41199 - Beating Wife in Islam

the question

To be honest, I was really astonished to read how you answer all the questions cleverly. I really want to know more about Islam but every time I know something new, I get suspicious about it bravely, I would like to know if it is correct that the Quran permits a man to beat his wife. If that’s true, how could you explain that?

Summary of answer

There is nothing in the Quran that suggests that a husband is allowed to beat his wife. She is to be honored and treated kindly, even when one no longer feels love in one's heart towards her.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

We are very happy that you are reading our site and are keen to learn about Islam. We ask Allah to guide you to that which will bring you happiness in this world and in the Hereafter.

There is nothing in the Quran that suggests that a man is allowed to beat his wife .

- The Quran enjoins good treatment of one's wife: she is to be honoured and treated kindly, even when one no longer feels love in one's heart towards her. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“and live with them honourably. If you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing and Allah brings through it a great deal of good.” [al-Nisa 4:19]

- The Quran explains that women have rights over their husbands , just as their husbands have rights over them. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And they (women) have rights (over their husbands as regards living expenses) similar (to those of their husbands) over them (as regards obedience and respect) to what is reasonable, but men have a degree (of responsibility) over them. And Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise” [al-Baqarah 2:228]

This verse indicates that the man has additional rights, commensurate with his role as protector and maintainer and his responsibility of spending (on his wife) etc.

- The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) enjoined kind treatment and honouring of one’s wife, and he described the best of people as those who are best to their wives. He said: “The best of you are those who are the best to their wives, and I am the best of you to my wives.” (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 3895; Ibn Majah, 1977; classed as sahih by al-Albani in Sahih al-Tirmidhi)
- The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) spoke a beautiful word concerning kind treatment of one’s wife, stating that when the husband feeds his wife and puts a morsel of food in her mouth, he earns the reward of doing an act of charity. He said, “You never spend anything but you will be rewarded for it, even the morsel of food that you lift to your wife’s mouth.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 6352; Muslim, 1628)
- The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Fear Allah with regard to women, for you have taken them as a trust from Allah and intimacy with them has become permissible to you by the words of Allah. Your right over them is that they should not allow anyone to sit on your furniture whom you dislike; if they do that then hit them but not in a harsh manner. And their right over you is that you should provide for them and clothe them on a reasonable basis.” Narrated by Muslim, 1218.

What is meant by “they should not allow anyone to sit on your furniture whom you dislike” is that they should not allow anyone whom you dislike to enter your houses, whether the person disliked is a man or a woman, or any of the woman’s mahrams [close relatives to whom marriage is forbidden]. The prohibition includes all of them. (From the words of al-Nawawi)

The hadith may be understood as meaning that a man has the right to hit his wife, in a manner that is not harsh and does not cause injury if there is a reason for that, such as her going against

his wishes or disobeying him.

This is like the verse in which Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“As to those women on whose part you see ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next) refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly, if it is useful); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance). Surely, Allah is Ever Most High, Most Great” [al-Nisa 4:34]

If a woman rebels against her husband and disobeys his commands, then he should follow this method of admonishing her, forsaking her in bed and hitting her. Hitting is subject to the condition that it should not be harsh or cause injury.

Al-Hasan al-Basri said: “This means that it should not cause pain.”

‘Ata said: I said to Ibn `Abbas, what is the kind of hitting that is not harsh? He said, Hitting with a siwak and the like. [A siwak is a small stick or twig used for cleaning the teeth - Translator]

The purpose behind this is not to hurt or humiliate the woman, rather it is intended to make her realize that she has transgressed against her husband’s rights, and that her husband has the right to set her straight and discipline her.

For more, please see this section: Kind Treatment of Spouses

And Allah knows best.