26231 - Ruling on bringing a servant into the home

the question

What is the ruling if a wife asks for a servant to help her, especially when she is a student and has a child, and her family and her husband’s family are not in the same city? Please note that the husband has a sufficient income and that when the wife was still living at home, her family had servants. She needs someone to help her. Please also note that she will require the servant to wear proper Islamic dress and to adhere to the limits set by sharee’ah. Please answer us, may Allaah reward you with good.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

In the earliest days, the Muslims used to have slaves, female and male, who used to serve them. Slavery was abolished [in Saudi Arabia] in 1386 AH, and there are no slaves any more. The people began to bring female servants from some other countries such as the Philippines, Sri Lanka etc. In this situation the people had no choice but to bring servants. It is permissible for a woman to bring a servant, but she should make sure that she is a Muslim and that she is trustworthy and there is no fear of her causing harm, and that she adheres to the rulings of Islam, is modest and observes hijaab; she should avoid meeting men, and if any man enters the house she should wear hijaab as women do in front of non-mahram men. Bringing such a servant should be the matter of necessity, and when the wife is able to do without her, she should be sent back to her family. (If these conditions are met), then it is permissible to bring servants according to need.