

224810 - His mother wants his wife to uncover her face in front of his relatives but his wife refuses to do that

the question

I am newly married. My spouse covers her face in front of all non-mehram men. She even covered her face on the day of our nikah and none of my male relatives (non-mehram) were able to see her face till today. My mother is very angry about this and she is telling me that she is very much insulted in front of our relatives because of my wife. She is now compelling me to remove my wife's nikaab & show her face to all our family members. My father and all my other relatives are supporting my mother in this case. Covering all the body with loose garments is alright for my mother with the exception of covering face. After months of debates between me and my mother in this issue now my mother is telling that she will grant permission to cover my wife's face if my wife shows her face to all my male relatives (non-mehram) for one time for the purpose of identification. On the other hand my wife wishes to wear nikab for the sake of Allah, she doesn't want to uncover her face not even for one time in front of non-mehram men. My mother is crying in front of me and continuously reminding me about 'jurayj' incident. She is telling that even 'jurayj' was afflicted with his mother's curse for making salah against his mother's call. If this is the case for most important salah then what is the ruling on putting nikab by going against and hurting mother's heart? Should I obey my mother or should I stand with my wife in this case?

Detailed answer

Firstly:

It is obligatory for the Muslim woman to cover her face in front of non-mahram men. This is what is indicated by the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's Sunnah, and that has continued to be a practice handed down from one generation to another of people of religious commitment and chastity, from the time of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and almost up to our own time, when the Muslims became obsessed with imitation of the West and

they went back to the ways of Jaahiliyyah that Allah had forbidden when He said (interpretation of the meaning):

“And stay in your houses, and do not display yourselves like that of the times of ignorance”

[al-Ahzaab 33:33].

The evidence for this has been explained previously in fatwa no. [11774](#).

Secondly:

You should praise Allah, may He be exalted, for having provided you with a wife who is religiously committed and is keen to obey her Lord, and you should help her in that. You are the first one who is required to help her to obey Allah and to stand up to anyone who wants her to disobey Allah.

Thirdly:

You should understand that Islam emphasises that the Muslim woman should wear complete hijab in front of her husband's relatives (such as his brother and uncle) and that she should not mix with them. If the Muslim woman is required to wear complete hijab in front of men who are strangers, the obligation upon her to observe hijab in front of her husband's relatives is even more emphasized and more important. This is what Islam teaches, so as to correct what many people are used to of women being heedless in front of their husband's relatives.

The wisdom behind that is quite obvious. A non-mahram man who sees her in the street, for example, will see her only once then he will carry on his way, and he may never see her again. If it so happens that he does see her again, the opportunities for communication between them are usually very difficult and very limited.

As for the husband's relatives, they may see her time after time, and talk to her and sit with her, and so on. Hence the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Beware of entering upon women.” A man among the Ansaar said: O Messenger of Allah, what do you think about the in-law? He said: “The in-law is death.”

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (5232) and Muslim (2172).

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to the Prophet's words, "The in-law is death," what this means is that the fear in his case is greater than in the case of others, and evil is expected on his part and the fitnah (temptation) is greater, because he is able to reach the woman and be alone with her with no one denouncing him, unlike the stranger or non-mahram. What is meant by the in-law here is the husband's relatives, except for his father/grandfather and sons/grandsons. His father/grandfather and sons/grandsons are mahrams of the wife and it is permissible for them to be alone with her; they are not described as "death". Rather what is meant here is the brother, nephew, uncle, cousin and others who are not mahrams. People customarily take things lightly with regard to them, so a man will often be alone with his brother's wife. This is what is described as death.

Fourthly:

With regard to your saying about your mother that she likes modesty (covering all the body with loose garments) and so on,

You have to understand that the concept of modesty may be misunderstood by many people, in a manner contrary to the correct Islamic concept.

The truly modest woman according to Islamic teaching is the one who wears complete hijab, does not mix with men, and does not talk to them except as much as is necessary only; she stays in her house and does not come and go a great deal.

As for looking down on the hijab and describing it as being a piece of cloth, this applies to any garment that covers the body of a man or a woman; all of them are just pieces of cloth. Will the wise person follow the plot of the Shaytaan so that he will remove his clothing and uncover his 'awrah, because what covers it is just a piece of cloth?!

Fifthly:

With regard to likening this situation to the story of the devoted worshipper Jurayj, that is not appropriate, because the mother of Jurayj did not ask him to disobey Allah. The most that can be said is that she called him, but he did not answer her. But in your case, your mother is calling you and your wife to disobey Allah, and the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There is no obedience to any created being if it involves disobedience towards Allah.” Narrated by Imam Ahmad (1041); it is a saheeh hadith.

If someone tells a person to disobey Allah, he should not obey him, no matter who he is, for there is no obedience to any created being if it involves disobeying the Creator, and it is not permissible for anyone to give precedence to pleasing people over pleasing Allah, or to seek their pleasure by doing that which angers Allah. Rather this is indeed something which it is feared will render all one’s good deeds null and void, not what your mother says. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“That is because they followed that which angered Allah, and hated that which pleased Him. So He made their deeds fruitless”

[Muhammad 47:28].

Shaykh as-Sa’di (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“That” punishment that they deserved and that befell them

“is because they followed that which angered Allah” of all kinds of disbelief, rebellion and disobedience

“and hated that which pleased Him” so they had no desire for that which would bring them closer to Him

“So He made their deeds fruitless” that is, He rendered them null and void. This is in contrast to the one who follows and seeks that which pleases Allah and hates that which angers Him; in his case, Allah will expiate his sins and increase and multiply his reward.

End quote from Tafseer as-Sa’di (789)

However we should point out that there is nothing in the story of Jurayj to suggest that his good deeds were rendered null and void; rather it tells us that Allah, may He be exalted, answered his mother's prayer when she prayed against him.

See: Saheeh al-Bukhaari (2482); Saheeh Muslim (2550); Fath al-Baari (6/480)

Finally:

You have to support your wife and help her to obey Allah, and encourage her to be steadfast in doing all kinds of good deeds.

At the same time, you have to be very gentle and kind towards your mother, and explain to her that this is an Islamic ruling and there is no room for compromise concerning this matter. All goodness is in obeying Allah, may He be exalted, and all evil is in disobeying Him, may He be glorified. You should treat her and your wife in the best and kindest manner, keep good company with her and be nice to her, and you can show her kindness by giving her gifts, saying nice words to her, and so on.

We ask Allah to help and guide you all.

And Allah knows best.