

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - Marriage of Ali

Ideal marriage

According to all accounts that have come down to us, the marriage of Ali and Fatima was an ideal marriage. It was a union of two great souls. Hafsa, a daughter of Umar and later a wife of the Holy Prophet wrote some verses highlighting the greatness of the pair. She said: Fatima is superior to womankind in the world; she is the lady whose face shines as the full moon; she is the bride whose groom excels all in Scholarship.

According to some authors Ali was twenty-one years old at the time of marriage, while Fatima was sixteen years old. According to my research the date of the birth of Ali is to be placed around 599 C.E. and on this basis he was 24/25 years old at the time of marriage. Fatima was born around 604 C.E. and on this basis she was 19/20 years old at the time of marriage. There appears to be a tendency with the writers of old to under estimate the ages of persons particularly women. In most of the books, for example, it is said that at the time of her marriage with the Holy Prophet, Ayesha was a child barely nine years old. Ayesha was more or less of the same age as Fatima or very nearly so, and was well within her teens at the time of her marriage.

Undoubtedly the marriage of Ali and Fatima was an ideal marriage as the marriage was performed by the Holy Prophet in accordance with the will of God, it could not be anything but an ideal marriage. As an ideal marriage it should have been a happy marriage. In this context two aspects of the case need special consideration. One is the economic factor and the other is the temperamental factor.

The economic aspect of the matter is that all writers of old are unanimous on the point that Ali was very poor. In his book *Ali, the Superman*, Dr. Ata Mohyuddin observes that Ali was extremely poor, and the young couple were obliged from the first, to live from hand to mouth. It is observed that often days passed without any fire being lit in their hearth. It is further observed that his bed sheet was so small, that if he covered his head, his legs remained uncovered, and if he covered his legs his head was exposed the account provides that Fatima had to work too hard. She did not have the wherewithal to wash her clothes which were blackened and soiled on account of dust and dirt. The shoulder on which she carried pitchers of water from the well was swollen, and the hands with which she worked the handmill to grind corn were often covered with blisters. There is a story that she requested the Holy Prophet to give her a maid slave to assist her, but he turned down the request. According to another story Ali hired himself as an ordinary manual laborer. One day he hired himself as a laborer to draw water from the well for a date per bucket. He drew sixteen buckets when his hands were blistered. He was given sixteen dates which he took to the Holy Prophet and both of them had their meal of these dates. I have long pondered over the question of the poverty of Ali and even the Holy Prophet. It appears to me that such accounts are highly exaggerated, and remote from the truth. I have prayed to God to show me light whereby I could ascertain the truth. Islam is not a religion for the next world alone; it is a religion for this world as well. Islam does not favor accumulation of riches and the hoarding of wealth, but it does not commend poverty either. It stands for the middle course marked neither by richness nor by poverty. The Holy Prophet before an ideal Prophet had to set an example in this respect. As such while the Holy Prophet could not be very rich, he could not be poor either. Islam stands for simplicity and austerity but simplicity and austerity are not another name for poverty. How could Allah permit his beloved to starve. When the Muslims migrated to Madina, Ansars shared all their resources with the Muslims. Under the circumstances how could the Ansar permit Ali and Fatima the beloved daughter of the Holy Prophet to live from hand to mouth on the verge of starvation. Ali and Fatima were after all human beings, and how could they be happy when they had to starve for days. When selecting husbands for their daughter even ordinary persons take steps to insure that their daughter is married in a family which is quite well off. This is a parental obligation, and it is unbelievable that the Holy Prophet would have married his beloved daughter to a person who had no source of income. The

Holy Prophet married his two daughters to Othman, one after the other, and Othman was the richest person among the Quraish. The Holy Prophet could not discriminate between his daughters by marrying two daughters to a very rich man, and marrying the daughter whom he loved most to a man who was extremely poor. Ali was the greatest warrior of the age. He was also the greatest jurist, grammarian and scholar of the age. When the Muslims set up a polity at Madina it was an obligation on the part of the State to provide means of sustenance for Muslims according to their qualifications and utilize their services in the interests of the State. Under the circumstances the accounts that Ali was very poor are not correct.

It appears that there were some temperamental differences between the husband and wife. Ali is said to be hot tempered while Fatima was cool-headed. It is related that one day Ali picked up a quarrel with Fatima, Fatima felt aggrieved and she went to the Holy Prophet to complain of the conduct of Ali. Ali followed her and hid himself behind a wall to listen what transpired between the Holy Prophet and Fatima. The Holy Prophet advised Fatima to have patience and submit to her husband. When Ali saw the Holy Prophet later, the Holy Prophet counseled him to be kind to his wife. Due to the wise counsels of the Holy Prophet, both Ali and Fatima succeeded in making adjustments which insured mutual happiness. Hasan, their first child was born in 625 C.E. and Husain, the second child was born in 626 C.E. The Holy Prophet had great love for Hasan and Husain and treated them as his own sons.

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