

The Nineteenth Talk

1. Interference Of The Parents

Today we shall discuss about the interference of parents in the lives of their children. This topic has always been an important matter of debate. Lots of unnecessary problems crop up because of uncalled for interference in the affairs of the children by their parents. Many divorces, too, take place between young couples because of parental interference. If we really want our children to flourish and progress, we should refrain from interfering in their affairs. We should not try to become uninvited judges of their problems. We find that this malaise is deep rooted in our society. It has gone to such an extent that even the men of piety, even those who are regular in salah and even those who are understanding, intentionally or unintentionally, cause problems for their children by their interference.

We need to learn a lesson from animals. They care for their offspring only till the time they need it. When they are capable of fending for themselves, the father and the mother leave them free to go their own way! We find that certain birds feed grains to their chicks for a few days only. When they find that the chicks are strong enough to fly, they teach their chicks to fly. When the chick has learnt to fly, they do not allow it to remain in the nest! You must have noticed that when a lamb is born, the mother exhibits a special affection and concern for it. She feeds it with her own milk for about two months and doesn't allow it to eat grass. When the lamb is strong enough to graze and feed itself, a degree of unconcern for the little one grows in the mother.

This instinct is found in all animals. It is found in humans too. It is only that we don't act on it. Our duty is to give a good upbringing to our daughters in all aspects – material, emotional, and spiritual. Give her a good Islamic upbringing. When it is time to marry her off, arrange her marriage so that she can start her future life with her husband. After this, the parents should refrain from interfering in their affairs. Now comes the time when the mothers should not be nosey about the affairs of their daughters. If some differences crop up between the daughter and the son-in-law, the parents should side with the son-in-law, instead of siding with their daughter, even if the son-in-law is at fault. To become an obstacle in the daughters married life, to plant thoughts in her mind and gain control over her are acts of oppression. The interference of parents many times becomes the cause of break-up of marriages of young couples.

Even if things don't reach the stage of divorce, it will become the cause of reduction in love between the young couple.

It is our duty, too, to give a proper Islamic upbringing to our sons. We must take care of their material, emotional and spiritual needs and give decent men to the society. When this son becomes an adult, it is the duty of the parents to find a suitable spouse for him, so that he can start his married life. Now the parents should refrain from interfering in the matters of the young couple. If it comes to their notice that the young couples have some differences, they should take sides with the daughter-in-law even if she is at fault. Later on, point out her mistake to her and show her the correct way. But right now, it is important to put out the fire of discord and not fan it. If the parents find that the newly wedded couple are having a fight, they should wisely try to diffuse the situation. But generally we find that the parents of married young men, especially the fathers, side with their sons and thus create problems in their married life. Mothers in turn expect their sons to do their bidding. Even if the mother orders her son to divorce his wife, she expects him to obey her. Only then will she be pleased with him. The father wants his son to be permanently enslaved to him and do his bidding. This is completely wrong. Such people deal a terrific blow to love, create tensions and destroy homes.

ثُمَّ كَانَ عَاقِبَةَ الَّذِينَ أَسَاؤُا السُّوَاىَ أَن كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَ كَانُوا بِهَا يَسْتَهْزِؤْنَ

Then the fate of those who committed misdeeds was that they denied the signs of Allah and they used to deride them. (Sura ar-Rum, 30: 10)

The Holy Quran says that those who trouble the believing men and the believing women, and don't express sincere repentance thereafter, will not only be consigned to Hell but will have to bear the punishment of fire. Those who sow discord should know that there are two terrible punishments awaiting them. In this world they too, will become entangled in discord. A mother-in-law who creates unnecessary problems for her daughter-in-law should know, the Quran says, that her own daughter might face a similar situation. Similarly a woman who creates problems for her son-in-law should be aware that her own son will also have to face similar problems. In the Hereafter, this discord that she has created will assume the form of fire and entwine itself around her feet. At another place, the Holy Quran uses a more stern language:

وَ الْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ

.....for persecution is worse than slaughter..... (Sura al Baqarah, 2: 191)

Telling tales, creating tensions and finding fault with others are sins worse than murder. The sin of killing

someone is so great that if someone kills an innocent person, it is equal to killing the entire mankind:

مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا

...whosoever killeth a human being for other than man-slaughter or corruption in the earth, it shall be as if he had killed all mankind, ... (Sura al Maidah, 5: 32)

Spreading discord and creating bitterness between a husband and wife are sins worse than killing someone. A foolish old man who had caused separation between his son and daughter-in-law, came to Imam Husayn (a.s.). The Imam (a.s.) told him, "I have heard that you have instigated separation between your son and his wife" When the man nodded his head in the affirmative, the Imam (a.s.) rejoined, "Do you know what magnitude of sin you have committed? Instead of causing their separation, if you had cut their veins your sin would have been lighter than what you have perpetrated!" If someone cuts off the veins of another and kills him in this painful way, how big a sin is this? If a person kills someone and cuts his dead body into pieces, he will rise on the Day of Judgement in the form of a dog or a beast. Imam Husayn (a.s.) is telling us that causing separation between husband and wife is a bigger sin than killing two people. This tradition tells us that making up tales and creating hatred between people is a sin bigger than taking human life. In our society fault finding is generally associated with the mother-in-law. She makes allegations so that her son does not think well of his wife. What does the mother-in-law achieve by doing this? Only troubles and problems. The first problem is that her son will become disturbed. After this, her son will never strive to keep her happy. Then she will have to face punishment in the hereafter. Some mothers-in-law are so ignorant that they treat their good and considerate sons-in-law as beggars. They are so foolish, they do not ponder upon the outcome of their behaviour. Some mothers-in-law give preferential treatment to one son-in-law over the other. This happens when one daughter was married some years ago and the second one very recently! So the recent son-in-law receives better treatment. These mothers don't realize how much they hurt their own daughters.

Sometimes the mothers-in-law use such harsh language, and inflict such deep wounds that the sons-in-law cannot forget it for the rest of their lives. People should abstain from polluting their tongues with bad language; otherwise these will assume the form of scorpions and keep stinging the person on the day of Judgement! It is a shame for the mother-in-law that instead of being friendly and affectionate with the daughter-in-law, she stings her like a scorpion. She should treat her as she would treat her own daughter, or even better than that. The father-in-law, who is like her father, should also love her like his daughter. Instead we find her being treated as an enemy. For example, she is told that the dowry was insufficient. Shame on the people who harbour such thoughts. Sometimes a son-in-law doesn't speak with the father-in-law because the dowry was less. Is this not a shameful attitude? The daughter-in-law should treat the mother-in-law with love and affection because it is the mother-in-law who has brought

up her husband, and then handed him over to her. She should respect and love her father-in-law because he has undergone a lot of trouble to raise her husband. I shall quote a parable here. A bitterly cold wind was blowing. A camel arrived at a hen coop. He put his head inside the coop, asked for some space and stepped right inside. In doing so, he destroyed the coop. Neither was he not able to find any shelter for himself, but instead ended up destroying the shelter of the hen. Many newly-wed daughters-in-law too are like this. They want to totally dominate their husbands. They want to drive their parents-in-law out of the house. How foolish is this attitude! This attitude is inhuman, and such people are committing a grave sin. What I want to stress here is that the parents and the children who live and share life amicably are always a blessed and happy family. They will be together in Heaven congratulating each other. To the contrary, in families where there are dissensions, hatred, and differences for small material advantages, they will neither have peace in this life nor rewards in the Hereafter. When a mother-in-law nags her daughter-in-law for bringing a meagre dowry, when a mother-in-law taunts a son-in-law for being poor and unable to meet the household expenses, they are earning for themselves a place in the Hell with this attitude. The daughter-in-law will be in Hell, when the husband will arrive there and curse her. Then the mother-in-law will arrive and curse her. The daughter-in-law will inturn curse her. Then the girl's mother will arrive and curse her daughter, blaming her for landing them in Hell. I am telling you only what the Quran says. When all these will have gathered, they will blame each other, for their own faults. The Quran says that all of these are cursed, because they have landed each other in Hell. If this is going to be the outcome, why do we fight at home?

I make a fervent appeal to the daughters-in-law. They should strive to be loyal to their husbands and his family. They should strive to spend a happy and contented life with their husbands and other members of his family. I appeal to the sons, too, to be loyal to their wives and should not act on the foolish dictates of their mothers. I especially appeal to the ladies because if the girl remains loyal, her mother-in-law cannot interfere in their affairs or destroy their home. She should be sensible and not listen to foolish talk. If the newly wed wife heeds the gossip mill, her life will be destroyed at the beginning of the married days. In many a case the result is a divorce!

I know of several cases of divorce. When I ponder over them, I find that in most instances the mothers-in-law are the cause of the break up. The fathers-in-law, too, show a lack of understanding. Instead of adopting a discreet silence, they interfere with the affairs of the young couple. The parents of the boy should take sides with the daughter-in-law. It is the responsibility of the girls' parents to support the son-in-law. When a small quarrel erupts between the couple, instead of brokering a compromise, they further fan the flames of discord and thus the couple starts fighting. It is a terrible thing for the husband and wife to fight with each other.

If a young wife fights with her husband and goes away to her parents' home, her mother and mother-in-law should try to cool her down and convince her to return home. A sensible father will tell her that her home is where her husband lives and she should go back there. He will take the daughter to her

husband's home and tell him to let bygones be bygones. Thus the difference between man and wife can be nipped in the bud. However angry and excitable the young son-in-law is, if the mother-in-law takes back her daughter to his home and talks to him for sometime, he will cool down. If the parents-in-law are good to the daughter-in-law, treat her with affection and side with her when some quarrel erupts, the daughter-in-law, however bad she may be, will reciprocate their love, and there will be no discord in the house.

When a man returns home after the day's hard work, which according to the Quran is a place of rest and relaxation, he expects the care and support of his wife to tide over the tiredness and refresh himself. But sometimes, instead of comfort, the home becomes a source of torture. The wife, who has been feeling lonely all day long, starts complaining to her husband as soon as she sees him. She complains to him about his parents – today your mother said this to me, your father scolded me like this. Then as soon as his mother finds him alone, she starts backbiting about his wife – your wife is stupid, she has no brains, actually she is not fit for our house. The poor man is already tired after working the whole day, listening to all this, tires him out. He becomes disturbed. The home is no longer a shelter for him. Do you realize how great a sin this is? The retribution for backbiting is more than the retribution for fornication.

According to a tradition of the Holy Prophet (s), if a fornicator dies without repenting, then as soon as he reaches the gates of Hell, such an intolerably foul smell will arise out of his private parts that the inhabitants of Hell will plead with Allah to relieve them of the foul smell. Fornication is such a grave sin. But a bigger sin is to backbite about someone and destroy or cause a decrease in the regard others have for him. If you backbite about your daughter-in-law to your son, or accuse her falsely, it is a very grave sin. On the day of Judgement, such people will be dipped in a lake of putrid water and will stay there as long as everyone is through with giving their account of deeds. Then, they will be consigned to Hell in the same state. Don't backbite because it is a major sin. A newly married girl and her mother-in-law should refrain from backbiting against each other. Certain mothers-in-law are so low, that they are always on the look-out for the faults of their daughters-in-law, so that they can condemn the daughter-in-law and backbite about her to their sons. If only such mothers-in-law knew what the Holy Prophet (s) has said. He(s) has said, "O people who believe. Do not be critical of others nor interfere in the matters of other people. If you do so, Allah will put you to shame on the Day of Judgement!" She should realise that tomorrow her daughter can get the same treatment she metes out to her daughter-in-law today. This world will pass, but what will happen in the Hereafter? The first day in the grave is very difficult. The parents-in-law should not be concerned about the dowry. Only foolish people have such concerns. They should not be worried that their daughter-in-law has brought less dowry. What they should be worried and concerned about is their graves. It is a crime for the mother-in-law to go through the purse of her daughter-in-law. Similarly the wife should not check her husband's wallet – these actions have grave consequences.

I make a fervent appeal to the parents not to interfere in the affairs of their grown-up children. Leave them free to carve their own futures. Do not hurt others – worry about your Hereafter.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/islamic-family-life-ethics-ayatullah-husayn-mazaheri/nineteenth-talk>