

LET HUMAN RIGHTS RULE YOUR HOUSE

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A friend of mine told me about his neighbour. The neighbour has a good job. He earns well. He is respected in his society. But his family life is not happy. His wife is also working. But the whole running of the house is the responsibility of the wife. The husband is not prepared to do even the smallest work in the house and yet he wants everything on time. He wants to be welcomed into the house with a glass of water. Then a hot cup of tea. When he is at home his wife and children should be at his beck and call for 24 hours a day and seven days a week!

When he gets up in the morning the wife is expected to give him the toothbrush, paste and towel. Then hot water, soap, and a fresh set of clothes. When his morning duties are over he wants hot tea and freshly made snacks for breakfast. Then he wants the newspaper at the right place. By the time he finishes reading the newspapers, he wants his meals ready. When he prepares to go to the office his wife should attend to him with his shoes and socks. And if she fails to hand him a handkerchief quickly not only the whole house but the neighbours will also know about it as he shouts at the top of his voice saying what an uncaring and useless wife she is!

If everything is not in order to his liking in the house he will not only shout but also beat up his wife and children. When he is at home his wife and children are like shivering rats in the presence of a cat! The situation of his wife and children is no better than the slaves in their owner's house!

There was an age when such behaviour of a husband was an accepted norm of behaviour or at least tolerated in a house. In those days a woman was nobody in the house. She was dependent first on her father, then her husband and finally on her children. A woman had no right in her own family or society. She had to carry on her life being subservient to her father, husband and sons. There is an English saying: "I and my wife are one and I am that one."

But those times have changed today. As human beings man and woman are considered equal. A woman is in no way inferior to a man. Women have proved themselves that they are equal to men in all fields like education, business, service as well as in the social and political fields.

Today a woman can earn her living independently of a man. She can decide whether she wants to become a wife and a mother. She does not need to depend on a man as in the past because she has her own earning. She can save money from her income for the times of her retirement and old age. Modern culture and science provide woman as much rights and authority as a man.

No working woman wants to do all the household works alone and let her man do whatever he wants for his leisure according to his hobby. So in our man-centred society and religion, a woman has to come out to claim her rightful place and equality. The woman has also to work hard to become competent in her field. She has to meet and discuss with many people. So after her office work she does not want to do all the household work alone. In such a situation in a family we find disorganization and mental tension. So, sensitive husbands no longer behave autocratically with their wife. Yet he experiences confusion and feels bewilderment.

A man brought up in a traditional family mentally compares the life-style of his mother and of his wife. He sees a sort of unruliness in the behaviour of his wife who brings revolutionary changes into their lives. In such situation the man finds it difficult to behave one way or other in the house and outside the house.

In older days a man used to make all the decisions in his house. A man's responsibility began and ended by earning enough to run the house. But today no woman is prepared to accept a man's decision in everything in a house. She too earns like her husband. So after earning like her husband, no woman is prepared to bring up the children, cook and do all the house hold work all alone.

The knowledge and ability of a woman to become equal to her husband are good things not only for her but also for the husband in many ways. Today a woman wants not only to cook and raise up her children but she also wants to become his partner and share his life in earning, in knowledge and business. This is equally good both for the husband and the wife.

The basic question is what does a woman want today? Man does not have the answer to the question. I quote the answer of a lady-writer Teri Apter who says in her book "Why Women did not have Wives" that, today's woman wants what the man always had with himself. She wants the power and opportunity to be economically self-sufficient. She wants self-confidence and pride which come from doing respectable jobs. She wants to have opportunities to develop her special talents and powers. She wants also recognition of her powers and proper remuneration.

If a man expects to lead a happy and prosperous life, then he must let his wife have equal rights like himself. That means, decisions in the house are taken together after discussing them. Man must participate equally in bringing up of children and other household work in a spirit of partnership and sharing. In this way a man is able to maintain a better relationship with his wife and children than ever before. This type of life is a real challenge to traditional minded men and at the same time a wonderful opportunity of special intimacy with his wife in this type of relationship.

Today to a certain extent a woman's rights are recognized. But that does not mean that a woman can run her house like an autocrat. As a woman has her rights in a house, similarly a man also has his rights in the house. As husband and father a man has all the right to be respected by his wife and children. A man often works and earns outside his house. He has a right to be respected and appreciated for his works and earnings.

In some houses the money which a man brings home every month is appreciated but his knowledge and his abilities are not appreciated. In other words, a man's money gets appreciation but the man himself gets no recognition by way of love and respect in the family. Many times a man uses threat as a means to get the respect due to him as a right and his family experiences dissention and quarrel. So we need to see that while fighting for equal rights for a woman in a family, the man's rights are not violated.

In a family as the man and woman, husband and wife, have their specific rights, so the children too have their own human rights. The children have the right to be loved. They have the right to

be brought up in a healthy atmosphere. They have the right to be educated. The children also have the right to get nourishing food, parents' care in sickness, clothes, time and to necessary facilities for games under the protection of their parents. Children need proper guidance to form their ethical and moral values. Children need to get constant guidance from their parents so that they are able to take big and small decisions of their day-to-day lives.

The children themselves are helpless to get many of these rights. They can only cry for them. But some parents make them keep quiet by threatening them and even with bodily punishment. Some parents raise their children in such a way that their mental, physical and intellectual growth suffers. Misbehaving with children, beating them or making them work as if they were adults are common crimes against children. The elders often exploit the children in many ways for their selfish purposes and deprive them of their human rights.

As the husband and wife as well as the children have their rights, the grand-parents and other elders staying in a house have also their human rights. If we speak about the rights of the grand-parents, they have the right to the respect of all the others in the family. In their old age they have the right to get all their basic needs fulfilled. The elders need to get nourishing food, medicine and nursing care to maintain their health, as well as physical exercise to maintain their bodily and mental fitness. Similarly the grand-parents and other elders in a family need to get facilities and opportunities for entertainments in the family. The elders deserve the care and support of their dear ones in sickness as well as in health.

To lead healthy and prosperous lives in a family it is not enough that the elders, the parents and the children are aware of each one's human rights. They all need the love, respect and support of each other and also knowhow and wisdom. For instance when a child is sick or she is not able to suck; then the mother needs to take out her milk, otherwise in her ignorance the flow of milk may stop or become less. Then, when the child becomes all right, she may be deprived of her mother's milk.

Similarly during the first 3 months a child needs to get the necessary injections like anti-polio vaccination and other medicines. But a child can become sick if these medicines are denied to her because of the ignorance or negligence of the parents. Even if a child may not die in such childhood sickness she can become handicapped for life! So if the parents do not respect the rights of the children for medical care and nursing the result can be terrible for the children for all their lives.

Science and medi-care have progressed by leaps and bounds during the past few decades. Consequently man's life too has undergone tremendous change. So a person has not only to safeguard his rights in a family but has also to be helpful to create a conducive atmosphere and circumstances for other members to uphold their rights. For this one needs to take into consideration all the changes and progress of modern times. One needs to shape one's life according to our changing times.

When that honorable and good man in the neighbourhood understands all these developments and changes, then perhaps his family members will be spared all their suffering and agony. He

will become an honorable man of a happy family when he will learn to honour his wife's human rights and to participate in bringing up his children and in the household work.

In order to get one's rights and preserve and maintain the rights of others in a family, one basic thing is required. That basic thing is called love, pure love. Jesus Christ has shown us the way to that love. He has also commended all to walk on that path: "My commandant in this! Love one another just as I love you."

If this commandment is observed, or at least an attempt is made to observe this commandment then human rights will be preserved in such a house. This commandment will become the foundation and the source of inspiration for every member of a family for maintaining and conceding the human right to one and all in a family. This will lead a family to happiness and prosperity. A happy family is the foundation of a healthy human society.