are a lot of evils.

Finally:

Married life is wonderful and is based on mutual understanding and harmony. Allah has created therein love and compassion between the spouses so that it will continue and last.

If the woman sees in herself or in the one who proposes to her that that there is no harmony or similarity in thinking, then it is better for her to taker her time and think long and hard before going ahead with the marriage, especially if there are differences of opinion before consummation of the marriage, or there are differences about matters in which it is hard for either party to accept the view of the other, or to understand his or her opinion or do without it in his or her life. In that case going ahead with the marriage is a risk, not something assured.

What we advise you is to set yourself straight and give up the haraam deeds to which we have drawn your attention – and this has nothing to do with marriage, because they are haraam even if you do not get married. After that you can work out something with your fiancé based on what is permissible for you in sharee'ah. If he agrees to that and opens his mind to it, then perhaps going ahead with the marriage will be good for both parties, but if you continue doing the things that we have warned you about that are nor permissible in sharee'ah, then we do not advise him to marry you, and it is his right, indeed he is obliged, not to do that.

You should note that happiness is found in obeying Allah and He is the One Who guides people to His way. If Allah helps His obedient slave to find a blessed marriage and a good family, then he will be in a kind of paradise before the Paradise of eternity, so strive hard to be obedient and look for a husband who respects the limits set by Allah, for all good in this world will come to you by seeking the pleasure of Allah.

Please see also the answer to question no. 22397.

And Allah is the Source of strength.