Obstruction to Matrimony

Today's discussion will focus on the impediments that the present society wrongly imposes to obstruct matrimony. I shall dwell on these very briefly. Removing these impediments by delivering one or several talks on the matter might not be possible. But I am certain my talk will start the audience thinking!

Making Lame Excuses

The first impediment in the way of matrimony of young people is the making of lame excuses, sometimes by the prospective bride and sometimes by the prospective groom. Sometimes even the parents come up with illogical excuses for not getting their young children married. These excuses have, in several cases, resulted in girls of the age of thirty remaining at home, unmarried. There are also persistent bachelors of forty plus years of age! When they are asked the reason for not marrying, they say that they couldn't find a suitable match! Here I would like to say something. I shall also dwell on this matter in my subsequent talks .

It is not possible for a girl or a boy to find a match which is 100 percent to her/his liking. In normal circumstances if someone fits the bill about fifty percent, it should be fine. If the requirements are met up to about seventy percent, the match can be considered excellent. Many illogical excuses are made even by families who claim to be religious. The worldly types have different reasons and excuses.

For example, the boy expects a house along with the bride, or considers beauty to be a must in his future wife, or wants to marry into a family with a very high status. He is unable to get the bride of his choice because he himself comes from a family with a lower status. So he keeps waiting to find such a match. Similarly, girls remain unmarried because their mothers say that the prospective groom doesn't own a house, is short in height or doesn't have the desired good looks! These are mere excuses. These are things which the intellect cannot accept as valid excuses.

In this gathering itself, perhaps, there are several girls who might have received twenty or more proposals that must have been refused on such flimsy grounds. There must also be such boys in this gathering who are trying to get married for the last two to three years but have been unable to get a suitable bride, even while there must be many girls amongst their relatives or neighbors. But they must have found some flaw in each one of them, and are still searching.

In the end these excuses will lead them to a very bad wife. The Prophet of Islam (s.a.) used to say, “O people! When your daughter reaches the age of consent, get her married. A mature girl is like a ripe fruit on a tree. If it is not picked on maturity, it will fall and go waste. Similarly when a girl matures, if she does not get married, she will waste. Same is true for the sons. If a boy reaches the marriageable age and does not marry, he too will be wasted.

There used to be several people making such excuses even in the gatherings addressed by the Prophet (s). Some of them asked, “O Prophet of Allah! What sort of match we should find for our daughters?” The Prophet (s) replied, “The mu’mineen are matches for each other.” (that is, some have the same status as some others) Wasail al Shia, Vol 14, Page 39 A mu’min is one who has a good character, follows the faith implicitly, and he is the kufu or match for another mu’min. If such a person asks for the hand of your daughter in marriage, agree to the proposal.

The people asked, “O Prophet (s.a.w.a.)! Who is a match?”

The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) repeatedly said:

“If you find a boy whose akhlaq (ethics) are good and follows the Faith properly, give your daughter in marriage to him. If matches are made without considering the aspects of akhlaq and faith, it will cause mischief and disturbance in the Islamic Society.” Wasail al Shia, Vol 14, Page 51

What more mischief and disturbance could there be in the Islamic society than is prevailing now? The Prophet of Islam (s) said from the pulpit that one should look for a boy with good moral character and faith as a match for their daughters. When a mother looks for a match for her daughter she should check whether the boy is proud, or jealous. She should check whether the akhlaq of the boy is sound. It has been quoted in the traditions that if someone looks only for the apparent good looks and the wealth in fixing matches for their children, the consequences of such marriages are tragic.

If wealth is the only criterion for a match, you will end up with regret, because such a match will be proud of his wealth or good looks or ancestry, and it is this pride which becomes a cause for differences and wretchedness later on. Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) said, “Give your daughter to a person who practices the faith properly. If he likes and loves her, he will respect her. Even if he doesn’t like her, his faith will not permit him to be cruel to her.” How felicitous is this tradition of Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.)! I suppose there is not even one person in this gathering who has not made such excuses, even though the Prophet (s) himself has not attached any importance to them, rather has negated them.

During the times of the Prophet (s), some unusual matches have taken place so that these flimsy excuses are eliminated. Examples are the marriages of Juwaybir, Zubair and Miqdad.

The Prophet (s) got a beautiful girl with good akhlaq married using faith as the only criterion to establish the fact that the basis of marriage should be religion and akhlaq, not good looks or ancestry. I do not say that you should totally disregard other factors. I say that the criterion for marriage should be faith and akhlaq.

If you like a girl seventy percent, you should not make further excuses in finalizing the match. You should not take recourse to istakhara, which is only meant for special situations when human wisdom and discretion fail, and it is not possible to obtain the opinion and advice of other mu'mineen. In situations where confusion prevails, istekhara can be resorted to. But in situations where everything is crystal clear, when the intellect can guide you, when a proposal has come from a boy who fits well into the norms of piety and morals, doing an istakhara is meaningless.

Istakhara in Islam, in fact, means that a person offers two rakaats of prayer and thereafter says the following words a hundred times, "Astakhirullaha be rehmateh" (O Allah! Make what I am going to do felicitous for me . Thereafter he should busy himself with what he had planned to do. The work will, God willing, be good for him. This is the istakhara that the author of Kitabe Jawahir has recommended in his book. It means to ask the best from Allah in your works. Sometimes when an istakhara comes negative, people do it again and again till they get a positive response. This is absolutely wrong.

In conclusion we would like to say that the excuses made by parents or the boys and girls for avoiding and postponing matrimony must be avoided. Instead, we should place trust in Allah. Allah will set the future right. According to the Holy Quran one should neither grieve over the past, nor be fearful about the future.

Lo! Verily the friends of Allah are (those) on whom fear (cometh) not, nor do they grieve. Sura Yunus 62 The friends of Allah neither grieve over the past nor are they fearful about the future because they place their trust in Allah. We too should, in matters of matrimony, stop making excuses and make positive decisions putting absolute trust in Allah. These excuses have all been rejected and refuted by the Prophet (s), the Imams (a.s.) and the religious scholars.

We quote here an incident about Kashif al Ghita, who was a Marjae Taqleed. There are very few examples like him in wisdom, erudition and chivalry. One day, after the lesson he said to his students, "I have a daughter who has reached the age of consent.

If I find a morally upright and religious young person, I shall give her in marriage to him." Hearing this, one of the students got up and sat down. According to the custom of that time, this meant that he was offering himself as a match for the daughter of the eminent cleric. Kashif al Ghita asked the boy to follow him home and adjourned the class. The student went

behind him.

The cleric knew that the boy was morally upright and a good student in the group. He knew that the boy was a good practitioner of the moral values of Islam. But neither did he have any wealth nor property. Kashif al Ghita told his daughter that there was a proposal for her from a boy who was morally and religiously upright but had no worldly wealth. Would she be interested in marrying the boy?

She told her father that all the authority vested in him. The contract of marriage was immediately drawn; the young couple was tied in wedlock. Kashaf al Ghita vacated one room at his house and settled the couple there. When he got up for the night prayer, he knocked at the door of the young couple and said, “I have placed a container of water at the door of such and such a room. Go and offer prayers.” The couple performed ghusl and recited Salahul Layl. The story we have related about Kashif al Ghita, it doesn’t conclude here because:

As for those who strive for Us, we surely guide them to Our paths, and lo! Allah is with the good. Sura Ankabu:69 Those who strive in Allah’s cause have been promised help by Him. Khashif al Ghita’s son-in law, Shaykh Mohammed Taqi, reached such a high state of learning that he could write a commentary on ‘Ma-alim’. Even now, after three to four hundred years his commentary is recognized as very authoritative.

All the sons of Kashif al Ghita became mujtahids. His family was so morally upright and religious that all the scholars of Isfahan were humble before them. The marriage which takes place according to the wishes of Allah and the Prophet (s) will be very felicitous. Quran wants us to marry on the basis of Islamic principles. This is the way of the Prophet (s), the Infallible Imams (a.s.) and the way of the mujtahids.

Allama Majlisi was an erudite scholar but was also very wealthy. To gauge his learning, a glance at his book Bihar al Anwaar should be sufficient. We can say with confidence that so far, after him, a scholar of his erudition has not been born. Allama Majlisi had a daughter who was not only a scholar and a mujtahida, but also very beautiful too. As far as lineage was concerned, she belonged to one of the highly respected families of the time.

Allama Majlisi arranged her marriage to his student, Sayyid Saleh Mazandarani, who had no name, fame and property worth a mention. But he was religious, morally upright and a good student of religion. Allama Majlisi married his daughter to him because of his good akhlaq. It is said that once Mazandarani was unable to solve a question of jurisprudence. When he came home and referred it to her, she was able to give a learned reply to the question! Although the daughter was not an ordinary person, the Allama selected this youth as a match for her because he found him morally upright and religious. He was a father who made no recourse to

excuses. He used to say that the Prophet of Islam (s) has said: "When a person approaches you for the hand of your daughter, and you are sure about his good character and practice of the faith, then give your daughter in marriage to him. If you don't do this, then there will be much mischief on the face of the earth!"

Unnecessary Show

The second impediment is more important and more difficult to avoid these days. In the earlier days the bride used to bring a Quran with her. Gradually a candle holder was added to the list, and all of you know what the list includes today. The things have reached such a pass that even if the groom sells himself, he cannot buy the quantity of gold that he has to give to the bride at the time of the marriage.

This prompts young boys to refuse matrimony. If the bride carries a Quran and an ordinary mirror with her, can it not suffice? What difference does it make if the groom brings an ordinary ring for the bride? What calamity will befall if the bride presents the groom an Aqeeq ring? Instead of this a chain of gold is put in the neck of the groom as if the hanging noose has been put on his neck! The first problem is that he cannot offer prayers with gold around his neck! The second problem and wretchedness is that if at the time of solemnization of Seegha e Nikaah the groom wears a golden ring on his finger and a golden chain on his neck, sins will be recorded on his book of deeds because ornamentation of men with gold is forbidden (Haram). Gold rings, watches, chains, spectacle frames and all things which are ornamentation for men fall under the forbidden category. Now, what difference does it make if the groom wears a silver chain or a silver ring studded with an aqeeq or even if he wears nothing at all on his finger? Even if people pass comments, neither will the sky fall on the earth, nor will the earth rise to the sky. On the contrary, it is our bad deeds that spoil the skies and destroy the earth. Is there anyone bold enough to break these unpleasant practices? But these practices cannot be done away by the efforts of a few people. All of us have to work towards it. We know that the city of Qum has certain distinguishing qualities. Cannot the people of Qum take the lead in putting an end to these practices? They should stop the practice of bringing expensive mirrors and candelabra as part of the bride's trousseau and conduct simple marriages. Slowly all other places will follow suit, and a day will come when the Islamic government will declare that we are the ones who have rid ourselves of this menace.

One person came to the presence of Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.). The Imam (a.s.) asked him if he was married? The man replied in the negative. The Imam (a.s.) then said that if the entire world and all that it contained was given to him for remaining without his spouse for a night, he

would not accept it. Then he said that a short (two unit) salah of a married man or woman is more felicitous than the entire night's worship of a single person.

Imam Mohammed Baqir (a.s.) gave seven dinars to a person and asked him to go and get married. Those days the amount was sufficient for a modest wedding. Nowadays, one may have to sell his house to be in a position to arrange his wedding! This extravagance is not liked by Allah.

Once the Prophet of Islam (s) was seated with his companions when a woman came to his presence and said, "O Prophet of Allah! I am not married. Kindly arrange my marriage." The Prophet (s) turned towards his companions and said, "Is any one of you willing to marry this woman?" One of the companions stood up and gave his consent. The Prophet asked him what he could offer for the dowry. The man said that he had nothing except the shirt that he was wearing. The Prophet (s) asked him if he remembered anything from the Holy Quran. The man said he remembered only one chapter, Waqiya, from the Holy Book.

The Prophet (s) then asked the woman if she was willing to accept the chapter as the dowry for her marriage to the man. When the woman agreed, the marriage was solemnized. The Prophet (s) used to give lessons to the people that they should not make excuses for delaying marriages. Today people from all fields including clerics, traders, the learned, the illiterate, the rural and the urban populations are involved in this undesirable practice. Why? The affluent sections are more involved in this than the poorer sections. Just think why people make excuses for delaying marriages. Why are they taking shelter behind istakhara to invent excuses for delaying and postponing marriages? The things have reached such a pass that even while the Seegha e Nikah is being recited, the groom is thinking of how and when he will clear the loan he has incurred for buying the gold for the marriage.

Does this not happen? Can the marriages not be solemnized without giving gold?! People should have trust in Allah that He will give more in the future! It is not at all possible that a good act performed in the way of Allah remains without reward! When you do something for a common person, he thanks you. If you do something for Allah, do you think Allah will not bless you?

O mothers! Gold can be gifted even after the marriage. Your main concern should be to find a good groom for your daughter who will love her. Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) says that even if the husband doesn't love his wife, his faith should be such that it does not allow him to be cruel to her and does not permit him to make her unhappy. However we find that even if the husband can cover his wife with gold ornaments from head to toe, he doesn't do it, because before marriage his feelings were abused, by your placing obstructions in the path of marriage. O

mothers, by making these excuses you are abusing his feelings and love. In the days gone by, a custom was that the groom was given some clothes after the proposal was accepted. Then a box of sweets was added to the list. Now it is said it doesn't look nice that only the groom is given gifts and the mother-in-law is given nothing, so something should be given to her too. Those who have the means can give and will definitely give. But what of those who do not have the means? They are forced into debts. A person who earns on a daily basis, a person who is not in a position to buy a kilo of apples for his children or a kilo of fruit for them for iftar is expected to also gift something to his mother-in-law, in order to please her. And if she is not a good woman no amount of gifts will please her. If she is a good person, she will always be happy whether you gift her something or nothing because these things cannot buy love. If someone thinks to the contrary, he is mistaken. In the Mathnavi, Maulavi says that a person went to attend the nature's call and recited the prayer that is prescribed for wudhu (ablution) prior to prayers.

When the same person went for doing the wudhu he recited the prayer meant for reciting at the time of attending the nature's call! Maulavi told to the person that he remembered the prayers very well but forgotten what they were meant for! For marriages too, people think that the love of the son-in-law is proportional to the gold given, or that love is in covering the bride in gold. This is a wrong concept. This can only bring worries, debt and problems for both the newly-weds! Love is that which is endowed by Allah. In the Holy Quran He says:

Lo! Those who believe and do good works, the Beneficent will appoint for them love. Sura Maryam 96

The Holy Quran says that if you want your son-in-law to love your daughter, you must establish a strong connection with Allah. You should be concerned with what Allah wants from you. Can anyone of you say with confidence that Imame Zaman (a.s.) is pleased with these marriages. Can we claim that Islam is pleased with our marriages, our excuses, our extravagance? Imam Wali al-'Asr (a) is not pleased, The Prophet (s) and Sayyida Fatema are not happy. We should break free from and do away with these undesirable obstructions to marriage.

Excessive Mahr

Another big problem is the fixing of mahr (dowry). There was a time when the non-revolutionary and non-religious types used to quote one million, two million, and three million. Now, after the revolution, people say that mahr should be equal to the number of the Prophets (s) – one lakh, twenty four thousand (124,000) units of modern money - at the mention of which people have to take to their heels. In Qum, another thing added to this is the sheer baha.

Do you know what sheer baha is? It is an evil practice. It means the mother taking money from the son-in-law for nursing her own daughter (breastfeeding her). The pity is that after extracting this amount from the groom, it is not even given to the mother; it goes into the pocket of the father.

What is sheer baha? Are you selling your daughter by charging sheer baha? Sheer baha means that you are selling your daughter.

The Jurists say that a person who cannot pay a hundred thousand or 85,000 tumans cannot agree to pay the same. Traditions say that a sign of an inauspicious bride is her high mahr. If there is no love, what will the mahr achieve? People keep a high mahr to bind the son-in-law to the daughter - when he is unable to pay the mahr, he will not be able to leave her. But what if the boy does not love the girl? The boy gives enough money in the house, he does not beat her so you cannot accuse him of being cruel, he does not use bad language so you cannot accuse him of having bad akhlaq. He just refuses to speak to her. She may bear this for a day or two. In the end, this house will become worse than a prison for her. After about a year in this situation the girl starts feeling that she not only has lost her mahr but she might even lose her life! So she forgives him the mahr.

In short, the mahr cannot bind a husband against his will. Some people have come up with a revolutionary idea that the girls can be married away without fixing any mahr. I don't agree with them because a marriage cannot be solemnized without fixing a mahr. It is also not correct when some people fix a copy of the Holy Quran or five coins as mahr. I believe that the mahr should be neither excessive nor small. The middle way should be adopted, and even then the mahr should be fixed keeping in mind the status of the boy and the girl.

Lavish Walima or Reception

The fourth impediment and problem in marriages is lavish walima. Walima is considered a felicitous custom in Islam, but which walima? The walima that the Prophet of Islam (s) held at the wedding of Hadhrat Fatima Zahra (a.s.). A goat was slaughtered and the poor of Medina were invited. After the poor of Medina, those who could not afford to buy meat, had shared in the repast, the Prophet (s) ordered the leftover food to be distributed amongst those poor who did not attend the feast or those who had not eaten the food. After this walima, the Prophet (s) led his daughter to the groom's house.

But today's walima is nothing short of a headache. We find the father of a girl unwilling to get her married. On investigation we find that in reality he cannot afford the walima, so he makes all kinds of excuses, even while the daughter is more than twenty or twenty-five years old. My

dear brothers this type of walima is totally wrong. Don't be under the impression that it will bring divine rewards. This type of walima attracts divine punishment instead of divine rewards. Walima is given to make the marriage felicitous, but the type of walima we give neither makes .the marriage nor the bride felicitous

A Wrong Practice

When a person dies, we find that his son and heir is not occupied with acts that bring Divine Reward for his father, but he is occupied with footing the bill for the majlis (condolence ceremony) of the father. He is worried about the food to be served after the majlis. People keep coming to give condolences and this goes on for a few days. The son is forced to sell his house to conduct a majlis for his father, and feed the people after the majlis. According to Islam when someone dies, other people should not allow food to be cooked in this house for three days. Instead they should take food for the bereaved family, and not go there to eat. To go and eat in a house where a death has taken place is makrooh (abominable). Some days back a youth had come to meet me. He said that his father had died, and with great difficulty he had managed to take a loan of 70,000 tumans. The first calamity is that his father had died, and then he had to feed people for a week, make arrangements for tea etc. He thought that he had done something good for his father whereas his father is complaining in his grave because his son took a loan and is cursing all those who eat at his house the whole day, because of which his wife, his daughter and his son are suffering. If you want to hold a majlis or a walima the best way is to be concerned about the poor, do not forget them. It is related that a lady used to cook sweets one day of the week and ask her son to distribute it amongst the people at the cemetery. One day the son was very hungry, so instead of distributing it at the cemetery, he ate it himself and returned home. At night the lady saw her dead husband in a dream. He informed her that the sweets she had distributed the entire year had not reached him, but he had received the sweets she had distributed the day before. On investigation the lady found out that it was the sweets her orphan son had eaten. We should be concerned about the children of the dead person. We should be concerned about the poor, not about those who can afford to eat. It is not right to stay for weeks at their houses, and become a headache for them, while they have to worry about getting meat, oil, chairs etc. Is this not troublesome for them? Islam forbids such things because when we keep going and eating at their houses they have to keep taking loans. Loans are, by themselves, enough to kill a person. The type of walima we have for our marriages and kind of majlis we hold for the dead are wrong. We should put an end to these practices, because Allah is not pleased with us. Our

.Prophet and the Imams are not pleased with us. Our Imam is not pleased with us