

The Twenty-first Talk

1. Compatibility At Home

Today we shall discuss about the atmosphere of harmony and togetherness at home. We should know that a hundred-percent harmony in any home is next to impossible. The husband and wife; the daughter and mother-in-law; the father and son cannot all be of the same nature! There will be marked differences between their natures and behaviour. Differences amongst the inhabitants of a home are, but natural. We cannot deny this, we have to accept this. We seem to be totally ignorant of the fact that a hundred percent compatibility is next to impossible. If there is a 100% ethical compatibility, it is indeed a great gift from Allah. However, if a husband and wife agree to the extent of, say, seventy-percent, the situation is very good. They should be thankful to Allah that they are highly blessed! I can say with confidence that if they are fifty-percent compatible, then too, they are lucky! Similarly if the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law; father and son; mother and daughter agree in all matters up to fifty-percent, they will be fine. If the agreement is around seventy-percent, then they must thank Allah that their family is blessed!

But if the compatibility is around 50% to 70% what steps should we take so as to take care for the remaining differences?

Two actions can remove the existing differences between the members of such families. I shall deal with the first in this talk and the other in the following session. One of the two actions is ***love!***

2. Love

The first thing that can obviate differences is love and affection. If love prevails between husband and wife; daughter and mother-in-law; and parents and children, then the thirty or fifty-percent difference of opinion that remains will not have any deleterious effect on their relationships. The rays of love will overwhelm these differences. Love makes people blind and deaf. One sentence of the Holy Prophet (s) illustrates this point:

If you like or love someone, then you will not notice the person's failings

You will neither recount such a person's weaknesses nor will you like others to mention them in your presence. If perchance, someone relates to you the shortcomings of your loved one, howsoever true, you will make an effort to defend him. If someone looks at a person with love, he hides and overlooks all his defects. Loving eyes are unable to see defects in the loved one. The same eyes very clearly perceive defects in the other persons. Even if one can see some defects in the loved one, he covers it up.

The story of *Laila and Majnu* is oft quoted. It is said that Laila had cooked a broth. Everyone was going to her to fetch their share. Majnu too gave his pot to someone to fetch some for him. When Laila was told that the pot belonged to Majnu, she threw it on the ground that it shattered to pieces. Majnu's friend informed him that instead of sending some broth for him, Laila had broken his pot. Majnu recited the following couplet:

Agar ba deegar anash bood maila

Chira zarf mara shikaste Laila

If Laila was inclined towards another

*Then why did she break **my** pot*

Majnu said that breaking of his pot by Laila was the evidence of her love for him. If this wasn't the case, then why didn't she shatter the pot of any other man! This shows that Majnu never, for a moment, thought that Laila could do anything wrong! Instead he covers up her wrong action. If a wife loves her husband, she will defend him if someone speaks ill of him. She cannot bear it when someone speaks ill of her husband. This is the same lady who does not hesitate to state the flaws she notices in friends or even her brother. But when it is the turn of her husband she springs to his defence, because she is actually unable to see any flaws in him. I know many ladies who thank Allah when their husbands become angry with them – they say: this sternness on the part of my husband is proof of his love for me, otherwise why doesn't he behave in the same way with his sisters. It is because my husband loves me and wants to reform me that he is strict with me.

One thing that we should remember is that while speech can create love, it can also extinguish love. Sometimes speech is like the beauty spot on the face which enhances the beauty of the person. Sometimes it is hard and burns – just like pepper.

Sometimes a husband expressing his gratitude to his wife is like the beauty spot on the face that shines like the moon, and is invaluable for the woman. A husband's expression of gratitude creates a lot of love in the heart of his wife. On the other hand sternness and curt behaviour destroys love and is just like pepper burning the mouth. Sometimes uttering a small sentence can play a very big role in extinguishing love between the husband and wife. Islam has promised great rewards for the wife who obeys her husband, and treats him well. There is so much reward for her that even the jurists can expect just a little more. The Prophet of Islam (s) used to say that any man or woman who recognizes the rights of Amir al Mu'minin, fulfils the obligatory (*wajibat*), abstains from sins, or if he happens to sin, he repents without

delay; and is married, then all the doors of the Heaven are open for them. Their station in the Heaven will be with the Prophets and the Infallible ones. The Holy Quran too says that certain people are with the Prophet (s) and the Imams (a.s.)

وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ
أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقًا

Whoso obeyeth Allah and the Messenger, they are with those unto whom Allah hath shown favour, of the Prophets and the Saints and the Martyrs and the righteous. The best of company are they. (Sura an-Nisa', 4: 69)

A person who obeys Allah and the Prophet (s) a hundred-percent will be grouped with the Prophets, their vicegerents, the martyrs and the righteous ones on the Day of Reckoning, and all the doors to Heaven will be open for him. He will be permitted to enter Heaven through the door of his choice. This is a great honour which will be bestowed on him. This honour can be acquired by maintaining a home with a cordial, pious atmosphere, filled with love and affection.

We read in the traditions that when a woman gives a glass of water to her husband, Allah grants her a reward equivalent to that for a full year of worship! Obviously the reward is not for giving the glass of water! Allah is giving this bounty to the woman because He wants her to be obedient and loving to her husband. Similarly when a man strives to provide comfort and sustenance to his family, it is as if he is fighting in the front lines of the battle against the infidels. Why is this man being given so much reward, while it is obvious that he actually has no right to it? He is being given this reward so that the atmosphere of the house remains good, so that there is love in that house.

On the other hand the use of foul language can land a person in Hell. The Prophet of Islam (s) says that if a woman displeases her husband, whether it is with a single harsh word, or an abusive tongue, or if a husband displeases his wife with harsh language or bad behaviour, they will be the first to enter Hell. Why is this attitude considered to be a big sin? The reason is that if love doesn't exist in the homes, life will go haywire, resulting in grave consequences. But if there is an atmosphere of love and peace at home, this home will be of immense benefit to the society. In the book, *Wasail al Shia*, several traditions on this subject are quoted. And we have also not been able to quote any of the traditions on this subject, narrated in the works of Allama Majlisi and other authors of repute.

The Prophet of Islam (s) says that if a wife bears the ill treatment of her husband with patience and does not confront him, and if a husband bears the bad behaviour of his wife with patience, this wife and this husband will occupy a station in Heaven equal to that of Prophet Ayoob (a.s) whose patience in calamities is well known. This status is not acquired as a matter of right, but it is earned with sincere effort to maintain love and amity in the family. We should exercise care that love is not snatched away from us because of our careless and hot-headed behaviour with members of our family. I appeal to you

to give utmost attention to the language that is used at home. Sweet and considerate talk enhances love and amity, while harsh words destroy them.

3. Favoritism

One of the major reasons for the lessening of love and good relations among family members is unfair preference given to some members of the family over others. This happens when one son or daughter is the favourite of the parents when there are two or more children in the family. Sometimes one son-in-law or daughter-in-law is favoured over the others. We find in certain families that while distributing their assets, they unfairly apportion more to the favourite son than to the other. In certain other families they totally deny any share to the daughter against all norms of fairness! Their argument, generally, is that the daughter has taken away her dowry at the time of marriage and need not be given any more from their assets. This is not a good attitude. The Prophet (s) said: May Allah have mercy on the parents who help their children to be virtuous. Then he (s) added: May Allah's curse be on the parents who carelessly leave their children uncontrolled to go astray, so much so that they become *Aaq* (disinherited).

What makes the children misbehave with their parents? If the son observes that his mother is on the wrong, she treats his wife badly and picks on his wife for trivial matters, still he should not misbehave with his mother. If he misbehaves with his mother he will render himself *Aaq*. When the son becomes *Aaq*, he will neither get any benefit in this world nor in the Hereafter! When a son feels that his father favours his brother over him, when the daughter feels that her brother is being preferred to her, when daughter feels that her sisters husband is being favoured over her own husband they are hurt. Such sons and daughters might start hating their parents. Pity the daughter who hates her parents. She then starts backbiting about her parents. She has no right to do so. When she backbites about her parents she becomes *Aaq*, even if the parents are on the wrong. The youth must respect their parents. They should not misbehave or use harsh language while dealing with their parents. The Holy Quran uses very strong words in this matter:

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۖ إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٌ وَلَا تَنْهَرُهُمَا ۚ وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا

Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none save Him, and (that ye show) kindness to parents. If one of them or both of them attain to old age with thee, say not "Fie" unto them nor repulse them, but speak unto them a gracious word. (Sura al-'Isra', 17: 23)

The Holy Quran says that one should be good to his parents. Being good to parents has been kept on par with worshipping Allah. It further says that even when the parents grow old and feeble, and do some injustice to the children, they still have no right to fight with the parents. Beware, never use harsh language with them. Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) says that if the parents beat a child, he should say to

them: May Allah have mercy on you. Arguing or fighting with parents is forbidden. If someone does this and the parents in their ire disown (*Aaq*) him, then this person is destined for Hell. But the parents too will go to Hell. When a son or a daughter goes to the Hell on the Day of Reckoning, the parents too will be asked to join them in Hell. The children go to Hell because they became *Aaq*, the parents go to Hell because they created the circumstances that led their child to become *Aaq*. They committed such acts that led their children to use harsh language or misbehave with them. When his mother misbehaves with his wife, the son retaliates and misbehaves with his mother. When the father is harsh with his son, the son fights with the father in turn, thus rendering himself disowned. The Prophet of Allah (s) has said that accursed are the parents who let their children become *Aaq*.

I appeal to the parents not to discriminate between their children. They should treat the sons and daughters equally. We see that sometimes an ignorant mother loves her daughter more than the son. Her behaviour even makes it very clear that she likes her daughter more. The first consequence of this attitude is that the love for the mother departs from the heart of the son. This is a major sin. Another sin is that the son starts hating his sister. Remember, if such feelings are created between siblings, it is very difficult to remove them. The more the siblings hate each other, the bigger their sin will be. The parents, too, are a party to the sin.

A father once distributed his assets amongst his children. He gave everything to one child, and deprived the other. As soon as the parents died, differences sprang up between the siblings. This enmity extended to the next generation. Many such examples are before us. This act is tantamount to *Qate Rahm* (breaking ties of kinship) which is a major sin. Who is at fault in such situations? It is the parents who sow the seeds of dissent amongst their children with their favouritism.

The Holy Quran has described the law of inheritance. The son has to be given one part and the daughter should receive half of what her brother gets. As far as daughters are concerned, they all receive equal inheritance. If someone gives more to one son than to the others, and gives more to one daughter than the others, then he has openly opposed Allah's Law of Inheritance. Therefore such acts are termed as *Kufr* or infidelity! If a mother loves her daughter very much, it's fine – but why does she belittle her son-in-law? If she wants her daughter to live in peace, she should treat her son-in-law with respect and attention when he visits her home! Why does she give more attention and respect to one son-in-law than the other? Why does the father compare one son to the other? Why does he tell one son that the other is better than him? This attitude is worse than killing someone. The spirit of the daughter who has been belittled gets killed. Control your speech. Be careful about your character. Be careful about these small things because these can result in grave consequences. When your sons-in-law visit you, respecting only one of them will be taken to mean that you are disrespecting the others. Sometimes the parents compare the intelligence and proficiency of two of their sons. The parent says: your brother is so intelligent. He studies so hard. You are such a careless person. This upsets and discourages the son who is less intelligent and smart. It is seen that the parents give more dowry to some daughters than the others because their grooms are wealthier. They don't realise the grave

mistake that they have made with this behaviour. Friends! This problem is not because of lack of wealth. This is the result of partiality and favouritism. The mothers should give equal love and affection to all their children. If the mother shows her love for her son's child, she should show the same affection for her daughter's child. If a child is prettier than others, he might become the favourite of everyone. In such situations care must be taken that the other less attractive children don't feel left out. We must ensure that no one gets preference over others at home. If there is favouritism in a home, its foundations become weak. But in the homes where love prevails, everything else becomes secondary. Then there won't be any differences between the daughter-in-law and mother-in-law, or between the husband and wife. In such homes you will not find fights or use of harsh language.

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