

QUESTION:

I am newly married, and trying to understand my role as a wife, daughter and daughter in law. I have a few questions. Basically my husband's parents are in that mentality that a daughter in law should not too openly visit her parents, should not see OR KEEP friends. And that should always stay at home.

I work 40 hours a week on rotating shift patterns. Therefore I can go over a week without getting the chance to see my parents, who are elderly and unwell. When I get the time, I usually try to go with my husband once a week. His parents, especially mum has an annoyed face on when I return, making me feel awkward. She also has digs at me.

I was told not to keep friends as they are bad influence, these people I have grown up with and Alhamdulillah they are good people and are trying to become better Muslims. I would often visit them at home or they would come to mine before marriage. However I have been reduced to cutting down contact with them which is leaving my friends and family upset with me.

My husband is very supportive and understands it's been very difficult being away from my family. However his Parents behaviour is affecting our relationship, as I feel bitter towards him also, and often have fall outs due to this behaviour from his parents. His sisters are always at his Parents house where we live, but me visiting my parents is looked down upon.

The other daughter in law's are treated badly. But due to work, I get a break and can stay away from this sort of practice.

Please can you advise me and help me understand the Islamic ruling regarding this.

All praises belong to Allāh, the Creator Most Sublime Who is Uncreated, the One Who has created all things in pairs that you may be reminded. Who has made your spouses as a garment unto you and you as a garment unto them. Peace and blessings be upon, our Master, Muhammad Mustafa ﷺ, upon his purified family, his esteemed companions, and whomsoever follows in his blessed footsteps until the last day.

“I work 40 hours a week on rotating shift patterns. Therefore I can go over a week without getting the chance to see my parents, who are elderly and unwell. When I get the time, I usually try to go with my husband once a week. His parents, especially mum has an annoyed face on when I return, making me feel awkward. She also has digs at me.”

Relations between husband and wife have been conceived as based on mutual cooperation, love and compassion. With marriage comes a role that has many responsibilities; responsibilities that one cannot expect to learn miraculously by signing on the dotted line of a marriage contract, nor instantaneously implement as a result of reading a brief article on the subject.

It is essential that a person attempts to learn prerequisite knowledge regarding the rights and responsibilities entailed within marriage and does not enter this new phase of life blindly. It is necessary to learn the rights the husband is obliged to give to the wife and also the rights he is expected to extend to his kin. Learning such knowledge will not only safeguard yourself but also others. Furthermore, learning such knowledge will allow any misunderstandings and differences to be ironed out amicably – as naturally in any marriage there are waves of differences but knowledge is an anchor ensuring stability.

If you have taken the leap of faith and entered into marriage only to find yourself bewildered and overwhelmed by the numerous demands of rights, don't panic. There is still time to learn given you are patient.

Firstly, know Allāh has said in the Glorious Qūr'ān:-

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

And indeed, you are of an exalted moral character.[68:4]

The Prophet of Allāh ﷺ is the example for Muslims in every aspect of life. It is vital that the married couple collectively read the biography of the best of creation and see how he ﷺ is an exemplar with respect to fulfilling the rights of the spouse and also how he ﷺ extended his mercy towards the family of those that he married.

Secondly, if not already done, it is necessary that you make study of, or minimum read, the various chapters concerning marriage, divorce and the rights of the spouse found within the authentic books of jurisprudence or extrapolated thereof.

Thirdly, observe your mother-in-law and seek her guidance. She has been the homemaker prior to your arrival and through experience understands your husband (her son) and the existing system better than you. Adapt to it. Work with it. Don't expect to change it with an iron fist instantly.

With regards to working long shifts, if you stipulated in the marriage contract that you are to continue working or hold a profession, then it is necessary for the husband to respect this and not go back on his word. If there was no stipulation or mention of you working in the marriage contract, it is permissible for your husband to request that you do not work. Islamically, the wife is to prioritise her husband and the family, as her role is defined as the homemaker. The husband is obliged to lift her costs and provide for the family respectively.

It is essential that a woman realises her working laborious shifts is neither **freedom** nor **escape** from her responsibilities, this is a false notion, rather, she is burdening herself far greater than she would at home. The recompense of a weekly wage whilst trapped within the endless cycle of work is not equal to the reward of building a family, developing a home, watching children learn and grow and moreover the recompense from Allāh.

إِنَّمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

Indeed, what is with Allāh is best for you, if only you could know. [16:95]

Furthermore, working strenuous shifts also marginalises the time one is able to spend caring for or visiting parents and family. It is necessary one understands the difference in priorities between family and work, especially in the scenario that the parents are ailing and the in laws complaining.

“I was told not to keep friends as they are bad influence, these people I have grown up with and Alhamdulillah they are good people and are trying to become better Muslims. I would often visit them at home or they would come to mine before marriage. However I have been reduced to cutting down contact with them which is leaving my friends and family upset with me.”

If your family believe your friends are a bad influence whilst this is not true, it is necessary that you make them see the truth by softly educating them. An unfounded accusation constitutes to slander. Slander of any type is an enormity. If you believe your in laws are slandering your friends then it is your responsibility to save them from such a sin by removing any misunderstanding that they may have. Ultimately you will know the disposition of your friends better but know the Prophet of Allāh ﷺ warned us by saying:-

الرَّجُلُ عَلَى دِينِ خَلِيلِهِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَحَدُكُمْ مَنْ يُخَالِلُ

“A man follows the religion of his friend; so each one should consider whom he makes his friend.”
[Sunan Abi Dawud 4833]

Associating with people has an effect upon one’s behaviour, morals and conducts. At times, particularly when we are blissfully sat within the circle of friendship, our perception of the friend becomes blurred through bias and any criticism of them is perceived as an affront to oneself. If your family genuinely feel your friends are a bad influence, it is necessary you engage in dialogue with your family whereby they highlight their concern and you subsequently put their heart at ease one way or another. Allāh make it easy and give you success.

“My husband is very supportive and understands it's been very difficult being away from my family. However his Parents behaviour is affecting our relationship, as I feel bitter towards him also, and often have fall outs due to this behaviour from his parents. His sisters are always at his Parents house where we live, but me visiting my parents is looked down upon.”

Allaah, Most Sublime, has said in the Qūr’ān,

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

"And among His Signs is this that He created your mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts); verily in that are Signs for those who reflect." [30: 21]

Love and mercy exists naturally between a husband and wife, however, this is often clouded by external factors. If you genuinely believe the family are affecting your or your husband's practising of the religion, or your relationship, then it is permissible and within your rights to seek a separate lodging. That being said, irrespective of the third person, you and your husband need to achieve a mutual understanding whereby your marriage is built upon solid foundations that do not move. One of these solid foundations is the treatment of your mother-in-law as your own mother. If an old mother rebukes her daughter for some matter, the daughter should not answer her back. Similarly, another foundation is you should treat your father-in-law as your own father and look after his requirements. During the lifetime of your husband's parents, do not become one who divides the family by raising the demand of a separate house (unless necessary to safeguard your religion). This is your house and the sister-in-law's who visit are but guests, there is no comparison between the two. Honour the guests.

Have the knowledge that Allah said:-

هُنَّ لِبَاسٍ لَّكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ ۗ

"They are clothing for you and you are clothing for them." [2:187]

Be that clothing that covers, protects and brings honour and dignity to the family.

And Allaah alone gives success, may He make it easy for you.

And He knows best.

Answered by Ustaadh Abu Dihh'ya Asid Shafait