170562 - Does the husband have the right to interfere in his wife's relationships with her (female) friends?

the question

I would like to know whether the husband has the right, according to sharee'ah, to interfere in his wife's choice of friends. Is there any evidence in the Quran or Sunnah?.

Detailed answer

Firstly:

Naturally, a married woman will have friends from before her marriage, and there is nothing at all in sharee'ah to keep her away from her friends, unless her husband does not give her permission for that. Rather, things remain as they are, so she may keep her friends from before, and they may visit her in her home and she may honour them with hospitality. This is how things were among the noble female Sahabah, foremost among whom are the Mothers of the Believers, the wives of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

It was narrated that Umm Salamah said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) prayed 'Asr, then he entered upon me and some women from Banu Haram, who were from among the Ansar, were with me.

Narrated by al-Bukhari, 1233; Muslim, 834.

Here is Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with her); the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) entered her house and found her female friends with her. Then she (may Allah be pleased with her) says that he prayed two rak'ahs to make up the Sunnah prayer of Zuhr.

There is a great deal of evidence, but what we have quoted above is sufficient. In fact the basic principle is that the husband should honour his wife's friends even after his wife dies! This is mentioned in the saheeh Sunnah.

It was narrated that ‘Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: I never felt jealous of any of the wives of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) except Khadeejah, even though I never met her. But the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to mention her often, and sometimes he would slaughter a sheep then cut it up and send it to the friends of Khadeejah. One day I said to him: It is as if there is no woman in this world except Khadeejah! He said: “She was such and such, and I have children from her.”

Narrated by al-Bukhari, 3607; Muslim, 2435.

Secondly:

What we have mentioned above does not contradict the wife’s duty to obey her husband if he tells her to end her relationship with one of her friends, or does not allow one of them to visit her, because the husband is in charge of the wives in the home, and he is a shepherd who is responsible for his flock. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them to excel the other…”

[an-Nisa 4:34].

And the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The man is the shepherd of his family and he is responsible for his flock.”

Narrated by al-Bukhari, 853; Muslim, 1829

The wife does not have the right to admit anyone into her husband’s house if the husband does not want that person to enter his house. And the wife does not have the right to go out of the marital house except with her husband’s permission. Even if he does not allow her to visit her family, she has to refrain from doing so. He may be unjust in this decision of his, in which case he is sinning; or he may be correct, in which case he will be rewarded. Whatever the case, it is obligatory for the wife to obey her husband in this regard. The wise woman will not put the friendship of a woman before her role as a wife who is happy with her husband and children in the marital home.

It was narrated that Jabir said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Fear Allah with regard to women, for you have taken them as a trust from Allah, and intimacy with them has become permissible to you by the word of Allah. Your rights over them are that they should not allow anyone whom you dislike to sit on your furniture. If they do that, then hit them, but in a manner that does not cause injury or leave a mark. Their rights over you are that you should provide for them and clothe them in a reasonable manner.”

Narrated by Muslim, 1218.

The husband’s preventing her from seeing a particular friend does not necessarily mean that that woman is of bad character or lacking in religious commitment; rather the pros and cons of any relationship are many and the wife may not understand these pros and cons in all cases.

But if the husband sees something in the friend’s attitude or religious commitment (or lack thereof) that makes this necessary, then the matter is clear and does not need any explanation.

For more information, please see the answers to questions 112048 and 10680.

And Allah knows best.