

Does a wife have to serve her husband?

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[silsilatul Huda wan-Noor, 33]

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

Questioner: Concerning a woman serving her husband at home, is it obligatory [Wajib] or recommended [mustahab]?

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): [Allaah said,] [**“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, as they have been provisioned by Allaah over women and tasked with supporting them financially ...”**]¹, and He said, [**“... and men have a degree [of responsibility] over them,”**]² so a woman must serve her husband in exchange for him doing what is obligatory on him, [obligations] that Allaah imposed on him, like spending on her, housing etc.

So it is not allowed for someone to say that the right of a man is only that he can enjoy relations with her, since this is something that both sides share in, just as he enjoys that with her she does with him too, so in this issue they are both the same and equal.

So in exchange for the financial aid that the man undertakes the woman must serve him, and there is no doubt that this is limited to what she is capable of doing since Allaah does not burden a soul with more than it can bear.

As for the situation getting to a stage where it is said, and unfortunately it has been said, that it is not obligatory for her to even give him a cup of water, or to make the bed and I don't know [what else] ... who will make the bed, Subhaanallaah! The verse is very clear—because the man has a right over the woman apart from physical relations.

For this reason we find that in the biographies of the Companions with their women and the biographies of the women with their men, [we find] that they used to serve their husbands to such an extent that they would carry ground date-stones on their heads [date-stones would be ground and served as fodder for camels], and not only that [either].

For in Saheeh Bukhaaree it has been reported that Faatimah the Daughter of the Prophet ﷺ came to her father ﷺ complaining about the marks on her hands from the hand-mill because she would grind flour in the house, so she asked him ﷺ for a maid so he ﷺ said to

¹ [Soorah an-Nisaa 4:34]

² [Soorah al-Baqarah 2:228]

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her, “**Shall I not inform you of something better than a maid? That you say Subhaanallaah when you sleep ...**” to the end of the hadeeth, if it were not an obligation on her—and she is the Daughter of the Chief of Mankind ﷺ—if it were not obligatory on her to serve her husband, he ﷺ would have gone to her husband to say to him, “That is enough, don’t burden your wife with having to serve you.”

She had marks on her hands, but he ﷺ bore it [i.e., bore seeing his daughter’s hands like that ﷺ], because he ﷺ was the one to whom that verse was revealed, [“... **and men have a degree** [of responsibility] **over them,**”]³, so this verse along with the practical Sunnah which the Companions were on with their wives and which they were on with their husbands—all of it shows that it is obligatory for a woman to serve her husband, within the confines of ability as we mentioned earlier.

Questioner: But O Shaykh some people say the silence the Prophet ﷺ showed, was it enough for it to be taken to mean it is obligatory?

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): We didn’t only mention the proof alone, we say that the practical life [example that they lived] is the Tafseer of the verse, what they did practically is not a proof on its own to say that it is obligatory, but when it comes as a Tafseer of a Qur’aanic verse or of something in the Sunnah, then it shows the obligation.

Questioner: Okay, some people say that if a woman used to have a maid when she was living in her father’s house then it is obligatory for the husband to get her a maid too, even if he is poor, is this right?

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): We say, “**Show us your proof, if what you say is true.**”⁴.

Obviously that is not right.

Since every claim that is made which doesn’t have a proof from Allaah’s Book or the hadeeths of Allaah’s Prophet ﷺ in this issue falls to the side and is not paid any mind. What has been said earlier is enough to show that it is not obligatory for the man to get his wife a maid.

Additionally I say that bringing a maid/helper to the wife’s home, whether a male or female, exposes one of the two to fitnah, if the person who comes to help is a woman then the man can fall into fitnah and if it is a man then the woman can fall into it ...

³ [Soorah al-Baqarah 2:228]

⁴ [Soorah an-Naml 27:64]