

The Neglected Rights of Husbands: An Examination

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Abstract: This article explores the rights and responsibilities of the husband in Islam, grounded in the injunctions of the Qur'an and the guidance of Hadith. It emphasizes that marriage, according to the Shariah, is a sacred bond of companionship rather than domination, framed upon mutual love, mercy, and obedience to divine commands. The discussion highlights the complementary roles of husband and wife, in which the wife is entrusted with specific responsibilities such as respecting her husband's parents, preserving family harmony, and balancing relationships with in-laws. She is encouraged to cultivate Sabr (patience), courtesy, and a positive disposition, while engaging in Dua for the protection of familial peace. Central to the rights of the husband are fulfillment of physical needs, emotional respect, and safeguarding his dignity, wealth, and honor in his absence. The article warns against destructive traits such as disobedience, disrespect, stubbornness, and seeking attention from non-Mahram men, noting that such behaviors diminish spiritual reward and threaten marital stability. The wife is instructed to adorn herself exclusively for her husband while avoiding practices that contravene Islamic limits. Her role encompasses safeguarding her husband's secrets, wealth, children, and property, as well as managing his temperament with wisdom to sustain household harmony. In parallel, the husband is urged to treat his wife with love, leniency, and forbearance, overlooking minor shortcomings to strengthen the marital bond. Grooming, care, and attentiveness to the husband's needs are highlighted as means of preserving love and protecting against the influence of Shait'an, which may otherwise incline one towards haram alternatives. The article further cautions against external interference in private disputes, affirming that ignorance of Shariah-defined spousal duties is a primary cause of domestic conflict. It critiques modern liberal and feminist movements which, under claims of freedom and equality, often promote immodesty, vulgarity, and ultimately exploitation of women, contrary to Islamic principles of dignity and modesty. A Hadith underscores that "the wife is the guardian of the house of her husband and his children," signifying her role as custodian of his honor, wealth, and secrets. Ultimately, the preservation of marital harmony rests upon adherence to the injunctions of Qur'an and Nabawi guidance, which ensure family peace, spiritual reward, and protection from societal corruption.

Keywords: Talim of Islam, Husband-wife relationship, Rights and duties in marriage, Respect for in-laws, Obedience and loyalty, Physical rights, Protection of wealth, honor, and secrets, Love and compassion,, Friendship in marriage, Jih'ad of women, patience in marriage, Courtesy, patience, diplomacy, Dressing for husband only, Amr bil Ma'ruf and Nahy Anil Munkar, Complementary gender roles in Islam

1. Advice for wife:

The wife should not ignore the Talim of Islam regarding the responsibility of a son towards his parents. The wife should respect the husband's parents and also encourage her husband to take care of them, just as the Qur'an has commanded. To please one's husband, a wife should establish a cordial relationship with his family. Nothing could be more terrible to a husband than seeing the peace of his family damaged by evil spirits of hatred. If the in-laws, especially the mother in law is not of fine temperament, the wife should try to deal with them in the best possible manner. This requires the art of handling, courtesy, diplomacy and repelling evil. Besides this, she should also offer Dua which is a spiritual source of curing problems. If the wife wants to maintain harmony in a joint-family, she should maintain a balance between her in-laws and her husband.

This is the best technique to protect herself and her family from any adverse effects. Poisonous feelings can be removed by her positive attitude and by the love which she gives to others. We should realize that usually how we treat others is exactly how they treat us.

Let us glance through a very important tradition transmitted from Abi Jafar Al-Imam Mohammad al-Baqir (as) in this regard. [1]

"One day a lady inquired from Rasulullah (S) regarding the rights a husband enjoys over his wife. He answered: First and foremost is that she should obey him and refrain from disobedience. She must not donate anything from the house without his permission, nor can she keep Nafil Sawm without his approval. She must never deny him his physical rights nor deprive him of its pleasures".

Abi Abdillah Al-Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (as) explained the merits of a good wife: [2]

- i. *"The best wife is one who shows appreciation when her husband brings home something and is not unhappy if nothing is brought home."*
- ii. *"There is nothing better in the world than a good wife. A good wife is the one whose husband is pleased upon seeing her".*

2. The Husband's Rights over His Wife:

The rights of a husband over his wife are many. The most important amongst them is related to having a physical relationship with her. The duty of a wife is to submit herself physically before her husband. It is also the responsibility of the husband to make his wife's mood pleasant. It is feared that if the wife ignores the desire of her husband, he would be inclined towards Har'am acts. If the wife entertains her husband, it means she has secured one spirit from going to the path of evil, of which reward is great and beyond human imagination. Both the spouses should satisfy each other's physical needs and ensure that one's minimum sexual requirements are met so that one may be prevented from sin.

The wife should not allow any other person to touch her, which is entirely her husband's right. Likewise, the wife has a parallel right in this regard. The Qur'an also explained the rights of the wife: [3]

"Women have similar rights over men as men have over women."

Islam defines rights and duties between the husband and wife in matters of sex. This right of the husband on his wife to demand sex is suspended during the month of Ramadan; in contrast, the right of the wife to demand sex from her husband is suspended when her husband is on Jih'ad. In the absence of her husband the duties of the wife include the protection of his rights, status, wealth and respect. The wife must not spend her husband's wealth without his permission nor should she reveal his secrets; rather, she should be a keeper. She must not allow any male inside the house without her husband's permission or in his absence, for doing so would lead to doubts which would have drastic repercussions on their relationship. She must respect the thoughts of her husband and support him under all circumstances.

Al Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (as) says: [4]

"A woman, who respects her husband and does not harass him will be fortunate and prosperous".

A good friend always maintains the respect of his/her friend. The wife should be the closest friend of her husband which is why upholding her husband's respect should be of utmost importance to her. Furthermore, the relationship between the husband and wife is that of "friends" and not lord and slave. The Qur'an says: [5]

"Believing men and women are friends to one another; they enjoin right, forbid wrong, establish Salaat, pay Zakat and obey Allah and His Rasul"

This Ayah on husband-wife relationship illustrates that the duties of both are principally the same.

Furthermore, the foundation of the marital relationship is based on love and care. The Qur'an explains this point beautifully: [6]

"And among His signs is this that He has created mates from among yourselves, that you may live in comfort with them, and he has put love and compassion among you (husband and wife). Surely in that are signs for those who think"

With regard to obeying the husband the Qur'an says: [7]

"...So the righteous women are obedient [to Allah and submissive to their husbands], and guard in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard [that is, their chastity and the prestige and property of the husband]..."

Although both genders enjoy equivalent fundamental human rights, the woman has been placed a step lower than the husband in matters of administering the familial affairs. The Qur'an says: [8]

"...but men have a degree over them..."

Abi Abdillah Al-Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (as) transmitted that a group of people visited Rasulullah (S) and submitted: [9]

O Rasulullah(S)! We have seen such people who offer Sajdah before each other. Rasulullah (S) guided them: "If it was permissible to prostrate before any creature except Allah, the Creator, I would have ordered the wives to offer Sajdah before their husbands."

A wife should follow the legitimate instructions of her husband. Appeasement with the husband is a great virtue while the displeasure of the husband carries serious trial. Rasulullah(S) held: [10]

"Whenever the husband calls his wife to fulfill his needs, she should immediately attend to his call even if she may be working by the site of her oven (kitchen)".

The Hadith means that the wife should give top priority to attend to her husband. Abi Jafar Al-Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as) says: [11]

"Certainly, Allah has made Jih'ad obligatory on both men and women. The Jih'ad of men is to protect the boundaries of Islam and Muslim states with their blood and wealth so that they may be killed in the way of Allah but the Jih'ad of women is to be patient while facing the difficulties of life with their husbands."

Rasulullah (S) mentioned: [12]

"O women! Whosoever amongst you is busy in the domestic affairs, she will get the reward of a Mujahid."

If the husband does not obey Allah's commandments or is unjust or even tyrannical in his behavior, then his wife is not bound to obey him, for her loyalty is to Allah first, not her husband. Decency and respect should be reciprocated and is not a one-way deal. The husband has to be obeyed if he is good and he fulfils his duties only. A Hadith clearly says: [13]

"A wife needs permission for leaving the house, giving Sadaqah and for Nafil Sawm."

A woman should be obedient to her husband, which covers everything as long as it is in the confines of Shariah. If the wife commits a misdeed, the husband can discipline her to provide Tarbiyyah (training).

The books of Fiqh have mentioned that the husband can use his command over his wife for four things:

i. If the husband orders his wife to be presentable in her daily life but she disobeys and remains unclean.

ii. If the husband invites her to bed and she refuses without any genuine reason.

iii. If she does not take bath to purify herself after menses.

iv. If she abstains from performing Salaah without a legitimate reason.

In the above circumstances, the husband should first convince the wife. If she does not agree to obey with his polite requests, he may order her to follow his instructions.

3. Who Is Not A Good Wife?

According to Ahadith quoted by al-Majlisi: [14]

i. "The Salaat (none of her deeds) of a woman who teases her husband with her tongue (talks angrily and hurts his sentiments) is not accepted (Wallah) even though she keeps Sawm every day, gets up for the acts of 'ibadah every night, sets free a few slaves and donates her wealth in the way of Allah. A bad-tongued woman, who hurts her husband in this way, is the first person who will enter Jahannam".

The author of Bih'ar says: [15]

ii. "A woman does not forgive her husband's mistake and does not accept his apology."

"Bih'ar" provided an Imami Tradition: [16]

iii. "The worst of your women is she who obeys her relatives but does not submit to the wishes of her husband, and malicious, is not afraid of committing bad deeds, adorns herself in the absence of her husband, would not accede to the wishes of her husband in privacy, would not accept his excuses and would not forgive his mistakes".

The author of Mustadrak says: [17]

iv. "The worst woman is one who is stubborn."

A husband can earn Ajr like Ayyub (as), as Imam says: [18]

v. Any man who copes with his incompetent wife, Allah, upon his patience (towards his wife) on every occasion, would grant him the reward of patience shown by Ayyub Nabi (as)." [18]

Abi Abdillah Al-Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (as) warned women: [19]

"Any woman who bothers her husband and distresses him is distant from the blessings of Allah and any woman who respects her husband, is obedient and does not cause him distress, is blessed and prosperous."

The Imam says at another place: [20]

"Any woman who says to her husband that she has not seen any good deeds from him has fallen in her credibility and is worthless in her acts of 'ibadah."

An Imami Tradition explained the point further: [21]

"A wife who does not speak softly & kindly with her husband and demands from him something which he cannot fulfill, no good deed of hers will be accepted and she would taste Az'ab on the Day of Judgment."

The Imam gives warning to wife of pugnacious nature to perish all her good-deeds: [22]

"A woman who says to her husband: I have not seen any goodness in you till date; all her actions will be rendered null and void."

The Imam also informed:

His father (Al Imam Muhammad al-Baqir) had a woman who would aggravate him (as per her habit) but he (Imam) would forgive her.

4. A Few Important Reminders:

The major responsibility of the wife as a partner is to realize and express the blessings of the marriage as much as possible. A wife must be helpful to the comfort and well-being of her husband. Such a wife is a blessing of Allah and the Qur'an grants her a beautiful title: [23]

"Comfort of eyes."

As stated earlier a wife must devote her life for the well-being of her husband. She must provide him with both physical as well as emotional support. Thus, if she makes herself up or dresses well it should be solely for her husband and nobody else otherwise she will be subjected to La'anah (divine curse) and Jahannam. In this regard, Rasulullah (S) taught his daughter Sayyidah Fatimah (as) and thus communicated the message to the daughters of Islam: [24]

"O Fatimah! When a woman makes herself up and steps out of her house to attract the attention of other men, the Malaek of seven heavens and seven earths send La'anah on her and she becomes close to the fire of Jahannam to such an extent that when she dies she will be straight away thrown in the Hellfire."

Abi Abdillah al-Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (as) discussed an important part of the makeup of women as follows: [25]

"If a woman perfumes herself to attract the attention of others, her Salaat will not be accepted until and unless she washes herself of this perfume and this bath will be like that of Janabat (Wajib on spouses after sexual intercourse)."

Upon reading this, one can realize the severity of the matter and the amount of corruption that is spreading in the society as women adorn themselves for other men. One of the primary reasons for the sexual anarchy and the increasing number of rape cases reported in Muslim countries is ignoring the clear Shariah instructions. Another point which must be considered is that if the husband wants his wife to be religious and obedient, then first he should follow the Talim of Islam. We have the concept of “Amr bil Maruf wa Nahy Anil Munkar” [26] (enjoining good and forbidding evil). Principles granted by Islam assure equal rights and obligations of husband and wife. These principles, if obeyed in true spirit, would ensure a peaceful family life. The Qur’an is ideal for all Muslims and only Murtad or renegade differ from its Talim.

5. Concluding Remarks:

A Muslim must have complete faith in the Qur’an. Moderates, progressives or the so-called enlightened are trying to lead against the Qur’an and coming up with the fabricated and exploitive conclusion of non-Muslims. The West understands equality of sexes to be in competition with each other; Islam views that as being complementary to each other. We need to explain Islam to non-Muslims rather than just looking for acceptable common points of agreement. The points of agreement could be a starting point but Muslims have a duty to educate others on Islam. I conclude this discussion on the following Hadith in which Rasulullah(S) explains the qualities of a good wife: [27]

“The best of your wives are the prolific, the affectionate, the chaste, the endeared of her family, the humble to her husband, fortified against other than him, listening to what he says, and obeys his orders, offers herself to him when alone, but not in an unabashed manner like his.”

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