

IS EARNING A LIVELIHOOD AN OBLIGATION

Q: 3- And lastly more and more Muslim brothers are marrying and cannot afford to support a wife. Their families either become a ward of the government or they experience a life of meager subsistence. In fact we know of one sister whose husband was injured on his job. He was awarded a small sum of money on a monthly basis by the government. The money is not enough to maintain his family. Yet! although he is not disabled to the point where he cannot work? he refuses to look for a job to bring in additional income to support his family. He claims he is doing Allah's work since he is out to invite every person he meets to embrace Islam and will not withdraw from Allah's work for the dunya. Whose duty is it then, to support his family? Or can the sister request a divorce based on her husband's inability to support this family. (Ibid)

A: Every Muslim is duty bound to earn livelihood for himself and for the dependent members of his family. This is not a mundane duty only, but it is a religious obligation also. The Holy Prophet saw, has said:

"To earn the lawful livelihood is a religious duty after the religious obligations (like prayers, fasting etc.)"

Since the dependant members of his family are entitled to get maintenance from a Muslim head of the family, he cannot avoid his economic responsibilities on the pretext that he is engaged in religious work. He should provide his family with their necessary economic requirements and then he can devote the rest of his time to the work of Tabligh. If he fails to discharge his duty in this respect and the wife has no other source of livelihood, she can approach a Muslim court' for the dissolution of her marriage from her husband who does not give her the proper maintenance.

Contemporary fatawaa