120672 - How to Solve Problems with Your Husband's Family

the question

How can I deal with interference from my husband’s family in my personal affairs? Is it regarded as bad manners if I answer them back, because they are of the type that will persist if I keep quiet? Allah alone knows that I have ignored their interference and attempts to provoke me many times, but it seems that ignoring them is not working, because they persist in asking questions.

By Allah, O shaykh, one of my husband’s sisters was talking about polygamy, when my husband was sitting next to me, and she said: What’s wrong with you marrying another one? And I was sitting right there, and she did not care about my feelings. At that time I was newly married, and was visiting them. By Allah, they knew nothing about me then to justify saying such things. If my husband praises me for something that I did – which is something that rarely happens in front of them – she says: That is her duty. All of this happened in front of me, and – by Allah – I never uttered a single word, because we, my sisters and I, were raised not to answer back to the one who mistreats us. I even do not know how to respond politely, except very rarely, and afterwards I feel guilty. I could say a lot about their interference and questions, even with regard to breastfeeding my child, and the place where bathe him, and his personal hygiene.

According to my husband’s testimony, I do not neglect him or fall short in taking care of him. Even their children repeat the same questions, to the extent that I hate going and visiting them, and when I visit them I do not show that I am upset. Sometimes she says hurtful or embarrassing things, and I act normally, but I am very angry inside. Moreover, my husband said: If you tell anyone about the way my family treats you, I shall ask you about it before Allah. With regard to her questions, I have already spoken with my sister and my brother’s wife about the things they do and the way they treat me.

They – Allah knows – are wise and they told me: Answer back politely regarding the things that you cannot keep quiet about, and whatever you can ignore, ignore it. Will I be sinning if I do that? Does my husband have the right to warn me not to speak about the way they treat me to anyone, even

though any person would need to discuss his problems and concerns with someone so that he can get it off his chest. By Allah, I feel so suppressed that I do not like to see them or hear their voices, because I become very angry, even with my husband; I have become hot-tempered and I hate to treat him roughly. I understand that he does not want the image of his family to be tarnished in anyone’s eyes, but I have the right to seek advice from people who are older than me and have more experience in life.

Is it permissible for me to consult and express my concerns to someone who is trustworthy, or must I remain suppressed and angry? How can I deal with my husband and his family in a way that is pleasing to Allah and does not trample my rights or overstep the mark in my relationship with them?

Because many families break up when one of the two parties oversteps the mark in dealing with the other party, and when troubles are not contained. Is it permissible for me to refuse to live near his family, so as to avoid problems?

Summary of answer

To solve your problems with your husband's family, do the following:
• Ignore what you hear from your husband’s family which you can tell is aimed at upsetting and provoking you and is pure fabrication, with no substance.
• Pay attention to yourself, your house, your children and whatever you hear from them that is true [in terms of shortcomings]; you have to rectify these things and do them properly.
• Try to be friendly towards his family, showing good manners, speaking gently and behaving kindly. Make sure to give them appropriate gifts from time to time, or some food that you have made for them, or some sweets that you have made specially for them.
• Be kind to your husband by not telling anyone about how his family treats you, and make him trust you more; do not let him hear or see anything from you that he does not like.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Causes of wife’s problems with husband’s family

There are many problems that may arise between the wife and her husband’s family . In order to solve any problem, we should examine the causes before anything else:

- The causes may be connected to the attitude of the husband’s family . There are some people for whom causing trouble is second nature, and they make mountains out of molehills and exaggerate about trivial, insignificant matters. But when people are like this, problems do not exist only between them and their son’s wife; rather they have troubles with everyone.

Solving this problem requires a great deal of effort to teach them right from wrong and good from evil, and to educate them about faith and obedience to Allah. In this case, the husband who is aware of his family’s nature and attitude should not pay any attention to what they say about his wife, and he should not attach any significance to it. Rather he should try to advise his family and call them to what is good, and he should comfort his wife if she suffers mistreatment at the hands of his family.

- The cause of troubles may be the fault of both sides: jealousy that takes root in the hearts of the husband’s family , when they see how fond he is of his wife and how he shows compassion to her.

The solution to this problem is compensating them by showing extra compassion and special care towards them and giving them a lot of gifts, whilst not showing affection to his wife in front of them. Moreover, the husband should pay special attention towards them, and offer a great deal of supplication asking Allah to remove the jealousy from their hearts.

- The cause of these problems may be what the husband’s family see in the wife of falling

short with their son, or with her children, or in taking care of her house, or what she demonstrates of shameful behaviour by not showing respect to their mother, and other things that could be real – not made-up – in many wives. This is the silver lining to these problems, because through it the wife may come to realise her shortcomings and negligence, and thus be able to make up for her shortcomings and rectify the situation, for the wife cannot claim to be perfect in her behaviour and attitude.

This is the easiest cause of such problems to fix, because the solution is easy and possible; the wife can rectify herself and mend the relationship between her and her husband's family by improving her behaviour and giving each person his or her due respect. Thus she will be able to rectify the situation, resolve the problem and gain her husband's appreciation.

Wife's obedience to husband

What we think is that the wife should obey her husband if he tells her not to tell anyone else of what happens between her and his family. This decision on the husband's part serves an important interest that surpasses the interest of the wife venting and getting things off her chest. That is because if, in such cases, the problems become widely known, everyone will have an opinion or will use it to come up with some scheme, or will give bad advice for solving these problems, which will only make matters worse and create further problems, and will generate more causes of trouble, with the result that it may become very difficult to find a solution after that.

It is permissible for the wife to complain to a wise person, and that does not come under the heading of backbiting, which is prohibited. See the answer to question no. 7660 . At the same time, the husband has the right to prevent her from doing this permissible thing, if he thinks that there is a legitimate purpose to be served by that.

What we think is that you made a mistake by not complying with his advice, and speaking to your sister and your brother's wife about what has been going on between you and your husband's family. In order to rectify that, you must repent and seek forgiveness, and not carry on talking to

them about this matter. You should urge them not to tell anyone else about anything that you told them. There is no need to confess to your husband what you did, because it will serve no purpose; rather it could result in more trouble. For example, he could start resenting you and what you did; or he could prevent you from speaking to your sister and your brother's wife at all.

All of that is possible, because the devil is always present and has a great impact at such times, for he will fan the flames, exacerbate the matter and will do his utmost to create enmity and resentment because of this trouble.

How can you get along with your husband's family?

Dealing with your husband and his family requires great wisdom on your part. But you – in Sha Allah – are able to cope with that, as is quite evident to us from your saying "because we, my sisters and I, were raised not to answer back to the one who mistreats us. I even do not know how to respond politely, except very rarely, and afterwards I feel guilty" and from your other comment "and when I visit them I do not show that I am upset. Sometimes she says hurtful or embarrassing things, and I act normally, but I am very angry inside." This is a thing that no one can do except one who has self-control, and no one can do that except wise people.

What is required of you now is the following:

1. Ignore what you hear from your husband's family which you can tell is aimed at upsetting and provoking you and is pure fabrication, with no substance.
2. Pay attention to yourself, your house, your children and whatever you hear from them that is true [in terms of shortcomings]; you have to rectify these things and do them properly.
3. Try to be friendly towards his family, showing good manners, speaking gently and behaving kindly. Make sure to give them appropriate gifts from time to time, or some food that you have made for them, or some sweets that you have made specially for them. For it is well known that gifts have a great impact in bringing people together and spreading love and affection between them.
4. Be kind to your husband by not telling anyone about how his family treats you, and make

him trust you more; do not let him hear or see anything from you that he does not like.

5. However, that does not mean that you should keep completely quiet about fabricated accusations that may be made against you. We advise you to refer that to your husband, and let him take responsibility for putting things right and giving each person their due. Show him that your family raised you well.
6. Finally, there is nothing wrong with suggesting to your husband that you should move away and not live close to his family. However, he is not obliged to respond. Your right is only to have separate accommodation, and you already have that. But wisdom and your best interests dictate that the husband should move further away from his family, if he realises that there is no harmony between them and his wife. Perhaps moving away may contribute to strengthening the bonds between all parties, and may remove some of these ill feelings and resentment from everyone's hearts.

Seek the help of Allah your Lord by offering supplication, and doing the duties that are required of you. We ask Allah, may He be exalted, to enable you to do that which pleases Him, and to reconcile between you all.

And Allah knows best.