

MUTUAL RIGHTS  
OF  
HUSBAND & WIFE  
THE RIGHTS OF WIVES OVER HUSBANDS

Rights (R)  
Mutual

ISLAMIC WEDLOCK

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In order to ensure that a family circle does not get involved into internal squabble, mutual enmity and disagreement, it is essential to base wedlock and union of husband and wife on Islamic spirit, which aims at promoting lasting happiness, love and purposeful life between two marrying partners.

"And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that ye may dwell (inclined) unto them, and caused between you love and compassion: Verily, in this are signs for a people who reflect"

(Quran: Sura Room - Verse 20)

Thus Islamic marriage is free of short-term objects like family position, beauty or wealth but rather for deep inner love and attachment between a marrying couple. A wedding performed with any such materialistic motive devoid of true love and spiritual attachment quite often ends in split and divorce.

MUTUAL RIGHTS

A society does remain integrated and progressive so long as each member understands and respects the rights of others the same way that he expects others to respect his rights. Failing this, life of men reduce to that of like animals. Accordingly a family as a small society cannot remain peaceful and happy until both husband and wife try to understand and respect mutual rights.

A wife becomes responsible to her husband in respect of domestic and family matters with various duties to perform, likewise the husband has obligations towards the wife. Whilst the husband has to fulfill duties mainly outside his home in order to earn a living, the wife has to take care of the house and rear children.

The holy Quran confirms this fact by saying:

"And for the women shall be similar rights (over men) in fairness" (Sura Al-Baqarah - verse 228)

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RIGHTS OF WIVES OVER HUSBAND

Of the various moral obligations towards his wife, a husband is supposed to assist her in the domestic duties, not to pick up and make an issue of small faults here and there, not to be rude but treat her gently. He himself must be mindful of cleanliness the same way that he expects her to decorate the home and adorn herself. Not to injure her tender feelings but comfort her. The Quran says:

"And deal kindly with them (women)" (Sura Al-Nisa-v.19)

The Prophet of Islam emphasizes the right treatment to women by saying:

"The best among you are those who are kind and gentle towards family members and I personally am so"

"Those who respect women are the noble and only the mean and debased are the men who disrespect and abuse women"

"The perfect of the faithful are those of best character and kindest towards their family"

The Prophet of Islam during the last year of his life and in his historical sermon at Meena at the end of pilgrimage, said:

"You should recommend to do good to their women as they live in your homes under your care and they are but under trust from God taken by you for companionship"

"Verily the best of men from my followers are those who are not hard in dealing with their family members and treat them with kindness and benevolence".

Women, by nature are more sensitive than men and ever in need of love, kindness and gentle treatment. It is incumbent upon men to fully realize these - her natural requirements and not to dismiss them on slight fault.

A narrator says that he asked the Prophet of Islam: "What are the rights of wives over their husbands?". The Prophet replied: "My brother Gabriel informed me and was persistantly drawing my attention in respect of (the rights) women to such an extent that



I began imagining the possibility of husbands being forbidden to say even a word to them (in retort & abuse) - Fear God in respect of them because they have been entrusted to you by Him to reside in your homes for the purpose of satisfying permissible sensuality and as your life-mate as well as mother of children. They have rights over your goodselves. Be kind to them and fill their heart with love and affection to enable them to co-exist with you. Do not hurt their feelings and create enmity with them. Do not take back from them what you have gifted them in the course of your love for them".

The tradition denotes the great stress laid by the Prophet of Islam in abstaining from any injustice to women and the duty of husbands to fill the hearts of their wives with maximum possible love and affection.

#### MUTUAL TOLERANCE

On inquiring the rights of wives over husbands by Ishak bin Ammar, the sixth Imam Jaffer Sadiq a.s. said:

"Feed and clothe your wives and pardon them on committing a fault".

Imam adds:

"My father Imam Mohamed Baqir a.s. had a wife troubling him but he used to pardon her".

When Hajira, the second wife of Prophet Ebrahim a.s. gave birth to Ismael, the first wife - Sara, who had no child began misbehaving and molesting Prophet Ebrahim a.s. who on complaining to Almighty God, was told that woman is like a bent <sup>tooth</sup> ~~too th~~ of a man. If you attempt to straighten it, you are liable to break but if you leave it as it is, you can continue deriving benefit from it.

This does not mean that women are born troublesome but is meant to imply their sensitive and delicate nature.

Imam Ali a.s. in the course of a letter to one of his sons, in respect of women writes: "Women are but delicate flowers of



tender nature and not hard creatures to deal with. Therefore be kind and considerate to them so that your life may remain pure. Whosoever tolerates the misbehaviour of his wife, God Almighty will reward him with the same what He rewarded Prophet Ayyub a.s. for tolerance in his great hardships."

#### FAMILY COOPERATION & FAITHFULNESS

One of the causes of family squabble and disagreement is the selfishness of husbands lacking sympathy and fairness towards their wives and children. He provides best possible clothes and food and maximum comfort for himself but he ignores the family and leaves all the domestic worries and problems for her to solve.

Besides, the modern way of life with the undesirable night clubs of gambling and drinking occupy those inconsiderate husbands until late hours at night, leaving wives at home alone brooding over the injustice meted out to them.

The Prophet of Islam says: "God Almighty is more pleased with those who provide more life facilities to their families. He also comments husbands to treat their wives equally in respect of clothing and feeding."

On seeing the helping hand extended by Ali a.s. to his wife-Fatima a.s. in domestic work, the Prophet said: "No one assists his wife in domestic affairs but in return earns sawab (reward) for hundred years of prayers for every one hair on his body".

#### SPECIFIC RIGHTS OF WIVES

The following are the specific rights of wives over their husbands in non-fulfilment of which the wife has the right to claim redress from Islamic authorities:

- a) Husband is supposed to provide life necessities like food, house, dress and such other necessities in accordance with his capacity and position. So much so if the wife needs a servant in the course of domestic work, this facility has to be provided by husband.
- b) Wife has the right to demand sleeping on the same bed with her husband atleast once in four nights.



- c) Atleast once in four [redacted] months the husband must satisfy his wife with sensual intercourse. This has considerable bearing over woman's temperament and mental peace.

Thus a woman in her home circle is fully safe-guarded with all her natural rights and is not required to take up outside employment or taken into free mixing societies, which ends up in domestic quarrel and unhappy home.

#### RIGHTS OF HUSBANDS OVER WIVES

For every society or institution, it is essential to have a head responsible for the smooth conduct of its day to day affairs. He has to be capable of providing maximum benefits to all concerned. Accordingly, the union and family resulting from a marriage of man and a woman, would need a head to bear the ultimate responsibility of providing the essential needs of life and solve problems when arising. Recognition of a head of a family is for the purpose of ensuring complete happiness among family members and proper upbringing of children.

The question now would arise as to whom is this post of head of family to be entrusted - wife or husband? Judging from the natural creation of the two, it will be seen that considerable difference exists between them, physically and mentally. Women are known to have stronger sentimental and emotional feelings and easily react under changing conditions of friendship, enmity, fear, happiness etc. On the other hand, men are generally more intellectual and capable of deep thinking before reacting to any situation. Scientists have proved the difference in the brain cells of the two - man and woman.

However, the physical and mental difference between husband and wife does not obstruct mutual cooperation between the two. In fact, the mutual cooperation and unity points out to the fact that the Creator Allah has created man and woman for separate and



specific duties and accordingly blessed them each with necessary physical and mental capabilities.

Based on the abovementioned principles, Islam has entrusted husband with the overall responsibility and authority over his family. It is he who has been made responsible to provide expenses and necessities of life of his whole family including wife and children. The holy Quran, in this respect says: "Men have authority over women" (Sura Nisa - verse 34) on account of the qualities and responsibilities which God hath caused the one to excel the other.

It must be understood that whilst Islam has given the overall authority of a family to husband, the domestic day to day care of the family has been entrusted to wife. She is expected to act as an assistant under him.

The Prophet of Islam has said: "Man is the Chief of his family and woman is for the home". In another tradition, the Prophet is reported to have said: "Man is guardian and responsible for the family and woman is for the household and responsible for her husband and children."

Thus it will be seen that Islam has based the family life on division of responsibilities and mutual cooperation, love and affection.

For attainment of smooth and happy married life, husband has been endowed with the following rights:

- 1) Wife is supposed to satisfy her husband for his sexual need when required unless prevented by special reasons. This is most essential for the preservation of the family happiness, pleasure and unity and refrainment from sexual vices;
- 2) Without permission of her husband, wife is not permitted to allow anyone from outside to enter their house. In the first place, the house belongs to husband and it is he who is the authority on household matters. Secondly, there is every possibility of clash and misunderstanding between husband and wife if outsiders were allowed to enter the house against husband's permission;
- 3) Wife is supposed to uphold and maintain the pleasure of her husband throughout the life of both together. Her movements,



actions and utterings should conform with the wishes of her husband. Without his consent, she is not supposed to set her foot out of the house. She is expected to remain ever obedient to her husband except in matters of religious duties. In obeying and keeping husbands ever pleased and happy, wives would naturally be attracting more and more affection and love from hearts of their husbands thus leading to full mutual understanding and happiness;

- 4) Life is always fraught with some problems and hardships. Wives are expected to share and assist husbands in all circumstances and always remain faithful to them;

A woman is reported to have approached the Prophet of Islam and to have asked about the rights of husbands over his wife. The Prophet replied: "She should obey him, she is not to give in charity anything without his consent, without his permission she should not fast (Mustahab - no wajib fasts), she should satisfy him in his sexual needs, without his consent, she should not go out of his house. If she does so, the angels of earth and heaven would curse her so long as she is out.

The Prophet said: "The best of women are those who always are affectionate and chaste, noble and respectful among the family and polite and humble before their husbands, their decoration and make-up is only for their husbands and not for outsiders, they listen their words, obey their commands and in private meet their demands".

"The most valuable blessing for a Muslim man is to have a Muslim wife that every time he casts an eye on her, she becomes the source of pleasure and happiness for him, she obeys him and in his absence protects his property."

"If it was proper for one humanbeing to prostrate before another, I would have prescribed for wives to do so and worship their husbands".

Seventh Imam Musa Qazim a.s. is reported to have said that the good behaviour of a wife and respect for the rights of her husband commands reward of JIHAD. Whilst man who goes to the battlefield for JIHAD - holy war , in order to protect the masses and uphold the



teachings of Islam, the woman is expected to give her sacrifices at home for the good training of children and creation of happy family surrounding, which serve the purpose of JIHAD.

A woman is considered in Islam to have fulfilled her obligations towards Almighty God only after she has fulfilled the rights of her husband.

#### MUTUAL COOPERATION AND SHARING OF WORK

Islamic rules for family life are based on natural creation and fair-play and it does not permit husband to demand domestic or outside work from his wife against her will and capacity. Rather, the family is based on mutual cooperation, understanding and sincerity. Islamic family life is based on fair division of duties with husbands generally minding the outside work whilst wives take care of domestic work.

At the time of wedding of his daughter, Fatima to Hazrat Ali a.s. the Prophet himself arranged for the division of this family's duties by instructing his daughter to take care of the domestic work whilst the outside work and duties were entrusted to her husband, Ali a.s.

The Prophet of Islam is reported to have said: "A woman who busies herself in moving things around in order to put her house in order, she is looked upon with blessings by Almighty and such people would not be punished in hell.

According to one tradition, a decent and polite woman is better than a thousand of indecent women. For a woman who constantly serves her husband, the doors of hell remain closed for her and the doors of heaven are kept open for her so that she may enter through whichever door she chooses.

Islam expects a Muslim wife to share fully with her husband in ups and downs of life. She is not to demand things which are beyond the means of her husband and which may cause unpleasantness.



The Prophet of Islam has said: "A woman who does not treat her husband with politeness and humility and compels him to accomplish things beyond his ability, her prayers and good deeds would not be accepted and on the Day of Judgement, she would invite wrath and punishment from Almighty God". What a useful guidance the Prophet of Islam has given to women in their relationship with their husbands. Much illfeelings and misunderstandings can be avoided if women take this lesson seriously and translate into action.

Once the daughter of the Prophet, Fatima was ill. Here, considerate and affectionate husband, Hazrat Ali a.s. asked if there was anything she would like to have. Hazrat Fatima a.s. in reply said nothing. When he insisted, she said: "Since my father recommended me not to demand anything from you lest you are unable to fulfill and feel ashamed, hence I do not ask for anything". Hazrat Ali a.s. then swore and pleaded her to suggest what she would like to have. On hearing this, Hazrat Fatima a.s. felt obliged to say that she felt like having a pomegrate.

The above incidence is a valuable lesson for the followers of the Prophet and his household as to what extent the rights and respect of husbands need to be safeguarded by wives. Islam considers it a great sin on the part of wives to molest and cause illfeeling to husbands. The Prophet of Islam said: "Any woman, who by her tongue causes illfeeling to her husband, God Almighty would not let her without punishment, none of her good deeds would be acceptable until her husband is pleased even if she had fasted during day and prayed at night, she might have set slaves free on the path of God and sent them on horses to <sup>fight</sup> in holy wars, still she would go to hell. Similarly, the husband who oppresses his wife would be punished.

#### ADORATION AND MAKE-UP OF WOMEN

Adoration of wives is undoubtedly a good way of attracting husbands and enhancing mutual love and relationship. It distracts



men from thinking of outside women for self-satisfaction, thus discouraging cases of divorce. But unfortunately, what we see today is less adoration at home for husbands than when wives go out to parties and pictures. This causes many problems and ultimate dissatisfaction and ill-feeling between husbands and wives.

It is for this purpose that Islam recommends wives to adore themselves solely for their husbands and not for displaying themselves to outsiders. On inquiring the rights of husbands over wives by a woman, the Prophet of Islam in the course of his teachings said: "A wife has the duty to use the best of a perfume she has and put on the best of clothes to adore herself for her husband".

The sixth Imam said: "A woman who applies perfumes for outsiders other than her own husband, her prayers are not acceptable to Almighty". For adoration of wives for outsiders other than their own husbands, they are liable to be punished by burning with fire, said the Prophet.