



There was once a wealthy cloth merchant who lived in the city of Baghdad. One day, while he was in his business, a young woman approached him and said that she was looking for a certain item that she wished to purchase. Thereafter, during the course of their conversation, she removed her niqaab (veil) and showed the man her face.

When the man's gaze fell on her face, he was so struck by her beauty that he exclaimed, "By Allah! I am amazed by the beauty that I have seen!" The woman then said, "I have not actually come to purchase anything. Rather, for the past few days, I have been coming to the market, looking for a man who appeals to my heart so that I may marry him, and it is you who has impacted on my heart.

I possess wealth of my own (i.e. I do not want wealth from you), so would you like to marry me?"

The man replied, "I am married to my cousin, and I promised her that I would not marry anyone else besides her. I also have a son from her." The woman responded, "Even if you visit me just twice in the week, I will be pleased." The man agreed to this proposal, and so they performed the nikaah. After the nikaah was performed, when the man returned home, he said to his first wife, "One of my friends asked me to spend the night at his home." Offering this excuse, he left home that evening, went to the home of his second wife and spent the night there. Thereafter, the man would go to visit his second wife after Zuhr Salaah every day.

Approximately eight months passed in this manner, until his first wife perceived the change in his behaviour and habits and became suspicious. She thus instructed her slave girl saying, "When he leaves the home, then (follow him and) see where he goes." Hence, when he left the home, the slave girl followed him. He first came to the shop, (and the slave girl waited outside, without him knowing that she was there).

After performing Zuhr Salaah, he proceeded to the home of his second wife while the slave

girl discreetly followed him. After he entered the home, the slave girl went to the neighbours and enquired, "Who does this home belong to?" They answered, "It belongs to a young woman who has married a cloth merchant."

When the slave girl returned to her mistress and informed her of what she had discovered, the mistress said to her, "Ensure that you do not inform anyone of what you have discovered!" (Thereafter, she continued as before, without confronting her husband or alerting him, in any way, to the fact that she was now aware of his second wife.)

After one year elapsed, the man passed away, leaving eight thousand dinars (gold coins) in his estate. His first wife first took the share of his son from the estate and set it aside. The son's share equalled seven thousand dinars. She then took the remaining one thousand and divided it into two equal portions. She placed one portion in a purse, called her slave girl and said, "Take this purse and go to the house of that woman. Inform her that he passed away, leaving eight thousand dinars. The son has taken his share, which is seven thousand dinars, and I have thus split the remaining one thousand between us. Tell her this, and hand the purse to her."

The slave girl thus took the purse, proceeded to the home of the second wife and knocked on the door. After being admitted into the home, she informed the woman of the man's demise and conveyed the message of her mistress. Hearing this, the woman began to weep. She went to her trunk, opened it and took out a document. She then said to the slave girl, "Return to your mistress, convey my salaam to her and tell her that the man had divorced me and had written this document as proof that he was separated from me. Return this wealth to her for I (am not his wife and) do not have any right to a share in his estate."

The slave girl then returned to her mistress and informed her of what the second wife had said.

(Sifat-us-Safwah vol. 1, pg. 580)

Note:

1. Secret marriages are very greatly discouraged in Islam. It is reported in the hadeeth that the nikaah should be announced and it should be conducted in the masjid. (*Sunan Tirmizi #1089*) When the nikaah is not publicized, then people develop suspicions regarding the man and woman, not knowing that they are actually husband and wife. Furthermore, many complications and problems arise such as the husband not being able to maintain equality between the wives in regard to their night turns, wealth and other aspects, laws of inheritance in the case of death, etc.

2. A woman should entrust the matter of her marriage to her father or other senior family members, consulting with them and allowing them to speak on her behalf. A woman should not find her own husband and propose directly to a man, as this is against hayaa.

Lessons:

1. The lesson that stands out in this incident is the quality of truthfulness that both women possessed. Though the first wife would have naturally felt uncomfortable with her husband taking a second wife, and in this case, her husband had also broken his promise to her of not taking a second wife, this did not cause her to deprive the second wife of her right of the inheritance. As for the second wife, then since only she had knowledge of the divorce, she could have pretended to still be married to the man and could have accepted the money. However, she also conducted with truthfulness and honesty.

2. On discovering that her husband had taken a second wife, the first wife did not confront him or publicize the information. In all probability, she realized that doing so could have caused great damage to her marriage. Since her husband was fulfilling her rights, she chose to 'look at the bigger picture' and overlook the second wife so that she could keep the peace in the home and maintain the stability that her son required.