

unconditional are specified by what is customarily the practice. The customary practice is that the wife serves the husband and takes care of the internal affairs of the house. They [who say that the wife is not obliged to serve the husband] argue that the actions of Faatimah and Asmaa were voluntary acts and acts of goodness. However, this argument is refuted by noting that Faatimah was complaining about the effects of her acts of serving her husband. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not tell Ali, "She does not serve you, but you must do it." The Prophet (peace be upon him) was never partial toward anyone in his judgments. When he saw Asmaa and the fodder was upon her head and al-Zubair was with her [meaning her husband], he [the Prophet (peace be upon him)] did not say to him, "She does not have to serve you and you are committing wrong toward her." In fact, he approved of the service they were doing and he approved of what the other Companions were doing with respect to their wives serving them, although he knew that some of them were displeased with that while others were pleased. This is a matter concerning which there is no doubt.¹

However, this does not mean that the husband does not assist his wife or do some of the chores if he can during some times when his wife is in need of that. In fact, the husband doing some of those chores and helping his wife when she is in need is evidence of a noble character. It is also part of dealing with his wife in a kind and good manner.

For that reason, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was never too proud—and he was the leader of the Nation and the one of best character—to perform some chores in order to help his wives. This is indicated in the narration from the Mother of the Believers Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) who said, when she was asked about what the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) used to do in

¹ See *Zaad al-Maad*, vol. 5, pp. 187-188.

the house, “He would help his wife— meaning serve his wife— but when the time for prayer came, he would leave to the prayer.”¹

When Ruqayyah, the daughter of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), fell ill, Uthmaan ibn Affaan stayed behind from the Battle of Badr in order to tend to her and look after her.² Furthermore, the husband should take into consideration the circumstances of his wife and he should not overburden her or make her do things that are beyond her capability.

(6) Protecting His Honor, Children and Wealth

The wife must protect her chastity and be careful about and avoid anything that might stain her honor and hurt her reputation. She should not do anything that demonstrates a lack of religiousness or a shortcoming in modesty. She must be careful about exposing herself and displaying her beauty to anyone other than those who are allowed to see her.

If she is lacking with respect to any of those matters, then she is not protecting her husband’s honor according to the amount of that shortcoming. Worse than all of that is where the married woman has a child through illegal sexual intercourse and attributes that child to her husband— and we ask Allah to protect us. The Prophet (peace be upon him) gave a very strong and severe warning concerning such an act. He stated,

أَيَّمَا امْرَأَةٍ أُدْخِلْتُ عَلَى قَوْمٍ مِّنْ لَّيْسَ مِنْهُمْ فَلَيْسَتْ مِنَ اللَّهِ فِي شَيْءٍ
وَلَنْ يُدْخِلَهَا اللَّهُ جَنَّتَهُ

¹ Recorded by al-Bukhari (#676), Book on the Call to Prayer, Chapter on the one who is helping his wife and the prayer is established so he leaves; and (#5363), Book on Expenditures, Chapter on the man serving his wife; and (6039) Book on Manners, Chapter on how the man should be while he is with his wife.

² See *Sabih al-Bukhari* (#3698).

“Any woman who brings to a people one who is not from them [that is, by illegal sexual intercourse] will have nothing to do with Allah and Allah will not enter her into Paradise.”¹

Similarly, she should protect her husband with respect to his children by bringing them up in a good way and teaching them the best characteristics and most beautiful manners. She should also protect his wealth by not spending it in ways that he does not want or approve. She also should not burden him by getting him to spend on things that are not needed or that have some aspect of waste or extravagance to them.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) praised the women of the Quraish. He said about them,

أَحْسَاهُ عَلَىٰ وَلَدٍ فِي صِبْغِهِ وَأَرْعَاهُ عَلَىٰ زَوْجٍ فِي ذَاتِ يَدِهِ

“They are the most merciful (*ahnaah*) to the child when he is young and the most tending to the husband with respect to what he owns.”² *Ahnaah* means they are compassionate. The woman who is *haaniyah* is the one who brings up her child in a proper way and if the father dies, she does not remarry but spends her time looking after the children. “Most tending to the husband” means that she guards and protects his wealth, his trust concerning it, and she protects it for him and does not waste his money with any frivolous spending.

¹ Recorded by Abu Dawood (#2263), Book on Divorce, Chapter on severe warning concerning denying one's child; al-Nasaai, vol. 6, p. 179, Book on Divorce, Chapter on severe warning concerning denying one's child; al-Daarimi, vol. 2, p. 153, Book on Marriage, Chapter on one who denies his child while he recognizes him to be his child. Ibn Hibbaan (#1335 from *Muwaarid*) concerned it *sahib* and its chain is excellent. [According to al-Albaani, this hadith is weak. See al-Albaani, *Dbaeef al-Jaami al-Sagheer*, p. 327.—JZ]

² Recorded by al-Bukhari (#5082), Book on Marriage, Chapter on who is to be married and which women are best.

(7) Being Thankful to the Husband, Not Denying His Virtues and Treating Him in a Good Manner

This aspect is proven by what is recorded in the two *Sahihs* from ibn Abbaas who stated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated during the address he gave after a solar eclipse, "I saw the Hell-fire and I have never seen any sight like what I have seen today. I saw that most of its inhabitants were women." They said, "Why, O Messenger of Allah?" He said, "Due to their lack of gratitude." They said, "Are they ungrateful toward Allah?" He said, "They are ungrateful to their husbands and they are ungrateful with respect to the goodness done to them. If one of you were to do good to one of them his whole life and then she sees from you something she does not like, she will say, 'I have never seen any good from you.'"¹

In a narration in *Musnad Ahmad* with a *hasan* chain, it states that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Most of who I saw therein were women who when confided in spread it about, when asked are stingy and when given are not thankful."²

In general, those are the rights of the husband. They can be all summed up in one general statement: The rights of the husband are that he be treated in a good and polite manner and that he does not hear, see or find anything in his wife except all that is good and beautiful.

The Rights of the Wife

The wife also has rights over her husband. Some of these rights are financial while others are not financial. The financial rights include the dower, discussed earlier, and maintenance, which shall be explained shortly by the help of Allah.

¹ Recorded by al-Bukhari (#29), Book on Faith, Chapter on being ungrateful to husbands and *kufir* which is less than [the greater] *kufir* [that takes one out of the fold of Islam]; and (#5197), Book on Marriage, Chapter on being ungrateful to the husband; *Sahih Muslim* (#884).

² See *Faith al-Baari*, vol. 2, pp. 540-542.

The non-financial rights of the wife include the following:

(1) Treating the Wife in a Kind and Good Manner

“Treating the wife in a kind and good manner” actually comprises all of the rights. If other rights are mentioned after this one, it is a case of mentioning a particular aspect in order to give it special attention after it has already been touched upon by a general term.

“Treating in a kind and good manner” implies accompanying them in a good way, keeping harm from them, not delaying in fulfilling their rights when one has the ability to fulfill them and demonstrating pleasure and happiness with them.

The basis for this is the statement of Allah,

وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

“And treat them in a good and kind manner” (*al-Nisaa* 19). Allah also says,

وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

“And they have rights similar to those over them according to what is reasonable” (*al-Baqarah* 228). Ibn Abbaas stated, “I love to beautify myself for the wife in the same way that I love for her to beautify herself for me because Allah has said, ‘And they have rights similar to those over them according to what is reasonable’ (*al-Baqarah* 228).”

Ibn Katheer stated in his commentary to the words, “And they have rights similar to those over them according to what is reasonable,”

That is, make the words you say to them good, make your deeds and behavior toward them good according to your ability. In the same way that you would like that from them, you should behave in that way toward them. As Allah says, “And they have rights similar to those over them according to what is reasonable.” And the Prophet

(peace be upon him) said, "The best of you is the best to his family and I am the best to my family."¹

Included in good behavior is being kind and gentle with them and not harming them. One should also overlook their shortcomings as long as it is not something related to the law of Allah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) alluded to this behavior when he said,

لَا يَفْرَكُ مُؤْمِنٌ مُؤْمِنَةً إِنْ كَرِهَ مِنْهَا خُلُقًا رَضِيَ مِنْهَا آخَرَ

"A believing man should not hate a believing woman since if he dislikes one of her characters, he is pleased with another."²

Also included in this category is that the man should not hurt his wife with either his actions or his speech. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked by one of the Companions, "What is the right of our wives upon us?" He replied,

أَنْ تُطْعِمَهَا إِذَا طَعِمْتَ وَتَكْسُوَهَا إِذَا اكْتَسَيْتَ وَلَا تَضْرِبَ الْوَجْهَ وَلَا
تُقَبِّحَ وَلَا تَهْجُرَ إِلَّا فِي الْبَيْتِ

"It is that when you eat, you feed her; when you get clothing for yourself, you get clothing for her; do not strike the face; do not swear at her; and do not boycott her except in the house."³

¹ Recorded by al-Tirmidhi (#3892), Book on Virtues, Chapter on the virtues of the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him); al-Daarimi, vol. 2, p. 159; and graded *sahih* by ibn Hibbaan (#1312).

² Recorded by Muslim (#1469), Book on Breastfeeding, Chapter on advice concerning women.

³ Recorded by Abu Dawood (#2142), Book on Marriage, Chapter on the right of the woman upon her husband; ibn Maajah (#1850), Book on Marriage, Chapter on the right of the woman upon the husband; Ahmad in *al-Musnad*, vol. 4, p. 447 and vol. 5, pp. 3-5; and al-Haakim graded it *sahih* in *al-Mustadrak*, vol. 2, p. 188.

(2) Teaching Her the Matters of the Religion and Supporting Her in Acts of Obedience to Allah

In essence, this means that he teaches her if she is ignorant and he reminds her if she forgets and, finally, he supports and helps her when she remembers [and does what should be done]. The most important matter [to learn] is the proper belief in the oneness of Allah (*tauheed*) and the beliefs and practices of the early generations of Muslims, as well as what goes along with the acts of worship and behavior.

Allah has stated in the Quran,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ
وَالْحِجَارَةُ

“O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is people and stones” (*al-Tahreem* 6). Ibn Umar narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ فِي أَهْلِهِ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ

“Man is responsible over his family and he will be asked about his responsibility.”¹

This also includes keeping the wife from having bad manners and characteristics, such as going out in public while displaying herself and everything that damages her modesty or lessens her faith. He must feel honor with respect to her and protect her and guard every aspect that protects her dignity.

¹ Part of a hadith recorded by al-Bukhari (#5188), Book on Marriage, Chapter “Protect yourselves and your families from a fire,” as well as in other places in his *Sabih*; Muslim (#1829), Book on Governmental Authority, Chapter on the virtues of a just ruler.

(3) Maintaining Her Chastity

Women also have natural desires. It is therefore a must upon the husband to comply with them so that she will keep herself from doing anything forbidden. This is part of the completeness of treating her in a good manner. The concern of the Lawgiver for the chastity of the wife can be seen in the fact that Allah has set a specific time limit for the one who swears not to have intercourse with his wife and if the man does not have intercourse with his wife before that time limit expires, the two will be separated. Allah says in the Quran,

لِلَّذِينَ يُؤْلُونَ مِنْ نِسَائِهِمْ تَرَبُّصُ أَرْبَعَةِ أَشْهُرٍ فَإِنْ فَاعُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ
غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“Those who take an oath not to have sexual intercourse with their wives must wait for four months, but if they return [during this period], then Allah is forgiving, merciful” (*al-Baqarah* 226). This indicates that it is obligatory to do that act that will keep the wife chaste. The longest period without that act is what is mentioned by Allah in that verse.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) instructed Uthmaan ibn Madhoon as to this right of his wife upon him when he was cutting himself off from them for the purposes of worship,

وَلَأَهْلِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا

“Your wife has a right upon you.”¹

The Muslim must do his best to take care of this aspect and give his wife her right.

It is narrated that Kaab ibn Soor was sitting with Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allah be pleased with him) when a woman came and said, “O Commander of the Faithful! I have never seen any man more virtuous than my husband. By Allah, he spends the night in prayer and

¹ Part of a hadith recorded by al-Bukhari in his *Sabih* (#1977), Book on Fasting, Chapter “Your wife has a right upon you”; Muslim (#1159), Book on Fasting, Chapter on the prohibition of continual fasting.

his day in fasting.” He asked Allah to forgive her and he praised her. The woman was shy so she stood and left. Kaab said, “O Commander of the Faithful, won’t you assist the woman with respect to her husband?” Umar replied, “Why?” He said, “She came to you complaining about him. If that is his situation with respect to acts of worship, when does he ever have any free time for her?” Umar sent someone to fetch her husband and he came. Umar said to Kaab, “Decide the matter for them for you understood from their affair what I did not understand.” He said, “In my opinion, she is like a woman who has three other co-wives and she is the fourth. So he may have three days and nights for worship and one day and night for her.” Umar said, “By Allah, your first opinion is not more amazing to me than your second view [just now]. Go and you shall be the judge for the people of Basrah.”¹

(4) Financially Maintaining the Wife

Maintaining the wife is a necessary right of the wife. It is inclusive of food, clothing and housing according to the situation of the husband and what is within his means. Allah has made it obligatory in His statement,

وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا
وُسْعَهَا

“The father of the child shall bear the cost of the mother’s food and clothing on a reasonable basis. No person shall have a burden laid on him greater than he can bear” (*al-Baqarah* 233). In his commentary to this verse, ibn Katheer wrote, “That is, it is upon the father of the child to spend upon the mothers and clothe them according to what is reasonable, in other words, according to what is customary for people

¹ See *al-Musannaf*, vol. 7, p. 148, by Abdul Razzaaq, Book on Divorce, Chapter on the right of the woman upon her husband; *Tabaqaat ibn Saad*, vol. 7, p. 52. Ibn Qudaamah related this incident in *al-Mughni*, vol. 10, p. 238, and said, “This incident became well-known and no one objected to it. Hence, it became like a consensus.”

like them, without extravagance or miserliness, according to his ability with respect to his being of means, moderate wealth or poverty.”¹

It is also confirmed that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ فِي النِّسَاءِ فَإِنَّكُمْ أَخَذْتُمُوهُنَّ بِأَمَانِ اللَّهِ وَاسْتَحْلَلْتُمْ فُرُوجَهُنَّ
بِكَلِمَةِ اللَّهِ .. وَلَهُنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

“Fear Allah with respect to women. You have taken them by the trust with Allah and have made their private parts permissible by the word of Allah... Their rights upon you are that you provide for them and clothe them according to what is right and customary.”²

Al-Bukhari and Muslim recorded that Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyaan (may Allah be pleased with both of them) came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said, “O Messenger of Allah, Abu Sufyaan is a miserly man. He does not give me enough to maintain myself and my child. So I take from his wealth without his knowledge. Is there any sin upon me for that?” He replied,

خُذِي مِنْ مَالِهِ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ مَا يَكْفِيكَ وَيَكْفِي بَنِيكَ

“Take from his wealth according to what is customary as will suffice for you and for your child.”³

The above indicate that it is obligatory upon the husband to spend upon his wife what is sufficient for her and her children according to what is customary and correct. It also indicates that the wife may take from her husband’s wealth if he refuses to give her what she needs, even if she takes it without his knowledge as long as it is the customary, acceptable amount.

¹ See *Tafseer ibn Katheer*, vol. 1, p. 304 (Daar al-Salaam Publications, 1413 A.H.).

² Recorded by Muslim in his *Sabih* (#1218), Book on the Pilgrimage, Chapter on the pilgrimage of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

³ Recorded by al-Bukhari (#5364), Book on Expenditures, Chapter on if the husband does not spend on his wife, she may take from his wealth what is sufficient for herself and her child according to what is customary and without his knowledge; Muslim (#1714), Book on Judgments, Chapter on the judgment for Hind.