

DOMESTIC HARMONY WITH FOCUS ON PATIENCE AND PRAYER

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Opening Recitation:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ
أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ
مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ
يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

Throughout the Qur'an we are reminded of Allah's many signs which He has sent to mankind. These signs are for us to reflect, and to recognize Him, to discover Him, and to appreciate Him.

For example in Surah Qaf, Allah beautifully describes some of His physical manifestations... such as the skies -- adorned and flawless -- and the earth, spread out with firm mountains -- and rain full of blessings, which produces gardens... gardens that can provide harvest.

Gardens are mentioned as one of the bounties of Almighty God.

Allah also manifests His signs in ways that are not visible, but felt. The verse recited earlier are an example, as Allah says:

“And among His signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in peace and tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): Verily in that are signs for those who reflect” (30:22)

Respected General Secretary Sahib, and my dear guests of the Promised Messiah (as)

Today I am going to talk about Domestic Harmony, and will attempt to weave these two particular signs of Allah, Gardens, and the Love and Mercy between Spouses.

Gardens, as we can all appreciate, are a source of peace and comfort. Some of us have gardens in our own homes. And we know that they require maintenance. Without care, they can start to fade. And the reality we are facing today is that not all of our gardens are thriving. Some of our households are withering. Some are stagnant. Some are neglected, and others are abandoned and left to die.

The first requirement of a healthy garden is to have the right soil. If you irrigate barren land without the right soil, little will grow. And what is that soil? Allah says in the Qur'an

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ
مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا
وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا ۝

“O ye people! Fear your Lord who created you from a single soul and of its kind created its mate, and from them twain spread many men and women; and fear Allah, in Whose name you appeal to one another, and fear Him particularly respecting ties of kinship. Verily Allah watches over you” (4:2).

In this second verse of Surah Al Nisa, describing the creation of man and woman from a single soul, the word *fear* is mentioned three times. Not once, not twice, but three times.

Holy Prophet (sa) used to recite this verse at the time of performing the marriage ceremony. Indeed, these words have been recited on the first day of all of our marriages.

The soil needed for our garden is *taqwa* or the fear of God. Domestic harmony is rooted in *taqwa*.

The subject of domestic harmony is very vast, too vast for the 25 minutes I have been allotted. So I will touch upon what I think are some of the major causes of domestic disputes within the families of our Jama'at -- financial stress, stress of family influence, and breakdowns in communication. This is based on my own brief experiences serving as Sadr Jama'at, and also in seeking advice of missionaries, elders and national Sadraan of Lajna, Ansar and Khuddam over the last few months.

And I must make a disclaimer here that I have no intention to lecture to you on domestic harmony. I was not assigned this topic because I have the answers. I am just humbly synthesizing and packaging information that is already out there for your consumption. Allah knows my flaws, and so does my spouse. But we'll get into *Libaas* a bit later.

One of the major causes of marital friction is finances. Disputes over the responsibilities of husband and wife with regard to the fiscal matters of the household is more common than many realize.

Husbands and wives quarrel on small matters which escalate quickly. And the reason, often times, is a misunderstanding of roles and responsibilities.

For an understanding of this we turn to the Qur'an for guidance. Allah says:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ
 اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا
 مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۗ فَالضَّالِّحَاتُ قُنُتَتْ
 حَفِظَتْ لِلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ۗ

Men are guardians over women because Allah has made some of them excel others, and because they (men) spend of their wealth. So virtuous women are those who are obedient, and guard the secrets of their husbands with Allah's protection. (4:35)

Men are guardians over women. *Qawaam* is a guardian, not a ruler. It is a responsibility we have as husbands and fathers, to provide for our families.

“Anfakoo Min Amwaaalhim” we must spend of our wealth on them. This is our obligation as spelled out in the Qur'an.

Secondly, we must spend specifically on our wives and children.

The Holy Prophet (sa) said:

Of the dinar you spend in the cause of Allah; what you spend in procuring the freedom of a slave; what you give away in charity to the poor and what you spend on your wife and children, the highest in respect of reward is the Dinar you spend on your wife and children. (Sahih Muslim)

When households are confronted with financial hardship, mutual consultation is necessary during stressful times. There is nothing wrong with getting advice from our spouses.

During the time of the Holy Prophet (sa), Arabs could not tolerate a woman advising them. Once Hadhrat Umar's wife advised him on something and he replied, Who are you to interfere in these matters? She replied that if the wives of the Holy Prophet^(saw) could give him their advice and the Prophet allowed this, then how could Hadhrat Umar put a stop to her counsel? Such was the courage that the Holy Prophet^(saw) inculcated in women, with his blessed model and his teaching.

A garden won't flourish if you provide sunlight but no water, just as it won't flourish if you provide water but no sunlight. The wife has duties to discharge both to her husband and her children that are also outlined in the Qur'an. If the husband is a *Qawaam* or guardian, the wife, as *Saaliha* or virtuous, is the day-to-day tender of the garden to prevent it from dying.

Frugality is a responsibility that the wife should bear in particular.

The Holy Prophet (sa) said, “it is the duty of the wife to look after your property when the husband is absent from the house and to guard her purity for him and to form the habit of saving for unforeseen needs and hard times. She must have a proper control of the household expenses.”

In his address to Lajna in Germany in 2013, Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) said:

“Some women possess the habit of creating mayhem, fighting with husbands, uttering bad things and making demands when financial conditions become tight due to their husband’s job or business loss, and when there is a lack of affluence. Such actions do not yield good results. A husband who is frail in nature hastens to take a loan to fulfill the wife’s desires and the habit of taking loans is a trap similar to quicksand in which a person sinks deeper and deeper. In fact, when such difficult situations arise, it is the duty of the wife to fully support her husband and be content with less.” (Address to ladies, Jalsa Sālāna Germany, August 23, 2003, Al-Fazl International, November 18, 2005)

The Holy Prophet (sa) rightfully said, as recorded in Bukhari,

Kullu-kum raa’in wa kullu-kum mas-oolun arra- iyya-ti-hee

Every one of you is a ruler and will be answerable in respect of his/her subjects.

Wives, in this way, have a role as rulers in the household. They are the glue of the family, the nucleus that keeps husbands and children in harmony. Our wives play a unique role in maintaining the core unity of a house, and this happens through emphasis on Salat and recitation of Quran. This is the great elixir that keeps households intact. And when domestic disputes arise, specifically we should turn to supplication for Allah’s protection from harm.

The verses also instructs women to guard the secrets of your husbands, ”haafizaatho lil ghaibay”.

The blessed wife of the Promised Messiah (as), Hadrat Amman Jan (ra) advised her daughter Hadrat Nawwab Mubaraka Begum(ra) before her marriage,

“a wife should not hide things from her husband nor do anything that she felt she may have to cover up from him. She explained; “The husband may not see what goes on but Allah Almighty does. Ultimately, when the matter is exposed it diminishes the dignity of a woman”.

The soil has been laid, the instructions on how to grow our garden have been understood. Remember, the most organized and well-kept gardens are those that have a defined space and distance between plants and flowers, an order that enhances the beauty. These boundaries should be respected, which brings us to the role of parents and in-laws.

In the Nikah Sermon we recite

وَ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ ط

and fear Him particularly respecting ties of relationship. (4:2)

At the very outset of marriage in Islam, particular attention should be focused on respecting relationships. Sadly, this is one of the main causes of a breakdown in marriages within our Jama'at. In his Friday sermon of 11/10/2006, Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) shared that 30 to 40% of the time in-laws are the source of friction.

Remember, when a couple goes into a marriage, they should know that mothers can be skeptical of daughter-in-laws and fathers skeptical of son-in-laws. That's not necessarily right, but that's the reality. Recognizing that this skepticism may exist is the first step to pre-emptively alleviating any stress.

First and foremost, your spouse needs to settle his/her own disputes with parents. Try not to get in the way. Don't compare your wife to your own mother, or your husband to your own father.

Husbands, if you are supporting your parents, inform your spouse openly as a matter of courtesy and clarity. Don't forbid your spouses from seeing their family.

And, very important, Don't divulge marital secrets to your family. As it is recited in Surah Baqarah:

نَسَائِكُمْ ط هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ
لَهُنَّ ط عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ

Remember you are a garment for your spouses as they are a garment for you. This means we cover our spouse's flaws and weakness and shortcomings, as they are the libaas that covers us.

So cover your spouse, even from parents.

Parents, let your children resolve their disputes. Give them space. You tend to your gardens, and theirs will flourish.

And at the end of the day, recognize that nobody can influence your relationship with you and your spouse unless one or both of you allow them to.

Check on your parents and in-laws regularly, and if one or both of them attain old age and required dependency on their children, have a serious discussion with your spouse about expectations and requirements. We have duties to our parents and our spouses need to be part of that conversation.

For mother-in-laws, look no further than the example of Hadhrat Amma Jaan with regard to treatment of daughter-in-laws.

Hadhrat Choti Apa was the daughter in-law of Hadhrat Amma Jaan. She reflected that her mother-in-law had a very gentle and subtle way of guiding them. Even the way she communicated was delicate. She never asked, “Do you know how to cook this?” but instead invited her, “let us go and cook this” or “let us go and do that.” She would instill confidence in her daughters-in-law and talk to them in a very kind, calm and gentle way. In fact, Choti Appa would say that her mother-in-law would give her more love than her own mother.

Coming back to our garden, it is important that we must confront obstacles when they arise. There will be elements that will threaten to destroy our flower beds.

Similarly, in relationships, there is bound to be tension. But remember, tension is not necessarily a bad thing. Respected Ameer Jama’at USA once shared this wise analogy with me. In order for an orchestra to make harmonious sounds, the strings of the instruments must have a bit of tension. No tension, no harmony. Similarly domestic harmony is a product of these human tensions. We just need to calibrate the strings the right way.

Arguments will happen. Disagreements are inevitable. We talk a lot about how to avoid fights. We need to talk about what to do during a fight, how to end one in peaceful fashion. Because those are the calls for help that come in the middle of the night. I’ve witnessed in our households that small disagreements turn to arguments which escalate into fights. And sadly, sometimes, these turn into domestic violence, and divorce.

We are seeing these problems right here. And often we find marital disharmony is a result of untamed anger. Most of us have been there, stricken with moments of anger that test our resolve.

We need to control our anger. Mark Twain likened anger to an acid, which does more damage to the vessel that it is in, than that which it is being poured onto. It is Satan’s workshop. And anger is not a sign of strength over your spouse, but rather a sign of weakness and insecurity.

Bukhari records the Holy Prophet (sa) teaching us :

The strong man is not he who defeats others in wrestling. The strong man is he who has full control over himself during his anger.

If your anger is a recurrent problem, please seek anger management counseling. Wives, pray for your husbands that they overcome this problem. Although you may be bearing the brunt of the anger, ultimately you may be the key to alleviating it. Remember, our spouses provide comfort.

le Thaskanoo Alaiyha
“ dwell in peace and tranquility with them ”

Men, try not rectify the behavior of your wife during an argument. TMAbu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet said: Treat women kindly. Woman has been created from a rib and the most crooked part of the rib is the uppermost. If you try to straighten it you will break it and if you leave it alone it will remain crooked. So treat women kindly. Do not try to straighten this rib.

And remember, the rib's function is to protect the heart. Your heart. Your wife's heart. Respect the design of Allah. Therein is wisdom.

The Promised Messiah treated his spouse in the best manner. On a single rare occasion he spoke in a loud tone to his wife. He said

"I felt that maybe my voice caused some pain even though I had not used any strong language. After this happened, I continued to do Istighfār, and very humbly offered nawāfil and also gave some sadqa, fearing that this harshness was due to some unknown offence." (Sīrat Hadrat Masīh Mau'ūd)

And what should wives do when husbands lose control. Follow the advice of Hadhrat Amma Jaan which she shared with her own daughter at the time of her marriage. She said, never argue with your husband while he is angry. If your opinions or actions are justified, a dignified wife will express this after her husband's rage has subsided. This leads to a more harmonious household and wins the pleasure of Allah Almighty.

Story of handkerchief

A man and woman had been married for sixty years. They kept no secrets from each other except a shoebox the woman had in the top of her closet that she had cautioned her husband never to open or ask about.

However, one day the woman got sick and the doctor said she would not recover. The man got the shoebox and took it to his wife's bedside. She agreed it was time he should know what was in the box.

When he opened it, he found two crocheted handkerchiefs and a stack of money totaling \$25,000.

She said, "When we were to be married, my grandmother told me the secret of a happy marriage was to never argue. She told me that if I ever got angry with you I should just keep quiet and crochet a small piece of cloth, a handkerchief"

The old man was so moved he had to fight back tears. Only two handkerchiefs in the box. She had only been angry with him two times in sixty years. He almost burst with happiness.

He then asked her, "that explains the handkerchiefs, but what about all of this money? Where did it come from?"

Oh," she said, "that's the money I made from selling the other handkerchiefs.

When the smoke begins to clear, be the first to apologize. This is sometimes the hardest thing to do. Egos are like those patches of ground in our gardens that need to be dug up and turned over in order for flowers to grow. My personal observation is that the main source of disharmony in households is the inability to suppress or tame our own egos.

When your marriage sinks to difficult and desperate times, when hope for resolution seems lost, bow down on the prayer mat and put your trust only in Allah. Not in yourselves, not in your friends, not in your family. We will let ourselves down. Others will let us down. But with patience and prayer, Allah will never let us down.

If you can't resolve a conflict, after praying, seek help. Write letters to your spiritual father, Huzoor and Jama'at officials. Seek professional counseling when needed. There is nothing embarrassing or wrong in going for marriage counseling.

In the November 2006 Friday Sermon I referenced earlier, Huzoor also mentioned that men are three times more culpable than women in causing broken marriages based on survey in the UK. And I'm standing here in front of you today to share that the same lopsidedness holds true locally. So here I'm specifically addressing the men, my respected elders and my dear brothers. Please know this:

Our wives should be our best friends.

The greatest friend to his wives was Rasulullah (sa) who rightfully said, "I am the best among you in treating my family." At home, he would laugh and have a cheerful disposition with his family. He would joke with his wives and comfort them. He would help with household chores. If one of his wives was preparing flour, he would pour water for it. If food was being cooked, he would add wood to the fire. He would take care of household matters without any sort of hesitation.

The Promised Messiah (as) said:

"The relationship between husband and wife should be as between two true and sincere friends. The primary witness of a person's high moral qualities and of his relationship with God is his wife. If his relationship with his wife is not good, it is not possible that he should be at peace with God. Therefore the Holy Prophet (sa) has said, "The best of you are those who behave best towards their wives" (Malfoozat, Volume 5, pages 417-418).

Allah has provided spouses to us through his Mercy. We must turn to our spouses for comfort, for counsel, for peace.

When our beloved Master, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa), the Chief of all Prophets, first was revealed the Holy Quran in the dark solitude of Hira, he turned to his trusted soul mate, his companion, Hadhrat Khadija (ra) who offered him much-needed comfort and reassurance.

So seek comfort in your spouses.

When the companions of Rasulullah (sa) grieved after the unfair conditions of the Treaty of Hudaibiyya, it was his wife Hadhrat Umme Salamah (ra) who advised him to instruct his companions to sacrifice an animal and thereby obey the prophet.

So seek counsel in your spouses.

And don't just pray for one another, pray alongside one another, just as Hadhrat Amma Jaan stood to the right of the Promised Messiah (as) and prayed alongside him. Congregational Salat with your family at home will make our gardens flourish beyond our imagination. A family that prays together, stays together.

And to newlyweds in the audience, lower your expectations. Sometimes flowers in our garden bloom in unexpected places. Say the right word...*Kaulan Sadeedan*...it's in the Nikah prayer... it's the vow we take.

Sometimes we let things fill the spaces between us and our spouses. Those things include our tablets, our smartphones, our TVs, . We do these things because they give us immediate attention, they give us an immediate audience. But they are precisely giving us what we in turn are not giving our spouses. This is carving out dead patches in our gardens.

Think of your relationship with your spouse as an emotional bank account. Make more deposits than withdrawals. Get her a gift, give her a thank you, give her a compliment. Compliment her in front of others, in front of your children. Dress nicely for your spouse, look presentable and dignified.

A friend of mine who was about to get married asked Huzoor earlier this year for personal advice on marriage. Our beloved Huzoor replied: No one is perfect, not you or your wife. So, when your spouse does something that you don't like, you should close your eyes, ears, and mouth. When your spouse does something you do like, you should open all three.”

So my dear brothers, ignore what displeases you about your spouse, and focus on what pleases you. Our wives are like flowers, tend them with care. If one enjoys the fragrance of a rose, one must accept the thorns which it bears.

Marriage is a wondrous thing...it can change our habits. We can mold and adapt to our spouses. Indeed, marriage completes our faith, as the Hadith reminds us.

There once lived a man and woman who got married. The woman was not used to sleeping in the dark. She needed to have the lights on. Her husband had the habit of sleeping in the dark. So every night, he would keep the lights on for his wife until she fell asleep, then would turn out the lamp. If she awoke in the middle of the night, he would relight the lamp. Eventually, the man became accustomed to sleeping in the light and lights were installed in all the rooms and above the stairs, and he even employed someone to be responsible for keeping the lights on. Decades later, after a beautiful and successful and long-lasting marriage, she said to her husband: “Do you remember that time when you could not sleep in the light, and now unless every corner of the house is filled with the light you cannot sleep!” That woman was Hadhrat Amma Jaan (ra), and the man was the Promised Messiah (as). (Source, “Hadhrat Amman Jaan (ra) – An Inspiration for Us All”, by Munavara Ghauri, page 30)

If Masih Maud (as) can do this simple loving gesture for his wife, why can't we?

Finally we turn to the adornments in our garden, our children. Domestic harmony rests on the harmony we have with our children.

Parents please don't fight in front of your children, or disrespect your spouse in front of them. They will then also disrespect you and then disrespect their own spouses one day. Weeds can take over a garden quite rapidly if they are not uprooted.

Similarly, don't talk ill of others, or of the Jama'at, within the four walls of your house. This is like a toxin that spreads in the garden and kills everything in sight.

Reprimand your children with gentleness. Our youth will make mistakes, just as we made mistakes. How you handle them is a test as much for you as it is for them. Remember, Sabr (or patience) is mentioned 90 times in the Qur'an. 90 times. Show patience.

Spend time with your children. If you tell them something, they will forget. If you teach them something, they may remember. But you involve them in something, they will learn. So involve your children. Involve them in your domestic affairs, in shared responsibilities, in spiritual exercises, in physical exercise, in academic pursuits, in visiting the mosque, and in watching MTA. In the world of gardens, MTA is a greenhouse, providing the ideal environment to thrive.

In closing

My dear friends, the Messiah and Mahdi of our time tended to the garden of his home with the utmost gentleness and care. He has likened those who don't follow his teachings like a dry branch, which draws water but never turns green and instead spoils the good branches.

Let's shed our dry branches. Let us roll up our sleeves, dig into the soil, create fresh fertile ground, and let us sow the seeds of *Taqwa*, humility, cheerfulness and devotion within our houses.

Our beloved Huzoor has addressed domestic harmony countless times in his speeches and Friday sermons. It behooves all of us to listen to our beloved Imam and tend to our gardens, so we can all consider ourselves worthy of being followers of the Messiah of the Age, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as), who has taught us all to inculcate domestic harmony in the model of our beloved master, Hadhrat Muhammad Mustafa (sa), with *Sabr* (patience) and *Salat* (prayer). Insha'Allah.

May Allah enable us to reflect on His signs, may He bestow peace within our homes, and turn them into *Riyadh-as-Saaliheen* (Gardens of the Righteous).

I close with a prayer for our families...

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا
وَذُرِّيَّتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ
إِمَامًا ﴿٧٥﴾

Our Lord, grant us of our wives and children the delight of our eyes, and make us a model for the righteous. (Qur'an 25:75)