

The Twentieth Talk

1. Obeying The Husband

It is natural for the wife to obey the husband. If a wife doesn't obey her husband, she is acting against nature. As you are well aware, all organizations must have a chief or a head. Imagine the smallest organization, say, with seven members, with no chief. There will be no discipline or order in such an organisation. According to wise men, the home is not just an organisation; it is a small kingdom with many such small kingdoms making up the nation. The small kingdom, too, needs a chief. The law of nature dictates that man should be the head of the family, because providing for the household expenses and the legal responsibility of feeding and clothing the wife rests with the husband.

The Holy Quran entrusts this function to the husband thus:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ
أَمْوَالِهِمْ

Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women). (Sura al Nisa, 4: 34)

The affairs of the home are in the control of man because he has the nature and capability of performing this function. The second aspect is that Islam entrusts the men with the responsibility of providing the basic necessities for the women. Therefore the wives should be obedient to the husbands. Similarly the children should be obedient to the father. A home where the children do not listen to their father is like an organisation where certain employees do not listen to the chief. If a wife wants to have her own way in running of the house, against the wishes of the husband, then it will be like an organization where the deputy chief disregards the chief. Obviously such an organisation cannot progress. Such organisations are subject to fights and strife. If the members of a family desire unity, peace, and comfort, the children should obey their father, and the wife should listen to her husband, because this is his right.

The second right of a husband is the right of intercourse with the wife. In this respect the wife has to be totally obedient to the husband. If she does otherwise, in the view of all the Jurists, she is *Nashiza* (disobedient). Such a woman cannot demand food, clothing and shelter from the husband because she is denying him the right to intercourse. The Holy Quran has strong views about this matter. There are several traditions too on the subject. The author of *Wasail* writes that a young girl came to the presence of the Prophet of Allah (s) and inquired, "O Prophet of Allah! I want to get married. What rights does the husband have over the wife?" The Prophet (s) said, "The first right that the husband has over the wife is that she should not act like a thief at home. She should not become rebellious. She should not pretend to do something and in reality do something else." The girl said, "I shall take good care of this matter!" Then the Prophet (s) said, "The second right of the husband is that the wife must totally submit to his natural instinct of sexual intercourse." The girl assented to this condition too. The Prophet (s) then said, "If any differences crop up at home, it will be your duty to ask for pardon from your husband and you should not sleep till he is pleased." The third condition appeared harsh to the girl and she asked, "Do I have to ask the pardon of my husband, even if he is on the wrong, even if he is the oppressor?" The Prophet (s) replied emphatically, "Yes! Even if your husband is oppressive and at fault, it will be your duty to seek a truce and ask for his pardon!"

The reason for this injunction is that the very existence of woman is for love and affection. She has been created for radiating love and affection. The Holy Quran considers a woman who possesses two qualities to be good:

فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَنَاتٌ ۖ حَفِيظَاتٌ لِلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ

So good women are the obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah hath guarded. (Sura an- Nisa', 4: 34)

A good wife is one who is humble and submissive with her husband. She does not have an abusing tongue and is chaste – whether she is alone or has company. Whether she is at home or in the street, she must remain chaste. Just as she observes hijab in public, in the same way she should also hijab in front of her *namahram* relatives. Thus she should observe hijab in front of her husband's brothers, in front of her husband's uncles, in front of the shopkeepers in her neighbourhood, in front of neighbours, and acquaintances etc.,

The wife should be obedient and submissive to the husband in matters of sex. Similarly the husband should also listen to the one who helps him and co-operates with him. Just as an organisation has advisers or consultants, so does the home. At home it is the wife who helps and advises the husband. All the programmes for the family are to be finalized by the husband, but he should consult the wife. If she makes a good suggestion, he should accept it.

One tradition of Amirul Mu'minin (a.s.) is very popular. Some people deduce a wrong meaning from it: "Consult your wives, but don't follow their advice!" Can he ever suggest that men should consult their wives and turn down their ideas even if they are good? Do people think that Ali (a.s.) will ever talk such nonsense. The real meaning of the tradition is that the husbands must consult their wives and turn down their suggestions only if they are not good. The men must listen to their wives, but the final decision is in his hands. He may accept her suggestion.

This above statement of Amirul Mu'minin, is totally in agreement with what the Holy Quran says on the matter. The Quran addresses the Holy Prophet, "Consult with your companions. Don't ignore them. Don't ignore the Muslims. Respect their personalities. But deciding the programmes is your duty."

فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ

.....And when thou art resolved, then put the trust in Allah. (Sura Ali- Imran, 3: 159)

The Quran and the tradition of Ammerul Mu'minin (a) both say the same thing. Man must consult his wife, because she is his adviser. If her suggestion is not good, then he should exercise discretion in the matter. In one of the traditions the Prophet of Allah (s) has said that one must consult his eldest son in important matters. The son is the master for the first seven years, a slave or servant for the next seven years and an assistant for the next seven years of his life. For the first seven years of a child's life, we must listen to what he says and wants. During the next seven years he should be trained to do work and should be made to work, so that he becomes a good human being and is not lazy. When he becomes above fourteen years of age, he should be consulted. Our children have a special place in society that should be given to them. It is the parents who can develop children with strong characters. It is wrong to tell a fourteen-years old boy or girl that he/she is stupid or foolish.

The Holy Quran says that we must treat our children with kindness. Use words like 'my dear' while addressing them. Address them politely and with affection. They must be told to be polite in talking to others. They should also be instructed that any type of polytheism is a major sin. Instruct them gently, explain kindly, make matters clear for them and then leave them alone. If we do all this, we will make our children decent persons. Our kindness towards our children will nourish the instinct of love in them. The traditions indicate to us that we should maintain closeness with our children, consult them when they come of age and accept their suggestions if they are worth adopting. Some men are so thoughtless that they keep the members of their families uninformed about their concerns. They don't inform their families about the nature and type of job they do, they don't share with the family their plans for the future. It is not only the children who do not know anything; even their wives are totally ignorant about these matters. She does not know what her husband does for a living; she does not know how her husband meets the household expenses. She only knows that the husband leaves home in the morning and returns in the evening with an abusive tongue. Husbands should take their wives into confidence,

because the wives are their deputies at home. If the husband is the head of the family, the wife is his helper in running the house. It is not right for the chief of any organization to ignore his deputy and keep him uninformed about the goings on. The wife, too, should cooperate with the husband in implementing his plans. This attitude will reinforce the husband's love for his wife. When the wives dutifully follow the instructions of their husbands, it is as if they are following the dictates of the Quran. The husbands must also remember that the Quran says that husbands should not ask their wives to do anything that goes against the *Shariah*.

The wife too has certain rights which the husband is obliged to fulfil. Psychologists say that if a person wants a comfortable and happy family-life, he should not get into fights and arguments. The husband should inform his wife and children about the steps taken by him in fulfilling their rights. It would be nice if the husband kept his family informed about his income and expenditure. When the husband refuses to spend, his family considers him to be a miser. But if they know that his income is less, they will no longer consider him to be a miser; neither will they make unimportant demands. If the husband disregards his wife, it will affect her character. She will no longer love her husband or be a good wife to him. I appeal to you not to insult your children, because if a young person is insulted, no crime is too big for him. The wife must obey her husband. In turn, the husband must consult with his wife and not ignore her.

2. Home And The Rule Of Law

I would like to say that laws and regulations cannot be enforced in homes. What will be more effective in the environment of the homes – laws and regulations or kindness, companionship, friendship, and thoughtfulness? The poet says:

*Who am I? Layla! And who is Layla? It is I
Both are one soul in two separate bodies*

If regulations come in the way, then the matters will go haywire. For example: The husband can tell the wife, “Don’t step out of the house, because this is my right.” Now the wife is obliged to take her husband’s permission before stepping out of the house. This is a right given to men by Islam. If the husband wants to enforce the law a hundred percent, can his wife visit her parents if she wishes to? No. She wants to visit a neighbour. She can’t. She has to live in the seclusion of the four walls of her house. But, if you enforce such strictness on your wife, she can also do a lot of things (in retaliation). There is a saying among the people that if you keep a woman in a house of steel, you cannot prevent her from going out if she is not a modest woman. Through enforcement of laws in a harsh manner we cannot prevent the wives from doing what they wish to do. But this can be achieved through companionship and being friendly. The thing that truly makes a woman totally submissive is thoughtfulness, kindness, honesty and friendship! If we make the wife our adviser and confidante instead of neglecting her, there will not be any need of enforcing the regulations. Suppose the wife also starts enforcing rules, like the husband? For example, she tells her husband, “Pay up, or else I will not nurse the child. Pay up! Only

then will I do some work in the house. Get me a servant, if I don't have a servant to help me in the house, I will not do any work. If you work, only then will I work in the house. I am obliged to submit to you only for sex, so I refuse to do anything else at home." In such a situation the home will begin to resemble a prison. A time might come when the husband thinks of dissolving the marriage. If the husband strictly enforces laws at home, the wife will start complaining within ten days. Therefore, we cannot insist on following strict laws and regulations in the day to day life! According to Quran, the best course is:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ

Indeed Allah enjoins justice and kindness... (Sura an-Nahl, 16: 90)

This means that justice and thoughtfulness must be equally balanced. The wife must be obedient to the husband, not under duress, but with affection. The husband should keep rapport with his wife so that she obeys him. The wife should deal with the husband with such love and affection, that he is obliged to reciprocate with kindness. Kindness and obedience cannot be obtained by enforcing laws.

I know many people who adopt such stern attitude in their lives, the results of which are very unfortunate. For example: If a wife's *chador* accidentally moves away from her face, the husband starts shouting at her. Maybe, the first time the wife will not protest. She may even put up with his rude remarks a few more times. But a time comes when the wife becomes rebellious and discards the *chador* totally, to the extent that she goes in front of the *namahram* in that state. In your presence she will wear the veil, but when you are away, she abandons it. Such things happen because the husband is an authoritarian. He is unbearably strict. There are certain husbands who tell their wives: you have no right to talk to my brother. You have no right to talk in the presence of my relatives. Such harshness results in serious consequences. Some wives too, have such negative attitudes with their husbands, even if her husband is patient. But when he has had enough, he divorces her.

I appeal to you that the environment of your home should be one of love and amity, not one of dominance and enforcing rules. For example, the woman is chaste and observes proper *hijab*, still her strict husband does not allow her to step out of the house. He doesn't allow her to visit friends, or go to the market to buy something. He doesn't even allow her to visit her parents. Should she not visit her parents? If you cannot get along with them, should she forsake them as well? By doing this you are only inviting trouble for yourself and your children. The stricter a husband is with his wife, the more stubborn she will become. What is desired of the husband and wife is to develop love and affection. Then they will be able to give their best attention to the upbringing of their children. They should be more concerned about the whereabouts of the daughter. Where does she go? Who are her friends? Does she come home on time? But if the parents become strict with their children, they too, will complain. We come

across children who frequent places which their parents disapprove of. When the reason for this is investigated, it is found that their upbringing was not on proper lines. Even if some attempts were made at upbringing, it was not with love and affection. Islam says that both excess and deficit are undesirable. Amir al Mu'minin (a.s.) has said:

An ignorant person is either lazy or hasty.

Some characterless people can become friendly, but their friendship is such that the day they clash, their attitude undergoes such a drastic change that they start accusing others falsely. Such people cannot train their children. Even if they find some time to sit with their children, they use such harsh words that the personality of the child is badly hurt.

Another thing I want to point out is that people should desist from misusing rules and regulations. In the view of Islam this is not a good practice. I have written a book, *Taqallab Dar Qanoon*, on this subject. I have extensively made reference to traditions and the verses of the Quran to make my point. For example people take interest but do not call it interest. They give 10000 on loan on the condition that it will be returned along with another 1000 and the creditor will give 1kg sugar in return for the additional 1000. So, in their view no interest was taken or paid! This is definitely a misuse of the regulations.

May Allah's blessings be on one of the leading personalities of the Qum Seminary, Shaykh Abd al Karim Yazdi, who once related that a man was repentant after pronouncing the *Talaq* (pronouncement of divorce) to his wife three times. Before the matter became public he came to the Shaykh and asked for a way out of the predicament. The man said that if they did the *Halala* for the woman, his family would lose their reputation in the society. *Halala* is the process of a divorced woman marrying another person, establishing conjugal relations with him, divorcing him to become eligible for marrying the first husband. The Shaykh says that one very pious looking person was sitting in the first row in the mosque. Thus he asked that man to marry the ex-wife, on the condition that he would have to divorce her in the morning so that she could marry her first husband. The man was also promised some money. The woman was married to that man. However the next morning the man refused to divorce her. The Shaykh said that we tried to persuade him but he would not agree. Ultimately the lady committed suicide but that man would not divorce her. One sentence that the Shaykh often repeated from the pulpit was, "*Certain men of justice are worse than Shimr!*"

This man was just. He had not committed any sin. He expressed his unwillingness to divorce the woman. But he is worse than Shimr because he was misusing a rule. Unfortunately this very danger of misusing rules and regulations is found more amongst pious people. A girl goes to school. Under the pretext of studying she tells her mother that she cannot do any housework for her. This is the misuse that the late Hajj Shaykh had pointed out. This girl is just, her stand is legitimate as far as rules are concerned but she is worse than Shimr! Her attitude will harm the household one day or the other!

Although you are a Mu'min, you are worse than Shimr because you are too harsh and stubborn in

enforcing the regulations. This attitude might render your pious wife and daughter rebellious sometime in the future.

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