

INTRODUCTION

What Opportunity Training Means

Opportunity training is a specific form of education, that comes very handy for cultures and systems seeking to make better use of time. Today's world is often characterized by rising egos, and people being inclined to shutting themselves in when faced with "tutoring".

In this age of fast-paced and intense living, "Problem-focused training / Opportunity training" as an approach making optimal use of the principle of efficiency in education, also helps achieve required quality standards as well as refreshing knowledge at all times.

Neurobics Instead of Aerobics

Various studies on the psychology of learning suggest the following points regarding the form of permanent registration of knowledge in one's brain:

Six Networks or the Royal Roads to the Subconscious

Only when our brains make effective use of the networks on "who, what, where, when, why, and how (5W1H)", learning instills lasting knowledge.

If we can activate our autonomous system when knowledge is introduced into our minds, in other words if we can stimulate feelings such as excitement, palpitation, fever, rapid breathing, spasms, dilation of the pupils, joy or fear, our brains produce certain chemicals (neuropeptides). These chemicals called somatic markers, in turn,

imprint knowledge on our brain, as if carving on a stone rather than writing in the sand.

That is why experiences and traumas in the childhood are always archived in our permanent memory, or subconscious. It is up to us to make effective use of the royal roads.

We need to try and activate our five senses for ideal learning. The knowledge would be a stronger one if we utilize actual experiences rather than just sitting on a desk and listening to the teacher.

In parallel to the process with aerobics, where we engage in certain exercises in a bid to get a “fit” body, our mental life also needs activity to be “fit”. Ancient cultures achieved this through “learning of science, wisdom and talent”. Today, we can achieve the same goal with the help of neuroscience. Opportunity training provides just one route in this context.

Neurobics deserves its own book, but here the following brief introduction to the topic can come in handy.

As the new science of brain exercises, neurobics aims to improve and keep alive our mind based on the “use it or lose it” principle.

Smart pills, smart diets and the principles of a smart life, all suggest that a happy family environment is a good friend of the mind.

- 1- Brain-friendly life
- 2- Brain-based learning
- 3- Brain-friendly diet
- 4- Brain-friendly socialization

Various studies show that incorrect diet and life-style choices, bad habits, distorted modes of thought, groundless prejudices, and baseless fears account for 60-70% of medical conditions suffered.

As Aristotle observed millennia ago, “people desires happiness more than anything”. People always seek to be happy. In earlier decades of its history, psychiatry focused mostly on three domains of existence: feelings, thoughts, and behaviors.

Nowadays, however, two domains stand out further: physical reactions and our value system.

When analyzing human beings, the relationship the individual has with herself, as well as her professional, familial, universal and

existential relationships should be assessed as a whole, as elements of the “BioPsychoSocioSpiritual Model”.

On the basis of the reasons laid down briefly here, one can say that it would be a smart move to make each and every incident within the framework of daily activities, a material of learning.

Enduring the natural consequences of our mistakes, and enjoying our good behavior is part of human existence. Given the importance we attach to organic character of food as well as almost anything, natural learning rather than rather than artificial relationships and experiences would be the obvious way to go.

What is Natural Learning?

Studies on optimal learning approaches for autistic children revealed that natural learning is the ideal form of learning.

That is a form of education based on the language of events rather than the language of words. It employs all languages of feelings, thoughts, and behavior.

Rather than lecturing a child for hours on being tidy, avoiding the child's pleas for help when he has lost something, and instead making sure that he finds the object himself, would contribute to lasting learning.

Or, letting the child go hungry when he does not like the food on the table, and acts picky, would do wonders compared to hours of advice on the matter.

Perhaps a husband who complains of his wife's habit of serving food very hot can easily shout angry complaints. But there could be better and more effective courses of action. For instance, if he brings ice cubes and grates to the table, putting them into his soup and other dishes, would provide a material lesson instead.

In response to a kid lying that he was not the one who broke the vase, a mother can teach the kid two lessons at once by saying “kiddo, it's evident that you broke the vase. But now you committed an even greater mistake. You engaged in lying.”

Doing so would make the child feel that first of all, he is loved and valued, and secondly, that honesty is the better course of action.

When the child wants to climb to the sofa, the parent can either help him do so, or tell him, rather wisely, “try to climb on your own. Don’t worry, I’ll catch you if you fall.”

The man of the house can show his love for his wife, through domestic service as the wife falls ill.

When the husband goes through a dry spell in business, and the food on the table is no longer plenty, the wife can say “we have so much to be grateful for”, to keep hopes and expectations of better things in life up.

Or if unhappy with the silence of her husband, a wife can teach a funny and permanent lesson if she applies a tape on her own mouth.

All these are examples of opportunity training applied through natural learning.

Standard Education vs. Opportunity Training

1. Standard Education (SE) is extended in structured settings such as a classroom, whereas Opportunity Training (OT) can occur at any time of the day, in a natural setting.

2. SE focuses on learning through self-expression, whereas OT intends to achieve learning through motivation.

3. SE is based on pre-determined course materials and rewards, whereas in OT, they are chosen in natural environments by taking initiative on a real-time basis. Or another course may involve choosing a specific “target behavior” and letting opportunities arise in terms of timing.

4. In the case of SE, teacher initiates interaction. In OT, interaction occurs freely, and can be initiated by anyone.

5. In SE, the teacher and the parent is the agent. In OT, anyone can be the agent of learning.

6. Last but certainly not least, OT lasts 7/24, and entails the observation of any behavior we engage in.

What does Family Life in tune with “Social Entropy” mean?

Entropy is the second law of thermodynamics. According to that law, everything in the universe is en route to an unavoidable fate in entropy. In the lack of any external intervention, hot water gets

cold; light is replaced by darkness; new things and young people get old; living things die; the room gets dirtier; and the universe continues to expand.

Every living thing as an area of control. Assuming responsibility for that area, we need to maintain the garden of the house; otherwise it would turn into a jungle of weeds. We need to be diligent about our professional life; otherwise we would go bankrupt or be fired. We need to clean our body and house; otherwise we would smell bad and fall ill. We need to try and be a good person; otherwise we would turn into a selfish monster.

In the same vein, if we don't make active efforts to have a better and nicer family life, if we fail to invest in our lives, we would not only fail in raising good children, who are the fruits of the household, but also don't find any peace in life.

Therefore, we need to set aside some time and efforts instead of seeking some miracle formula.

Therefore, we need to spend some time with our spouses and children, equal to the amount of efforts we make for our work and material wealth.

Therefore we need to make the area and people we are responsible with all the while we need to satisfy our ego. Otherwise, the law of entropy does not allow any exceptions.

The Place of Family Values

According to Brighouse and Swift (Princeton University, 2014), family values refer to the ethical standards of the relationship between the parents and the children.

“Field theories” are an important part of the science of psychology. If there are some values to keep the units of a field connected, the system would stay alive. If the values are lost, the whole system would collapse as the invisible ties keeping all together would wither away.

A nation with a robust shared culture, shared ideals, and shared history would be strong in the face of negative external factors. The stronger the bonds keeping a family together, the more resistant the family would be in the face of storms.

The leading values keeping families together are as follows:

1. Conferring: The ability to solve problems through conferences and consultations among all.
2. Equality: In terms of compliance with the rules of the household, everyone should be subjected to equal treatment in terms of their responsibilities and engagements concerning time, money, and educational resources, not to mention the balance of freedoms and responsibilities and the use of opportunities.
3. Autonomy: Each and every individual should both experience the feeling of belonging to the family, as well as the outlook of freedom.
4. Fairness: Everyone should feel that fairness applies in terms of the exercise of rights. There should be definite limits of the rights of the parents and the children.
5. Love and affection: Warm relations characterized by love actually are the most precious bonds of any family. That is the feeling that fosters compassion, devotion, and empathy.
6. Respect and esteem: The members of the family should be able to respect the personal rights of others.
7. Trust and confidence: For the feeling of loyalty to prevail, the members of the family should be confident in the fact that other members of the family would not harm them.
8. Sharing: The members of the family should have an ethical outlook that would entail sacrifice of certain individual entitlements for the sake of others' rights.
9. Secular upbringings: Certain advantages enjoyed by the family, such as material wealth, fame, status, or power contribute to the values that keep the family together.
10. Moral upbringings: The family's attitudes towards life, certain incidents, death, creation, divine power, patience, modesty, and existence help keep the family together in times of troubles, and provides consolation.

The Importance of Family Connections

This part of the introduction chapter focuses on a number of scales to help you make a self-assessment before venturing further into the book. Doing so will give you some tips about your standing

in your relationships and family, as well as about your emotional awareness. These tips will show the way while you read the book, with reference to your specific needs.

Score 47 Points and Be Named a Relationship Expert!

A number of questions help us assess whether one's form of connection in human and family relationships is a healthy one or not. The "close relationships scale" standardized by Prof. Nebi Tümer from METU is based on the following items:

Items assessing the confident connection model

1. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner in the relationship.
2. I am pretty comfortable in getting intimate with people I am in a romantic relationship with.
3. I can get intimate easily with my partner in the relationship.
4. I don't worry much about the person I am with leaving me.
5. I don't find it difficult to build an intimate relationship with my partner in the relationship.
6. Usually, I find it natural to discuss my problems and concerns with my partner in the relationship.
7. I don't worry much about getting dumped.
8. In difficult times, asking for help from the person I'm involved with in a romantic relationship helps me.
9. I tell almost everything to the person I'm with.
10. I talk about recent developments and experiences I have, with my partner in the relationship.
11. I am pretty comfortable in trusting in and depending on the person I'm involved in a romantic relationship.
12. It is easy for me to trust in and depend on my partner in a romantic relationship.
13. It is easy for me to exhibit compassion for my partner in the relationship.
14. My partner in the relationship truly understands me and my needs.

(The more affirmative answers you had, the better.)

Items assessing the nervous connection model

1. I worry about losing the love of the person I'm with.
2. I often feel worried that my partner in the relationship will no longer want to be with me.
3. I often worry that my partner in the relationship does not truly love me.
4. I worry that my partner in the relationship does not attach the same level of importance to the relationship as I do.
5. I often wish that my partner in the relationship harbors as strong emotions for me as the ones I have for him/her.
6. I continuously think about my relationships.
7. Whenever my partner in the relationship is away, I worry that he/she may get interested in someone else.
8. When I express my feelings to the person I am in a romantic relationship with, I worry that he/she may not feel the same with me.
9. I don't worry much about the person I am with leaving me.
10. The person I am in a romantic relationship with causes me to have doubts about myself.
11. I don't worry much about getting dumped.
12. I think that my partner in the relationship is not willing to get to the same intimacy level as I do.
13. At times my partner in the romantic relationship change his/her feelings towards me, without a reason to do so.
14. Sometimes my will to be very intimate scares people away.
15. I worry that my partner in a romantic relationship will not like "true me" as he/she gets an intimate understanding of me.
16. The lack of compassion and support I need from my partner in the relationship makes me angry.
17. I worry about not being an equal match with other people.
18. My partner in the relationship minds me only when I'm angry.

(The more negative answers you had, the better.)

Items assessing the avoidant connection model

1. I prefer not to show my true feelings to my partner in the relationship.
2. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner in the relationship.
3. I have difficulties in having a relaxed attitude to trusting in my partner in a romantic relationship.
4. I am pretty comfortable in getting intimate with people I am in a romantic relationship with.
5. I don't feel comfortable with opening up to my partner in a romantic relationship.
6. I prefer not to be very intimate with my partner in a romantic relationship.
7. I feel uncomfortable when my partner in a romantic relationship wants to get very intimate.
8. I can get intimate easily with my partner in the relationship.
9. I don't find it difficult to build an intimate relationship with my partner in the relationship.
10. Usually, I find it natural to discuss my problems and concerns with my partner in the relationship.
11. In difficult times, asking for help from the person I'm involved with in a romantic relationship helps me.
12. I tell almost everything to the person I'm with.
13. I talk about recent developments and experiences I have, with my partner in the relationship.
14. I feel tense when my partner in the relationship gets very intimate with me.
15. I am pretty comfortable in trusting in and depending on the person I'm involved in a romantic relationship.

(The more negative answers you had, the better.)

The 47 questions provided above provide insights into one's ability to have a robust relationship, as assessed by the relevant scale. If your answers were sub-optimal, they would nonetheless would give

you insights about what is lacking, and clues about the direction of change that may be required. If you cannot do it on your own, professional help could be handy.

Emotional Awareness Can Solve Many Problems

The professionals engaged in mental health issues all agree that emotional insensitivity and a lack of emotional literacy are truly inimical to meaningful communications. And emotions make up almost 80% of communications. The tone of one's voice, the way he or she utters the words, sub-threshold accent, mimics and gestures are so important that, with some insight into them, we can often communicate without talking.

To make this task easier for you, I would like to present a scale of positive, negative, and intimacy emotions. You can improve your emotional expression skills or understand emotional expression of others better, by applying the scale.

Here's the scale Y. Kuzucu translated into Turkish in 2011:

Emotional Expressivity Questionnaire

Items assessing the expression of positive emotions

3. Usually I contact my friends physically as well during a conversation.
4. I laugh a lot.
9. Watching TV or reading a book may make me laugh.
11. I often laugh till I cry or my cheeks ache.
13. I always express my dissatisfaction when things don't turn out as I want them to.
15. I express my affection for someone by hugging or touching him or her.

Items assessing the expression of intimacy emotions

1. I often tell people that I love them.
6. I feel embarrassed and have trouble expressing my gratitude when people do good things for me.

7. People realize my feelings when I really like them.
8. I apologize when I do wrong.
12. I can laugh at myself when I am alone, by just remembering some old stuff.

Items assessing the expression of negative emotions

2. People usually notice it when I am angry.
5. People can tell what I have been feeling, by just looking at my facial expressions.
10. When I get angry at someone in public, the others notice my anger.
14. My smile is soft and guarded.

Scoring and cut-off score:

The questions in the scale are scored on a range from 1 to 7:

- 1: I definitely disagree.
- 2: I disagree.
- 3: I am inclined to disagree.
- 4: I am undecided.
- 5: I am inclined to agree.
- 6: I agree.
- 7: I definitely agree.

Then the scores from the items marked by the subject are added up. The highest score one can get is 105. The higher the score, the better the individual's emotional expressivity skill assessment would be. No cut-off score applies.

Individuals with high levels of emotional awareness are endowed with the greatest psychological and social capital levels for establishing higher quality relationships within the family. And it is not difficult at all to get that skill.

We Can Evaluate our Family Relationships; Let's Try

This scale helps identify the issue areas in the relationships one has with her parents and siblings. Based on such issue areas, one can seek explanations concerning expectation levels, the avoidance attitudes towards intimacy, bonds of trust, ability to form a team or not, and the causes of sustained conflicts despite the existence of goodwill and affection. You too should ask yourself these questions, and get an idea. If you are confused, and if your inner voice tells you “something is not right”, you should see a consultant.

Family Evaluation Scale

Notes: 60 statements concerning the families are provided below. Please carefully read each statement and make an assessment on its applicability for your family. The crux of the matter is about your perception of your family.

There are four option for each statement: I agree completely / I mostly agree / I somewhat agree / I don't agree at all.

Mark the matching option with an (X). Don't ponder over each statement in length. Try to extend quick and sincere answers, to the extent possible. If you feel undecided, go with your initial choice. Please make sure that you provide an assessment for each statement.

Sentences:

I agree completely.

I mostly agree.

I somewhat agree.

I don't agree at all.

Questions:

1. We have difficulties in scheduling outdoors activities as a family, for we cannot reach a consensus.

2. We handle all the issues (problems) regarding our daily lives, within the family.

3. If someone in the household is sad, the other members of the family would be aware of the reasons.

4. At our family household, people often don't fulfill the tasks assigned to them, as required.

5. When someone in the family is in trouble, the others really get concerned.
6. Whenever we face a nuisance or troubles, we support each other.
7. We would be nonplussed in the face of an emergency in the family.
8. Sometimes we don't notice when we run out of certain necessary things in our household.
9. We avoid expressing our feelings of affection and compassion towards each other.
10. Where necessary, we remind family members about their duties, and make sure that they do their part of the burden.
11. We don't tell our problems and worries to each other at home.
12. Usually we implement the decisions taken by the whole family, to solve our problems.
13. People in our family home only listen to us when we say things they like to hear.
14. It is not easy to discern what a family member feels, by just listening to his or her words.
15. There is no equal assignment of tasks in the household.
16. The family members have a tolerating attitude towards each other.
17. Every member of the family acts independently.
18. At our household, everyone directly tells his mind to the other person, rather than using implicit hints.
19. Some of us in the family household don't make our feelings known.
20. We know what to do in case of an emergency.
21. In the family, we avoid discussing our fears and worries with each other.
22. We have difficulty in revealing our positive feelings such as affection and compassion for each other.

23. Our income (wage, salary) is not sufficient to meet our needs.

24. After developing a solution for a problem, our family discusses whether that solution would work or not.

25. Every member of our family household is self-centered.

27. At our home, it is not possible to keep the bathroom and toilet clean for long.

28. There are no expressions of affection within the family.

29. At home, everyone can clearly speak his or her mind without reservation.

30. Each and every member of our family has specific duties and responsibilities.

31. Usually we don't get along well within the family.

32. In our family, harsh-ill behavior occurs only in certain circumstances.

33. We interfere in others' dealings only in cases that concern us all.

34. In our family, we don't always have time to spare for each other.

35. Usually what we say at home and what we wanted to say do not match.

36. We have tolerance towards each other within the family.

37. At home, we pay attention to each other only in case a personal benefit is to arise.

38. We handle the matter among ourselves in case a certain problem affects the family.

39. Nicer emotions such as affection and compassion are on the backburner in our family.

40. We all come together and discuss before deciding who is to take on which task at home.

41. It is always difficult to make decisions in our family.

42. At our household, individuals pay attention to each other only in the presence of personal interests.

43. We are always frank to each other at home.

44. There are no rules in our family.
45. When someone is expected to carry out a task at home, it is always necessary to check on and remind him or her about the task.
46. We can easily decide on how a certain issue (problem) is to be handled within the family.
47. We are not sure what would happen in case the rules of the household are not complied with.
48. Anything imaginable can occur in our household.
49. We can express our positive feelings such as affection and compassion for each other.
50. We can overcome any problem in our family.
51. At home, we don't get along very well.
52. We stay crossed with each other when we're angry.
53. We usually don't like the tasks assigned to us in the household, for usually they are not the tasks we hope for.
54. We interfere in the lives of each other, even if we don't do it with ill-will.
55. Members of our family know well what to do in the face of any danger (e.g. fire, accident), for we had discussed and identified specific courses of action for such cases.
56. We trust each other within the family.
57. When we want to cry, we can do so easily and without reservation.
58. We have trouble in getting to work (or school) on time.
59. When some family member does something we don't like, we tell him clearly.
60. We try and find various ways to solve the problem, as a family.

Assessment: Below, the items are listed with reference to the skills they are related to. By checking them out, you can make an assessment of your behavior within the family.

Questions on general functions: 1, 6, 11, 16, 21, 26, 31, 36, 41, 46, 51, 56.

Questions on problem solving skills: 2, 12, 24, 38, 50, 60. Questions on communication skills: 3, 14, 18, 22, 29, 35, 43, 52, 59.

Questions on role-sharing: 4, 8, 10, 15, 23, 30, 34, 40, 45, 53, 58.

Questions on devoting required attention: 5, 13, 25, 33, 37, 42, 54.

Questions on behavior control: 7, 17, 20, 27, 32, 44, 47, 48, 55.

Questions on the ability to express emotional reactions: 9, 19, 28, 39, 49, 57.

Reference: McMaster Family Assessment Device, 1983 by Epstein, Baldwin, Keitner, & Bishop, Turkish version: I. Bulut 1990.

SINGLE VS. MARRIED INDIVIDUALS

One can speak of two rough categories of people: single ones and married ones. The perspectives and lifestyles of the people in these categories are not the same.

In an endeavor to come up with an answer to questions “what exactly is a married person? What are his/her defining characteristics?”, the Turkish translation of the word “married”, namely “evli” is telling, for it means “a person with a home”. It has specific reference to an address to which the person would return at the end of the day. Comparable to the rules of countries and communities, the household as a micro-community also exists on the basis of certain rules. The married person, in other words, the person with a home, lives in that home in accordance with certain rules. The time to be at home by, the time to each, the time to go to sleep, and the time to wake up are all set, even though some room for flexibility exists. The married person is one of an order. He or she has a number of essential duties and obligations with respect to the spouse and children.

Of course the unmarried person also has a home, a place he or she stays at. But more often than not, that place is not her own. It is probably her parents’ place. The single person, the unmarried one, thus stays at the home of others. As he or she does not own a home of her own, she is not dependent on and obliged to that home. Even though she may have certain obligations towards the household she lives in, she is not absolutely compelled with them. She can leave and abandon that place, avoiding any return. Therefore, the unmarried person is not strictly bound by the order and rules. He or she may spend her days carefree. Even though he or she may have a parent waiting for her at home, no spouse or children exist to do so.

The married man has a home, a shelter. He is bound with them. That is why he has a high level of resistance to the lures of the outside world and social life. Whenever he gets confused, he would hear the call of the home and the people at home. But the single one has open ears for any voice of the world. He lacks an inner voice rising against the lures of those outside voices. He does not have a wife to think of, or children to always be concerned with. He feels free and unclaimed. Since he does not have any place to return to, all he knows is to go. He does not know about returning. Thus he heeds every call and invitation.

The married man does not pursue life alone. He does so with his wife and children. The married man is a plurality, in effect. And he tries to face life with the power and capabilities of a plurality. He is compatible with the scale and diversity of life. On the other hand, the single man is alone. He would face the plurality and diversity of life, all by himself. He needs to find answers to all questions and problems of life, all by himself.

This difference between the married and the single individuals often lead them to different consequences and ends. One can bravely face the salvos of life, while the other often cannot stand against them, and falls down. The single one falls more frequently and more probably. He would get involved in traps to facilitate such falls, given his loneliness. He would seek shelter in alcohol, drugs, and various games.

The married person, on the other hand, is the one seeking a certain goal, a final decision he made for his life. His life, in turn, starts to be shaped on the basis of that decision. He is a settled down and peaceful one. The single one, in turn, has yet to find a spouse and make a decision. He would flow like a mad river, without a specific direction. In this context, his aim is also unclear. All he does is to flow and search. But he wouldn't know what he is searching for.

The married one is tied to certain things, and always thinks about them. That is the expression of sacrifice and devotion. Even though he is still an individual, he thinks and acts as a plurality. But the single one does not have any place to look back on, as he is not tied up in the first place. All he thinks about and is concerned with is himself. That is why the single persons are more inclined to selfishness.

If a married person engages in selfishness, that can be interpreted as holding on to the outlook of a single person despite being married.

The Consequences of Marriage

Today, marriage is often discussed with reference to the problems it entails. Unfortunately that is the prevailing outlook of marriage today. The hedonist and selfish outlook that characterizes the American lifestyle also infiltrated and poised what marriage meant for ancient cultures. In this context, the marriages are no longer able to fulfill their former functions. The man and wife no longer respect and stay true to the bond of marriage. They can act selfishly without much hesitation. Who suffer most from the negative consequences of such a state of affairs, in turn, would be the child(ren) of that marriage. In a sense, they would both have and lack their parents. They grow up in the shadow of bad examples, and that is how they venture into life.

Even though the marriage exists on paper, it is not a true marriage; not by a long shot. Every institution is subject to certain must-haves. The must-have of any marriage is loyalty. The spouses have loyalty and obligations towards each other and their children. Only in such a lifestyle the individuals can be considered truly married, belonging to a household. The well-being of the society and the country depends on the true existence and robustness of marriage and the institution of family. In such a society, norms of ethics also arise through the institution of family. The home and marriages are the building blocks of the society. A solid building requires solid building blocks. A strong society, in turn, rises on strong marriages...

The health of any human being depends on the tripod of harmony in one's inner world, social harmony, and professional harmony. The health of individuals are assessed with reference to this tripod. And these three elements of harmony are tested mostly in marriages. An individual who successfully combined these three elements of harmony can achieve a healthy marriage. The marriages lacking these three elements of harmony, on the other hand, don't last. Yet, it is not possible for an individual to achieve this, all by himself. Human is a social creature, and that need is satisfied through the family, which is the smallest of all communities.

Only in a family the human being can get positive values. Both love and respect can be possible in a family.

A number of studies focus on life-coaching. These studies reached the following conclusions about a healthy man: A human being should have self-awareness, recognize others, establish empathic relationships, assume a conciliatory outlook, keep anger in check, and be able to solve problems. All these amount to elements of norms of ethics, suggesting the significance of ethical man. An ethical man, in turn, is aware of what is good and what is bad. But what exactly is the decisive factor in labeling someone ethical or not? Contemporary societies have their social norms coded in laws, yet from ancient times on, ontology had been the source of ethics. Ontology, or the religion that is the response to one's existence...

Today, the dominant paradigm aims to depend mostly on laws in determining a social order. The constitution as the social contract, as well as the laws rising on top of constitutional foundations aim to protect human beings from other human beings. Each individual is required to abide by the laws. This would prevent an usurpation of rights, providing an effective form of protection. Yet, in the end, man is but a lump of meat, and is pretty vulnerable to the influence of evil and evil thoughts. It is always possible to abuse some loopholes in laws, and avoid the claws of law. In ancient Greece, Spartans were allowed to engage in theft, provided that they weren't caught. Today, the picture is not very different. Therefore, laws do not prevent evil in the first place.

Hence, another prerequisite is a must for the existence of ethical man. You cannot assign a cop to each and every human being; making every person his or her own police is a more effective approach. And making a person her own police can be possible only through a call for action for her conscience. A person can commit a crime in dark, far from the eyes of others, usurping the rights of others. But a person with a strong conscience cannot hide that crime from herself, even if she can hide it from others. A person who has insights about herself avoids evil and crimes not because of her fear of laws, but because the fear of the fury of her own conscience. She would know her own place, and would not dare interfere in the rights and entitlements of others. The basic dynamic on conscience, that strong and effective

police, rises on top of is the fact that human beings don't deem life limited to just this world.

There is an afterlife to follow death. There is a God, the owner of all existence and all human beings. The God will bring the human beings to account. The thought of accountability before the God gives one a strong conscience.

The thought of accountability before God, and conscience –the offshoot of that thought– can be instilled in only one setting to raise ethical men. All disciplines point at only one institution for this purpose: Education. Education, in turn, can best be provided in a family. The child would develop a manual of life through the examples she observes from her initial years on. A human being in age group 0-5 is essentially learning the fundamentals on which future learning will be based on. In this sense, the family and the household are the laboratories to produce people, good or bad. That is why investment into family, and thus marriage, is crucial.

There are scientific studies on this matter. One such study was carried out at the University of Nebraska. The study found three features of happy families: First of all, happy families spent time together. Secondly, they had recognition and acceptance prevail. And finally, the members of the family were religious, and engaged in activities such as going to church together... You see, that study too underlines the importance of norms and ethical values. It is evident that a healthy individual can be possible through ethical norms, which can be instilled through the family.

Never Without Marriage!

The benefits of a marriage are clear. A human being achieves every need of her nature and creation, through marriage. Under the influence of the hedonist and selfish conception, a frequent theme of this text so far, people think that they can achieve these without marrying as well, and live accordingly. They want to get the fruits of marriage, without assuming the responsibilities of one. Extramarital sex, bearing a child outside wedlock, having a family without marriage... This is an unnatural understanding, and reducing marriage to just sexuality is a grave mistake... Feminism, and Freudian outlook that gave birth to it have much ado about this state of affairs.

It is well-known that Freud associates all illnesses with the suppression of desires. It is true that suppressing feelings causes some illnesses, but it is not correct to generalize this view. And a generalization is what exactly Freud does, reaching to the conclusion that desires should be satisfied under all circumstances. In a sense, Feminism has its roots in this perspective, and thus recommends free experience of sexuality. It claims that men and women can experience sexuality without a family or marriage. And it even considers marriage a form of enslavement for women. It always asks “why should a woman stick with just one man?” And that outlook, creates enemies out of man and woman, who were created as matches. And when man and woman embraces such enmity, the life evolves into one of a struggle.

Reducing marriage to sexuality alone is partly due to this outlook. Yet, the purpose of marriage is not sexuality, but reproduction. The continuation of humanity... Not only the continuation of human existence, but also the raising of good and healthy human beings... Reproduction is a natural need, comparable to the need for food and shelter... For a good marriage, in turn, one needs to marry with a good person. But today, “beauty” came to dominate the definition of good in the context of marriage. One often seeks to marry a beautiful and prosperous person. And doing so, beauty and prosperity are advanced to the top of the list of priorities. And that transforms life into a struggle. For, achieving beauty and keeping it is a costly endeavor, and requires wealth. And struggle is necessary to achieve wealth.

As struggle becomes the prime objective, that end begins to justify the means. Stealing, cheating... virtually everything can be justified under this light. And the consequences of this outlook are evident everywhere, from economics to marriage, ethics are rendered irrelevant. Literature, arts, and cultural photography embrace a completely unethical structure. Life, nowadays, is rendered a domain with no room for ethics, dominated by the devil and lust. And today, we are facing the results. Beauty and wealth, virtually limitless experience of sexuality led to major disasters.

Divorces, children raised without parents. The age of consent for sexuality is falling to every younger ages. Teenage parents now pose significant problems for materialist societies. Nowadays, no one wants to marry.

For, they are not equipped to handle the responsibility of marriage. Today, human beings are rendered powerless, weak, and selfish. We are now facing a lack of an ethical man, a true man. We only have a being mired in a body and biology. The hedonist and selfish materialist thinking rendered human beings not much more than animals.

No; such an outlook cannot maintain life, but only end it. In such an environment, humanity cannot be born. It can only rot. A healthy person, a peaceful and fruitful life is only possible through a marriage based on robust foundations. Such a marriage, in turn, can be possible through norms of ethics only. Human beings, men and women are not enemies of each other. Human beings, the perfect ones, can only be possible as man and woman finds shelter in and helps each other. A man and woman would be “one” through a true and healthy marriage, evolving into true people. Only through such endeavors women and men can bear good children, and ensure the continuity of human existence. A good society can be established through marriages like these.

What thinkers like Darwin or Freud presented and led to is nothing more than paganism. The life cannot be reduced to a struggle; sexuality without norms and limits cannot be allowed. The freedom of women cannot be achieved through a surrender to desires, an outlook of men as enemies, and avoiding birth. Ownership of her own body cannot be interpreted as a right to consume it. The body has certain entitlements. Existence has its facts and obligations. A woman can truly exist without killing off her distinction and betraying her personality. It is possible to be a woman as a wife and as a mother as well.

We need to think in this way. Otherwise, we would look annoyingly similar to the societies predating the flood. We would devolve into hominids, rather than full fledged human beings. A being that seeks only food, sexuality, and pleasure. Human in form, animal in essence... Such creatures cannot build civilizations, but only consume and destroy the existing ones. Civilizations can be built only by people who forsake their desires, who accept and embrace the difficult path, and who work selflessly to be useful for others.

There are certain norms, ethics, and devotion in the foundations of any civilization.

The Right Candidate for Marriage

Marriage is one of the most important acts in one's life. Choosing a profession and the decision to get married are what guides the subsequent years and decades of one. In a sense, problems arising in one's life stem from the errors made with respect to these two decisions. Yet, often people commit mistakes with respect to these, even after substantial thought on them. And that is the thing with life. Nonetheless, mediating over and over on these issues is a must.

Studies on making correct decisions and their findings underline two perspectives: Should a human being act emotionally or logically? Which decision would be the correct one? The one based on emotions, or the one based on logic? These are the questions asked by any and all human beings, regardless of the location and culture one belongs to. For, human nature is an undeniable fact, independent of one's culture and location.

Yet, such questions impose a certain dualism on human choices. As if one based on emotions should ignore logic completely, and vice versa... And in the end, one would opt for one of the ways, disregarding the other completely.

In deliberations about marriage, people often act on the basis of their emotions. For emotions are more real and strong for people. They are so close to one's heart, that they really make themselves felt. What one feels in a given moment feels as if true and real. A woman would be inclined to think that the man she loves is the right choice. A man would think that the woman that stole his heart is the one. Logic and reason, on the other hand, feel distant and only probable. One would be inclined to thinking "these consequences don't occur right away; so maybe they won't occur at all."

This is a common line of thinking, and a sensible one at that. For that is a fact. Is someone you like in your earlier years, for instance your high school sweetheart, really the right person for you?

Would the emotions always point at the right guy? Is the person you like, you fall in love with, the right person to take on the life together, or is it just a fling to spend some time together? What part of one's heart seek after that pleasant individual? One's soul, personality, truth, or what he tells to himself? In a study, university students, boys and girls, were asked to look into the eyes of a friend

from the other sex. In the end, boys and girls who looked into the eyes of someone from the opposite sex, without interruption for five minutes, began to fall in love and like the other person. Twenty-five percent of the students who took part in the study reported such feelings. They were able to fall in love with some complete stranger.

It is common knowledge that life feels something else during one's youth, in the ages of flirting. People go through this period, in which their biology and emotions have a completely distinct outlook. The truth of that period, however, is not a good match for the life in the wider sense. It is quite the opposite actually. Therefore, that period of intense attraction between the sexes is important, as well as dangerous. Reducing marriage to nothing but sexuality, presenting love as the first and foremost element of marriage, can lead one to errors at such a crucial junction. A person truly shines not during the age in which he surrenders to his biology and nature, but in which he returns to life as a sacred process.

And diligence is necessary, given this important distinction. One should think about his choices, over and over. And especially the girls should think hard! For, the most vulnerable party in a marriage is often the fairer sex. Most men who received the answer "yes" under the influence of the girl's feelings mired in young age, would eventually sail for other destinations in the journey called life, and the woman would often be left with the burden. She would be left alone with a child, and experiences all the hardships a young widow in human societies would suffer take their toll. And there is the fact that men often wear sexuality tinted glasses when thinking about a relationship, and thus they put their desires to the center of everything, avoiding serious responsibility by doing so. Therefore, the girls should avoid being the easy choice, and should not be easy to get. Letting herself be an easy take is a surefire way of reducing one's worth. In this sense, developing an identity with reference to principles and values is crucial.

The importance of religious thought which underlines values such as morality, modesty, virtue and sin, is beyond debate. For man is not a being that exists on its own. Man is not the owner of his body, and cannot live a life dictated only by desires. There is a creator. And man has certain responsibilities before that creator. Man is required to comply with the norms of the society he was born into.

In this sense, being just emotional or just rational is not the way to go. No one is required to employ an irrational emotional outlook or a rational desert bereft of emotions, when making some decisions. Neither emotions nor rationality, alone, are the right ways to go. The healthiest choice is a decision-making framework employing both. An emotional perspective leaning on reason, and a rational one with room for emotions is the route for healthy decisions. Life is not about emotions or reason alone. An emotional choice may abandon you in the middle of life, in a relationship, in the face of hardships. A person who represents the rational choice, may turn out to be impossible to live with, and doom you to a life without enthusiasm or joy.

The right person to marry may not always be the handsome, beautiful, and the wealthy one, as most are inclined to believe. The superficial characteristics should not dominate the decision. The essential thing is what a human being is, and not what he or she has. Does the person have indispensable principles? Are these principles based on humanity and ethics, or are they hedonistic and selfish? Does this person want pleasure out of life, or is he interested in living a valuable life?

Most people pay lip service to the dictum “it is the inside of a person that counts, not the external appearances”, but often do just the opposite. Beauty, handsomeness, and wealth are instead deemed priority requirements. And the result would, more often than not, be a disaster. In subsequent stages of marriage, neither looks nor wealth may help with the pain. The person suffers in that pool of wealth, and cannot find solace. Choosing the principled, conscientious, right and ethical person, on the other hand would be the right way to go for life in overall, even though it may not seem to be the rewarding approach early on. It is possible to live a poor life with a principled, conscientious and ethical person. But that life would not be an uneasy and troublesome one.

The decision is supreme! The choice may either be a disaster, or heavens. Therefore, the decision regarding the person to marry with is vital. That choice, in effect, is about the person making the decision. A principled person goes with the principled choice. Choosing external looks or characteristics instead of the principles tells something else about the person making the decision.

Case in Hand

“If you are married to a mealy mouthed person...”

“It is impossible to grow without daring to lose...”

Berat, a member of a family with hazelnut orchards in the Black Sea region of Turkey, and Sedef, the girl he intends to marry, have some conversation before marriage.

Berat says “there is this tradition which is most important to me. Each summer, we return to our home town, when it is time to pick the hazelnuts. I expect you will not raise problems on that matter.”

Choosing to stay silent rather than losing her love, Sedef thinks “let’s not say anything at the moment. I’ll change him in the future.” Berat, in turn, interprets that silence as an indicator of agreement, and talks no more of that topic.

Even though staying silent in such a case is to be interpreted as acceptance, in case one of the spouses have a hidden agenda, that may lead to problems in subsequent years of marriage, posing a hindrance to that return to home town in summer year after year. And that would shake the foundations of marriage. In this context, opportunity training can lead to the following conclusion: “Your silence leads me to thinking that you are not happy about hearing the hazelnut issue. I have an open and transparent style. If your answer is ‘no’, I would like to know it.”

1. Doing so, you will convey the message ‘we should be able to talk about anything.’
2. Your determination becomes clear.
3. Your red lines surface as very apparent.

Marriage in the Context of Needs

Human beings are not born complete. They need to reach their complete state through the journey of life. At the moment of birth, the human would be interested with everything, and would need everything. Human beings are weak, and are certainly not self-sufficient. The earthly and unearthly needs of man are virtually limitless.

In a sense, these limitless needs provided the motive for the rise of civilization. In his endeavor to cover a lack, man achieved many

goals and built many things. To cover his need for warmth, he mastered fire; to sate his need for shelter, he built houses; to reduce his worries about tomorrow, he invented ownership and accumulation. Capitalism's emphasis on production is based on the needy character of human beings, even tempting him to need more in a push for ever farther boundaries.

Yes, man equals needs. It is possible to read everything of interest to man, through needs. The same applies for marriage as well. And in the case of marriage, the needy character of human beings have even deeper implications. Human beings need to marry. Neither the woman nor the man is complete on his or her own. Both man and woman are born incomplete. The life, in turn, is the journey of man and woman, with a view to reaching a state of completeness. Human beings seek things to fulfill their needs and shortcomings. And there is a man to complete each woman, and a woman to complete each man. A man, left alone, is just a man. And the same applies for women as well.

But a man who finds his woman, and a woman who finds her man, starts to be human.

The Weight of Needs in Marriage

We need to discern the real needs and the needs created by our perceptions. The ultimate questions are as follows: What are the basic needs? What is the truly essential need for man and woman?

As noted above, neither woman nor man are created to live alone. They need each other both biologically and psychologically. Woman and man as individual beings, complete each other. Just like hydrogen and oxygen combining to create that blessing we call water, man and woman come together to create "human". Single life is not the same form of life as that of married life. As single individuals, both man and woman live a life on his or her terms. They wander around as a man or a woman. Just like oxygen and hydrogen would wander around in the atmosphere, before coming together. They are partly free, and they are interested only in their own world.

When they decide to marry, however, the clear implication is about the will to move onto a new world. In marriages, woman moves in with man, and man moves in with woman. Of course this move to

another location does not entail a complete transformation, for the individual is not left out in the end. Marriage is the combination of two separate worlds, to create a different one. Therefore, after marriage, the individuals involved cannot think “I can live a single life in a marriage.” Even though marriage looks like a partial surrender of one’s freedom, that is not a harmful relinquishment, but a helpful one. Indeed, marriage takes away one thing, but instead provides many more. Through marriage, man finds the woman for her, and vice versa... The emptiness one feels inside during single life starts to fill up in some way.

In marriage, hearts come together. For, human beings are endowed with the feelings of love, commitment, and belonging. Through marriage, woman finds the counterpart of her love, and her emotions are no longer left hanging in the air. Instead, the feelings solidify and combine with the feeling of commitment to and safety with the man.

The same applies for man as well. Man and woman get a new address on this world, through mutual connection with another heart. Even though they may leave for a while, take long walks in various branches of the journey of life, they always have this point they can return to. The married people get a person to return to after all. They also get children calling for them.

From the Biological Perspective

Man feels the need for coupling. Biologically speaking, man and woman look for their match. Yet, marriage is rather a cultural institution, even if it is also compatible with this biological reality. A person learns about the need to marry, within the framework of the cultural codes of the place he was born in. Marriage, in turn, corresponds to the feeling of commitment, arising as biology and cultural codes impose themselves. After one’s teenage years, the body starts to feel itself, and the brain starts to produce the required proteins. And one begins to feel an inclination and attraction towards the opposite sex. In parallel, the need also makes itself felt on the psychological plane, producing the will to connect with someone. The fondness each gender feels for the other is based on this background.

That fondness grows towards the object of affection on a biological and psychological plane, and evolves into love if it is allowed to

continue to grow further. Love is often compared to ivies. An ivy ties itself to a tree to maintain its existence. The attraction between oxygen and hydrogen is a good analogy for the attraction between man and woman, underlining the need everything feels in terms of connections. The world would not exist without a sky, and the sky would be meaningless without the horizons of the world. No fruit can exist without a tree, and no tree can be born without a fruit providing the seed. The same principle applies for the marriage between man and woman.

Human beings feel the natural need for food and drink, as well as coupling, on a biological plane. It is natural, and thus, instinctive... The same applies for plants and animals as well. They live in their programmed forms.

The plants and animals live without thought and decision. They are pre-programmed in a sense. But that is not the case with human beings. Even though man has instincts, he also has the ability to keep those instincts in check, and live them in a certain form. And reason is what makes man capable of doing so. With reference to the cultural codes of the place one was born in, man creates a form out of his instincts filtered through his reason. Instincts with their biological foundations lead to deeper meanings based on reason and cultural codes. And doing so makes marriage much more than a simple arrangement to meet one's sexual needs. It is true that not every sexual intercourse occurs in marital union, but it is possible to meet one's sexual needs through marriage.

Plants are endowed with life; animals are endowed with spirit. Human beings, in turn, have both life and spirit, as well as reason and awareness. Human beings ask the questions "who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going to?", and feels the need to seek answers to these questions. Plants and animals are not aware of themselves or the place they were born in, yet human beings are aware of themselves and the space they were born in. For instance, he is capable of choice, not to mention hesitation among various choices. That awareness takes him to a search for meaning.

Man is someone seeking meaning at all times. He would be unhappy when left without meaning. And that makes him worrying and anxious. The solution he found for such a worrying and anxious outlook is to attach meaning to existence like a puzzle, and to engage

in abstractions. For him, sun is not just the sun. Eating, drinking, shelter and reproduction all assume other meanings as well. And doing so, human beings stand distinct from animals.

Animals and plants do whatever task that befalls on them. They don't think, and don't venture into other alternatives. In a sense, animals and plants apply what they were taught. Man, in contrast, becomes a man through learning. That is why animals cannot avoid traps set for them as all they think about is food. Human beings, on the other hand, also seek food, but also tries to get it without falling into a trap.

Human beings are not condemned to a pre-determined destiny. It is endowed with some amount of will. That is why human beings are considered the nobles of all creatures. And given the will it is endowed with, it also has responsibilities to be accountable for. Civilization was possible only with such human characteristics. From the invention of fire to the current state of industry, everything occurred through the freedom of human beings.

The Transformation of Needs

In the light of this biology and psychology, man has certain needs. But history, and the conceptions it stipulates, such as the modernist or capitalist perspectives, provides different definitions of man, and imposed new needs. In pre-modern millennia, people would grown and marry in the household they were born in. Next to their parents, in the same village... Many unavoidable elements of today's conception of marriage were simply unthinkable in those days. Neither a new house, nor so many furnishings were deemed necessary. The child born into a family would take up the same profession as with his father, and would marry with the daughter of the neighbor. Yet, time did not stay still, and led to numerous changes. The history is obvious; so are the changing circumstances and the changes in habits that come with them. We are now living in the post-modern era. Now, the number of houses is virtually equal to the number of marriages. And the needs also grow in parallel to the number of households.

We no longer make do with bare necessities, and feel the need to satisfy further needs fed by the perceptions imposed by capitalist consumption habits. From clothing to a house, tools, vehicles... Life

has both an internal and an external aspect. The needs of the interior are not the same with those of the exterior. Human beings think of others as well when eating or wearing certain things. “What would the others think?” is a truly imposing question in terms of burdens. And then, there are the children, and the new circumstances they bring along. There are parents who claim that “I’m doing this for my child, not for myself”... And there’s fashion, and God knows whatever else.

True and healthy marriages are based on developing a robust need of needs based on essentials. Letting the winds on the street influence the list of needs, in turn, would shake the foundations of the family, and impose impossible burdens on the individual.

And that would tire the individual, curbing his interest, attention and devotion to his or her spouse. That is why one can never be too careful in identifying needs.

Marriage: Peace for the Individual and the Society

We need good marriages. That is an absolute need for the individuals, as well as the society. The end goal of human beings is to be happy, to live in a happy society. And, in a sense, marriage is an effort towards that goal. No one marries just to assume further burdens. Yes, one is aware of the responsibilities marriage entails, but believes that it would bring happiness along. That is why one opts for marriage. In the background of every marriage lies the will to be happy.

And the question that follows the will to marry in order to be happy is “What does happiness mean to you?” Is it about the things put into circulation by modernity and capitalism? Or is it about nobler things? Are having a good car and a house, and getting an attractive spouse indicators of happiness? Or is it about the will to live one’s life in the direction of nobler goals, in the company of a good and correct spouse, even if material prosperity may not always be there?

Unfortunately, today people equate happiness with material prosperity, and having an attractive spouse. Yet, we cannot help but notice that people are still unhappy even though they have all these. Wealth and attractiveness are not enough to make people happy. The people living in the luxurious and expensive neighbor-

hoods of Istanbul flock to psychologists, while the residents of the outskirts of the city don't even know what a psychologist is. That's a fact. Thus, the definitions of happiness and the perceptions imposed may not be accurate.

No, associating happiness with a single thing is not the right thing to do. Happiness is related with the inside of the person, and external objects cannot meet that internal need. You cannot feel the emptiness one feels inside, with just buying cars or houses. Even the whole world cannot satisfy one's greed. It always needs more to consume.

That is the nature of mankind. The world is not enough satisfaction. Man does not want to get old and die. He does not want death to be an end. In a limited world, man wants something unlimited and eternal. And wealth, nice cars, or an attractive spouse does not go an inch towards sating such a need.

Happiness based on conditions and tools don't last. Man feels the fear of losing the tools and material elements. And that fear prevents any happiness derived from those elements. For even though they exist then, they may easily disappear someday. For one may be attractive physically, but the old age is always looming on the horizon. In one's youth, the fear of old age makes him unhappy. And thus he fails to enjoy the years of youth. Therefore, one should better seek happiness in somewhere else, rather than in external and material factors and tools.

Man would always ask "who am I? Where do I come from and why? Where am I going to?" And only searching correct and realistic answers to these questions would bring in true meaning. The fact is the world is but a temporary existence. And realizing that fact, man can venture accordingly. He thus attaches only a temporal value to such a temporary world. He would not get embroiled ankles deep in such a temporary and mortal existence. For, he would realize that material delights do not satisfy one's heart. An attractive spouse is attractive not just due to physical features. For, ten years later those features would naturally disappear. And would someone leave his or her spouse, just because of that natural loss of attractiveness? Is that the gist of marriage and happiness?

No, would answer the man, and puts, instead, meaning to the forefront. And opts to love the spouse not because of her physical

features, but her characteristics as a human being. The spouse may get old, and the external beauty is certainly passing. But true human beauty that stems from one's character lasts. A good person in youth would make a good person in old age as well. A good person can be comparable to a tree that stays green and fruitful for all four seasons.

That is why it is necessary to underline meaning. We need to be careful to make sure that our experiences are meaningful. If we had discerned a noble meaning, and lead our life in the direction of that meaning, even hardships we may experience would feel meaningful. We would be able to remain patient, and reap the rewards for doing so. By helping our sick spouse, we grow the person inside us, soften our heart, and multiply our feeling of well-being.

There are people who achieve happiness in both a prison and a palace. But we are well aware of the existence of unhappy people, despite living in palaces. What gives, one may ask. Why one can be happy even in a prison cell, while another cannot achieve happiness despite living in a palace?

We need to think about these issues.

To Own or Not to Own

No, we don't mean to denigrate owning things and the will to own. Of course man is under obligation to work, and of course he will seek earnings. The person seeking earnings is on God's path. It is precious to work for rightful earnings. People cannot achieve results and gains without working and building on grounds. For us to acquire things, reasons are essential. We can have a fruit only if we pick it from a tree. We get a wage, only if we work at our business.

One cannot feed himself by sleeping all day. One cannot achieve happiness without making an effort. The dictum is clear: love needs effort. That is true. One needs to take responsibility to be happy. One can earn his living even without yielding to greed and avarice, without resorting to wrong paths. Greed is a great calamity; contentment, on the other hand, is a great fortune. A person should look behind, rather than looking above and tell to himself "thank God, I could be in a worse shape" rather than asking "why am I not richer?" He should not make his life miserable, worrying over the lack of a

car or a house, and should instead think of the people living on the streets, in need of even a slice of bread.

Most unhappy people are mired in wrong comparisons. They look up to people who own more, and ask themselves “why am I not like them?” A kind of egoism determines this behavior, and the individual believes that he is entitled to much better. Sure, no one is born into equal means. No one chooses the conditions he or she is born into. We are not the owners of the nature and existence. The human beings are not the ones to decide on the allotment. Man has control over some matters, but not all. So, he should not reach out for more than the extent of his capabilities, and learn to be content with what he has. People who are not content with what they have, and who cannot be happy as such, will not be happy with the things they dream of as well.

A human being should learn to be happy under any circumstances, with any means. And that can be possible only through avoiding greed, and achieving contentment.

A man can have great dreams, but should never think ill of his current status. Better days can be achieved only through making good use of current days. Entitlement to more can be achieved through appreciating existing means.

Contentment and effort should run side-by-side. Contentment and effort are often mistaken as distinct qualities. Contentment refers to a state of standstill, whereas effort refers to move for the better. That is called the formula for “dynamic happiness”. And in positive psychology, it is often described as “authentic happiness”. Pure happiness... A form of pristine happiness, free from negative emotions...

Pure and pristine happiness can be achieved only by those who have optimism and a flexible attitude towards happiness. There is a famous saying: “Love your destiny!” In other words, “Amor fati!” Contentment and acceptance of whatever that falls into one’s share, and avoiding any complaints... When that outlook is embraced, one would often think about the object of contentment. If someone receives only a meager salary, he would come to accept it. He would then make an assessment of the options available on that figure, come up with a list of needs, and adopt his life standards accordingly. He may have only a meager salary, but in response, he would have to

meet only meager needs. And thus, he will find a way to avoid the need to seek after ever further goals. Doing so, he will have more time for himself, and avoid cases which would pose problems for him. And in this context, meager salary can evolve into a blessing in disguise. It will allow the individual to think and find better ways to use his spare time. A person in a prison cell could have an optimistic outlook if he thinks “yeah, I’m in prison, but I’m not hanging on a tree. Let’s see what time has in store for me.” If he mulls over his fate, thinking “I’m in a cell... Why am I not out”, then the life will turn into a true prison for him.

We have to believe in this. We were all created by God. We’re all servants of God. Even the smallest leaf movements are known to god. God knows our state of existence, at all times. The God sees and hears us, at all times. If we are having some distress, God is the one that summons it. Yet, God is not an oppressor. So, even distress imposed by God should serve a grander purpose. If we are poor, God must have some point on imposing poverty. So, we need to think more about God.

This line of thinking helps endure the pains of life. And it helps remove one from the confines of pessimism, fostering optimism instead. And an optimist person thinks in a healthy way. A pessimist would always see the worst, while an optimist is able to find paths of good. One cannot emphasize this point enough. Belief is a true gift. The universe is like an airplane. If you believe in the skills of the pilot of the plane you ride, you would have a more comfortable journey. The same principle applies with the belief in God. You would feel comfortable, thinking “God is the owner of all existence, the universe. Whatever he does is the right thing. Therefore, there is no point in feeling bad and pain.”

The Route of Perceptions Brings No Happiness!

Canan Ceylan, an experienced actress of the stages had this interesting observation: “My youth was spent in prosperity, luxury, and fame. Yet, I couldn’t find happiness. Now, instead, I am living in the comfort of my religion, and doing my best to do the bidding of God. I was mistaken with the places I searched happiness in. Now I realize that true happiness is here.”

She apparently complied with the dominant paradigm for years, albeit unable to find happiness. And then she turned to herself, and looked at her. There she found answers to her questions. The answers she was able to find had an impact on her life, and she felt what she always sought for: happiness. No one can deny this observation; it depends on an experience. And there are so many examples similar to that one!

See, we need to understand what happiness means for us. Will we be able to find happiness by meeting our material needs only? Can we find solace and satisfaction, if we heed only what our body and desires want, meeting all their demands? A number of experiences shed light on our way. The lives of people who adhere only to their motives, and who only seek to satisfy their desires, are not glaring examples of happiness. Take Canan Ceylan's observation, for instance. She lived that life, and she is not the only one who had a similar experience, to find happiness elsewhere after all.

A human being cannot be happy by just satisfying her desires. For, the emptiness inside lingers on even after the needs are met and the desires are satisfied. For, man is not just a material being. It is not a combination of just desires and a stomach. Man has a spirit, a heart, as well. So what is the fulfillment sought by the spirit and the heart? Money, wealth, or fame... Do they prevent old age? Can they prevent death? Can a limited world be enough to meet a human's limitless desires? No, you cannot put an end to these questions. Worries and anxieties will always be there. So, one should satisfy not only his material existence, but the spiritual one as well.

A person whose spirit and heart is not satisfied will not know material and earthly peace as well. Someone whose spirit and heart is satisfied can also achieve the satisfaction in a material and earthly sense. But vice versa is not an option. For, the one who feels the satisfaction of the spirit and the heart would find meaning for himself and for existence, and does not deny the body and material existence. But he also does not ascribe over-significance to them. For instance, a believer can marry, to meet the needs of his biology. But he does not harbor extreme fear of his loved one getting old and dying in time. And would not be mired in discomfort due to the fear of losing one's wife and children. Yes, he would be well aware of the fact that his spouse would get old and die someday. But he also knows that

death is not an end. He would be inclined to think that his worldly spouse would be by his side in the afterworld as well. He would be aware that material existence would stay on this plane, and that this world is not everything for human beings.

And based on that knowledge, he does not attach extreme significance to ownership of worldly things, for they are only temporal.

Attaching significance beyond one object's true worth would be unfair. And fairness stipulates due significance. The man and woman can love someone else. But taken to extremes, that love would be unfair. For God is the true love for anyone. Human beings can be worthy of love only on the basis of their creation by God. So love for human beings cannot be compared to the love for God. No one's wife deserves worship. Doing so is asking for trouble. Going to extremes in love is a recipe for extreme pain of love. So, the saying "there is no happy love" has its grain of truth.

The definitions and needs imposed by the dominant perceptions are often not essential. Therefore, instead of making definitions and identifying needs based on such perceptions, we should better know ourselves and our essence, and base our list of needs and map of definitions on an awareness about the humanity's journey on this world. We should seek not a life and marriage as per the dictates of fashion, street, and other people, but a goal set by our Lord, the holy texts, and ancient cultures.

Case in Hand

Kivanç and Zeynep are engaged, and go to movies together. After a while, Kivanç asks "is your seat comfortable?"

Zeynep answers "yes."

Kivanç asks another question: "can you see the screen clearly?"

The answer is again "yes." Zeynep is delighted by this exchange, thinking "my fiancé is concerned with my comfort." And at that moment, a brazen Kivanç says "then let's switch seats."

Zeynep would be shocked. Her fiancé's request was truly unexpected for her.

At this junction, Zeynep's potential reaction can take three forms:

1. She would be angry, but gives up her seat nonetheless. In such case the man would remain completely ignorant of her feelings.

2. She would be angry, and leave the theater saying “selfish man.”

3. She would respond “so your seat is not comfortable. Then let’s switch seats during the break. That would be the fairer solution.” Such an answer is a good example of opportunity training. The positive outcomes of such an answer on part of Zeynep would include an awareness about the rights of her fiancé, Kivanç. And she would also save herself from damage on her self-confidence, as she would avoid repressing the issue.

MARRIAGE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ETHICS

The contribution of marriage for the development of the ethical values of the individual and the wider society is indisputable. Family is the birth place of any human being. It is also the first place to observe and learn anything related to individual human beings and humanity in general. The family also provides the first setting to practice one's inherent moral values.

And what are the moral values? For instance, it includes honesty, keeping one's word, and making sacrifices. A human being learns about these in his place of birth, through his parents. Then he would start to apply that knowledge with the members of the family he lives with.

The family is the smallest-scale model of the family. Family serves as a small-scale laboratory to get the experience of living with someone else, and to build up respect for the personal boundaries of others, not to mention an awareness about the differences. The human beings socialize within the family, and learn how to live with and for someone else. In the family, the individual both learns about and gets the chance to apply the values. One cannot speak of a morality in seclusion, in isolation from other people. Perhaps morality can express itself in one's dealings with other creatures, but the human dimension of morality can be tested only in a social setting.

Family: The Zone of Opportunities and Trials

A carpenter gives wood a functional form. A sculptor creates a form out of the rock. A learned person is comparable to a carpenter or sculptor. He can carve out distinct personalities out of the individuals he is dealing with.

That distinct personality often noted in ancient texts, on the other hand, chooses to look inside, rather than dealing with others.

He would become distant from the society, and seeks seclusion in a cave. He would seek an ethical perspective doing so. And given that he does not have any interaction with other people, he does not face the consequences of such social interactions. For instance, he would not encroach on others' rights. Fakirs who point at the way of abiding by the orders of God within a society, does not deem that the right path, however. They point out that the crucial point is to do the bidding of God within a society. They argue that one must do the bidding of God in, say, a shop, while engaged in shopping. They claim that abiding by the will of God at a distance from the society is no huge deal. In a setting where there is only halal but nothing forbidden by the religion, one cannot make many mistakes anyway. The real achievement is to avoid sin in a setting where it is possible to engage in sin.

Sure, it is possible to live in a good society. That is what Islam envisages: the human beings are expected to live in a society, and not to run away from it. Swimming in wavy seas, rather than still waters is the objective. The person who can swim in a stormy sea, and still reach the safety of the beach stands out. Such a person must have known a thing or two about swimming. In a society where contradictory and inconsistent voices are present, one needs a strong self-awareness and internalization of moral values, for one to keep his ethics intact. And that can be possible only through a family. Only in a family the person notices himself and learns what to do.

In case the father of the family is not a good spouse, and does not act fairly with his wife and children, he most probably would not be a good person in the wider society, duly respecting the rights of others. Sure, there may be exceptions. A person who has a bad marriage may not get to experience being a good spouse. Whatever he does, he may still be forced to take wrong turns, by the other party in the marriage. That is an externality to the individual. In other words, bad pictures observed in some families has nothing to do with the individual characteristics. An often told story about Socrates is telling: One day he was having some pleasant conversation with his students. Then his wife showed up and started a war of words with him, expressing her evil tongue. Finally, she pours a bucket full of

water on Socrates. After a while, one of the students cannot help but ask his master, Socrates: "Should I get married?" The answer is both funny and wise: "Sure, go ahead and get married. If you get a good spouse, you will be happy. If not, you will be a philosopher."

Despite everything, the family provides a testing ground. What is good in a family would also be good in the society. The role of the family in raising an ethical and good person is indisputable. A man can get to be a father only in a family. A woman can enjoy motherhood only with a family. Being a father and mother, in turn, refers to a higher level of human existence. For a father is something more than a man. So is the case with mothers versus women. The father and mother –the parents– stand out with the achievement of creating a new human being. So, they come to involve a new person as well. For instance, the feeling we call compassion is observed mostly in family settings, with reference to children. The mother is the first one to think of when hearing the concept compassion... the image of a mother who cares about her child above everything else, dedicating her life to the latter... The true value of man and woman cannot be discerned without a marriage. Their true colors are shown only in a marriage. For, only in a relationship a person can flower, and bloom out. In an exchange, or a journey, a person reveals glimpses into his or her true self. One's morality or honesty can be ascertained only through a marriage.

Marriage is the setting of trial for the people. It is both the place the individual is born, and gets to realize himself, and the place where he will be tested. It is both a zone of opportunities and tests. So, it is analogous to life in general. Once born, every individual has the opportunity to enjoy and realize his humanity. Life has its share of difficulties, action, and conflict. In the face of such conflict and action, human beings are forced to make choices. And the choices as well as sacrifices one makes are telling in terms of understanding the qualities of that human dough. A person can choose to be a good one, if he chooses good and moves away from bad. And of course the opposite is also possible. In conclusion, every individual has the potential to evolve into a good human being. Yet not everyone dies as one. Most people waste away the opportunities. Just like only a few of the seeds laid in a field can grow to be great trees. Some seeds rot away, some grow and bear fruits.

The life flows on dialectics, conflict, and action. The relationship in a family and marriage are also similar to life, in that sense. In the beginning, two human beings come together.

Just like the meeting of day and night. Man and woman are essentially two distinct stories and two distinct worlds. The meeting of these two worlds, their efforts to come together and merge in a family is no easy task. Deciding to be married is not the same as being married. Taking the actual leap and getting married is the crucial element of the process. Happy and peaceful marriages prove that man and woman can really marry. Uneasy marriages which are always mired in conflicts, on the verge of divorce, on the other hand, show that the man and the woman has yet to meet and truly be one.

The Prerequisites of an Ethically Strong Marriage

A person who owns a field and who throws some seeds to it should be careful about the characteristics of the soil and the seed, if he wants to get good results. But he also has to be careful about the further steps of the process as well. One would not just throw seeds on any field. First, one should prepare the field for the process. Laying down the seeds without making sure that the soil is suitable is no recipe for product. In the same sense, if one has the soil ready for the seeds, but lacks the actual seeds to lay down, the process would again not occur. The seeds should exist, and should be good ones to boot. So, assuming that we have a good soil, and good seeds. The next prerequisite is about the season, and the existence of necessary conditions. Only when laid down in the right season, with the right conditions, the seeds can grow. But that's not all. Rain is necessary for the seed to grow. One cannot simply make rain fall, but there are a few solutions one can seek for this condition. In other words, just laying down the seed does not absolve one from any further responsibility.

In this perspective, one cannot be careful enough with the process before the marriage, the decision to get married, and the preparations for the marriage. All studies on marriage in Western and Eastern societies refer to the conditions required for an average marriage. Save for the exceptions caused by differences between the societies, there are often common elements noted with reference to the formulas of happy and peaceful families. First of all, the person should be aware

of his grounds for marriage. He should have a solid answer to the question “what one expects from marriage?” Without a solid answer to that question, marriage as just an adventure is not acceptable. One cannot just jump into the water, and then see if he can swim. A marriage without a definite goal would not work. It would end in the first shock to be experienced.

A commander who takes on the battle is nothing if not decided. He would be aware of and believe in his reason for fighting. So, he even bravely risks death on the battle field. Some commanders win the war just by taking on that risk. The same perspective should apply with respect to marriage and family as well. A person should not jump in a marriage, if he does not expect some noble goal out of it. For, marriage entails a dive into the hectic life and conflicts. It is no party zone. Marriage requires effort. When getting married, the person should be decided above else. He should have the will to maintain the marriage. He should also have a plan B to apply in response to the problems arising. He should exhibit determination to withstand problems. In a sinking ship, the captain cannot be the first one to jump into a lifeboat. A good captain is the one that fights to save his ship, despite everything. A captain who thinks of himself first, and abandons the ship before everyone else, passing the buck to the crew and the passengers, would only have the full blame in the things to come.

Marriage: In spite of Everything?

Family is deemed a great value in our culture, civilizational paradigm, and the foundations of our society. Our religion, Islam, which is the essence of our people, defining us, also has this perspective on the family. Yet, it does not push for marriage till death, as Catholics often do. It does not approve abandoning the marriage to the first strong winds, but it does not insist on staying in the marital union in the face of unacceptable developments.

For instance, in a marriage the parents and the children may be estranged, starting to oppose each other instead of existing for each other. The man poses hell for the woman, the woman to man, and both to children. No one can demand continuation of such a marriage, for that marriage can no longer be called a family. One cannot consent to sustaining such a marriage just for keeping a household

for the children. The children in such a household are effectively unable to benefit from their parents. So, the marital union does not mean much for them.

In contrast to the common view, these forced families are even worse for the children. It would be better to get a divorce and separation of the man and wife in such cases. Of course, it is a difficult thing, but it is better than the opposite. That is why our Prophet saw a necessary evil in some cases.

If the man and woman is unable to speak any more, and if all they do is to have fights, if the children are suffering violence at all times, one cannot find many other solutions. If such a state of affairs persists after trying every conceivable solution, the parents should choose divorce for their children, if not for themselves. That is unavoidable.

One would marry to form a family. And the individuals who are members of that family need to constitute a whole we call a family. One can speak of the existence of a family in case the individuals stand for rather than against each other. If this is not the case, the marriage can be deemed a failure in terms of producing a family. In the lack of a family, on the other hand, trying to sustain a marriage would only lead to greater problems.

No, the marriage is not the scene for wars of ego. It cannot be deemed an arena for power struggles and scene for revenge. Marriage is a bowl to melt and fuse egos. It is a setting where individuals live for others rather than for themselves. The interests of the family composed of all persons involved, rather than the specific individuals' and egos' interests, are crucial in this context.

The individuals would be only secondary in case the rights of the family are being violated. For, the passengers would also go down if the ship sinks. The passengers could only stay afloat if the ship stays so. The family is the site of sacrifice, assistance, benevolence, honesty, and solidarity to occur and appear. That is the *raison d'être* of the family. In the lack thereof, marriages where efforts are in the opposite direction, one can no longer speak of the existence of a family. Thus, putting an end to that would perhaps be the better option. At least they stop serving as bad examples. Thinking of marriages like these, people fear and often abandon the idea of getting married.

One would not agree with workers ignoring the needs of the place, or burning the factory just because every single wish they may have is not being met. If the factory is burned to the ground, the workers would also lose their source of earning.

In the same vein, the boss would also be mad to think about just his own interests, for the plant is meaningful only with the matching labor force. A boss who does not think of the workers would be deemed to be ignoring the well-being of the factory as well. The individuals who don't pay due attention to the well-being of the family are also comparable to these cases. A person who is willing to sacrifice the family for his individual interests will be effectively sacrificing himself. The head of the family cannot act like a factory owner acting in total disregard of the workers. Being the head of a family where the spouse and the children are unhappy is no recipe for happiness. Instead, it rots inside.

To overcome these issues, marital contracts, which become more and more prominent and frequent occurrences in recent years, may help. People should be signing a contract before venturing into a marriage. It would be wiser to take on that responsibility with a clear definition of one's tasks, duties, and responsibilities. Of course one may wish to act in contrary to the signed deed. And what would be the sanction for that? Everything is about the individual, and an active conscience is the key. If the individual is not a conscientious and honest one, if ethics make no sense for him, the signature can go only so far. Even then, making a contract early on can make a person more comfortable for decisions to come. He can then go on and say "you promised to do this and that. And now I act in this way due to your failure to keep your promise. So, don't blame me. No one can blame me on this issue."

Marriage: No Pink Dreams

As the institution to bring two distinct individuals from two different genders together, marriage is certainly no pink dream without any problem. First of all, human beings occupy the central position in the marriage. And human beings are composed of both a soul, and the material desires. The union of two individuals, each of which is actually a field of struggle among good and evil, makes the issue ever more problematic.

Man and woman would come together under that umbrella. The union of two individuals, both of which certainly experience their own internal struggles, would be then tinted with the feminine and masculine characters of the two persons involved. Both man and the woman experience a struggle that is natural first of all, due to the individuals being human, not to mention the difficult problems posed by the differences of their genders.

We don't mean to go as far as the Christian theology does, and claim that the mankind is marred by the original sin. But it is safe to say that human beings are not imperfect, and are difficult to handle.

That is the philosopher's perspective of the issue. There are also some problems arising out of the meeting of two distinct individuals from different cultural background. Say, the woman is from one region, while the man is from another. Given the fact that our society is a relic of a bygone empire, sometimes we see the union of people from different ethnic groups, and at others, from different religions. A Turk can get married to a Kurd and vice versa. And there are marriages between Christians and Muslims.

And in this sense, marriage is shaped by numerous differences. And that is not the sole factor at times. The socio-economic state of affairs in the country also play a part. Nowadays, marriage and forming a family is no easy task. Coping with inherent problems and carving a harmonious union out of the inputs at hand requires great effort. Both man and woman need to build substantial skills just to carry that burden. The first thing to do is avoiding a selfish perspective. Thinking only of one's own interests, and acting without due thought for one's spouse is both easy, and wrong.

Individuals should be aware of the fact that they have both their good and bad sides. They should receive education to suppress the bad in them while clearly expressing the good. They should read and work hard for this purpose, engaging in a challenge with their own individual desires all the while keeping their souls and hearts up. A person whose soul and heart is in the clear, with an active conscience to match, would try to see and understand her own mistake in a relationship, and seek a solution. Doing so would also push the other person to thinking, and noticing her own share of fault.

Think about the conversations on the problems arising in marriages. Is it often about analyzing the issue, or putting the blame on the other party? The cases where the parties criticize each other cannot be deemed true conversation. They are just battles in a war of egos.

And that is what consumes a marriage. Criticism is not about disgracing the other party, but about revealing the facts. But criticism may, at any time, turn into a weapon. Thus, it should be handled with care. One should point out the mistakes without humiliating the other person. There is criticism, and then there's negative criticism.

In a marriage, the individuals should first look at themselves, and explicitly state where they committed a mistake, and how. They should not proceed to the criticism of the other party without criticizing themselves first. The democratic culture first should exhibit itself in the family. Criticism and liberties have a legitimate place in families. People should be open to criticism, and should respect the freedom of the other person in the marriage. Preventing her from speaking her mind, and instead imposing the dominant party's mindset on the other one is not fair. In the lack of mutual respect, mutual love cannot exist. A person can only love someone he or she respects.

Case in Hand

There are two brothers: Alican (6) and Keremcan (7). They go to the amusement park with their father. A ticket clerk greets them, and says "tickets are required for age seven and above." The father pays the ticket price for Keremcan. In response, the ticket clerk laughs and says "I didn't know their age. He could pass for a 6 years old boy. Why did you bother to pay for him?" The father's answer is thought-provoking: "Perhaps you don't know their age. But they do." Doing so, the father gives an applied lesson of honesty for the boys, instilling in them a lifelong value that honesty is.

People often define ethical behavior as "doing the right and good thing, with the right and good causes, in the right and good way." A child can be provided education on ethical behavior through role models. The parent's refined perspective on life and events it entails, and the ethical nature of the solutions he or she may provide for certain problems, provide the pillars of ethics of the child, as he grows up.

PREPARING FOR THE MARRIAGE...

When one talks about marriage preparations, the focus is mostly on the material preparations. Such as finding the financial resources for the stuff to be bought, or preparing the home the family would then live in... Of course this is an indicator of the directions winds push people towards... But it is not an accurate representation of the issues to come. Preparing for a marriage should, first and foremost, entail a mental accounting about what marriage means for us. There are two crucial junctions in the life of anyone. The first one is choosing profession, and the second one is marriage. The more data and input one has available in making these choices, the healthier the resulting decision would be. And the risks would fall in proportion to the sound reasoning of the decision.

The decision about marriage can never be underestimated. One cannot start a marriage thinking “I can walk away if it does not work out”. One cannot succeed in a marriage that is founded on such shaky grounds. A person with such a mindset would better stay single.

Marriage: The Journey to the Core of Life

Marriage is no trivial journey or a simple adventure. It is rather comparable to setting sail for the ocean. Any human being, man or woman sets sail to the essence of life, that is as deep and varied as the oceans, in the company of another person. Therefore, the person who makes the decision for marriage should be aware of the finer aspects of the decision, and should act with the diligence of a surgeon. The decision to getting married can be compared to the decision to jump into a war, in terms of the problems one will have to endure in due course. The people getting married, will, likewise, face many

problems. They will encounter different people, different circles, different cultures and habits. The battle-winning commanders share one trait: the will to venture and take the plunge with the problems.

In the same vein, people who persist in times of conflict, and people who choose the struggle to keep marriage afloat will be successful. Thinking of divorce in any problem one encounters is not the recipe for success. Struggle and working to keep marriage alive is important.

The persons to marry will be partners in this life and in afterlife. A person who thinks “if I notice an issue with my spouse, I’ll leave her and look for a better one” will not have a good and successful marriage. That is why one should only envisage lifelong association, and should stand by the spouse in health and sickness, in any condition to come. Once a person stands strong on this point the other problems one would encounter in marriage would feel rather insignificant, and easily surmountable.

People who decide to jump on the boat of marriage should know that marriage is not just a means to meet biological needs, and that it also has psychological and moral aspects. For marriage is not about just two persons. It is not just about two people. It is the micro-level reflection of macro-level structures, for it is comparable to a tiny society or a tiny state. Sure, the marriage is composed of the man and wife, but also the families, pasts, stories, and cultures of them are also involved. In this sense, it is not a personal institution, but a social one.

In this light, marriage acts as a safe harbor for the individual. The individual gets a relief at home, to dress the wounds incurred outside, in the street, in the face of many problems of the world. In a sense, home and marriage is the harbor to protect one against the negative aspects of the external world. This function is even more clear in the case of people who lose their home, marriage, and spouse. For instance, the historians came across an interesting piece of information in their search for a reason that made Suleiman the Magnificent take personal command of the army in the campaign that culminated in the Battle of Szigetvár. For, by then Suleiman was 70 years old. “Is it normal practice to go on a campaign in that old age?” one would ask. Suleiman fell into a deep well of solitude

after the death of his beloved wife Roxelana, and went all the way to Hungary in the old age of 70, eventually dying there.

In a sense, he dies as he tries to outrun his loneliness.

The presence of a life partner, someone to share one's heart with, meets most psychological needs one may have. And meeting those needs is the essence of any marriage. Marriage is based on companionship, sharing life, and being parents. Thanks to marriage, a person can experience being a friend and being a parent at the same time.

The Arch-enemy of Marriage

Today, however, marriage is considered a union that serves sexual needs, above else. And that causes a host of problems. Whenever sexual needs cannot be satisfied, the marriage is abandoned quickly. And of course that is the wrong attitude, for marriage addresses both biological and psychological needs of an individual. The nature of human beings is inclined to marriage.

The modernism, on the other hand, puts the satisfaction of desires to the center stage. Given that emphasis on pleasures and desires, modernism has a peculiar attitude towards marriage. It considers marriage as a union that serves the sexual desires of a person. Marriage, among other things, is deemed a way to satisfy one's desires. In the times we live through, pleasure is deemed a sacred and inviolable concept. Looking at life through that perspective, an individual wouldn't have a difficult time leaving all behind when pleasures are no longer available, or certain comforts are missing in a family. For, in such a perspective, the individual, as well as his desires and comfort is sacred.

Selfishness is the greatest enemy of any marriage. In a marriage among selfish individuals, conflict would be simply unavoidable. As the individuals involved focus on their own priorities only, they can easily ignore that of the other person, and have, instead, a selfish perspective on any matter. "I" would be the rightful party in any issue, while the other one is simply in the wrong. As the person puts himself in the center stage, narcissism would soon follow in the wake of self-perceived grandeur. He would perceive himself to be special and important, while the other person is just a detail, in a sense, a means useful to serve him. He does not think about fairness

in the relevant cases, and imposes his own perspective on all issues. A conflict would be the natural outcome in such environments.

The tirades starting with “my right” or “my mom”, or “my whatever” would soon be common place.

Once an Italian girl visited a Muslim friend from Egypt. Coming from a family where individualistic perspectives dominate, she finds the family she visits as a very curious setting. In contrast to the war of egos among the individual members of her family, the individuals in the family that hosted her would always work hard to help each other. In such a family, individuals would sacrifice personal comforts, and live, instead for the other members of the family. They would not seek shortcomings of each other, but help each other to overcome them. Once she noticed Islam to be the driving force of that attitude, the Italian girl converted to Islam. That’s the nature of Islam. It involves thinking about others much more than one thinks about herself. It entails sacrifice, and seeking happiness in the happiness of others. It is based on the belief that people can be happy together, rather than alone.

Islam does not tolerate selfishness and arrogance. It does not approve of selfish and arrogant persons who put themselves to the center stage, focusing on satisfying their own desires above else. In a sense, in a marriage, a person who is inclined to always find the fault with the other party, and who expects perfection from one’s spouse, can also be considered arrogant in some sense. Expecting perfection from others implies a perfect self-image. As the individual thinks that the other is at fault, he would like to upgrade the other person to a perfect state. In his mind, himself is the epitome of perfection, while his spouse or children are not so.

No; the world is not a perfect place. It is marred by many imperfections and shortcomings. Thus, neither the human beings are perfect. And in a marriage, the spouses should be aware of this state of beings. If the individual considers himself to be perfect, he should also know that that observation is not accurate. A human being is not an angel. It is rather incomplete, and cannot achieve everything. You cannot reasonably expect a child to be as mature as a forty years old person. Such an expectation is neither reasonable, nor humane. It implies a lack of empathy towards the child.

The lack of empathy, described as emotional deafness, is a result of egoism, selfishness, and arrogance.

**In order to prevent the devolution of
marriage to a fight of egos...**

In order to prevent the devolution of marriage to a fight of egos, the individuals involved should try and understand themselves better. They should first be healthy, so as to build up healthy marriages. If the individual himself is not healthy, and instead suffers problems with his values and emotions, another person starts to look worthy and valuable. The will to satisfy desires, attaching priority to beauty in a choice for one's spouse, and the features of the household goods to be bought in preparation to the marriage, gains undue importance.

Of course one would need some household goods, but do they deserve primary focus? A person who marries with someone with an absolute focus on material beings would only harm herself. It is difficult even to maintain a friendship with such a person. He would be inclined to make a huge fuss about nothing. Marriage should be with people who focuses on nobler values, rather than just material ones. With someone who is ready to dedicate himself to his wife and children...

In the process of marriage preparations, the women customarily attach greater value to material goods. But interestingly, they are the ones who often dedicate themselves to the family first. After the marriage, man often continues to maintain his individuality, while the woman assumes the role of motherhood, making her family the primary context of her life. The role entails caring for her husband and children, and making life easier for them... The woman is usually the one who is desperate for the well-being of her children, for women are often endowed with greater skills of empathy. That is a by-product of their fertility, and thus the feeling of motherhood. A woman who gives birth cannot see the child as a truly independent being. Instead, she would perceive the child to be an extension of her own existence. So, anything the child suffers will cause a suffering for the mother. The selflessness of the mother starts with pregnancy. In the womb, the child starts to take away from the mother. The child

would take away so much iron from the blood of the mother, that the woman starts to suffer from anemia.

The woman, or the mother, is comparable to a tree designed to produce a fruit. In the winter, the tree prepares for giving birth. In the spring, it would be fertilized. In the summer, it produces the fruit, which is the result of that fertilization. And in the fall, after the fruit, it suffers a death in a sense. A mother, in turn, would also forget about herself after giving birth to the child, and starts to live for the child instead. Some chickens and swallows are known to jump on the enemies, into the pit of fire, just to save their children. A woman who tasted motherhood is similar in this sense. A woman knows no bounds when the case is about her children.

Programmed for such high levels of self sacrifice and devotion, women can make wonderful spouses if they follow that program. And men who have such wives would be very lucky. For a healthy and strong marriage, however, man should also be similar to the woman in terms of devotion and sacrifice. The man should stand by the woman who fights tooth and nail for her child and marriage.

Onwards to the shared goal...

Marriage is a natural need, just like eating and drinking, shelter and reproduction. The nature of human beings is inclined towards marriage. Such a natural concept, marriage should rise on shared goals. However, nowadays people don't put so much thought in marriage. In the olden times where the traditions were supreme, the elderly would show the way, and the young ones would prepare for marriage under the guidance of the older generations. Extended family was the norm; so was strong family ties. Today, however, we are in a different era. Long gone are the extended families, and strong family ties. Today, individuals who are born into nuclear family, and who in time is expected to stand on his or her own feet are the norm. An individual, in turn, is the person who decides for herself, and on her own. Now the picture is a virtually undecipherable one, against a background where the capitalist and modernist outlook to life is emphasized, and where the satisfaction of the desires and pleasures is put to the center stage.

Nowadays, marriages are built in such a skewed environment. In sharing a life together, one considers marriage not as a goal in and of itself, but as a tool to achieve other goals. Nowadays individual's goals rather than shared goals are in fashion.

Yet, in a marriage, one can no longer talk about a single individual, but of a couple. And that requires thinking for two, rather than one.

In a marriage, one has to deal with the responsibilities associated with the marriage institution, along with the responsibilities expected of any individual. Above, we compared marriage to the combination of hydrogen and oxygen. In the atmosphere, oxygen and hydrogen can be found on their own. But when combined, they turn into water. And when they combine to transform into water, their solitude comes to an end. In a sense, they lose their freedom. They lose their freedom, but in exchange, they form the miracle that is the source of life: water. Oxygen and hydrogen meets with a shared goal. Water, or should we say the source of life, is the expression of a shared goal.

Before marriage, man and woman are two independent entities existing on their own. They certainly have their own value. But through the decision of marriage, they come together, and evolve into something else. Looking from outside, the repercussions are obvious, but the same should apply inside as well. In other words, one should act in line with the shared goal, as the precondition of marriage. Sharing the joy and pains of each other, living and facing life together, building a life together... Existing not as solely as Ayşe or Ali, but as a "we" bringing both together... If that is the outlook, one can talk about the existence of a shared goal in the marriage.

Such a shared goal and outlook does not require abandoning the individual characteristics and existence of the persons which build the marriage, however. The shared goal is not to make the man and wife look alike. They are not required to love and hate the same things. That would be totally unnatural. Two distinct entities cannot evolve into one. What should occur is to bring two distinct entities together, around a shared goal. The existence of water does not mean that hydrogen and oxygen are lost forever. Water contains both.

In marriages, one often tends to overlook that fine point. Instead, individuals are often expected to sacrifice their own personality for

the sake of the shared goal. The individuals tend to intervene in the private space of each other, and in time, start to look similar.

For instance the woman loses her identity as a woman. Assuming the role of the wife, the woman loses her separate existence. And everything is taken over by the man. In that sense, man loses the woman. In doing so, having lost his woman, he realizes he is alone once again. He would then start to look for a woman outside the household, to replace the one he just lost at home. That is a frequent occurrence. In such marriages, the man gets bored as the woman loses her identity and personality, and in turn, seeks adventure elsewhere.

That is why the existence of both man and woman is the primary ingredient of marriage. In the lack of one, or in the unchallenged dominance of another, the marriage would not work. Therefore, the spouses should respect the existence of each other, and to boot, should work to underline the existence of each other, rather than trying to erase each other. Ayşe should exist and stay alive. So should Ali... Ali and Ayşe should, however, work towards a shared goal. And what would that goal be? The continued existence of human beings, not to mention the search for well being in this world and the one to follow. Ali should be aware that this goal is not possible without Ayşe, and Ayşe should know that only with Ali she can achieve that goal...

Marriage from the Eyes of the Couple

Two distinct outlooks from the same perspective, towards the shared goal thus delineated, is the key to happiness. Two distinct outlooks sharing the same perspective towards the world, life, and union... If one adopts a material perspective while the other sticks to an ethereal one, they cannot find happiness. They need to share an ethereal as well as material outlook. Let's assume that the woman got into the marriage, but her husband is not very concerned about meeting her sexual needs. He does not pay much attention to whether the wife is satisfied or not. And when the woman raises that as a problem point, the man would proceed to say "I did not marry you for sexuality. My choice was based on you being a religious person." That is not a correct perspective however. Religion is never about ignoring the nature of human beings. It attaches importance to sexuality as well in a marriage. And it considers meeting that need

important. The life of our Prophet is well-known. Established sources provide sufficient details about his relationship with his wives. The rights of his wives were all respected with diligence.

Nowadays, marriages suffer from problems of this kind. Numerous sexual problems are observed with respect to the man or woman. Of course these problems are not beyond solution. The biological or psychological factors contributing to them should be diagnosed and treated. Being embarrassed about this matter, and avoiding the discussion of the problem would not bring one closer to the solution. For, marriages suffering from these issues are not simply acceptable, and cannot be sustained for extended periods.

Marriage is not about this world alone. It has also an otherworldly aspect. An outlook limited to this material world alone would lead the individual to error. A person who does not believe that the otherworld is a place of judgment, would feel free to do his will for as long as he can avoid the courts in this world. He would violate the rights of his wife, and does not lose his sleep for the injustices he may commit. But if he believes in the existence of the other world, and his accountability there, he would assume a graceful attitude towards his wife.

A person marrying on the basis of material motives alone would eventually lose his interest in his wife, as time takes toll on her physiology, or as his initial passions are met. Then he would start seeking newer passions. But a person who believes in afterlife would not put the material developments of this world to the center stage, does not embrace a material only perception of marriage, and loves his wife for this world and beyond.

The fate of marriages for love, primed by modernity, is common knowledge. We all know how such great loves come to an end after a year or two, and how divorce becomes unavoidable. Love, in simpler words, is nothing more than sexual desires. When those desires are satisfied, or when the spouse is no longer seen as sexually attractive, such marriages come to an end. Such marriages are often called marriages for 'interest'.

And an outlook based on interests alone is the enemy of a healthy marriage. For, "love" is not the goal but the result of marriage. A relationship based on such a love is not a good one. A relationship

that can lead to love, is good, however. Love is possible in the existence of a good relationship. But not all the relationships based on love will be good. Certainly love cannot be the goal of marriage, for it is variable in a sense. In time, one can come to harbor different emotions towards the object of one's love.

And a robust relationship cannot be built over such variable foundations. Building up a marriage over emotions is not a recipe for lasting union. Of course emotions are important; but they are not the whole picture. Reason and logic should have control. One should have a mood ruled by reason and logic. Rumi once proposed the following hierarchy: "The heart should be ruled by reason, and the reason should be ruled by the spirit."

The spirit stands at the top, followed by reason, and followed by the heart which represents the emotions... None, however, means much on its own. Neither reason nor the heart... The reason is comparable to the steering wheel, while the heart is like the engine... In a car lacking an engine, the steering wheel would be pretty useless. In a similar vein, what good would come from a car with an engine but without a steering wheel? Spirit, in its turn, is like the road to be taken by the car which is composed of the steering wheel and the engine. If there is no spirit, the body that is home to the steering wheel and the engine would, in a sense, be lifeless. The spirit is the life itself. Thanks to that spirit, man maintains its connection with existence.

Case in Hand

Kemal is a diligent and careful guy, who loves his home and who is a good spouse that comes home right after his work is done. His wife, Zehra is a woman that is dedicated to her children. However, excess in her interest in children leads to continuous delays in honoring her responsibilities in the household. Failing to tidy up the house till the arrival of her husband, Zehra soon comes to face negative reactions from her husband. After a while, every evening would bring its host of quarrels at home. The primary reason of these problems is the disappointment of Kemal in terms of his expectations of a home in good order. After a while, the quarrel would evolve into a fight of "your choice vs. my choice" or "your mother vs. my mother".

One day, a friend of Kemal takes him to a family communications seminar, where he learns about “the you-language” and “the me-language”. That night, when he arrives at home and sees the hectic landscape, he says “I feel bad when the house is so messy” rather than “do you call yourself a woman? Aren’t you ashamed of the state of this house?”. Zehra feels surprised. Kemal, the guy who, until that night, hasn’t been withholding his criticism of his wife given his defense mechanism, now embraced a new approach, which invoked the feeling of responsibility rather than defense mechanisms on Zehra’s part. And she duly responded “you may have a point my love. I perhaps neglected the house chores a bit while focusing on the children. I’ll be more careful from now on.”

In this example, the messy house offers two learning opportunities for couples:

- 1- Embracing a positive language would help solving problems.
- 2- The respect among the spouses is soothing.

SEEKING MATERIAL WELL-BEING IN MARRIAGE

Nowadays, material well-being is a common criteria guiding most people's choices regarding marriage. People want to marry rich people, and marriage is considered an opportunity to "hit the jackpot". The question often asked is "Does the groom own a house and a car?" People often think "I should have such a marriage that money should no longer be a problem for me. I don't want to worry about getting what I desire."

Of course one cannot reasonably disparage a pretty universal tendency of all human beings. That is a core tenet of human existence, based on the psychological and biological nature of the species. Human beings need food, shelter, and safety. The attitudes towards ownership and material well-being stem from these needs. The desire for material well-being correspond to these very human needs.

Marxist theory sees property ownership as a form of appropriation, whereas Islam considers ownership as a right subject to certain conditions. In Islamic perspective, this world is not inherently dirty; neither are the properties on this world... A food that meets one's need for nourishment, a house that provides shelter, an environment that meets the craving for safety are deemed primary needs. And primary needs are just extensions of human existence.

Prosperity

The concept of prosperity refers to the cases beyond meeting basic needs. And such cases vary from individual to individual, time to time, and age to age. The prosperity perspective of the pre-modern times are not the same as that of the modern era and afterwards. The prosperity vision of a villager is not the same as that of a city-dweller.

In an often quoted story, two villagers had been sitting under a tree and eating onions, with much gusto.

One would ask the other “I wonder what the Sultan eats at home.” “What a stupid question that is” says the other. “The buds of onions, of course.” For a plain villager, richness is about the ability to eat the buds of onions.

Today, however, the data and the definitions we have about prosperity changed so much. The apparent forms of life in the contexts of production and consumption, needs being ever re-defined, not to mention the changing definitions of happiness and prosperity... Many unenvisioned luxuries for the people of previous ages are, today, deemed must-haves. Weekends and summer vacations, for instance... The concept of vacation among the pre-modern people was so unlike what we have now. Feeling the need to spend each weekend and each summer at some different place is a pretty modern need.

The industrial revolution, the developments in technology, the great leaps in communication techniques, and countless tools we have developed, thoroughly changed what a human can do. The essence of human beings did not change, but the objects which reflect the needs of human beings did. In the olden days, people would communicate through specific means, and today, they use certain others.

The means to meet the needs for food and shelter among the essential needs also changed so much. The change the concept of prosperity went through also occurred in such a process of transformation. Today, human beings does not settle with just these basic needs. Food and shelter are no longer enough on their own. The type of food involved, and the presentation are also important considerations today. So are the shape and location of the house... Today, a person seeks nourishment and a warm shelter, as well as other things. One cannot imagine a life without internet, mobile phones, and wide-screen televisions. A simple shirt and jacket, and a pair of shoes are no longer enough on their own. Their color, style, quality and quantity are also deemed important nowadays. The style, design, and trend are now crucial needs.

No one gets clothes just as a means to cover himself. Clothes is much more than a physical need nowadays. People get their clothes under the motives of being appreciated and looking nice. People

don't just buy replacement clothes to replace ones getting worn out. And when you think about it, the clothes don't get simply worn out. There are no more patched up clothes around, are there? Capitalism is often occupied with sustaining production and consumption.

If people stop buying new things before their old stuff wears out completely, that machinery of capitalism would grind to a halt. And no one would allow that to happen.

Frugality is now so out of fashion. Today's economic perspective simply would not work by just meeting the basic needs of humanity. And in this context, economy exerts ever rising pressure on human psychology, and maintains its existence through fermenting the desires to be admired and privileged. The primary motive is to own better and different; to get what no one else has. Nowadays, people forgot about the dictum "don't boast what others lack". To the contrary, owning what others don't have, and boasting about it is supreme.

This state of affairs, this outlook is what defines the present. Rebellions, revolutions, and wars were caused by this impossible-to-quench thirst to own. That is what doomed Rome. The obsession of Roman elites with prosperity, and their subsequent exertion of substantial pressure on the populace, followed by the latter's rebellion through Christianity... In Rome, Christianity was accepted as the religion of the state through such a process.

You see, prosperity is not something one can define in a strict framework. It varies with reference to the person, time, and ages. Rumi compares wealth to a sea, and man to a boat on that sea: "The boat should remain afloat, and should not be immersed in water. If the boat is immersed in water, it would sink. If it keeps water out, it can reach its destination." In this view, the world is the sea humanity floats on. If human beings allow the world (or the worldly things) penetrate them, they would go down. But if they keep the world external, it would only act as a servant.

A person can be prosperous, and achieve material wealth. That is not a problem. The problem starts when the human beings embrace material wealth as the ultimate goal. Desiring material wealth in and of itself, rather than as a means, is not acceptable.

Good to have, but how?

Jesus Christ ordered “you should eat to live; not vice versa.” If a human being forgets about the actual goal in eating, and starts to live just to go on consuming, he would only contradict with his reason of existence.

Death is unavoidable, and the road to the grave gets shorter each day. We are not here to stay forever on this world. The life is short and we will move on to afterlife in a short while. We are but guests here. And a guest should not forget his temporary status in the domain he occupies. The bed one lies on is not his own, and will never be. In the morning, he is bound to rise up, and leave the house.

God commands that “eat and drink, but don’t waste.” Wastage is using more than our fair share. Sure, we are entitled to using the blessings of the world we live on, but we are not entitled to embracing them as if we would never be separated. A man can only do so much in a house he rents from someone else. That same awareness should apply for the world he lives in. The world and the things on it are put into humanity’s service for a limited time frame. A man cannot simply do as he wishes with them.

The owner of the domain is God, not the man... Everything is associated with a certain sense of ownership. A human being is not the absolute owner of everything. There are certain rules applicable to the use of the domains and blessings granted to man. The limits of what is allowed and what is forbidden are stipulated. For mankind, neither halal nor the religious restrictions apply as explicit rules. To the extent that a human continues to benefit from the blessings of this world in this framework, he would stay afloat on the sea, and not get immersed in water. That is how he would avoid sinking.

Sure, material wealth is a crucial issue in marriages. And material prosperity is surely important. But if it is promoted to the status of the single-most important determinant, substantial problems would naturally follow. For instance, in a marriage between man and wife, both start to work for material wealth. They can buy a house and a car after long years, and achieve a certain level of economic well-being. The kids get married as the man and wife proceeds through their forties. Feeling tired after all the hardships endured, they may naturally be inclined to seek a second spring. It is a common oc-

currence to see the man sway towards younger women. The wife who got old with him, and who put on some weight on the way, no longer looks attractive.

And the man would seek some new adventures, confident in his material earnings. He would forget about his *raison d'être* and instead focus on selfish pleasures.

Only a single obstacle puts a brake on the desires of human beings: the certainty of death and the passing nature of this world... A person who is well-versed in this understanding, would not fall for the material and transitory pleasures of this world. He would stay loyal to his wife and family, thinking "I reached this old age, and am now closer to death than ever. After such an old age, given the certainty of death, I cannot be consoled by the whole world. It is better to live by the principles of the afterworld." When the pleasures of this world are given primacy, the physical decline suffered by one's spouse would cause stress on the individual. But when the other world is put to the center stage, the spiritual aspect of the spouse would assume primacy, rather than her physical looks. And the individual would avoid running after wrong desires. He would achieve the awareness of the ephemeral nature of all pleasures of this world. The pleasures of this world, in effect, are only teasers. Their price is really harsh. And losing those pleasures is a cause of concern for the individual.

Material wealth should be considered a tool, not a goal. Material wealth is only significant when it is directed towards a goal. It only drowns the individual when it becomes the overall goal. Which destination do you want to reach through material wealth? Do you want to sate your selfish desires? Selfishness and selfish desires only make one prisoner of material wealth. They would make the human work for the tool, rather than making the tool work for the human. And that represents the fall of the man, whereupon he would be slave to his tools.

Instilling the Material Well-being Perception in the Family

In a marriage, the spouses should be aware of the value of material wealth, for them to be able to cope with the problems affecting the family. An outlook based on solid foundations is a requirement for training them in this context.

And that training should be of a specific character, rather than a formal one. A formal education would not suffice on its own. The ladder from primary school to the university often fails to contribute to the maturity of the individual. And a distinct type of reading should accompany the training thus required.

In terms of maturity, many a university graduate fares no better than a primary school graduate. Breaking and ruining things like children who think about nothing but their desires is virtually their forte. They just desire, without thinking of the costs involved. Satisfying their desires often is everything they seek and get. And they know of no ideal but to satisfy desires.

People with higher education but lacking knowledge of anything other than eating, occupying a shelter, and satisfying desires may eventually get married and have kids, but would cause lots of problems all the way through. Even though they are no more mature than children, they would then face the responsibility of raising children. And that is not a state of affairs a human being should find himself in, for being a human is an opportunity in and of itself. It is not a being that would be satisfied merely through the satisfaction of biological needs.

Driving a race car at a constant speed of fifty km/h would be a waste of means and opportunities. That is the basic problem of our country: The lack of a maturity training to run in parallel to formal education. We are in this less than perfect position due to the overwhelming weight of people who are eligible from a formal perspective, but deficient in terms of maturity. Everything is being discussed over simple slogans: modernity, progressivism, reactionary outlook and so on...

Human beings are born with the opportunity to achieve grandeur and nobler things. And as they go through life, they should think about how those nobler goals can be achieved, and should live accordingly. That is why one cannot emphasize literature, philosophy, arts and wisdom education enough. University education alone is not enough. A dervish lodge is also necessary. Mathematics alone is not enough, it should be accompanied by literature as well. Economics should be complemented with poetry. The material outlook should be complemented with a spiritual one. Only by doing so one would

grasp the gist of issues such as marriage, relationship, and material wealth, and act accordingly.

Case in Hand

“Spouses who are married but who only think of profits”

Asude Hanim and Aziz Bey visit holy sites as part of Umrah, but unfortunately have a discussion during their return flight. And that discussion grows into a fight. But that fight is not the first one they had, and is only another bead on a string of fights. After that experience, however, they visit a leading religious figure and confess “we love each other and we don’t want to break up. But we also have serious trouble in getting by.” The learned dervish they had visited ask them individually what they had prayed for most during their Umrah. Aziz Bey responded that he prayed mostly for a new car, while Asude Hanim said most of her prayers were devoted to buying a new house. And the dervish tells them “your hearts are not directed towards each other. You are married but you only think of material things... You should direct your hand, your heart, and your tongue to the same direction.”

From the experience of Aziz Bey and Asude Hanım in this story, two points can be emphasized:

1. Emotional honesty is important.
2. Happiness should not be sought in material and earthly possessions. Attention should be paid to making one’s spouse happy.

IS LOVE A SINE QUA NON?

Love takes the helm in the attraction between man and woman. If a man and woman had come together, one would assume the existence of love in between them. As if man and woman cannot stand together in the lack of love... Actually, that is not always true. For, love is not always a sine qua non for a robust relationship. Love can be an effect of the relationship, rather than a cause. The individuals can fall in love, but may not always sustain a good relationship. And the relationship may wither away when love is gone. But a strong relationship can lead to love.

The basic purpose and goal should be the establishment of a good relationship and marriage. Everything should serve that purpose. Sure, love is a great feeling. It virtually takes one to heaven. But while doing so, it can also disconnect him from reality. One who loses his ties with reality, in turn, should better expect a huge surprise when the reality hits him back. That is why love should always be based on facts and truth. Rumi's quote about the compass applies for love as well. A person should always be in touch with reality. A love that cannot meet that requirement would only cause pain and disillusion.

Prerequisites of Marriage

Love may serve as an introduction to marriage, but it would not be of much help in case a strong marriage cannot be built. A stronger foundation can be laid through a process that starts with the question "what should one do for a healthy relationship and marriage?" Sharing is the basic foundation of marriage, which is the union of man and wife. And for sharing, the parties of the union should know each other.

A human being would get closer to someone he or she knows well. An awareness of the other person's wants and requirements enables action in tune. Love is essential to the extent it contributes to the process whereby man and woman learn about and get to know each other. Otherwise, love should not be exaggerated as a concept.

A number of prerequisites apply for marriage. A person who wishes to marry may have come across someone to do just that with. Perhaps that second person is a stranger at that moment. But that strangeness does not lead to negative emotions nonetheless. When one comes across with such a person, one would be inclined to hear about her and get to know her better. That want and will enables the individual to open his heart to the other person. And warm feelings caused by affection start to flow through that opening.

The process of getting acquainted that begins in such a pure and plain way, and the marriages built on good will are observed to be healthier. And often such marriages are found to lead to great loves in subsequent years and decades. The stories of long and longer marriages all point at these roots. You would see many examples of this if you look around.

And we also know that the marriages which begin with a huge love often fail. And what a failure that is! People who would swear by their eternal love for each other may end up trying to kill each other. That is understandable in some sense: If someone is blinded by his love for another person, he would be enslaved by that love, and the other person effectively comes to own him. In this context, the individuals involved want the other one belong to him or her only. Falling in love is effectively falling to enslavement. And someone who falls in love is rendered the slave of the other person. The lover always wants his love to stay with him. Yet, the object of love is not a property to be owned. She has her own family and social circle as well.

And being subjected to such a great love, after a while, tires the object of that love, and pushes her away. And that is the thing with life. The person who is madly in love is often unable, or unwilling, to see that fact.

All great loves are poisonous and deadly, to some extent. In other words, love is a good thing, but only in conservative amounts. A balanced attitude is a must in any case.

Values, Perspectives to Life

A person is born into an environment or space. And gets his form in his place of birth. The environment and space, in turn, is also shaped around the person, in the longer run. What puts a person into activity, on the other hand, is value. Space, in turn, amounts to the sum of all values. The society and space is built on values, and that is how it can keep itself in existence. A human being, in turn, is nothing but values. Without values, it would be merely an object of interest from a biological and physical perspective.

The union of two human beings, and the relationship between them is possible only through their values. In the lack of values which go beyond both individuals, personal interests and worldly desires surface, and in the long-run, ruin relationships.

What are the personal values that render one person truly human? There are some values which are merely tools, and there are some which are goals. From ancient times, the following had often been pronounced as basic values of humanity: honesty, respect for the boundaries and rights of others, keeping promises, valuing the other person, modesty, good will, respect for labor, and working hard...

And in the essence of all these values lie love and affection. If a value is related to what we do for the other person, if it is about being “nice” to another person, that value requires love for the other person. Therefore, love is the essence and spirit of life.

A person who holds the values fermented by love, he is essentially an aspirant of goodness. That is what he seeks, thinks about, works for, and aims for. Such individuals approach another person for goodness and quality. That is what they have a marriage for. That is what they build a relationship for. In their endeavor to improve and better themselves, they want the person they approach also have goodness.

Given his spirit and heart, the human beings are inclined to excellence. He would like to learn, since learning is a means to achieving excellence. He would get married and treats his spouse well. And treating the spouse well leads to further goodness. The marriage and relationship of good people, in turn, act as a center where good arises. Unions like these effectively act as a school.

That is why quality and value is never short of demand. Something that is quality and valuable naturally seeks another quality and valuable thing. And is also sought after in the same process. As Nazif Gürdoğan put it “the quality needs no passport.” A quality person is able to go through all the gates, and is always approved. Virtuous people are admired, even by their enemies. For instance, prophet Mohammad draw the awe of his enemies as well, given his virtue. For our prophet had always been a trustworthy individual. The morality of our prophet had been based on goodness. And that morality based on goodness sought to improve life and the world. That is why all human beings and human values which had been cast aside till that day, had been attracted to our prophet.

One should think about love and human values in this context. Love is not something that occurs only between opposite genders. It is about existence as a whole. And since it is not always thought in this context, its perception was reduced to sexuality, sacrificing true love in doing so. Sure, love has an aspect based on attraction between opposite sexes. In this context, love refers to a kind of attraction between the genders. That is why the opposite sexes are attracted to each other. Doing so enables reproduction and the continuation of humanity. But love is not limited to that. A man is capable of loving a woman, as well as other forms of existence. But that two forms of love is inherently different. A man cannot hold the same form of love for his wife, and for his mother, and vice versa. Love that brings humanity close to existence and human values has a distinctive depth to it.

Of course people seek excellence. And they love what his quality and valuable. Upon finding a trace of excellence –a sign of quality and value– in the other person, begins to love her.

When one fails to see quality and value in the person one loves and is exposed to, that love eventually diminishes.

If a person wants to be loved, she should develop specifics of quality and value. If she has the question “how can I sustain my marriage and make it better?” she should first try and improve herself and her outlook. She should look at her heart and mind, and feed both. She should learn more, and feed her heart much better. A person with a more beautiful heart and mind would have a better outlook of life. Every woman would love and would like to live with a man with

a good heart and mind. No man can give up a woman with a good heart and mind.

Families as the Hearth of Love

Love is a magical key that opens many doors. It is like a magnet that ties people to each other. If a family is based on and built by love; invisible and unbreakable ties of love exist among the individual members of that family. Think of the bricks that make up a building. They are tied to each other with cement. That cement is the bond between them. Blowing winds or falling rain cannot destroy the building. And thus, the people inside the building are protected from the elements. Love is comparable to cement that binds the members of the family together. Individuals who are separate human beings are tied together by love, and evolve into a family. They flow to each other through that invisible bond.

The family members who are loyal to each other have their ears open. They know how to listen. And keeping their ears open makes learning possible. When someone in the family talks, the others start to listen, and think about what they hear. In a family where love exists, the individuals would unavoidably be influenced by each other. For, the other person is no ordinary third party, but someone that loves him or her. A person would naturally be impressed by loving eyes and acts. Loving individuals, in a sense, emit waves around them, and those waves have unavoidable effect on the people nearby.

Just five senses are not sufficient to explain that effect. The whole being and existence of the individuals come into play. How they sit, how they stand, how they look are all shaped by love. For instance, the states of learned people are just like that. Someone who visits such people would eventually leave as a transformed person. Yet, he may not have done or said anything through the process. But just being with such sages means something on its own. For, such learned sages exist in a state of true love.

They hold an existence beyond what material science can understand and assess. Being close to that existence, in other words, the experience of love in a family setting, is a similar experience. In such families, the children learn faster and grow with better health.

We are talking about true love here. It is well known that some forms of love are selfish. Some people love for just his own needs. It is akin to loving someone for some form of interest or pleasure... Such a love, however, would eventually consume the recipient of that love. A woman loved for her beauty and wealth would cease to be loved as that beauty and wealth runs out. Moreover, selfish love exist on a plane of mutual interest. They exist only the other person also expresses love. In the lack of mutual feelings, that love would also cease to exist. It may seemingly exist, but what is truly loved is what the other person, that is being seemingly loved, has and makes available. Such selfish forms of love are tested in the context of life, and often end in frustration.

The family should be built on top of love that is not conditional based on interests and pleasure. A family cannot rise on the basis of such a love. On the other hand, the love that exists should be developed, and reinforced with only good things.

No, marriage is not just a partnership based on similar interests. People need each other, but marriage cannot be built on needs. It is true that a marriage is also a partnership, but it requires investment by the parties, for that partnership to become entrenched and enhanced. Both man, woman and children should do their duties. The grand total of that investment is love. The individuals should know the other members of the family better, so as to be able to love them. They should never forget that their existence depends on the existence of the others, as well as the existence of the family.

An individual in the family should love the other one not for his interest, but for what the other person essentially is. The individual should be respected with his identity and differences, not due to his function.

Parents should love their children not because they are good children, but they are just children. The children can sometimes say different things. They may harbor views which are not in line with those of their parents. But if love is withheld from them on the grounds of these differences, the parents would be deemed selfish. No, parents cannot hold love as a stick. Conditional love is not a healthy one. Conditional love used as a stick is a good recipe to raise a selfish person. They start to live not as they are, but as they are expected to be. And this eventually gives them a double personality.

The child would not be harboring true love, but looks like loving just to satisfy the parents. It is necessary to respect children, so as to prevent them from engaging in such behavior. Unrequited, unconditional love should be extended to them; so that they can develop the same love for their parents.

The Dialects of Love

True love has certain dialects. One should be well-versed in them. You cannot express love without an awareness of its dialects. Even if you are truly knowledgeable, if you don't speak any dialect you cannot convey that knowledge. Someone who is not proficient in English cannot speak and express his knowledge in a setting where that language is spoken. The same applies for love as well.

There are certain channels through which love flows. One should have access to those channels. For instance, there are some people who love others, but don't know how to express that love. They lack the required skill. People sometimes talk about fathers who love their wives and children, but who fail to express that love. People who love but seem not to. People who fail to do the things loved by the spouse in the relationship, due to an unawareness.

Exchanging gifts is one of the channels and dialects through which love expresses itself. Exchanging gifts is a common practice in our society as well. Special occasions serve as an excuse to extend gifts to each other. The gifts extended on special occasions express and amplify existing love.

People who love but fail to express that love should learn that dialect –the practice of exchanging gifts. One should not think little of a flower. A small gift can go a long way in terms of bridging distances and warming people to each other.

Sacrifice is yet another amazing expression of love. Sacrificing one's comforts and money for the sake of the individual he loves; doing something for loved ones... Waking up earlier than the wife on a morning, and preparing the breakfast for her... Preparing small remedies for her when she falls ill... Prioritizing her requests above else...

Yet another expression of love is the awareness of spouses, of each other's needs. What does my wife love? What does she wish for? A

man who knows the answers to these questions, who tries to obtain these without the wife asking for them, can be safely perceived to be in love. The wife in turn would think “my husband loves me, for he is aware of my expectations.” Spending time together is a must for the spouses to know each other better. How can a husband who arrives home late every day get to know his wife? A woman who does not warmly welcome and is not interested in the problems of a husband that arrives at home on time, and that performs his duties well, cannot possibly understand how her husband feels and what he wants. Making the effort to get to know each other is the primary condition.

Talking to each other, and the ability to communicate is another dialect of love. If someone talks, he would definitely have love towards the other person. Talking, and particularly praising each other in the talks... By naming the positive features of one's spouse, the individual honors the spouse. Without talking, praises cannot be voiced. One must talk to be able to praise the other. A person who talks and praises her spouse can be deemed to have flattered the spirit of the other. And praise should be realistic and balanced. Exaggeration in praise will not be very convincing. Extreme praise can also lead to hubris on part of the object of praise. Incorrect and groundless praise would lead to narcissism. That is why the acts of the individual should be praised, rather than the individual herself.

Physical contact is the obvious dialect of love. A person wants to touch and hug the person he loves.

Eye contact, a touch to the shoulder, a touch on one's hair, a smile, can all be considered physical contact.

One needs to utilize the dialects of love noted above. Not everyone is capable of writing a love poem. But he still can express his love through one off the dialects noted above. When these dialects are used, the love will be deemed to have occurred. Visible love provides the grounds for a glorious union. In the presence of quality union, love will remain. Love would lead to the establishment of the union, and would be sustained by a quality union thus established.

Case in Hand

“Love is based not on love, but on thought...”

Ugur and Sinem fell in love and got married. But before they even got through their first year as a married couple, they gave up on the idea of having a child, thinking that they don't get along well. In the end, they went to see a lawyer to get a divorce. The lawyer, in turn, advised them to take couple's therapy. The therapist had a look on both, and saw that there were no underlying obstacles to prevent the continuation of the marriage. They had good will and love, but they simply didn't get along well. Neither party had a strong concept of emotional awareness. The man thought eroticism was love, while the woman thought romanticism was.

They were given some assignments on the relationship between love and connection, and were taught to have a "relationship focused on giving rather than receiving."

They had some concerns and incorrect fixed attitudes. Sinem thought that "if I engage in erotic acts, my husband would think ill of me", while Ugur thought "if I act in a romantic manner I would look weak and lose control."

In the assignment, the therapist asked Sinem to use her sexual prowess for a month to bind her husband to her more effectively, and Ugur to put on a loving smile on his face when he looked at his wife, and to say nice words every now and then, touching her softly. Both successfully fulfill the assignments. The result would be a great success, and the couple virtually returns to its honeymoon period.

In this experience, both parties extended emotional gifts the other one desired.

AROUND LOVE...

People love in a blend of emotions. The emotions can be compared to the existence of seven primary colors, which are intertwined in a harmony. At the core of the harmony of emotions lies love. In a sense, life revolves around love. From first breath on, human beings face and crave love. The mother's womb provides a safe and warm shelter for the development of the fetus. Once its development reaches a certain stage, a human being is born.

Yet, the world that he is born into is unlike the womb. It is cold and inherently unsafe. The first breath fills his lungs with cold air. The contrast of the cold and unsafe environment is stark, with the previous one where he would be fed without even moving his lips, and all his needs would be catered to enable his development without hesitation. The cold air filling his lungs brings his first acquaintance with fear. Instinctively he seeks safety, and bonds with his mother, who would be providing that safety. Upon taking refuge in her arms, and after being fed, he would feel more comfortable, and feel love for the mother who enables that comfort.

That is why love is a form of energy to bond. A human being connects to what he loves. One can talk about the existence of love only in the presence of a connection. Think about an atom, with neutrons and protons in the nucleus, while electrons circle around it. That is also a scene of attraction, connection, and love.

The Layers and Levels of Love

There are certain layers and levels of love. There is a normal level of love, and an increasing, ever stronger form of it...

We tend to call that increased level of love, passionate love. That is the zenith of love. In Arabic, passionate love is synonymous with ivy. An ivy sucks on a tree, and scorches it. It would not let it go, and becomes virtually one with the branch it holds on to. As the state of passionate love is comparable to that of an ivy, the same word is used to describe both.

If love can be compared to a spectrum, passionate love lies on one end, and hate on the other. Love stands in the middle of passionate love and hate. It refers to a case of equilibrium. Hate and passionate love are the extreme forms of love. As love refers to an equilibrium, it can be compared to white light. Hate, would be dark, and passionate love would be a deep red... Of course there are also hues in between. Love is not reserved for just good things. One can feel it for bad things as well. In other words, love can be directed towards different states, rather than a specific one. A human being cannot live without harboring love. Without love, he cannot be deemed to exist. The feeling of love would certainly be directed to something. In one way or other, it gets connected to its object. Regardless of the object of affection, a human being feels alive through that feeling. However, one feels good when he loves something good, and bad when he loves something bad.

Love is in the essence of the universe. Love, in a sense, is what binds every single element of existence together. Love is the power around which the universe revolves. Passionate love and hate, as the feelings that determined so much in history, stand at two ends of the spectrum of love. One would often hear references to a power that pulls planets towards each other. That pull is a form of love. Love corresponds to that power of attraction. You would move away from things you hate, and get attracted to what you love. A person who loves is attracted to that object of love. As the attraction increases, one would start to feel passionate love. First one starts to like the other, then feels that tingling feeling of love, and then falls into passionate love. Liking, love, and passionate love stand as the three crucial emotions in the hierarchy of love. First one feels affection towards the object of love. That affection attracts the individual in that direction. Then follows a connection. Once that connection is established, a pleasure would be felt.

Hormones related to love were identified in human body. Certain hormones are related to pleasure, and certain others are related to connection. Dopamine is related to pleasure. It is the award and punishment hormone of the brain. Dopamine is released in the case of love as well. But other hormones such as serotonin, adrenaline, and noradrenaline are also involved in love.

Connections, in turn, entails oxytocin. For instance, when injected with oxytocin, male monkeys devote greater attention to the female monkey and their offspring. Oxytocin is released most during breastfeeding. And doing so, the mother builds an ever deeper and stronger bond with her child.

This biological fact suggests the following understanding: The spirit is valuable in the eyes of God, and expresses itself on the body. The release of oxytocin, a chemical working in the brain, is just one form of expression of the spirit. It leads to such bonds among the mother and the child, the lover and the loved one, that it is often accompanied by a fear of loss. When someone loves another, she develops a bond and suffers from the fear of loss of that object of bond. Life, thus, is an amalgam of building bonds, and worrying about the loss of those bonds. In this sense, one can argue that love stands at the center of existence.

The Raison d'être of the Universe

As love stands at the center of existence, it is accepted that “affection is the *raison d'être* of the universe.” Without love, human beings don't act, stand up, write, speak, paint, or build something.

People suffering from schizophrenia exhibit a symptom that can be described by a lack of will or motivation. The patient would shy away from doing even the smallest of chores. Often anhedonia accompanies that lack of motivation. The patient does not get pleasure from anything. The person suffers from a lack of motivation, as he does not get pleasure from anything any more. These symptoms refer to advanced stages of depression. In ordinary depression, the individual would be marked by unhappiness and a general lack of enjoyment. But he cannot just stand by in the face of certain serious issues. But in melancholic depression, where he suffers from anhedonia, the individual completely loses his interest and ability to get pleasure. In

such a disinterested mindset, he would be unable to love something. The individual would be completely mired in sorrow. He would just sit by, still like a rock. Some are observed to dip in extremely hot water, just to feel something in the grip of that thick sorrow.

When unable to love anymore, the individual would only suffer, and lose any justification for living.

Motivation for Love

In this context, many sought formulas and motives to keep love well and strong, so as to keep the human involved alive. There are two distinct types of motivations: internal and external. To encourage his kid, a parent would apply external motivation, telling him “you’re doing great” and so on. The experts working in this field, on the other hand, resort to internal motivation by instilling in an awareness of studying on part of the student. They attach importance to student embracing her studies with an internal will, rather than due to external factors.

Sure enough, the internal type is the healthiest form of motivation. Do you need something to be done? What you should do is to present a picture underlining the need for that thing to be done. The first thing to do is to enable thinking on the information provided. One would do wisely to look how our prophet Mohammad did in terms of instilling certain manners. Numerous verses of the holy book describe the true nature of the world and the form of living one should seek on this world. Many pieces of hadith by the prophet underline the road to heaven will be open to those who embrace that direction. First of all, one should determine the truth, what is the right thing... It should be emphasized that when one bases his life on the truth, the rewards would definitely be coming. A human being would thus learn what to do upon learning the truth, and would reap the fruits to the extent he lives his life in the light of that knowledge.

Human beings want to engage in activities that would lead to concrete results. Tasks in vain are not attractive to humanity. The existence of an end goal motivates the individual. Achievement, and the ability to succeed gives hope to the person. Even making some efforts and suffering some pain in that endeavor often give pleasure to him. Even the pains suffered for a goal are pleasurable in some sense.

Why do we like hot food? For that hot food presents a certain taste, a certain form of delight. And for the sake of that delight, the human bears the pain of the hot, and hotness ceases to be a pain from then on. Do the lovers exist in another state of existence?

Remember the story of Mecnun, for instance... Despite all the suffering he endures, he would not complain, as the pains suffered for one's love give delight to the individual.

All that is needed is love on part of the individual, ascribing importance to the object of his affection. When someone loves another person, and considers her important, the difficulties he would endure for her would feel like pleasures. But that does not happen with mere lip service to love. A true love is needed. True love, in turn, can happen only with a person that got rid of the cruder parts of his personality. True love exists with true human.

Love and Pleasure

In this day and age where authenticity is a pretty scarce quality, one often mistakes love and pleasure. For instance, seeking pleasures are often confused with love. When asked "why don't you get married?" people often respond "I have yet to fall in love." Falling in love is often considered the reason of marriage. That, however, is essentially ignorance about love. Love is often mistaken for pleasure.

Yet, love and pleasure are very different things. Of course love involves pleasure, but pleasure need not necessarily involve love. Pleasure is only valuable if it occurs as a result of love. Pleasure without love, on the other hand, is a totally physical and earthly motive. It is mostly associated with dopamine secretion in the brain. Pleasure occurs as the body is stimulated. But it is only transitory. It is not valuable in and of itself.

Pleasure is tangible, while love is often intangible. A human being experiences pleasure when eating something or having an orgasm. It is about some fireworks going off in the body. In the case of love, however, something else occurs. The person rises to an abstract plane through the wings of love. Love is related to the existence of human beings. It is about the meaning the person ascribes to life and his surroundings.

Pleasure is selfish and bodily, while love entails a value of its own. A person ascribes a meaning to something he loves, and sacrifices part of himself for that meaningful entity. In a sense, he wriggles out of selfishness. Pleasure is all about receiving, while love occurs through giving. Take the mother's love for her child... That is such a strong love, going often beyond the confines of love, amounting to compassion.

Even though love often entails an expectation of mutual feelings from the other person, the purest form of love that compassion is, is not thus constrained. A mother has compassion for her child, without expecting something in return. Compassion is about love without any expectation of a return. Compassion is the pure form of love.

Forms of Love

The form of relationship that creates an association between man and woman represents yet another form of love. The interest and attraction between man and woman, and the appearances of that attraction are expressed as romanticism. The science of psychiatry, in turn, developed certain scales to assess the level of romanticism involved. Such scales are often called "Close Relations Scale". The primary feature of that type of scale lies in the fact that it stipulates certain forms of connections. The bonds one develops could be anxious, avoidant, aggressive, or safe in nature.

If the relationship is based on trust, the individual would not feel fear in terms of building bonds and worry about breaking apart. For instance, in case trust is the basis of the relationship one has with his mother, when grown up and married, he would be able to move away without worrying about losing that bond. The physical separation does not worry such a person, as he would continue to love his mother from a distance. But if their relationship is far from ideal, and if the mother's connection with the child is marred by certain problems, the love would not be a healthy one, nor would the separation be... In a trust-based relationship, both separations and reunions are considered normal.

In an anxious relationship, however, both would pose important problems. In the case of anxious bonds, the person would feel uneasy even when together with his loved one. Yet, they should be at peace

and ease, given the goal of bringing the lover and the loved one together is achieved. But alas, there would be no peace, as the bonds are anxious ones at best. Some mothers don't even let their children to play in the street, due to the fear of losing him. And whenever the child goes out, he in turn would worry about the mother who stayed at home.

And then there is aggressive bonding. We read many news items about that form of connection. About people who beat up their loved ones, resorting to violence. The type of lovers who say "if I can't have you, no one can"...

The murders of women... That sick mindset that believes the loved one is not an independent human being, but just an extension of the lover...

In the case of avoidant bonds, Leyla and Mecnun's love story is a good example. They are separated right as they were about to achieve accession. Mecnun suffers greatly to rejoin his great love, and in the end can rejoin her. But right at that moment, he also lets her go. That avoidant form of bonding is touched by some fear, that loss would be occurring as one builds a bond... One feels that the magic and love would dissipate as the lovers finally come together. Love is expressed in the inability to meet. Love from a distance is often felt more attractive.

Expression of Emotions

One can assess the emotions of individuals so as to understand if they are truly able to express them or not. Some people love others, but fail to express that love. There are many examples in daily life and prevailing relationships. For instance, when we talk to children, some complain that "I can't understand if my mom really loves me or not. As if she wears a mask. It is impossible to perceive what she feels." Children like these behave in some way, but are unable to understand if that behavior is approved or not.

The children of mothers who are the subject of such complaints are not often endowed with safe bonding. They often grow up to be individuals suffering from a number of problems. They run away from home, and suffer from behavioral disorders. A look into why the children act in that way reveals that the real problem lies at

home, with the mother, the parent. Since it is not possible to raise healthy children in such settings, naturally mother should assume a greater burden in emotional education. The insights to be provided by the mother will play a major part in enabling the child express his emotions better.

People who are unable to express their emotions are, in a sense, mute. One can talk about emotional deafness and emotional muteness. It is called alexithymia. As the individual suffering from that condition is unable to express his emotions through his words and behavior, he appears to suffer from an illness. The symptoms of that suffering include various problems of the stomach, intestines, and heart. They would get sad but are unable to express that sadness.

In the end, their feelings rise to the surface as physical issues. As their behaviors and emotions cannot be expressed through words and behaviors, stomach cramps and pains take over the job. Most stomach problems are due to problems in expressing emotions. The emotional world of human beings, like their biology, is scene to certain developments. That is why education on emotions, just like physical education, is crucial. In particular, the parents should be subjected to that education.

God ordered "Tell people you love about your love. Tell them 'I love you for the sake of of God'". Various verses of holy Quran can be interpreted in this direction. The expression of love is emphasized in the life of prophet Mohammad, his practices, and in our cultural mindset.

When a person expresses his love, making it evident, the relationship between the two individuals would be stronger and confidence-inspiring. Does my neighbor love me or not? What does my friend feel about me? If the answers to these questions are not clear, doubts arise with respect to my neighbor and friends. And in the presence of doubts, their place in my mind and heart becomes ambiguous, and even pointing at potential danger.

People without clear emotional states, without any expression of what they love and don't love, what they feel sorry for and not, would naturally darken the mood. They are perceived to wear masks and does not show what they feel in the inside. For instance, politicians are accepted in this category. That is how they are considered to be.

People who put on masks on purpose, to hide their true agenda can mislead people in the short term, but they are bound to losing in the long-run. In general, these people are narcissistic, and often are perceived to be passive-aggressive snobs. It is interesting that NLP courses, in a sense, serve these people. These courses teach people how to gain trust of others, and how to present a better picture. The courses are about assuming an artificial appearance.

They preach “speaking positively; using nice and well sentences.” They show how to get along well with everyone.

And the reason? To achieve certain things and goals... That is how some people try to achieve their goals...

In our daily lives we come across many professional faces smiling at us and wandering around with a positive mask at all times. Hundreds, even thousands of insincere people. It is clear that assuming misleading appearances just to achieve some things and goals is vile. Such an attitude, in fact, damages the people who embrace that attitude. Think about it: a person always appearing as someone he is not, wearing masks at all times. And that is a recipe for fragmented personalities.

Yes, love is a huge resource. One should get to know it, understand and process it. When one reaches the truth about love, embracing it in his universe, it serves as a precious value, helping the person ascend. People who are able to set up a life marked by love can be compared to people striking a gold or diamond mine. True love represents such a value that it helps person ascent well beyond his physical existence, to the unlimited universe of the heart. Love for a greater value rather than for interests and pleasures. Such a love manifested to give rather than receive would bring heaven on earth. Love for interests and pleasures, on the other hand, means ascribing sacred value to one's self. And that makes one a narcissist. Narcissists are capable of love, of course, but not a love of others.

The Need to Commit and Love

Human beings are born into existence, and are faced with many things right after their birth. And human beings are interested in everything in the vicinity. In a sense, a human is alone. And in another sense, he is involved in many things. In the beginning, that

loneliness leads to the need for trust. He wants to be sure of everything surrounding him, and wants to get connection with something, in his endeavor to find shelter.

Human beings lead a life based on a pyramid of needs. The lower levels of the pyramid contain the basic needs such as food, shelter, and reproduction. These basic needs are followed by the crucial need that the need for safety is. And the need for safety is the source of the need to get connected to something. Throughout history human beings had always loved and got bonded with something or other. The drift of man towards woman and woman towards man is an expression of the need for love and bonding. Every woman wants to love and build some bonds. The same is true for men as well. Every person loves someone, and places that loved one in the center of his heart. His thoughts and imagination assume a nature that is all about the loved one. Bonding with another person, however, can sometimes lead to truly twisted states of mind. Lack of self-confidence, frustrations, loneliness, and living in seclusion can lead to the development of bonds among the members of the same sex as well.

Imposition of a specific identity to define a person also has to do with this. One's self-definition and expression with reference to that identity are all results of the need for bonds. When a person is associated with an identity with a sense of belonging, he is able to avoid loneliness, in an experience similar to supporting a football club or belonging to ideological circles. The feeling of belonging acts as a home for the person. The physical house provides shelter for one's body, while the identity provides shelter for the spirit. When immersed in an identity, when included in a tribe, the human being starts to feel safe.

The modernity's emphasis on the individual is about taking the human being apart from those sources of belonging. The individual is someone who is able to get free from his family, identity, belief, and ties. So, he is all by himself. And a person who is alone would be an easier prey for the indoctrination by modernism. And modernism, in a sense, is a form of capitalism. In this paradigm, man is expected to free himself from the direction provided by identity, but instead, surrender to the orders of capitalism. In the end, he finds something else to bind to: the sacred elements of capitalism...

The need to connect and establish bonds is natural to human beings. It is part of their essence. Therefore, the need to connect is not about a shortcoming. The gist of the matter is about the object of connection.

In this sense, one should make sure that the need to connect is directed to healthy objects. As a rule, one should connect to what is true and right.

When asked “what do you do?” religious scholars respond “we both unshackle, and tie.” In other words, they unshackle the people from the earthly obsessions for money, position, fame, and bodily desires, and establish new bonds, this time with the supreme being that God is. The God granted the feeling of bonds to enable us to bond with Him, rather than with what is only ephemeral. That is why “God is all you need, if you need a friend. Quran is all you need, if you need an object of affection!” The bond with the God gives man entitlement to the creation of God. But is it wiser to establish bonds with the property, or the owner of that property? Won’t you get ownership of the property through association, when you establish strong bonds with the owner?

Incorrect bonds make one exposed to dangers. When a human being is unable to find truth and instead focuses on ephemeral, he would effectively be employing his emotions in the wrong direction. Today, this is a common occurrence in relationships entailing bonding and love. One would be surprised to see some forms of bonding, regardless of the genders involved. Dedication to a loved one to an extent whereby the lover says “without you, I would just die.” Is it natural for some person to become everything for another? The man feels such a strong connection, that he eventually forgets about himself, his environment, and the reason of his existence as a human being. In an interesting account, Shams Tabrizi disappears when he notices that Rumi’s bonds to him get ever stronger, taking the latter away from God. After the disappearance of Shams Tabrizi, Rumi thinks hard about his feelings and bond to the former. After great reflection on his experience, he authors *Masnavi*, his great work of poems describing love.

Commitment, but How?

A mother would naturally love her child. A teacher would love her student, and a lover would love his loved one. But one should be diligent about not crossing certain limits in that love and the bond it entails.

Loving something more than one can take, establishing bonds beyond the capabilities of the parties of that bond, will be dangerous for both. The form of love is important in loving someone. What lies in the core of our emotions? Do pleasures and earthly tastes play a part? If so, the feelings cannot be deemed very innocent. One should seek bonds where reason, heart, and soul are all involved.

The picture is clear: Our emotions as well as our loves should undergo repairs. Love and bonds which do not undergo repairs may lead to breakdowns. As in the case where a man bonds with another man, or a woman is interested in another woman... The rule of guidance is provided by God in His verses, and by our prophet in his hadith and actions. A person would love his mom, dad, children, neighbors and so on. It should be evident by now that there is a wide range of love. One should love others with reference to the position involved. We cannot apply the same form of love for our mother and our God. The two loves should be distinctively separate.

The root of the issue is to love for the sake of God, rather than for our bodily pleasures... When one loves for the sake of God, we would have a healthy form of love for everything.

Case in Hand

Are exchanges, giving and receiving, the key in the struggle against infidelity in relationships?

Assume that one has love and goodwill, but lacks in communication: The result would be unhappy relationships, devolving at times to infidelity...

Beren is married for five years, and is also a working woman. One day she notices a colleague at work is interested in her. They don't experience anything private, but Beren feels some form of delight due to her colleague's interest. She is at a junction to decide: She will either opt to "live with that secret" and will just wait and see, or

she will have a talk with her husband. Beren goes with the second option, and takes a radical decision. She tells about it to her husband Erhan. Erhan goes mad and starts to yell at her, calling her a “slut.” He says “I’m not sure if I want to live with this marriage any more.” But they still love each other, and Beren had acted in a honest way.

In the end, Erhan thinks about it, and shakes off his anger a bit, asking “OK, now please tell me what is going on.”

Beren answers with a desperate tone: “You aren’t interested in me at all. I feel so alone. I have no one to talk to. You don’t talk to me at all. All you do is to talk towards me. You are always talking about your own work, and not even once wondering how my day was. I think that you are not interested in me, and you do not love me. Everything you do virtually has a subtext like ‘I have her in my pocket’...”

Erhan does not feel good about it. “I want to know every single detail about you, except that man, of course.” And that is the first time he had been active and with an open ear. He realizes that they are on the brink of an extramarital affair. He failed to meet most psychological needs of his wife, and had instead focused always on taking something from her. He was unable to give till that moment.

Honesty and good will of Beren, however, impresses Erhan very much. And her decision to transfer to another office instills in Erhan the trust he needs in the relationship. Actually both harbor love for each other, but their communication in terms of the dialects of love, namely active listening, service behavior, exchanging gifts, and touching are all one-sided. Erhan realizes that fact. He truly admires Beren who noticed her infidelity right at the time it was in her mind. That is the second time he fell in love with her. And even infidelity could thus be put to good use.

LOVE AS AN ECONOMIC ASSET

Love is one of the most fundamental emotions of any human being. Of course it is mostly related with the spiritual side and existence of human. However, it can also be compared to economic assets, in terms of its effect. People often focus on the spiritual side of love, and does not analyze it as a material value.

Yes, love is an economic asset as well. Just like goods and property... Why would one wish to have economic assets? To consume, right? He wants to sustain life through consumption of those assets. It is evident that economic assets should first be produced, if they are to be consumed. One cannot use something that has yet to be produced and acquired. A person can surrender only something he already owns. And to be generous, one should have something to surrender. Someone who does not work to own something cannot be generous. The person needs to work, produce, and own something so as to be able to be generous.

That same formula applies for love as well. To be able to love, one should learn how to, and have accumulated it in himself. A person who does not think about love, who does not develop love within, and furthermore, who does not have love, would be incapable of loving another person and extending love. In this sense, love is an economic asset one can have. And whatever applies for economic assets and their use should apply for love as well.

Managing Love

Love cannot be earned easily. It requires substantial effort. And once earned through effort, one cannot waste it away. Love needs to be cherished. It should be applied timely and in adequate doses, in a

valid setting. As a rule, one should be neither lavish nor stingy in its use. And generosity is what lies in between lavishness and stinginess. The individual should be generous about love.

If there is a grain of truth in these considerations, a certain formula is required for the management of love. It is even more crucial to find that formula, in the case of marriages. For marriages rise on the conservation of the values the couple has. What keeps the marriage alive and the family together are the personal and family values they have. And love is at the top of the list of those values. Developing, preserving, and promoting love is a huge value for the family.

The individuals which comprise the couple should ask himself or herself “do I harbor enough love towards my spouse and children? Am I being fair in the dispersement of that love? Am I making economic use of that love?” If his or her answers to these questions are fair and correct, fear would go away, and is often replaced by confidence.

The individual’s confidence in his status is a sign of a strong relationship. It reflects confidence in his standing and himself. And that is a sign that he perceives marriage as a shelter that he will be loyal to. He has a feeling of belonging towards that shelter, where he can be himself. And that translates to inner peace for the person. In that case, one can talk about peace for the person and the family.

And peace and happiness are prerequisites of love. The perception of love as an asset depends on its timely, adequate, and valid use. Some marriages are marred by an excess or shortage of love. Excessive love means excessive control. Shortage of love, on the other hand, is lack of interest. In the first case, the man even wants to dominate his wife’s dreams. In the second, he does not care if his wife exists or not. Extreme control and lack of interest are enemies of marriages.

Both squandering, and stinginess would eventually consume the person, family, and the society involved. Extreme love as well as lack thereof also kills the person, family, and the society.

Love that does not overwhelm: Compassion...

We need love that does not overwhelm. Some forms of love reach towards the spouse and the children like the legs of an octopus. The parents love the child to such an extent, holding him so dearly, that the child, after a while feels trapped. And doing so, he would contract

in his corner, and begins to suffer various troubles. He would develop narcissistic habits, putting himself to the center of everything. But, he would not receive the same kind of attention in real life, on the street, among his other friends, and as a response, he would embrace seclusion. The end result would be a child that is so shy and fearful of the outside world, and so arrogant to compare himself to the axis of the world within the family.

Another issue with that kind of love is about the fact that it is not true love. The love directed towards the child is not actually for him. That love is a reflection of the love the parent has for himself or herself. The parents don't perceive an independent entity in their child. They perceive him as an extension of themselves. And as they love themselves very much, the child who is perceived as an outwards extension of that existence would also be loved.

The ideal love is the unconditional one. And that has a name: compassion. Compassion is the name of unconditional love. One does not expect something in return for compassion. In the case of love, one somehow finds and gets some return. That is not the case with compassion however. Compassion is found in every mother. Every mother would be willing to put herself in harm's way, to protect her child. Compassion is such a love that sometimes it can be mistaken as a lack of affection. The mother would not be willing to saying yes to every single request on part of the child, embracing instead the child's benefit in the longer run. Sometimes she acts for the child's good, even if the child's immediate interests dictate otherwise. The child may desire unhealthy foods, and may cry for them at times. But a mother would not mind those cries, and would not cave in and hand her the unhealthy stuff just to put an end to crying.

A mother that loves with affection may not always express her love in so many words, but her love would nonetheless be ever present. She would dedicate herself to her child in every sense, and spend her life for the child. In a sense, she does whatever she can. Her love is not a love expressed in words, but a love that shapes a certain attitude. In such a love, there are no games, no objectives, no ventures to achieve certain goals.

That love is not expressed through gifts or material things. As it is true and authentic, it would naturally be requited as one does

not expect a response. A mother that extends such a love would be loved in response. A father that loves in that way is not forgotten.

Unrequited Love Would Eventually be Required

Love like that is like a magical key. It opens any closed door. Such a love is comparable to sun. A spouse or child who is loved in such a way would open all the doors. Their interior would look outwards. The lover would find herself a palace with open gates, and would enter that palace, enjoying its rooms. The loving spouse would get himself a place in the world of his love. The loving parents find themselves a precise heart in their child, and get themselves reserved seats there. They occupy the dearest spots in that heart, and everything they say has an effect on the child. And their love for the child is like water to a tree. The tree would begin to develop, its branches grow, its fruits shine. A love that was extended timely and adequately would certainly lead to good results and consequences.

A child who had received love as an economic asset would understand the value of that love. He would not act unfairly to the parents who had loved him in such a way, and would fear of losing their love. The child loves, and also fears his parents based on the worry of losing their love, rather than due to physical violence. That is a concrete aspect of love and affection underlined by Islam. A fear from and love for God, based on the worry of losing His approval is emphasized. The fear from and love for God is based on the worry of being deprived of God's great gift that heaven is, rather than the fear of the flames of hell.

The fear stemming from the possibility of losing love brings along a host of responsibility. The child would eventually begin to understand what is expected of him by his parents. He would develop a listing of correct and incorrect behaviors. He would eventually learn to avoid incorrect behavior, and instead choose the correct path. His concern would be "to do the right thing to make my parents happy."

And such an outlook is a recipe for idealism, and the will to work for a goal. A child with an ideal and goal, in turn, avoids the distractions of wrong paths, and starts to live a calculated life. His goal, rather than his desires would be the primary axis of his life.

Making Pertinent Use of Love

The fear of losing the love of God or parents would eventually be translated into action to avoid such loss, and thus the ideal of acting in a way to earn their love. A life built on the foundations of love, based on the objective of love, would develop. The ideal of the individual would lead to an accumulation of emotions. The thing that is valued most is the one that is loved most. If a person has a lesser love for something, the value he attaches to that thing is often considered secondary.

That is why we need to be aware of how much love we have for someone or something. The things we love most are our ideals. "Why and how we love a person?" The answer to that question reveals us and our character. If Leyla is loved for her own sake, that would be a figurative love. But if the love for Leyla takes the person to God, then that love will be deemed true love.

If something is ascribed an excessive amount of love, and if the emotion of love is not used in a fitting manner, the person involved would naturally suffer. That is why there are gazillions of songs about the pain of metaphorical love. Leyla or Mecnun were made the objects of an undeserved amount of love. The price, in the end, had been a great pain and suffering. Therefore, the amount of love something deserves is not unlimited. Something should be loved only to the extent it deserves. The spouse, children, or the earthly possessions should be loved only up to a certain level. The owner of true love is God, our creator who is the owner of everything.

Think about it: What is the object of our affection? The destination of our love? How and to what extent do we love our child, our spouse, or earthly possessions? Does that love make us forget about the purpose of our creation as human beings? For some, her child, husband, or material wealth is everything. The death of any one of these, however, brings a pain that is comparable to death. After that loss, such people cannot truly hold on to life. And that is not a healthy attitude. It shows that love had not been used in an economic way.

Case in Hand

Is it possible to combine love with arrogance? A person who says "I love you very much, so you should be mine" is nothing but

an arrogant lover. And such a love enslaves the other person. A person who thinks “I deserve only the best; I should have the best of everything” can fall in love, but the object of his love is not the other person, but his own interest in her. Once that interest withers away, the love can easily devolve into hate.

A poet once said “I carry love around like the bullet in my chest, not like the flower on my collar...” The genetic heritage is conveyed through DNA. Cultural heritage in turn, is conveyed through wisdom. Love is a supreme experience, and is enjoyed in a different way in every culture. Western philosophy direct love to concrete objects, whereas the Eastern culture focuses on abstract and supreme values.

Love entails extreme commitment. And just like any other form of excess, it feeds the opposite. Exaggeration leads to understatement. We see the ebb and flow of love and hate.

Love entails extreme commitment and pain. An oyster feels pain when a grain of sand infiltrates its shell. And in response, the oyster secretes a fluid to cover and coat that piece of sand, producing, in the end, a beautiful pearl.

Love is the kingdom of romanticism, not of eroticism. That is why it is more than sex. The story of Ahmet Bey is telling:

Having reached his sixties, Ahmet Bey suffers prostate cancer, putting an end to his sexual life. He tells about it to his wife Zeynep Hanim: “I will understand if you don’t want to live with me.” Zeynep Hanim does not hesitate for even a second: “I am ready to live with even half of you.” After hearing that, Ahmet Bey and Zeynep Hanim begin a second spring. A serious disease actually rendered their relationship a higher quality one.

RESPECT IN MARRIAGE

Upon hearing the word marriage, people first think about love. They believe that marriage grows on the roots of love, and its function is to foster love. Of course they have a point. Love really looks good in marriage. But one should also remember that a tree grows only in suitable soil. And there is a soil on which love can grow: the state we call respect. Can someone love another person who does not derive respect, and who is not considered an independent entity? Human beings love things that are able to exist in integrity.

What is Respect?

Respect refers to seeing and regarding well the existence of another person. It entails showing the same amount of care for the other person. In the case of respect, the individual perceives the other person to be comparable to himself. In the presence of respect, one would be aware of boundaries of his own existence and the boundaries of others. He does not trespass on those limits. Respecting someone refers to putting the other person in good regard, noticing the latter's existence. A person that is noticed, and that exists in his perceived form, is actually respected. The greatest punishment one can be subjected to is to be ignored.

In psychology, respect refers to an awareness of the limits of relationships. Just like walls exist to separate one house from another, respect among human beings functions as invisible borders. Punching a hole in the wall of a house, to peek in the life of the neighbor; or ignoring the border of the field in a village, trespassing into the field of another person amounts to disrespect, ignoring the existence of the neighbor. And that can be a grounds for a fight. In the same vein,

intervening in the life of others, feeling entitled to such intervention constitutes a violation of the borders.

That is why it is considered objectionable.

Every human being is special and is entitled to privacy. Every human being that appears as a will deserves respect. A person who is ignored along with his will is effectively deemed non-existent or dead. Killing a person does not always amount to putting an end to his biological existence. Ignoring or obstructing his will also effectively means killing his existence. And killing one individual is not so different than killing the whole humanity. Therefore respecting every human being that exists with a will is what the prophet's guidance recommends. For, such existence is the will of God. And living in opposition to the will of God is great disrespect. It amounts to overstepping one's limits.

Respecting others is not the same thing as bowing before them. It should not be understood as belittling oneself or glorifying others. Nowadays respect usually is perceived in this paradigm. People tend to equate respect with bowing and scraping before others. No, that is not respect. It is just glorifying others while belittling oneself. If justice is about seeing everything in due place, such an attitude cannot be called just. It is just over-glorification of others, and undue belittling of oneself. And it would be even worse if that practice is a result of personal interests.

Respect and Responsibility

In the case of respect, the individual would realize the existence of himself as well as the other person. And that amounts to an awareness of the responsibilities of the individual, as well as of others. Human beings are social creatures. Due to the awareness of living with others, he would stop and wait at traffic lights. Stopping at red light, abiding by the laws, living a life in accordance with social values, knowing one's limits, and awareness about the existence of others are crucial elements of that social nature. A person would stop at red light due to the awareness of the rights of the people traveling in the other cars.

Respecting the laws is not about respecting a text in a book. For that text, the constitution, is actually what the society is. One respects laws out of respect for the society.

Stopping at red light and respecting the laws are among the external responsibilities of humans. And then there are the internal laws of any person: morals, values, halal and forbidden acts... When a person behaves in accordance with moral values and the principles of halal, his internal responsibilities are deemed honored. The sanctions applicable for failure to comply with the laws are external. They are applied by the superstructure of the society. The sanctions for internal responsibilities, on the other hand, are about the conscience of the individual. They are defined and imposed by the individual herself. A person who does not meet the requirements of his internal responsibilities would face his own conscience. An awareness about his deeds would lead to a pain in his conscience.

People with an active conscience act in accordance with the awareness of their internal responsibilities. To them, the ignorance of the police about their acts is insignificant. A comfortable conscience is the more important need for them. There are plenty of ways to avoid or go around the laws. The individual involved can seek any of these. But a person with a strong conscience tries to comply with his internal and external responsibilities, and seeks happiness and peace in such a life.

The gist of the issue is to raise people who abide by their internal responsibilities. A relationship, marriage, or society can be healthy only with the presence of such individuals. And that is what marriage is needed for. For a human being can be possible only through marriage. His birth and ethical development occurs with reference to family. Without a family, a child cannot come into existence. And a child cannot be raised without the education provided by the parents.

The Relationship between Marriage and Respect

In this context, marriage and family stand out as both the reason and the result of respect. Marriage and family are necessary for respected generations. And respectful individuals are required for continued existence of sound and healthy families. Man and woman want to marry people they respect, above else. No one wants to marry

a person who is not respected, who lacks values, and thus, who can simply be ignored. Men and women marry people they believe to harbor characteristics worthy of respect.

There are no great issues up until this point. The true test starts once the marriage is effected. In Turkish society, men usually have a hard time to bear the independent spirit of the wife, and instead, impose his own will on her. Gradually, the man embraces a disrespectful outlook for her wife, by suppressing her own personality, and by trying to impose his own will on her.

In marriage, which is the union between man and wife, respect refers to the acceptance of the other person. The man should accept the existence of his wife, and should not violate her limits. Woman, in turn, should not ask the husband to surrender to her will. Partnership in marriage should not be perceived as captivity. They should try and meet at some common ground, without surrendering their own character and existence.

In marriages where the woman cannot be seen or where the man is practically bypassed, fairness cannot exist. In a fair marriage, man and woman join in, and live without any infringement of their rights. Partial surrender of one's essence for the sake of marriage should be based on that person's free will, dedicating his life to the family. And surrendering oneself on a voluntary basis is a precious and commendable act.

In the universe and existence, the balance between justice and mercy is very important. Mercy refers to a feeling of love and respect, while justice shows that the act is done within the stipulated borders. In marriage, love and respect for the spouse and children is crucial. But one should be aware of the limits applicable. Showing more than reasonable love and respect may alter the position of the individuals involved. The person who receives such extreme love and respect would develop narcissist tendencies, while the one who gives them would devolve into an underdog. That is why a balance is again necessary.

Learning Respect

Learning respect often occurs through an education based on discipline. By developing internal and external discipline, the indi-

vidual is provided the required education to develop respect. Internal discipline is based on the self-awareness of the person.

It entails instilling in an awareness about the existence as a human, and the requirements applicable to human beings. Doing so, the human beings become aware of themselves, and start thinking about themselves. External discipline, on the other hand, instills in the consciousness of being born into a family, a society, and a culture. Through this education, the individual develops the ability to be aware of external existences and developments. He becomes aware of his responsibilities before himself, and others.

Certain norms apply for internal and external discipline education. The educational process teaches people how to live by the norms. A member of the society should be aware of the necessity of norms for a healthy social life. Normality refers to living by the norms. Disregarding norms, on the other hand, is considered abnormality. The abnormal people are, in a sense, those who don't abide by the norms. Indeed, life can be sustained only thanks to norms. In a setting where everyone is abnormal, one cannot speak of order and society. Extreme individualism brings chaos along. And that entails practices which cannot be associated with a society. That is why every game, discipline, and anything one can think of are subject to norms. Education, football, this and that... They are all subject to and occur within norms.

Norms vary from one society to the other, from one culture to the other. For instance, in case of respect, our culture and society harbors distinct attitudes. For instance, one should not cross his legs in the presence of an elderly person. That is not the case with Western societies, however. And the roles in the family are distributed in a specific way due to the peculiarity of our norms. We came up with a specific answer to the question "who is the head of the household?" We have cultural norms to govern the form and continuity of marriage, and the specific roles assigned to the members of the family. Respect, love, and duties are defined on the basis of these norms.

One can marry, form a family, and apply justice in the disbursement of love and respect, by taking into account universal and ancient values along with social norms. One cannot achieve happiness through conflict with the society and its norms. One cannot reach that goal by disregarding basic human values. A human being exists

if he is present in totality, and can be seen and recognized with his personality. A person lacking in these qualities can neither be marriage material, nor a candidate for compliance with social norms.

Case in Hand

Nigar Hanım directs the following question to a trusted counselor: “My husband is a really hard-working person. And he loves us very much. But usually he arrives home late in the evening. Now my five years old son is beginning to disregard him. He does just the opposite of what his father tells him, and his father yells at him, calling him “disrespectful.” I don’t know which side to take. I am worried about the future. It is as if the house is a battle grounds between the father and the son...”

The counselor says the following in response: “It is possible to use this as an opportunity. In the discipline of child psychology, what you described is called the child’s fixation on his father. In plain language, it refers to a case where the child loves the father and wants to spend more time with him, but where his behaviors express that want in just reverse. At that age, a child cannot be expected to express his emotions verbally. For the child, even a beating by the father may be more preferable to total disinterest on part of the latter. In case the father sits by the child, holding his hand, and explains why he was late, just as he would explain to a grown-up, and patiently tells him that he was busy, seeking in the end, some means to remedy, that would be a concrete step for the education of the child. Child learns three things through positive communications:

- 1- My dad loves me.
- 2- I can spend time with my dad, even if not right away.
- 3- We can solve my problems at home, through a close and warm relationship.

RESPONSIBILITY AND AWARENESS

What does responsibility in married life refers to? How can one share the feeling of responsibility? How can people get it?

The feeling of responsibility is divided into two categories: internal and external. Acting in the confines of responsible behavior as the individual takes a decision and acts on it, refers to internal responsibility. External responsibility, on the other hand, entails responsible behavior on part of the individual, in the context of his relationships in social settings. It is imperative to start with a responsible perspective in the inside first, during the decision-making stage. For human beings always take decisions, as they sit somewhere, or as they contemplate...

The human life is the aggregate of the decisions and preferences one had. Life is shaped in line with the decisions taken. At the junction of choosing something, the individual will also be choosing to surrender something else. Preferences and choices set the nature of life. Therefore, decision and choice requires some kind of responsible attitude. Thanks to the concept of responsibility, people don't just choose, but first contemplate on the potential choices. And this process avoids overstepping one's boundaries, as action is based on thought. A person not characterized by adequate amounts of reason may lean towards a grave and whisper "Don't worry if you did not lie and engage in forbidden behavior!" But what is forbidden behavior? In religions, it refers to the servant on this world overstepping his boundaries, and trespassing the domain of God. Overstepping the rights of others, or those of the nation and the homeland are also forbidden.

Lying, in turn, is actually going against the personality and truth of the individual. Honesty, knowing one's bounds, not overstepping the domains of others are all issues considered with respect to internal and external responsibility.

Internal and external responsibility are even more noteworthy in the context of marriage. It is a common question: How can one be a good spouse? What is the secret to being a good husband or wife? People are looking for a good man or a good woman. They are also seeking ways to be a better man or woman. Yet, being a good human should have the first priority. Without being a good human, one cannot be a good man or woman. Not everyone is rich, wealthy, beautiful or handsome. And one may not achieve these qualities even if he or she may desire so. But one can be a good human. In terms of being a good human, everyone has the same opportunity. Every human being is born with such an opportunity, and realizes or fails to realize the good human inside, through the decisions and preferences he may have. God, in turn, ignores the wealth or physical attractiveness of a person. Instead, God takes into account if the person was a good one or not. Good people, and not the rich and powerful, meet the requirements of God. Therefore, being a good human should be the goal. The exalted goal is about being a good human.

Importance and Priority

In the family assessment scale, analyzing one's marriage, the relationship between man and woman, as well as between parents and child, the central feeling constitutes the essence of assessment. What is the dominant aspect of communications within the family? What is the order of priority within the family? Is the most common topic discussed money? Or is it fame? Is it wealth? The child sets his priorities with reference to the issue that is most commonly discussed and underlined in the family. And that structure of priorities later determines the direction of decisions and preferences of the child. If wealth had assumed the position of priority, the child's preferences and decisions would go accordingly. The other matters would stay on the backburner. The child develops responsible attitudes towards money, but is left without such responsibilities in other issues.

Responsibilities apply with reference to the order of priorities. The Ottoman code of civil law had this principle: "merits are impor-

tant, but procedure has priority.” The quality of some object to be bought is of course crucial, but its presentation and packaging gets the priority in consideration. A good baklava should be presented in good packaging. Otherwise one cannot preserve it much. That is why the quality of a good is important, but one should pay attention to the packaging as well, to ensure it can be preserved. But sometimes that order of priority is exaggerated so much, that priority takes precedence over importance. Excessive concern with packaging to which priority was ascribed would sometimes make one forget about the good itself. In the end, packaging is all that remains. The same principle applies for marriage as well. In some marriages, priority supersedes importance. Some people attach greater importance to the appearance of marriage, rather than its essence.

In a marriage, and in the relationship within the family, individuals who have a strong sense of responsibility stand out from individuals who lack it. Some act in line with their whims without feeling any responsibility, while others always act with a sense of responsibility. The desirable state of affairs requires a balance between freedom and responsibility. A married person can't behave to satisfy all his whims, as if he is not married. That is not acceptable behavior in a marriage. Whether it is done by the man or the woman, the marriage would not be sustained in the face of such behavior. In marriage, the man is responsible before the woman, and the woman before the man. None are free to do as he or she desires. Mutual respect and understanding should be supreme. Getting married, in part, is about abandoning life as an individual, and starting, instead, a life shared with someone else. Therefore, a person who does not know how to live with someone else, lacking the feeling of responsibility, cannot handle marriage.

Marriage is nothing if not responsibility. A form of responsibility someone who would give up with the first dark cloud cannot handle. Marriage is like sailing into the ocean of life. You cannot just say “I can't do it anymore” in the middle of an ocean. A person who sets sail for the ocean should be aware of the route of the voyage will lead to the middle of ocean, and that the ship cannot be abandoned in the middle of an ocean. One should observe problems with the other person before the marriage, not during it.

That is why people to get married should be very observant up to the point of getting married, and half-blind once they got married. Assuming a half-blind outlook before marriage, under the influence of excitement, would only lead to an incorrect choice. In the same vein, being diligently observant during marriage, seeking defects with the other person, would also be wrong. One should be half-blind after marriage, so that the defects would not be so obvious, and that the partners can focus on solutions rather than defects.

The children of parents, who have such established senses of responsibility, would also be endowed with the same sensibilities. If the children are irresponsible, perhaps their role models were not up to the task. That is why marrying someone lacking a sense of responsibility entails great dangers. For both the partner in marriage, and the children to be born into that marriage...

Awareness of Oneself

Self-awareness refers to one's recognition of his own character. A person who has strong self-awareness would be conscious of his strengths and weaknesses, as well as his mental state. He can answer the question "what is crucial and what is insignificant for me?" Here is a quick analogy: You want to go somewhere, and you got yourself a map for doing so. But first of all, you should know your own location to be able to choose the shortest route to your destination. A person who is not aware of his location cannot go to his destination. Awareness is comparable to this need: the appreciation of oneself.

Having answers to the questions "Who am I? What are my strengths and weaknesses? What kind of opportunities do I have? What are my shortcomings?" and so on... Before making an investment, the companies analyze their existing states of affairs first. They take the plunge only after assessing their existing status. A person armed with self-awareness, in turn, is comparable to a company that makes a strong analysis. When getting into a venture, he would look at the mirror first, make an assessment, and behave accordingly.

That is why self-awareness is a must for any marriage. If the person expects his spouse to do something he cannot do, or is unable to notice the positives about his spouse, his awareness levels cannot be called commendable.

Awareness can be compared to the existence of a camera that is recording every move the individual does, so as to be able to have self-criticism as required. The person would check herself, identify her shortcomings, and seek ways to overcome them.

The person eventually leads himself and keeps himself under control. A person who cannot lead and control himself cannot lead others as well. A person who cannot provide guidance to himself cannot guide others. Such a person cannot be the head of the household. First of all, the person should be his own leader, so as to be able to lead the family in the marriage. And yes, that can be achieved only as the individual achieves self-awareness... We can only lead what we are aware of.

Human Genes

The feeling of responsibility can be discussed in two forms: moral and material responsibility. Moral responsibility is about ontology and existence. It is the kind of responsibility that leads the individual to seeking questions such as “Who am I? Why was I created? Why was I created as a human being, rather than as a rock or as soil?”

Human beings have four genes. The first is about meaning. For no other creature is in search for meaning. Only the human beings ask “what does my existence mean?” The second gene of human beings expresses itself in the search for novelty. Because of the existence of this gene, human beings seek and improve the design of, say, their homes. A spider lives in a shelter that is basically of the same size, while human beings had always effected changes regarding the forms of the shelters in use. In a sense, human beings are evolving. Due to that capability, human beings live in a universe developing in the cultural sense. The human beings are thinking entities. They live through abstraction, and ask existential questions. They write poems, sing folk songs, engage in philosophical debates, and seek novelties at all times.

Furthermore, the human beings take risks. The gene for venture and risky behavior is present with humans. Sure, not every human being is endowed with that gene, but the children who have that gene are called hyperactive kids, and live in a state that is vulner-

able in terms of hazards. And being vulnerable to hazards bring the advantage of openness to development.

You cannot improve and earn if you don't take risks. The same applies for athletes and discoverers. They are all endowed with the gene for risque behavior. As that gene is associated with dopamine, it has much to do with pleasure. A pleasure arising out of openness to hazards, and thus willingness for improvement... For instance, people who engage in weird experiences and activities do so as they get pleasure out of these.

The fourth gene human beings have is about time. Human beings have an emotional world running between the past and the future. As they live the present, they can also think about the past and the future. They shed the light of past experiences on present, all the while worrying about the future. For instance, the human being would think and worry about "what will happen tomorrow?" That is not the case with animals, for instance. An animal who had found food for the day would not worry about tomorrow. It lives in the moment alone. And that difference compared to animals made the human the founder of history. He built so many things as he worries about death, and as he tries to avoid it. He constructed houses and palaces, and laid down the foundations of civilizations.

As he appeared in the shadow of these genes, his expectations from marriage should not be limited to biological ones only. Sure, marriage meets one's expectations about sexuality, but that should not be the only element. Marriage has its own abstract content and meaning as well. And understanding that depends on self-awareness. A person with self-awareness would also be capable of understanding his partner in marriage. A person with self-awareness can engage in empathy.

Realistic Approaches to Marriage

People who marry under the intoxicating influence of love and excitement tend to compare marriage to heaven. Upon leaving their parents' homes and setting up their own, the boy and girl would tend to believe that all the objects of their complaints would stay in the past. And they would certainly be disappointed, as they acted in an idealistic manner rather than a realistic one.

No marriage is but a garden of roses. How we wish they were, but that is not the facts! And that would not be natural. The persons who imagine a perfect marriage would better wake up from their dreams, and get a grip of the reality. Idealism is not bad, but realism is even better. The gist of the matter is about two different individuals coming together, bringing their stories to an amalgam under the title marriage. The combination of the two individuals is not a simple development. Other actors involved in their lives also take a part. The parents of the boy and the girl... Their relatives... Their cultures all seep into the marriage. Marriage is not something that occurs in isolation between two individuals. It is a meeting involving much more. First of all, both the boy and the girl adopt a new set of parents as well. They face a brand new picture, which is not always comparable to their past experiences.

The people getting married should be aware of the fact that they are taking a new journey. They cannot maintain their old lives and habits. They should reset themselves in accordance with the new case. If the boy or the girl imposes her own conditions on the other person, that would be acting selfishly. Neither the man nor the woman should impose herself, and expect the spouse to abandon his or her own existence completely.

But often people violate this principle. As they wish to maintain their previous lives, and are unable to let go of their comforts, they assume strict positions. They tend to be obstinate. They think "what I want should occur", and don't feel the need to engage in empathy. And that is a grave danger for marriage. The great enemies of marriage are obstinacy and egoism. One of our late teachers used to say the following: "Seek three characteristics in the person you will marry: She should fear God, so that she does not engage in evil in secret. She should have a sense of shame, so that she does not engage in evil in the open. And she should not be obstinate. She should fear God, feel shame before the creation, and not be obstinate..."

A woman who accepted marriage with a person must have accepted his past as well. And that past involves a set of parents. The same applies for man as well. Certainly, the parents would be visiting this new home that is being built.

These parents, in turn, are shaped by different geographies, cultures, and realities. They are often old people, with dental plates. One

can come across a case where such dental plates are being washed in a recently cleaned bathroom sink. If the wife is not happy with the view, she would not have the right to tell her husband “dear, I don’t want this to happen.” That is simply unacceptable. Getting into a marriage, man and woman are assumed to be in love. And being in love should mean loving the other person as a whole. The woman should love the parents of the man she loves. The same applies for the man as well. Is it right to say “I love you, but not your parents”?

What should one do in the face of a man or woman that does so? How can a freshly married man or wife handle such a problem?

The person in error should be reminded of the limits applicable. He or she should be confronted and told “you no longer live on your own. You’re my spouse. You should think not as on your own terms, but as my partner in marriage.” Saying “yes” to everything one says, just to prevent some discord would only make the problem bigger. It would be a grave mistake to tell one’s parents “don’t visit us anymore” with a view to satisfying the will of the partner who feels uncomfortable with said parents. Fast forward two or three decades. The person who told his own parents not to come visit them, will hear the same words from his own son or daughter. This will continue as a chain of events.

Presumption of Good and Bad

Of course there are the stories about awful in-laws. Some people try to dynamite the marriage of their children, instead of trying to reinforce it. And those stores are numerous. Regardless of the case, the newly marrieds should stand by justice and fairness. They should talk about the matter based on fairness and justice, rather than on selfish impulses. When faced with such an issue, the individuals involved should not embrace defensive positions for their parents, and check to see if the argument has merit or not. Defensive psychology would not be helpful at those junctions.

The parents of the partners are not enemies. One should not forget that the in-laws are parents in their own right. An in-law which is perceived as an enemy is a sign of troubles to come for the marriage. Perception of an in-law as an enemy is the first step in making one. Someone perceived to be an enemy will eventually become one.

In family relationships, people are presumed to be good. Presumption as bad should be the exception rather than rule. On the other hand, in dealings with enemies, the reverse applies. Marriage is not a battle among enemies, bringing them together. Marriage is dominated by a relationship among friendly peers. Therefore, presumption of goodness should prevail. Presuming the other person to be inherently bad is attached to a certain responsibility. Bad presumption is considered one of the greater sins. An opinion cannot be built on presumptions. Presumptions may foster paranoia. A person who always harbors negative presumptions, and who always acts on them, would, eventually, be left alone.

Yes, lacking presumptions of goodness is detrimental to marriage. In a marriage, in family engagements, the presumption of goodness should be the rule. One should think and act in a good way, despite everything. A person that thinks and acts well at all times will be able to achieve some rapport in one way or another.

As is the case with everything, responding bad behavior with goodness is the most effective solution. The ability to smile to grumpy people, and to withhold answers to people who say bad things, requires a certain level of wisdom. Mother-in-law stands for one's mother, and father-in-law stands for one's father. They assume an interchangeable standing. And handling people with such crucial standing in a bad way is not good for neither the persons involved, nor the marriage as an institution. They merit respect, at the very least. One may not always love the parents of one's spouse. But respect is an absolute requirement.

As is the case with any issue, a person should act with self-awareness on this matter as well. A person should be conscious about himself and his limits. A person who is aware of himself would also be aware of his God.

Case in Hand

Ayse, a five years old girl, wants to help her mother, but drops and breaks a vase she was trying to clean. And that vase was a pretty precious one. She would immediately feel sorry, and say "I didn't do it" as her first reaction. The mother understands the case, and tells her daughter: "Ayse, my love, I saw you dropping and breaking the

vase. But you committed an even more serious mistake. And that is telling a lie. You said 'I didn't break it.' As bad behaviors go, that is much worse than breaking the vase."

Doing so, the mother extends two gifts to her daughter:

1. She made her daughter loved, in spite of everything.
2. She taught her that honesty is much more valuable at their household.

She used the breaking of the vase as a context to give a valuable lesson. That would not be such a telling lesson, if she instead lectured the child about honesty.

COOPERATION IN THE FAMILY

Cooperation is not about a monologue, but a dialogue. A monologue is like traffic flowing in a single direction. As in the case of a single person doing all the talking, in a commanding or lecturing tone... In monologue, the speaker is the active party, while the listener is the passive one. That is why monologue cannot be considered cooperation. Dialogue, however, is something else. As one of the parties say something, the other party thinks about it and responds with a statement to the contrary, or by contributing to what the first person said. The two parties of the communication expand the discourse, and engage in cooperation regarding the expression of truth.

Legs of Communication

Communication rises on three legs: verbal communication, emotional communication, and behavioral communication... In relationships, verbal communication covers five to ten percent of the issue. Words convey only specific knowledge. Knowing something and presenting the knowledge about it does not provide solutions. In emotional and behavioral communication, the tone of one's voice, the mode of articulation, body language, form of expression, and the actual intent also plays a part. What is the actual intent in expressing a certain piece of knowledge? To what extent we live by the words we say? Do we believe in what is being said? Extending knowledge alone is not a service. The true service is about experiencing the knowledge thus conveyed. The extent or form of our knowledge is mostly irrelevant. The truly important thing is the extent to which we live by the things know and convey. Effective communications and relationships occur through existence.

A person can present a pretty good picture of something, and can be very impressive on an emotional tone. But if that good points conveyed in an emotional tone cannot be expressed through actual behavior, the speaker's impression would not be a lasting one. Nasreddin once paid a visit to a friend. And he notices his friend on the window, before knocking the door of the house. When he knocks the door, it is opened by the child of the family. He would say "Dad is not home at the moment." In response, Nasreddin would say: "OK... I see, your father is not home... Tell him when you see him, he forgot his head at the window." In that story by Nasreddin, the existing case renders the words irrelevant. As the words are not in tune with the obvious facts. And Nasreddin uses that opportunity to strike a funny goal of truth.

For a Genuine and Healthy Relationship

If one wants a genuine and healthy relationship, monologue should be abandoned, so should be egocentric attitudes. Failure to do so, and instead continued imposition of will like that of a commander, will not lead to cooperation. If one wants to enjoy a healthy relationship with the other person, one should avoid bossy attitudes. Granted, we live in an age of ego, and that modernism plays to the hand of egoism under the guise of individualism. And excess in the emphasis on individualism, should not be perceived as "cherishing humanity". To the contrary, individualism is an effort to isolate human beings from their values and moral principles. The individual is the entity without any moral values and divine aspects. It does not revolve around the spiritual perspective underlined by death, the will to eternity, and cherishing existence. Yet, a human being grows into his personality on the basis of these facts of life. For a human being, death, the will to eternity, and the meaning of existence is crucial. In this context, the individual is the entity that ignores all these. And the gap produced by this ignorance is filled with egoism and worldly desires. The individual has, supposedly, moved beyond the religious-based outlook, but in essence all he had done is to attach a sacred status to his own bodily will. The person and his earthly desires come to occupy such a basic position, rendering the individual in a sense, untouchable. In this outlook, God is extracted from existence, and is substituted by humans.

Humanism is inherently characterized by this perspective. It came to occupy the place of a religion, through a struggle against Christianity. That is how the philosophical grounds of modernism are.

Humanist is something, and humanism is something else. Humanism is an attitude that sanctifies and glorifies human, attaching him perfection, and considering him the owner of the world. Humanist, on the other hand, underlines the value nature of human beings, and is, in a sense, reference to the noble nature of human existence. Reference to the meaningful existence of humanity is not the same thing as deification of human. So, being humane is pretty understandable. But embracing the ideology of humanism is a troubling position. Humanism sacrifices existence for human beings. Humane outlook, on the other hand, is an attempt to determine the human's position in wider existence. As it boosted human ego, the contemporary age came to represent such a raw outlook. As the poet Behçet Necatigil put it we are going through a "very raw age".

In a relationship, defending oneself poses a problem. Such an attitude would unavoidably lead the other person to defense as well. And the result is relationships where both parties seek to prove that he is right. Conversation whereby the other party is accused would sever the ties, and would force the other party to defend himself.

The result would be a state of affairs whereby both parties defend and legitimize his point, without trying to understand the other person's. That is why one should not ask "what kind of a person are you? Why are you doing this?". Instead one should say "we cannot understand each other if we only look from our own perspective." Doing so will lead the other person to thought, and see that the parties in the communication have fragile hearts. And therefore, one will be able to address the other person, rather than just reiterating his own position. A relationship needs two persons to grow. The relationship is a common ground occupied by "me and you". It necessitates dialogue rather than monologue. No relationship can exist without cooperation.

Communication Skills

There are many methods of communication skills. Behavior based on trust is just one of these.

One necessary requirement of this model is to avoid accusatory and judgmental styles. This model absolutely rejects sarcastic attitudes, pointing the other party's shortcomings, and lying. This model is a must for a healthy relationship. One should never lie if the relationship is to be based on trust. And it is no easy task to achieve this. Everyone could easily lie. Human nature is somewhat inclined to lying. People are introduced to lies from childhood on.

It is well known that at an early age the children embrace lies as a defensive means. He would claim not to have broken a dish, even though it is obvious that he was the one that broke it. And that lie makes the mother angry, who cannot keep herself from smacking the child. Such an encounter does not teach the child about the inherent problems of lying. All it does is to teach them fear mother's physical force. As a result, the child learns to obey due to fear. Certainly, resort to physical force and smacking should not be the first recourse the mother should seek. She should be able to say "my dear child, it is obvious that you broke the plate. But you did something that was even worse: you said something that was not true. You lied." In the face of an attitude the child learns two things: He is loved by his mom. And one has to speak the truth whatever the conditions may be... And as a result lies are abandoned as a tool, and the truth is underlined as the ultimate goal. Trust-based relationship model should be based on solid foundations from childhood on. If the child is convinced in the wisdom of telling the truth under all circumstances, he would be acting correctly in subsequent periods of life as well.

At times, we notice some person being defended stubbornly. When we ask the person who defends the other "why are you defending this guy so fervently?" the answer would be "he gained my confidence. That's why." We stand by other people due to confidence in them, and trust most of our assets with them. For instance, the patient trusts the doctor with his health.

Imagine to witness a few lies by the other person in a relationship. Can you continue trusting that person after that observation? No, you cannot. For a single lie does away with trust.

Confidence is like a nervous pigeon. A single lie can function as a stone that makes the pigeon fly away. You may have heard of the story where all forms of evil were locked in a room. And lies were

the key to open the door to that room. Whenever one starts to tell lies, all forms of evil start to unravel.

Yet, despite this danger of lies, it is pretty commonplace in today's world. Thanks to communication technologies, it had infiltrated all aspects of relationships and life. People are so used to lies and their existence, that honesty is now considered a commendable virtue. Honesty is not something extra. It is the essence of any existence. But now it is considered as a surprising virtue. Whenever someone does just what he should be doing, in other words does not engage in theft or lies, it draws awe on others. People comment "wow, he is a really honest guy!" The economic models are failing one after another, for the people that implement them are not honest ones. Yes, in an environment where honesty is not the accepted principle, evil can grow quickly.

Behavioral Entropy

Lies are comparable to viruses. We call this "behavioral entropy". "What is entropy?" you may ask. Let's describe it with an example: You poured some hot tea in a cup. And the cup starts to cool slowly. Early on, it feels hot, but eventually it loses that warmth. A flash lamp with fresh batteries initially generates strong light. But as you use it, its light gets weaker. These all are results of entropy.

The entropy of evil works in a quite different way however. Early on the evil's effect is limited. But in time, its effect grows. In order to overcome evil, one should fight for goodness. And goodness should be protected and reinforced in the face of increasing entropy of evil. In the face of darkness of evil, what is moral and desirable should be repeated again and again. If one wishes to see the growth of colorful flowers in a garden, he should sort out the weeds continuously. A little bit of negligence leads to an invasion of weeds.

In a sense, evil refers to the lack of goodness. Evil has no inherent value. It just appears in the gap left by a lack of good. Good requires efforts, while the lack of effort is all that is necessary for evil to exist.

Evil people can exist in the lack of good ones.

Therefore, the fight against evil can be furthered by people seeking and doing good at all times. Our prophet said "I came to complement good ethics." It is necessary to have good ethics, to take the streets on

the basis of that ethics, and to engage with people and entities. Evil finds itself no room to seep in where good ethics and graceful and beautiful behaviors dominate. Liars cannot live among honest people.

Trust-Based Relationship

Trust-based relationship serves as the grounds where cooperation sprouts. And a lack of selfishness is the defining characteristic of trust-based relationship. In a relationship, selfishness refers to the individual putting himself to the forefront, while turning a blind eye towards the others. When you put aside people you are engaged with, you will naturally be left alone. And left alone, one cannot talk about the existence of a relationship. There is no relationship of one. What someone talking to himself, embracing himself does is not a relationship.

That is why it is necessary to overcome selfishness in a relationship. The parties should embrace the following line of thinking: Where does the solution lie for the health of the relationship, family, partnership, and cooperation? If a husband puts his desires to the forefront in a marriage, he will be effectively ignoring his wife and children, and will be functioning as if they don't exist. And where the spouse and children are not present, or where their rights are simply ignored, one cannot talk about a family. The same applies in reverse as well. When the spouse or the children ignore the father and only think about themselves, they would lose touch with the father. Neither of these approaches work. Therefore, the parties should take these into account when seeking a conclusion.

The decisions should be based on the future of "us" rather than the future of "me." The crucial issue is not proving the point of "me" or "you", but bringing us together in common ground enabling the existence of "us".

The goal in discussions and debates is not to prove a specific party's point, but to find out the truth. If individuals focus on themselves rather than the truth, the thing that will follow is ego wars. And wars would eventually discard one of the parties involved. And when one of the parties is discarded, one can no longer talk about the parties of a relationship, but just someone left alone. Yes, one cannot sustain a life in solitude. Happiness would not be possible in such a setting.

That is why, such wars are without winners. Even if someone initially looks to have won, in the end his loss would be apparent.

Democracy in the Family

In a family, neither the husband nor the wife should lose. The family should bring gains to both. One cannot simply think “I should win, even if to the detriment of my partner.” A relationship cannot be maintained with such a mindset. What is maintained in unions dominated by that thought cannot be called a family/marriage. For a relationship where there are no losers, the fashionable formula of “win/win” should be applied in some form. If you insist on the “I should win” mentality, the other party may simply concede defeat for good, just to sustain the relationship in some way. But one should be aware that such a life would be unbearable. And can you be happy with a spouse who does nothing but silently concede every point? It is a great curse to live with someone who does not love you but just has to live with you as she does not have any other option!

A spouse whose words, thoughts or feelings are not taken into consideration would feel worthless. Absolutely worthless! Think about living with someone who long ceased to exist, who feels worthless. A spouse who is reduced to a simple object in the house cannot offer anything to her husband or children. Can a worthless void produce something? Not at all! A spouse who feels worthless will think about leaving the scene whenever the circumstances change. She would seek other destinations.

A relationship should focus on democratic values. It should be a plane on which the partners talk and act on their facts, and actually live together. Yes, man and woman evolve into a “we” through marriage. But they maintain their distinct personalities. Therefore, the existence of two individuals should be sustained. Only if both man and woman can speak their mind freely, only through a debate on both views, the truth can be revealed. At times, the woman’s view would prevail. At others, the man’s. In the end, the decision would not be that of a single individual but of both. That is how democracy operates in a family.

Democratic values are, contrary to the popular view, fruits of our own culture, rather than mere imports from the West. In our culture,

we attach great importance to consultations. We are the believers of a religion that orders “consult among each other.” In a sense, democracy was acquired from the Islamic societies of Andalusia. The democratic climate helps develop empathy. Criticism and opposition are always based on empathy. When our prophet ordered something, his companies were free to ask “my lord, is this your personal view or a verse relating an order of the God?” This freedom suggests the presence of accountability in the relationship. Relationship requires accountability. It cannot work without an open mind for criticism. Without an open mind for criticism, without accountability, one cannot achieve cooperation.

Yes, accountability is a must for developing a trust-based relationship in a family. Openness and transparency are necessary! Secrecy and political attitudes only damages trust. And once damaged in a family setting, trust cannot be imposed to the wider society. Marriage is a micro-level form of society and state. It is the starting point of everything, before making the jump to the streets.

Selfishness and Obsession

A person who puts himself to the center stage at all times, who believes himself to be right at all times, who imposes his truths on his wife, and who tries to transform his wife to be more similar to him, can be called an obsessive personality. An obsessive person has a hard time accepting the existing state of affairs, and insists that something is missing.

He is a perfectionist, and does not allow room for any error. To him, everything is just black and white. There are no hues of gray, and he cannot live in one anyway. Always wanting to achieve perfection and seeking improvement can help the development of the individual. But expecting others, including one's spouse, to be perfect, insisting on the need for their perfection would make one only a keen observer of faults.

And a person who is always seeking some fault on part of others would be deemed to be arrogant. Continuously nagging someone, telling “you are this and that” is a symptom of arrogance. Indeed, one is not tasked with carving out excellence in his wife. All one has to improve to the point of perfection is the relationship itself.

Therefore, one should focus on his own responsibilities rather than those of his spouse.

Let's think about four names of God: Jamal, Jalal, Kamal and Baki... Jamal refers to beauty; Jalal to power and force; Kamal to perfection; and Baki to eternity. And human beings are considered the entity in which God appeared. Therefore, every human being is endowed with some partial appearance of these names. Human beings love jamal, and is characterized by jalal. They expect to achieve kamal and a baki end. That is why it is natural for a person to expect his spouse to be perfect. But one should not forget that the world we live in is not characterized by perfection. Human beings are small and helpless. They cannot meet all requirements of the life they are exposed to. Human beings have their bodily desires. As the spirit seeks ascendancy, the body pulls it down. That is why it cannot achieve perfection and completion, despite the will to do so. In essence, God is the only source of perfection. A person should be aware of his limits, and should expect and desire only what his means would allow. Even God would weigh good against bad in the judgment of human beings, and consider people with more good than bad to be inherently good. In this context, a mortal human cannot be entitled to expecting hundred percent perfection from his spouse. Is the person asking his spouse to be perfect, truly perfect himself? Does he have no faults of his own? Is it fair to oversee nine good features of a person, just for the sake of one bad feature?

The dictum is a wise one: "A person seeking perfection in others is destined to be alone." This obsession requires treatment. People suffering from it need to work on it. They need to develop awareness skills. That is what psychology and psychiatry intends to achieve.

First of all, self-awareness should be developed, followed by self-management, and then social awareness, leading to a robust sense of relationship management.

Self-awareness refers to the individual's awareness about himself. Without knowing thyself, you cannot venture far. The first thing one should do is to get to know himself, and notice his limits. A person focuses on himself and manages to see himself as part of a greater whole would eventually overcome obsession and perfectionism. Loving someone entails the need for someone else, as the individual is not self sufficient. We approach someone else through love. But

obsessive and perfectionist people cannot get married, as they are incapable of love. People who are capable of love get married. People who are able to love and notice their own shortcomings. Marriage entails coming together of two loving persons, with the will to form a whole through the combination of two incomplete parts.

Indeed, the education to instill self-awareness is important. The individual achieving conscience about himself is crucial. "A person who is aware of himself would also be aware of his God." God requires human beings to know themselves, in order to be aware of God. Through an awareness of oneself, human beings educate themselves. We receive that education through an awareness of the God. The God is the great educator. The existence of God is incessant; so His educating nature... Just like a shepherd warning a sheep who strayed away from the herd, by the throw of a stone, God would also warn us as we stray away from the right path. Never forgetting this fact would make a person a healthy one, and saves him from getting mired in just bodily existence. And that is considered a form of cooperation with God.

Case in Hand

Ihsan is truly crazy about football. Canan, in her turn, literally despises football. But she also wants to spend some time with her husband. Embracing a focus on solutions, she would devise a plan to make both happy. She decides to join her husband in an away game. Doing so, they will be able to travel together, and stay at a hotel for a night, to have some quality time together. On the other hand Ihsan will also get to enjoy the football festival he has been waiting with excitement. By choosing not to create a problem out of the football passion of her husband, Canan came up with a formula that is beneficial for both herself and Ihsan.

Example

Be careful about the coalitions within the family, if you don't want your child to be a sneaky one...

In healthy families, the parents should not develop coalitions with each other; neither should the children. By avoiding coalitions, the

parents learn how to develop a shared language, while the children learn to share and the relationship with peers.

If your child approaches you and tells you “Dad, I will tell you something but you must never tell it to mom”, the best answer would be “I am curious about what you will tell me, but please let me be the one to decide on whether to tell your mom or not.”

Through such an answer, the child would learn two things:

1. My dad does not approve of having secrets from my mother. He is at least reserved about such an attitude.
2. In my family, everyone has relationships based on respect for the personality of the others.

EMPATHY IN MARRIAGE

As a concept, empathy is an invention of the West. It was developed in the West. But in terms of its contents, it is something we share with the West. When hearing the word empathy, we often hear “altruism”, and perceive a form of shared feelings. Empathy refers to putting ourselves in the other person’s shoes, and imagining our thoughts for the other person as well. Seeing the others through a lens similar to the one we apply for ourselves... Attaching them value equal to the level we attach to ourselves... Being concerned about them as well... In this sense, empathy is a concept that is pretty acceptable to us. Our belief system and all heavenly teachings emphasize what empathy refers to. It is promoted in all religions.

However, as a concept, empathy is mostly a recent invention, that came to be voiced from the 90s on. What that concept stands for was surely experienced and underlined in earlier decades and centuries as well. But they were considered part and parcel of the domain of culture and ethics, and not scientific terminology. But with the invention of brain imaging systems in 1995, the difference between the empathic perception and the one that is not so was laid stark. The effect of both in the brain was found to be different. It was understood that thinking of others in a way comparable to our thinking about our own selves, and thus engaging in empathy, activated certain parts of the brain. From this junction on, empathy and approaching others with compassion and mercy was found to be important for human health. In this context teaching of empathy was made a crucial element of education about emotional intelligence.

The West came to be acquainted with the concept of empathy through these research efforts. Yet, much before that realization, the

texts of great spiritual leaders such as Rumi had always been about this attitude.

And for all those years we had their works right in our libraries. That is what sufi literature was all about. The dervish lodges and Islamic monasteries had always taught disciples about these. A teaching that underlines manners above else... First manners, then knowledge... In the simplest sense, manners refer to self-awareness on part of the person, coupled with attaching due respect to people who are distinct in existence. It is about thinking about others as well, and cherishing others at an extent comparable to the value one attaches to himself.

Once the effects of behaviors were understood with the help of brain imaging systems, coupled with the positive results associated with assessing others as a value, empathy came up as the concept to complete the whole picture. That was how the concept was defined, along with the development of the relevant methodology. For in human relationships, in social life, that was the important element. People sought answers to the following questions: "Why would a person commit a crime?" "Why would one engage in bad deeds?" These questions are crucial for the development of empathy in individuals who engage in crime and other bad deeds. And the education programs were put in place on the basis of the methodology developed. The goal was to put people who committed crime, and in particular those in correctional facilities, through this education. And the participants in the program were not released till empathic developments were observed in the individual concerned.

Teaching Empathy

The education was designed and applied as follows: When someone committed a crime, for instance murder, he would be subjected to that education. After the program, the answers to the following questions were sought: "Is the person who committed murder feeling regret or not?" "Is he able to put himself in the shoes of the murder victim?" If the answers to these questions are positive, the individual would be released, on the basis of the assumption that the goal of correction was achieved. If not, the individual would be kept under detention. Of course, with continued application of empathy education.

According to the people who extended empathy education, the individuals are capable of learning empathy. Even if they were not born with strong skills of empathy, they can learn to act with empathy through the education they receive. It is often considered that empathy is not an inherent skill, but one that can be learned afterwards. Of course that view is partly debatable. In particular for the case of girls, for instance. Boys and girls naturally play games. During those games, one can fall and injure herself.

Boys would continue playing, while the girls go and help the injured one. The brain of girls and women are more effective in terms of empathy. That is the case, for the girl (woman) will grow up to be a mother. And motherhood means sacrifice. It necessitates thinking about her child (some other individual). That is not the case for men. They are rather selfish. That is why empathy education is more applicable for men.

In the Ahi Organization of the Ottoman era, the butchers were assigned gardening tasks once a year, so that they would not be immersed in the habit of butchering animals alone. So that they would be aware that the object of slaughter is also a living thing. So that the butchers retain some sense of mercy in their occupation. And such ethics is based on sufism.

Unfortunately, practices like the one described above are now forgotten. We have forgotten that we are with entities and living things entitled to live like us in the universe we were born in. We think mostly of human beings in general, and our individual selves in particular. We are deluded to think that we can continue to exist even in the lack of others. Yet, we are obliged to live with others in the social life we live. And in the wider sense of existence, we need the plants and other animals as well. In the lack of plants, animals, and other people, we too cannot exist. Therefore, thinking about others is actually thinking about ourselves. The existence of others is actually good for our own existence.

Humans are capable of establishing relationships. But with whom such relationships can be established, if no one else exists? That is why empathy should be taught. The education should start in the family, and continue on the street and in the school. And that education should occur in a systematic manner. Human beings cannot be left to their own devices.

The education should cover each and every value: Respect, reverence, love, and solidarity... Empathy, in this sense, yet another value to be taught. On this matter, the family has a great responsibility. Human beings learn how to live in the family environment. They are born into the family, and proceed into the streets after growing up in the family. When human beings proceed towards the street, as they make an appearance in social settings, they need the skill of empathy, above other skills. One needs an eye that is capable of seeing others, and a perspective that is respectful of others.

How can one establish a relationship in the lack of that skill? Can someone immersed completely in himself, thinking about nothing but the satisfaction of his own desires live in an urban setting? Can he establish some ties with the nature?

Aspects of Empathy

Empathy is an indispensable value for healthy behavior. It has three aspects: thought, emotion, and behaviors. In empathic thinking, the person who does the thinking focuses on the perspective of the other person, rather than his own perspective. He would try and speak what the other person would say. The position of the other person is the determining factor in this endeavor. There is a well-known joke: One day Temel had been standing on the side of the road. Dursun stands on the other side of the road, and tells Temel “get to the other side of the road.” Temel responds “Wut? I’m already on the other side.” If Dursun had engaged in empathic thinking, he would not think of a “other side” from his own perspective, and would tell Temel “come to my side of the road”. Indeed, empathy is the ability to look from the window of the other party.

It is well known that everyone has a distinct perspective. Our perspectives are not absolute, but rather personal. And other individuals have their own viewpoints... A person should be aware of himself as well as of others... The person and the others represent two distinct universes, even though they share some similarities. There is no single universe. The life is a greater existence that entails multiple universes intertwined.

It is no easy to be a human, or to live a life... As we don’t live alone, on our own, we need to think about others as well. We need

to take into account the emotions of others, alongside our own. We have our own rights. So do other people... A true human being would have a keen eye for the rights of others.

Empathy is among the preconditions of the label of human. Through empathic behavior, and by thinking of others, we can truly be human beings. Indeed, that is not an ability the animals have. They just act on the basis of their natural drives. They are not concerned about what the others would say or would suffer. For instance, up to the age of one, human beings don't discern themselves from the rest of the existence. They would not distinguish their feelings from the others'. The child would be concerned only with himself, and put his feeding to the center of his existence.

All he has are wants. He is not concerned about the others' capability to meet those wants, and the prices they would be paying for doing so. He does not concern himself with the finances of his parents. He only insists on getting what he desires. Interestingly, autism patients also exhibit similar behavior. They put their own status into the center. The children and autism patients act so, due to their shortcomings as human beings. Empathy is a feature of only people who are complete and mature.

Lack of Empathy; Cancer Cell

People with weak levels of empathy fall short in terms of their humanity. Think of someone lacking in the skill of empathy. He would not think about anyone other than himself. He would be careless about his surroundings, acting like a Tasmanian Devil in a sense. He can even kill for his own interests. Not thinking about the other person is essentially ignoring the other's existence. And that is, in a sense, monstrosity.

We call some entity that savages another of its kind, just to fill his own stomach, a monster. A person lacking the skill of empathy is very comparable to cancer cells. Cancer cells also act in that fashion. They continue their existence by ripping apart other cells, and getting hold of everything the body takes in. Cancer cells use excessive amounts of oxygen, blood, and glucose in particular. And they grow pretty quickly as they make mad use of any material the body has. The veins in cancerous tissues quickly get thicker. The tis-

sue generates an enzyme to accelerate the development of the veins, and by doing so, consumes most of the oxygen and glucose available in the body. Excessive consumption of oxygen and glucose is a sign of cancer cells, and it is among the first symptoms to be noticed in any early diagnosis.

Yes, the cancer cell only thinks about itself, and tries to grow even at the cost of causing death of the whole body. It is a cell lacking empathic qualities. It always wants selfishly. And in the end, with the death of the body comes its end.

This process is telling: a person lacking the skill of empathy grows by consuming other people. And when there is no one else to consume, his own existence cannot go on. That is why people lacking in empathy are comparable to social venom. They kill the society, in a sense, as they want to have all the assets of the society for themselves.

When the society no longer can function as one, the person lacking in empathy loses his own shelter. One can argue, at this junction, that the lack of empathy can serve as the key to release all evil from their locked quarters. And naturally, the empathy skill is the key to social peace. A person capable of empathy thinks of others more than himself. He acts in an altruistic and devoted way. A person acting in line with empathy lives his life for the others, and sustains his existence by contributing to the existence of others.

Empathy and lack thereof are so crucial in shaping outcomes. In some families the head of the household falls into delusions of grandeur. He no longer sees the woman and the children. He always puts his own desires to the forefront. He acts as if the woman and the children are his servants, lacking any rights on their own. The woman may have a job, or she may work at home, but all those efforts are ignored by the husband, who acts as if he is the only one working for the family. He complains of getting tired, as if the woman is not entitled to getting tired... The woman works at her job, and then comes home and works some more in the kitchen, meeting all requests by the children. The man, in turn, sits in his comfortable seat after work, issuing orders around. A human being should be able to think about the existence and rights of a woman, about a fair attitude...

This is nothing but cruelty! A person lacking empathy always oversteps his boundaries, and demands more than he is entitled to. And he is considered a cruel person as he infringes on the borders and rights of others. But interestingly, the same man, who is capable of behaving well towards the others outside, may act with all the cruelty available at home. He behaves as if he is the king of the household, and wants everything to be in line with his wishes. In effect, he assumes himself to be the king, and the others mere servants. And he wears different masks outside, and at home. In Anatolia, these people are often called “Polite to others, ruffian at home.” Yes, exactly that, a ruffian at home, for he acts in a rough way! And he is polite to others, as he acts mild-mannered outside!

Empathic Family

It is not sufficient to present empathy as a value. One also needs to learn it. The human beings should act with self-awareness in the family as well as in social life. Self-awareness is necessary to be able to perceive one’s own shortcomings. A person should think at all times, about his perception, thought, words and behavior.

Is he always thinking about himself? Or does he take the other people into account as well? How does he act with respect to his wife, children, and neighbors? Does he present a selfish person to them? Or does he try and be happy together with them? Do our spouses feel themselves well with us? Do we make them feel better?

The lack of empathy exhibits itself in the form of blaming others. Upon arriving at home, the man can get angry to see a mess. He scolds the woman asking “what kind of a woman are you?” He does not stop and think about why the house is such a mess. Maybe the woman was ill that day, and did not have the strength to put things in order. Maybe the kids had been a tad more active, and she had other stuff to do, thus did not get the chance to put things in order. But the man does not think of such possibilities. What he proceeds to do is accuse and scold. If he thought about it even for a bit, and expressed his sensitivities about the matter in a kinder way, the woman would try much better in devotion, without suffering from contempt.

When we act with some thought about the person we are dealing with, we also facilitate the other person's will to think about us. A person engaged in empathy would only meet empathy. A person handling others with good will only be met with good. That is the mutual nature of life. Empathy serves as the foundation of healthy relationships. But one does not achieve that perspective on his own. To be able to reach that level, one should work on himself. One should first stop and think about it when doing something and starting to talk. One should feel worries such as "how would the other person take my act or words?" or "will I be offending her or will I be leading her to thought?" We need to think about the consequences of any act we will engage in. And that rule applies in every domain of life: work, family, shopping and so on...

In families where empathy reigns, the feeling of belonging also develops. When a man acts thinking about his wife and children, the latter would feel valuable, and embrace the bonds tying them to the family. In the same vein, when the woman acts with her husband in mind, the same ties grow with the husband, who would proceed to embrace his home and family even more.

Thinking is a sensitive matter. Human beings speak to other human beings. And one cannot be certain about what the words would be triggering in the other person. For instance, assume that you are a rich person talking to a poor one. If you brag about your wealth in that poor guy's presence, you may, in a sense offend him. Bragging about your own wealth has an effect comparable to humiliating the other person. Expressing your fortunes may be perceived as an attack towards the lack thereof on part of the other person. For instance, in the past, in Turkey, the words "how happy is the one who says I'm a Turk" were written on the mountains of provinces where the population was not ethnically Turk. To be honest, that was anything but empathic. Let alone any sensitivities about the feelings of the people of those provinces, the perpetrators of this offense forced their way in doing the insult. And the consequences are clear: emotional offenses and wounds amounted to a critical mass. Writing those words on the mountains neither converted the people of those places to Turks, nor made them happy. All that was achieved was pushing them further away. The identities which were ignored became all the more apparent. The larger identity got fragmented, and second-

ary identities became more prominent. And many organizations building on those emotions became a sociological fact. Today, we are trying to fix these.

A mistake committed by the parents in particular is to compare the child with others, with a view to directing him to improvement. They often say “see your brother is so successful. He is devoting the necessary attention on his studies. He is doing all his homework. You, on the other hand...” The goal in doing so is to provoke the child into action and more interest in his studies... But such words often have a destructive effect, and lead the child to even deeper troubles. One should take into account what the child would feel. Such words often praise one child at the cost of another.

The parents should embrace a language marked by empathy, and should evaluate the children as separate individuals. The children should be handled with behavior patterns to make them feel valuable, without any humiliation. The shortcomings of the children should be ameliorated through an emphasis on the better qualities of the child involved.

A child whose shortcomings are underlined cannot possibly feel valuable. And a child who suffered a treatment that made him feel worthless cannot have strong ties with the family.

Empathy in Micro- and Macro-Communities

The family is the micro-level society, while the country acts as the macro-level one. The level of empathy required in a family setting should be applied in the larger society that country is, as well. The parent holds the responsibility for the small society we call the family. In the larger society, the government holds that same responsibility. The parents need to keep the family together. In parallel, the government needs to keep the regions and peoples which comprise the country, together. If the families are to have some semblance of a constitution, the first article of that constitution should underline the requirement of empathy. In the same vein, the first few articles of the constitution of a country should also be written with empathic sensitivities. If you prioritize a specific child in a family, or a specific ethnicity, line of thinking, or group in a society, all you achieve is to fragment that society. The social contract we call the constitu-

tion should be based on empathy. Otherwise, it cannot function as a social contract. Have you ever seen a contract that ignores and excludes others?

The Western societies appear to have grasped that fact after two world wars. They formulated their social contracts on the basis of democratic values, putting empathy at the center. A practice where everyone can express themselves and thus feel more valuable, has developed. In democratic societies, no single identity rules on its own. There are multiple identities in co-existence. In such settings where numerous identities, colors, and views exist side by side, everyone can enjoy the feeling of being valued and cherished. Differences feed and reinforce each other. Comparable to a symphony, with a polyphonic character, offering a rich tune as a whole...

One should not worry about social contracts and social organizations enabling such richness. The combination of differences is nothing to fear about. No one would sacrifice his own existence. In contrast, through protecting their own existence, they become open to the existence of others. The person maintains his own identity, while others maintain theirs... If you don't deem others valuable, and impose your own values on them, you would be effectively pushing them away, instead of drawing them towards you. But when you cherish them as valuable, they would be naturally inclined towards you.

And such inclinations would increase exchanges. You would get richer with the other person; so does he with you. Both parties embrace life and face developments in a richer state of existence. For, empathy means the ability to look from other perspectives.

Empathy in Marriage Choices

There are some cases which some families go through, leading to substantial fractions: Attitudes which develop outside the context of empathy... A boy or a girl would fall in love with someone else, and would want to live a life together with that person he or she comes to cherish. And he or she would think about it as well... In depth, if one may say so... Finally, he or she would discuss it with the family. And the parents may assume a completely negative attitude: "No, you cannot marry someone like that. I don't approve of it. If you marry in contrast to our will, you'd better forget about us!"

Such an attitude would be a grave mistake by the parents. They act as if the child is not a separate individual and personality, but just a property, servant, or extension of their own existence. Sure, the child is born to this life through the parents, but he or she would not be confined to a life all about the parents. Of course the decisions and preferences of the parents are important. Their consent is most valuable. But the parents, in turn, should not impose binding conditions on the decisions, preferences, concerns and thoughts about future their children may have.

Such a practice would amount to an abuse of parenthood, using it as a stick in some sense... Parenthood entails certain rights, and those rights are undeniable. But they should not cover anything and everything. There are also certain limits to parenthood. They occupy a certain place and position in the contexts of rights and fairness. When they overstep the boundaries, one would be freed of the obligation to obey the will of the parents. The parents should behave exactly as such, as parents. If they overstep their role as a parent, the child would be required to remind them of their proper place. And that should not be perceived as a rebellion, but as underlining a right. Our beliefs as well as the accepted practices of civilization tell us this.

The social practices offer numerous examples of dire straits marriages go through as a result of decisions imposed by the parents. Children who are forced to marry a relative would often be doomed to a life lacking in happiness. The bride would be unhappy, the groom would be unhappy, but they would be stuck in a forced marriage.

The man would seek solace outside, while the woman is forgotten in a corner of the house. Violence becomes a fact of these families. And the children born into such unhappy families would always be hurt and lacking in some sense of existence.

Every human being born to this world has his autonomous personality. The parents should respect that autonomy. Their duty as parents is to provide warnings and voice their preferences. But they should not impose their will above else. After a certain age, the child may have his own decisions and preferences. Imposition of certain decisions on the child who is past a certain age would push him away from home, and sever his ties with the family.

In such cases, the child should be able to say “no” to his parents. Studies on psychosocial skills focus on these matters. The importance of the ability to say “no!” in the context of dependence on parents or in substance abuse is investigated in depth. In such circumstances, the individual should be able to say “no” to his insisting parents, just like he should be able to say “no” to a friend which is offering some substance again and again. The healthy individual has the ability to say “no” under certain circumstances. The ability to say “no” effectively refers to the ability to maintain one’s autonomy, and the inherent rights anyone born as a human being. Saying “no” is effectively telling some “stop!” in an endeavor to impose a decision, to overstep one’s boundaries.

The choice about marriage and taking the plunge and getting married is a crucial step. Marriage is taking the leap together towards the unknown, to come what may in life. When a person decides to go with another person, he would be deemed to have accepted the facts about the latter as well. A step through the gates of marriage is in a sense some partial sacrifice of one’s own existence. If the man and woman don’t make sacrifices as they come due, the marriage cannot be maintained. If one thinks “even in a marriage I can live by my own choice and preferences”, he would only be dynamiting the foundations of the marriage. Many people who had initially said yes to everything, only to forget about his words later on, caused many problems and marked the beginning of the end for many marriages.

Case in Hand

Süleyman is an athlete, and wishes to have a tattoo on his arm. He brings up the issue to consult with his wife, and to get her consent. Leyla does not like the idea, but she cannot tell him “no” anyway. In the end she says to him “show me the tattoo, and I’ll have the same one on my arm as well.” Süleyman promptly opposes Leyla’s intent to have a tattoo, and thus drops the issue of having a tattoo for himself as well. And the result would be none having a tattoo. Leyla’s attitude led to an empathic awareness on part of her husband. The problem the tattoo posed in the first place eventually provided an opportunity for Süleyman to engage in empathy.

MAXIM OF BRIDE AND MOTHER-IN-LAW

The conflict between the bride and the mother-in-law is not a local problem. It is a rather universal one with roots going back to ancient times. It is not a problem inherent in a specific country or culture. It is an issue for the whole humanity. Even Sumerian clay tablets were found to contain passages about the problems between the bride and the mother-in-law. These matters are discussed in societies which lived millennia before the common era.

Today, we go through certain variations with such an ancient problem. First of all, we have this concept called modernism, which left nothing undisturbed. The grand families of the pre-modern era are now only curious tales from bygone centuries. When one talks about a family, the reference is always to the nuclear family, composed of the parents and the child(ren)...

The Transformation of the Family

Modern family equals to nuclear family. As the nuclear family as a concept came to be accepted, and embraced as the undisputed dominant reality, a certain framework of rights began to surround it. Up to a certain age, the child is a member of the family, and flies away after that age. The parents would be left on their own corner, and the child would live his own life on his own terms. He would either get prepared for a new nuclear family of his own, or not. A sociological reality based on social Darwinism prevails.

Nuclear family is something constructed and introduced by the modernist outlook. That perspective considers an extended family a costly entity, as an obstacle to competition and social Darwinism.

The more fragmented a family, and the smaller it is, the more consumption, and thus, production, would be needed...

One can sell just one refrigerator to a large family. But if there are households for individual nuclear families, and at times for individual human beings, one can sell/buy so many.

The ideal human image embraced by modernism always seeks his own interests. And the modern society, in turn, is composed of entities gathering around interests. In the core lies a race, based on competition among humans. Competition naturally brings along fragmentation. In large families, however, union and solidarity was supreme. The family provided shelter for individual members. A person who is in shelter cannot be reached and hunted down easily. And if such a person cannot be reached through direct connections, it would not be possible to sell him something beyond bare necessities.

The development of nuclear families opened up a new page in this sense. Nuclear families are entities developed for the sake of the production-consumption based paradigm. The persons who are born into that family are considered individuals, and are not held liable to any one else. They are supposed to be autonomous and independent on their own. They are birds to fly away from the family after the age of eighteen. They are expected to fly this way or that way on their own. There is no more a strong tree branch for that bird to sit and rest on.

In time, the nuclear family model that was designed in the modernist paradigm of the Western world came to be the dominant concept in the wider human community. And it made an appearance in our country as well. But we had our own history and traditions to contrast. The traditions, knowledge and beliefs remained in existence, and human beings continued to abide by them. That is why the nuclear family in our societies has some peculiar hues. It is not as well entrenched as it is in Western societies. Instead, it came to represent an amalgam. For instance, we have apartment blocks owned and occupied by larger families, with the grandmother and grandfather in the bottom floor, while the mother and father occupies the middle floor, and the son and the bride in the top floor... There are also apartments where uncles and aunts also have a flat. Or we have streets where relatives from an extended family live in close proximity.

The researchers saw and took note of this fact. In a sense we came up with a synthesis, an arabesque amalgam... And it is nothing to underestimate. In our society, the larger family continues to exist. The parents are not people to leave behind and forget about. In the West, the elderly parents dying on their own are common occurrences. In our society, however, such deaths are considered really shocking and shameful problems.

The children of those parents are often shamed in society, and are considered people lacking in humane qualities.

But one should think about the emergence of a trend of such cases. It is an undeniable fact that parents living alone is now a thing, and a growing one at that. The deep loneliness of the parents who are not called by anyone, and who have no one to call to... These elderly people have the problem of lacking contact. They suffer from a major collapse in terms of social contacts.

And that collapse is often accompanied by conditions such as the Alzheimer's disease. The lack of contact is one of the causes of that disease. In the lack of mental stimulus and social contact, the elderly people lacking people to talk to, or a grandson to play with, fall into a process of gradual collapse. In a sense, they lose the ability to talk.

The grandkids really get along well with the elderly. Do you know why? The elderly, the grandparents have an ancient history and an extended story to tell. And they are inclined to telling about their experiences. And the grandkids being grandkids, are pretty curious, and have lots of questions to ask. And there is a certain convergence of two parties' inclinations. The mouth and ear would join each other. The elderly act as the mouth, and the grandkids act as the ears, bringing about an amazing combination. Conveying the history and traditions, maintaining them in a process entailing change as well... The parents are often busy handling the requirements of life, and they don't always find the time to deal with the children. Thus, the grandkids are left with the grandparents.

Psychology of the Problem

The problem of bride and the mother-in-law is based on a certain mindset and psychology. The in-laws fear that the bride would cause an interruption in the so far excellent story the family had.

They worry that the bride would take their son away, and that their grandkids would be growing up in far away lands.

And often that is the case. Through marriage, the son flies away from his previous home, and builds a home of his own. Even if that home may be in the same province, it would often be far from the first one.

In some cases the boy would wander away to other provinces. The grandparents would hear about their grandkids only through the phone. They can see the grandkids only during special days like eid holidays. And the mother-in-law often blames the bride for all these changes. That may not be the right way of thinking, but that is often the case nonetheless.

The bride, in her turn, thinks that the man he married should belong to her first and foremost. She would, for instance, tell her husband "you are now married, and thus, mine." She would perceive her mother-in-law to be some interference between herself and her husband. She perceives the mother-in-law as a competitor trying to take away her husband. And she treats the in-law in this context.

The psychologies of the bride and the in-law are facts of human existence, and are beyond dispute. One cannot condemn them for embracing that perspective. Human beings are known to embrace a number of perspectives. The problematic part is acting on that incorrect perspective. One should, instead, try to curb and correct that perspective to the extent possible. The bride should not be perceived as some tramp to steal away a son. The mother-in-law should not be perceived as someone trying to stand in between a couple. If one does not keep control of these thoughts, the self-fulfilling prophecy would certainly occur.

As one does not think about these innate perceptions thoroughly, both the in-law and the bride would be mired in them. Everything the bride does disturbs the mother-in-law, and vice versa. Mimics and insignificant acts are often ascribed great/incorrect meanings. And these incorrect meanings are in time deemed to be facts. For instance misunderstandings are often found to lie at the root of the conflicts between the bride and the mother-in-law. A simple detail would be overemphasized, paving the way for a fight.

The facts are not the same thing as the perception. As people act on the basis of perception rather than facts, they are often prone to accidents in communications. That lies at the root of any interpersonal conflicts. And it is the source of the disconnect between the bride and the mother-in-law. When the husband arrives at home, he notices a depressed impression on his wife's face. And the reason? She would begin to talk about it: "Your mother... you know... She doesn't love me at all. She did this and that..." And in response, what can the guy do? He would naturally start to defend his mother.

And that defense makes the wife even more angrier: "I was right after all. That woman is taking my husband away from me." And the man would insist on his defense "she's my mother. What do you expect me to do?" Thus starts a crisis, and the cracks start to appear within the family that was established with great hopes.

And that is an incorrect attitude. The bride should not act on the basis of that perception. And even if she does, the husband should opt to listen to her, rather than trying to make her stop complaining. By talking, the bride can feel more comfortable as she can air the hurting wound in herself. The husband, in turn, should think about the things he hears. If there is some grain of truth in those words, he should tell her wife "I see your point dear. Mom can be like that sometimes. All mothers have such tendencies. But they are not doing that in bad faith. They act on good faith, even if their actions are not on the best course... The thing we need to do is to handle this matter without being disrespectful."

And hearing such a response, the bride would cool down a bit. All she wanted, in the first place, was a sympathetic ear to listen to her. When she finds that her husband is listening to her and trying to understand her, she would feel more comfortable. And once she feels more comfortable, she can be more tolerant of her mother-in-law, trying to close the gap between each other. When she visits her in-law, she would say "Dear mom. You're the mother of my husband, so you are my mother as well. Sure, I may have some mistakes. But I am not doing them on purpose. We are younger than you, and we are not as experienced as you. But you should know that we are not forgetting about you, or disregarding you."

See, man has an important role to play to achieve a solution to this problem. He should not stick with only his wife or only his

mother at all times. Rights and fairness are crucial. And one should also focus on the solution. Our Prophet commanded “be fair even in your love for your children.” Whenever a problem arises in the household, one should act as a judge, and not as a lawyer. One should be deciding based on the input provided by both parties, rather than defending one of the parties involved. The man should first understand the parties’ perceptions, then understand the underlying facts, thus coming up with an understanding of the whole issue. Finally, he should act in a way to facilitate solution.

That is no easy task though. But the man bears responsibility in this context. In the end, the parties involved are his mother and his wife. The man can come up with the following solution, for instance: When he is with his mother, he can talk to her about what his wife thinks well about his mother. And when he is with his wife, he can share the good things his mother had said about his wife. Acting as a bridge, the man will be able to find a common ground between his mother and wife. He should not do the opposite though. He should not, just for the sake of telling the truth, relay the negative things his mother had to say about the bride. And he should not mention the complaints his wife had about his mother. And he should also take the criticisms voiced by the parties in an assessment based on good will, rather than seeking ill intent behind them. For instance, when his wife complains about his mother, the groom can ascribe those complaints to the bride’s anxiety about losing him.

Good and Bad

It is well known that telling a person “you’re a good man” over and over can lead him to doing some good. And such an attitude can go a long way in problems like this one as well. A wise person had two dogs: a white and a black one. These two dogs, however, always fought each other. One day, the grandson of the wise man said “I wonder which dog will win at the end of these fights.” And the wise man responded “my dear child, the one we feed well will win undoubtedly.” In a similar vein, human beings also contain positive and negative characteristics in themselves. A human himself is a battleground, the stage to a conflict of positive and negative. Will the positive or the negative prevail in this stage we call human

beings? Certainly, the perspective the human in question is more interested in will prevail.

One should not forget about this matter about the co-existence of good and bad inside a human: the bad does not exist in an active manner. The bad and evil becomes apparent only as the man fails to work to foster the good in him. For instance, there is no night in and of itself. It occurs just in the lack of sunlight.

This crucial viewpoint should be used as a guideline for relationships. The people who comprise the marriage should work to achieve the good and the well, and should foster them. When the individuals are good and well, and when they treat the others as such, the bad and the ugly cannot find shelter among them. The most effective method to fight with the evil is to remain on the side of goodness.

Psychological entropy is akin to physical entropy. Hot water starts to cool down as it is left on its own means. A burning candle would eventually go off. In the same vein, a person starts to drift to the evil side when he does not actively stand for the good. If the reign of good in one person comes to an end, that person would be a slave of the evil. Therefore, we should always be aware and conscious, and always be engaged in a struggle...

We should not forget what our prophet said: "I came to complement good ethics." Having good ethics is the rallying cry of the followers of our Lord. The believer should be the builder of good. All the relationships he engages in are based on good and beauty, from the micro-scale to the macro one. The believer should take this teaching as the primary axis of his existence, and should think and live accordingly. Doing nothing would suffice for the slide to evil. But efforts are required to be a good person. The nature and body of the human are inclined to evil. To be a good human, on the other hand, one should rebel against his nature and body. Nurettin Topçu authored a dissertation (book) titled "The Ethics of Rebellion". In that book he draws attention to the ethics that is associated with the rebellion one would have against his nature and body.

The individual human should engage in such a struggle. The same should apply in a family as well. The family should be rendered a domain of good and beauty, a stage for the discussion and experience thereof.

We need to take a look on ourselves and our families. What is the thing that is most often discussed and cherished in a family? The thing that is indispensable for the family actually defines its identity and climate. Is money the most important object for a given family? Or is it something else?

One should place what is valuable, good and noble at the root of the family. Not what is only passing and ephemeral.

Both man and wife have important responsibilities in this context. They can either create heaven on earth at their home, or render it an arena where bodily desires compete against each other. Some homes act as safe shelters, while others often induce the feelings to run away. And all is due to the preferences of the people that make up the family. The foundations of the home and the family shape the rest of the story.

The “Value” of the Family

Nowadays, marriages and families are shaped mostly by the desire for wealth and money. And this creates numerous problems. Given the material foundations they are built on, these homes and families fail to provide safe and warm harbors for the members of the family. They neither serve as “home” for the man and wife, nor as a shelter for the children. For instance, unable to get the peace they seek at home, the children seek it elsewhere, in other sources. This has much to do to explain the inclination of current generations to substance abuse.

And the inclination is ever more prevalent after the 90s, where the capitalist lifestyle and money and wealth came to be the major determinants of life choices. The previous generations were more idealist in their outlook. All families, secular or otherwise, had some kind of idealism. For instance, young people from both the left and right of the political spectrum often had a consensus on the ideal of a better country. Even though they purported different routes to that goal, the goal was shared nonetheless. But in parallel to the developments in the rest of the world, our country too went through some form of change, and experienced a substantial sociological breakdown. A book-reading idealist generation was replaced by one

that is focused more on pleasure. That latter generation had a thing for consuming and getting more...

This cannot be explained through external factors alone. The transformation of the family also played a role. The greed for wealth and the satisfaction of desires is now an accepted goal for all families. That is why substance abuse is observed not only among the children of secular families, but those of conservative ones as well.

We often get questions by families which face these problems. They all ask us "what can we do? How should we approach our addicted child?" As in the case presented above with reference to the conflict between the bride and the mother-in-law, we will repeat the same formula: Don't embrace a negative attitude. Apply a positive outlook with patience. There is only one thing one can do to help a fallen child: holding his hands. If we cast him out because of his addiction, if we expel him from the family, we cannot gain him back. We would lose him completely. And talking is the key at such a junction. For, talking is establishing a connection. It refers to the maintenance of the relationship.

As talking is kept as an available channel, the parents can talk with the child, about the right and wrong. But if the family members are no longer on speaking terms, one cannot even talk about the good things involved, let alone discussing the bad. The children of families who are able to speak their mind freely don't feel the need to lie. If they commit some mistakes, they can confess that to their family with a free conscience. These children can think about and voice any mistakes the family may have committed. They would speak with the confidence that the family will only deem it natural to hear about the mistake the child may have made.

Indeed, the parents should place the child on their side, rather than on the other side of a metaphorical table of debate. They cannot speak freely with a child across the table. But if the child sits on the same side with them, they can talk within the team. The embrace of a positive attitude is crucial in any relationship. One should have a positive outlook, and not a negative one...

The Re-establishment of the Family

Both the conflict between the bride and the mother-in-law, and the failure regarding the home's function as a shelter leading the children seeking peace outside remind us one thing: the re-establishment of the family as per the directions provided by our belief and value system. The importance of the rights of the parents should be underlined; so should be the need for perfect respect expressed by the children, towards their parents...

The man of the house should express the same form of respect for both his own parents, and the parents of his wife. The woman, in turn, should bear the same level of responsibility before her own parents, and the parents of her husband.

When a family is built on these foundations, the children to be born into that family will be immersed in these values. The children will, in particular, get used to respect for the parents, at the very earliest years of their lives. For they will have their own parents as role models who express perfect respect for the still older generation of parents in the family. As the child grows older, and starts attending the school, and reaches to his teen years, he will have an even more open mind for these values. The parents should instill these values in the child before he reaches those years. For from the age ten on, the mind and ears of the child would be rather directed to the outside. They would no longer be attaching priority to the education provided by their parents.

But a child who timely and duly received the value system and upbringing based on the traditions of a strong family, would not seek peace outside. He would be aware of the loving parents he has, and ventures outside with the confidence of the compassion extended by the parents who focus on values rather than money. His return home would also be accordingly. He would know that his home would be the place to leave behind the pains and troubles a fall or injury outside may bring about. For him, home, and not the addiction outside, gives peace.

A child who enjoys such a strong sense of confidence and healthy upbringing would, in the future, have a healthy marriage of his own. He desires to see moral value rather than physical value in the person he will be marrying. And the choice of a person with strong moral

values would bring in a new member of the family, who would be naturally respectful of the parents of both partners in marriage. In such a marriage, the bride and the mother-in-law would not be in conflict. Nor would any child seek peace in substance abuse.

Case in Hand

Being on the same team with the mother-in-law...

Adem is a good husband, but is also very close with his mother. He spends way more than reasonable amounts of time with his mother. His wife, Aliye, in turn, criticizes Adem continuously, and calls him “mamma’s boy”, telling the tales of his devotion to his mother. From time to time, they have harsh discussions. Aliye’s relationship with her mother-in-law is rather cold. She believes that her mother-in-law plays the part of the victim and addresses her son’s feelings of sympathy, abusing his weakness for her.

In the end Aliye decides to consult with a family consultant. And the consultant tells him “make sure Adem sees the errors in his ways through her own eyes. A man’s love for his mother is essentially his love for a woman. A man capable of loving a woman can also successfully love a second woman, this time his wife.”

Armed with this new perspective, Aliye adopts a new strategy. She encourages Adem to visit his mother even more frequently. Doing so, Adem gets a respite from the need to defend himself and his mother, and can look at the picture through rather objective glasses. Now, Aliye effectively joined the same team with her husband and her mother-in-law. Adem also becomes aware of this new positioning, and starts to lend a more open ear to the views of Aliye.

THE FEELING OF HINDRANCE

People often believe that all over the globe, for the larger portion of history, life was organized around the needs of men, and that mode of organization posed an obstacle for women. Woolf's books "A Room of One's Own" and "Three Guineas" revolve around that theme. Along with that assumption, certain practices also contributed to the feeling of hindrance suffered by women. The feminist theory underlines this matter and asks women to rebel against this imposed hindrance. It claims that the society and family as an institution are shaped and positioned to oppose women or relegate them to a secondary level of importance, and thus, that women can achieve freedom by rebelling against this organization.

These assumptions and views have their grain of truth. And they are based on historical, sociological, theological, economic, and political facts and conceptions. It is a matter that is worthy of volumes and volumes, and the literature is pretty rich. Here, however, the focus is not on the merits of these claims, but on the concrete examples specialists working on marriage and family issues often face.

Current Feeling of Hindrance on part of the Woman

Which issues instill the largest feeling of hindrance on part of the women living today? Does a woman feel hindrance if she cannot wander around in the streets during the night? Or would she be subjected to hindrance if she cannot go visit her friends and relatives without notifying her husband first?

Indeed, the examples presented to us often refer to cases like these to depict a feeling of hindrance. Of course that feeling leads to a feeling of victimization. People come to believe that their rights

are violated, and that they are subjected to treatment as second class citizens. The perception involves intervention of someone on the life of another.

If a hindrance or obstacle exists, and if the woman feels the existence thereof in her relationship or marriage, one can forcefully argue that, in the context of the relationship, the borders are not defined clearly, and were often violated. The man may truly have overstepped his borders; or the woman may harbor expectations well beyond their ordinary responsibilities. At this junction, what we underline especially is the clear definition of borders in any relationship. The rights and responsibilities of the man and the woman should be expressed in clear terms, and should be accepted and embraced.

The states have their constitutions. The constitutions delineating the rights and responsibilities of the citizens are considered social contracts. The constitution stipulates the limits applicable to the citizens as well as to government authority. In a sense, order can be possible through the borders drawn. One cannot speak of an order in a setting where everyone can act as he wishes. The freedom of an individual ends at the spot the rights of another begin. When you buy a land, you buy a specific site with specific borders. And then you get it registered on your name in title deed registry. Through these practices, people organize their life without trespassing over the rights of others.

In a relationship between two individuals, in a marriage, borders like these are simply inevitable. The rights and duties of the spouses; the rights of the woman; the rights of the man... The institution we call marriage can be possible thanks to the fundamental question "which borders should the married people should observe?" In a marriage, two people come together under a single roof. Two person means two distinct worlds. Two person who are not same as each other, and with their unique sets of sensitivities... Both have different sensitivities. And these sensitivities are what determine the borders. The man and woman should act in a manner respectful of the sensitivities of each other. They are responsible with respecting the borders.

Furthermore, human beings are social creatures. They should live within the borders of the social structures they were born into. When the man and the woman do not settle with these private and

social borders, and instead attempt to do as their will, problems would naturally follow. Of course they can feel some kind of hindrance, but that feeling does not make them right. If the man says “no” to any attempt by the woman, would the woman be truly subjected to a hindrance? Or, in another case, if the man does as his whims dictate, ignoring his responsibilities towards the family as the head of the household, and if he is criticized for doing so, would that be considered hindrance?

If the man and the woman feel hindrance due to the obstructions preventing them from doing as they wish, they may not always be in the right. This point is crucial: In a marriage, the parties should make their wants, needs, and expectations clear. The extent to which these wants, needs and expectations are deemed acceptable is crucial. Of course a person wants everything, but in the end, life does not provide room for all wants. If you are married, and you have only certain economic means, living as part of a society that has certain rules and limits, you are obliged to abide by those limits. Most married people who come to us about their problems suffer from the lack of a healthy priority of wants, needs, and expectations. When we ask them to come up with a list, they first act confused, and then they just make an ad-hoc list of the things they can think of. They don’t care if the items on the list can be achieved or not, and if they are beneficial or detrimental to the individual/family.

We face the existence of spouses who have no clear conception of their wants. They are just dissatisfied. It is not clear if they could be satisfied in case the spouse they are complaining about acted in another way. This is a case of undiagnosed unhappiness. That is why these people need to achieve an awareness of their wants. Without forgetting to whom they are married, and where... Without disregarding the status of the spouse, and the structure of the society... The gist of the matter is, again, the awareness on part of the individual, about himself and the person he is in a relationship with.

Marriage is not a Battle

It would not be correct to consider marriage as a battle ground, as the feminist theory is inclined to suggest. In a sense, feminism has its roots in Darwinism. It perceives life as a conflict and segregation rather than as a grounds of cooperation and integration. If life is

considered a struggle, the strong would stand in the end. And for that, each of the parties should be aware of how they can overcome the other party, in one way or another. According to the competition perspective of Darwinism and its offshoot, feminism, struggle and conflict is normal; so is the oppression of the weak by the strong... The belief is that, through this process of evolution, life would be even more perfect. A society with no room for the weak, and only the strong to exist.

Even more competition is encouraged due to this line of thinking. Protection afforded by the family, social values, and associations is not deemed a positive value. For that protection is thought to pose an obstacle to the rise of the powerful. When the feminist outlook based on Darwinist roots is employed to describe the relationship and the marriage between man and woman as a competition and struggle, weirdness ensues. Women aspire to be more than a woman, while the men want for more. For instance, some women embrace a masculine look, while some men experiment with a feminine look. In this context, marriages become difficult endeavors, and family is rendered something else. Marriage and family is now deemed to be out of fashion.

A person who feels to be hindered should think about it: "Under which circumstances he would feel free from hindrance?" "What is the bar for that perception?" "Would he be still considered hindered, if he sets the bar too high in an unrealistic fever?" Yes, one should be reasonable when setting the bar. Man and woman should think about not only their individual selves, but also the marriage and partnership they engage in. They should meet in the middle, on common ground, rather than going to extremes. At that golden sweet spot... At the place where both parties reach through partial sacrifice...

Reconciliation is crucial. It can only be possible in a context where the individual is cognizant of himself and the person he is dealing with: It reflects mutual understanding and respect.

It is about noting one's own rights, all the while maintaining an awareness about the rights of the others. Unfortunately the excessive emphasis modernity and capitalism makes on the individual and ego taints the culture of reconciliation. They make people fight each other rather than seeking reconciliation. It considers the parties in

a relationship not as two contributors with shared interests, but as two opposing sides.

No, reconciliation, and thus a healthy marriage and relationship is not possible within the framework of modern assumptions. And the feeling of hindrance, after the prevailing fashion, is often rising on the basis of these modern assumptions. Indeed, an authentic relationship and order can be possible only through established borders. The marriage can be sustained in cases where the parties don't have absolute liberty, and instead have to respect the rights and borders of each other.

Mistreatment by Men

Even though we underline these, we should not deny the injustices suffered by the women in practice. The existence of many women who suffer in the hands of men, who are mistreated and effectively hindered by men, is an undeniable fact. But why is this the case? Why do the men impose such suffering?

There is a common saying: men are not emotional beings. They are rather calculating creatures. The man is closer to reason and assessment. But he marries the woman, who is closer to emotions. Therefore, marriage is an amalgam of reason and emotions. The woman is, in this context, destined to suffer in the hands of the man, for the latter is incapable of reading the states of womanhood associated with emotions. He cannot read them, and thereafter misinterprets them, leading him to naturally unacceptable attitudes.

The shortcomings the man has in terms of emotional awareness are related with his hunter character. Hunter is primarily engaged in defense and attack... It is similar to soldier. In a sense, such a masculine character has its functions. As the head of the household, he can put that into good use defending his family. That is how his genes function. That is also the source of his courage and aggressive attitudes.

Women, in turn, are not born hunters. They are rather nurturing creatures. The woman is a mother above else. The child who lacks in terms of emotional defenses needs a mother.

For a child who have substantial emotional needs, the mother provides shelter, a kind of response. The mother should be sensitive of fear, so that she can perceive dangers early on. In this sense,

woman are more active, and they worry more for their children. And that anxious state of mind helps her to sense potential threats early on. Regardless of their gender, all children have their share of emotional needs. They act as recipients in terms of love, compassion, and acceptance. And a mother is a necessity for children of such nature. For, it is the mother who does most of the raising the child. The father ventures outside the home, while mother is there to do the nurturing.

Sure, man is also needed to give birth to a child, but his part in actually raising the child is not that obvious. The mother plays a more significant part in the birth as well as growing of the child. The mothers who fall short in terms of the requirements to raise a child properly will only raise children suffering from a number of problems, just like the children who lost their mothers due to some calamity, and who had then been raised by their fathers. The children left to the care of a father are susceptible to dangers. Indeed, many needs of a child flow through the bridge we call a mother. For instance, there is the motherhood hormone, but there is no corresponding fatherhood one. As an experiment mentioned above, carried out with the monkeys observed, male monkeys injected oxytocin hormone engaged in behavior to protect their children.

Neither the man nor the woman is complete on his or her own. That is why the man gravitate towards the woman, and vice versa. The gravitation the man feels towards the woman, and the woman feels towards the man point out the need of both sexes to find another to cover their shortcomings. Perhaps the healthiest relationship of all is the one between the man who discovered the woman in him, and the woman who developed the man inside. The man can become the person sought after in such a relationship by working on his emotional side. The woman, in turn, can develop her judgment for the same purpose.

The man needs to learn the language of emotions. He should approach a woman in a way distinct from his usual approach to objects. He should be aware that the woman has a heart. A man need not say "I love you" every single day. It is equally important to understand one's wife, to help out with some of the house chores, and to serve her at times.

Offering a glass of water, or refilling her glass of tea... The services the spouses perform for each other, and the exchange of gifts are the expressions of love.

Prevailing Model of Men in the Society

Yes, the hindrance the women feel, and the decipherable appearance of their emotions, is related to the nature of the man. But there are underlying social grounds for this state of affairs. In the final analysis, one can talk about a model of masculinity presented by sociology and the society. In this vision, man is perceived to be the main actor in life. Everything occurs in connection to him. For instance, we tend to call boys “pasha”... In this perception, woman exists as a secondary element standing by the man, paving the way for him, making life better for the main actor... This perception forms part of the background to the issue we have. And its effect is even starker in societies dominated by men. In rural societies in particular, one can often hear the saying “small communities have big laws.” Indeed, the rules in small communities are much stricter. People who live in disregard of these rules would be labeled and alienated before long. “Community pressure” and “peer pressure” are actual effects shaping our lives.

The man is born to such a reality. That is what he learns as he grows up. He embraces a certain form of masculinity model, and tries to imitate it. He looks at the woman, the marriage, and the relationship between man and woman, through the lenses provided by the society. He calls his sister an object of his honor. He believes he completely owns the woman he married. He believes that the final decision regarding the women in his life belongs to him. He extends an oversized sense of ownership towards women...

The man perceives the woman to be an extension or a part of him. And as he can move his arm as he wishes, he expects the woman to be that compliant as well. He wants the woman to do all his bidding, and not resist his wishes at all. He is inclined to forget that the woman is also a human being, a subject and personality of her own. He cannot think about the existence of the desires, wants, and preferences of her.

In such a context, it is assumed that the woman is obliged to love what man loves, and not to love what he does not.

Certainly this perception cannot be considered reasonable at all. And as it is wrong, it leads to destructive results in practice. The woman comes to believe that she is ignored, rendered invisible practically, and hindered. And naturally she objects to such a perception. The man, in response thinks “how dare you object?”

Such a perception and assumption on part of the man amounts to narcissism. Extreme fondness the man has for himself, placing himself in the center of life, and desiring everything to be in tune with his preferences... He cannot even tolerate the children’s affection for their mother. He tends to belittle children who are fond of their mother, saying “these are just mamma’s boys.” He cannot bring himself to thinking that a boy who loves his mother would, in the future, be able to love the woman in her life, and thus would have a healthy marriage. Nor can he foresee that a boy who does not love, and who even hates his mother would be incapable of loving his wife in the future, and thus would be doomed to unhappiness...

Unrealistic Wishes and Expectations

The woman may have a point in this respect. But here is a more constructive line of thinking for her: Sure, she may want to be loved by both her husband and her children. But she should not demand her husband and children to love her, and her alone. If she feels jealous about the love her husband harbors for his mother or sister, and if she feels hindrance in case her expectations on that front are not met, she would be in the wrong. It is well known that some women are dominant in character. They rule over the men and children... That is an undesirable state of affairs. For the male children of such dominant women suffer from significant problems. Most transsexuals have backgrounds that match this description.

The wishes and expectations should be realistic. Unrealistic ones unavoidably lead to an emotion of hindrance. And women who feel hindrance would, in time, come to feel worthless. To prevent such consequences, one should strike a balance.

Neither the woman nor the man should expect more than their fair share of rights. They should not harbor wishes and expectations

which may lead to problems. They need to do this if they want to be good models for the children. Let's think about it: A man pretends to offer a piece of liver to a cat. And as the cat reaches out for it, the man pulls it back. The cat would naturally start meows to beg for the liver. But the point the man has in this endeavor is not to make the cat suffer, but to maintain the contact with the cat. He does what he does as an expression of love and interest. His point is to keep the cat close, so that he could engage in an extended loving relationship with it, touching and feeling.

The same applies for life as well, in a sense. We cannot get the nice things we long for, right away. Our affection with the things we attain stems partly from the difficulties we endured in doing so. If we get something easily and immediately, it would not feel very valuable to us. Human beings are comparable to cats in terms of their ungrateful spirits. And the treatment for such a spirit is to make blessings hard to get. That is how people learn to value the blessings one gets. The man withholding the liver instead of giving it right away, and preventing easy access to blessings, are good, and not bad, for the cat and the man. Doing so, the cat and the man receives the message "be aware of the value of this blessing you receive! If not, they won't be coming your way any more."

Therefore, people should not feel hindrance in case what they desire does not happen right away. A man or woman whose wishes are not fulfilled right away, and who, instead, face some difficulty, should think about it: "Why am I not being allowed to achieve my wishes right away? Why am I facing such obstacles?" A person that received the answer "no" should seek the underlying factors of that response. If, instead, he considers himself to be a victim of unjust treatment, that would be the actual misfortune for him. The obstacles exist to be overcome, not to complain about. If someone tells you "no", you are expected to make some effort to overcome that response. An effort to understand... To assess the situation in detail... Throughout history, all successful people who achieved their goals in all aspects of life had, at some point or other, faced some obstruction, which they duly analyzed. For them, the barriers acted as opportunities rather than disasters. A plain life without any obstacles would not be a meaningful one. That is why one cannot

expect a problem-free relationship. The problems are to be solved on the way towards a healthy relationship.

Case in Hand

A well-educated perfectionist who has a bright career and a good job, Cumhur, marries a young colleague of his, Meltem. However, as early as the first week of marriage, Cumhur, whose father was a faculty member, asks for a divorce. The families of both sides intervene, but fail to come up with a solution. Sure, the couple loves each other, but Cumhur says that his wife's mouth smells foul, and that he cannot be expected to live with such a person. The newlyweds decide to visit a marriage counselor. The counselor investigates if a psychiatric condition requiring treatment lurks in the background, and concludes against the existence of such a condition. Then, the couple is asked to fill out "relationship status, relationship attitude, and relationship orientation" scales. The scales show that Cumhur's perfectionist tendencies stand out, while Meltem is mostly inclined towards dependence. They have the capacity to have a good marriage.

Some points the therapist focuses leads Cumhur to taking sudden steps towards change and solving the problem.

In response to the therapist's question "Imagine you are on a journey, or a surgeon who began an operation, or a commander who just entered into battle. Would you just stop at a moment's notice, and say 'I give up. I'll seek other alternatives'?" he responds "of course not."

"Marriage is such a serious business, and a crucial institution. If you contemplate divorce as the first alternative in the face of any problem, you should better not marry at all. If you had engaged in a marriage, you should try and adapt your problem-solving style, and work on the option 'to fix foul breath.'"

This new attitude helps the young man to come to his senses. Cumhur decides to review his perspective to marriage, thinking "my thoughts about marriage were incorrect. I now realize I have some more thinking to do."

ANGER AND RAGE

Rage is one of the four horsemen of apocalypse, representing the negative side of human psychology. Those horsemen are the har-binger of disaster... Four horsemen: grudge, rage, jealousy, enmity... Whenever one of these negative emotions arise, the brain produces a special mix of chemicals. When the person feels rage, that chemical is secreted into the blood. And it makes the muscles on one's shoulders, neck, waist and back tense. It also increases the resistance of the veins, and thus increase blood pressure. All energy reservoirs are utilized, and cholesterol, fatty acid, and glucose levels rise.

What Does Rage Signify?

Rage activates the alert system notifying one about the impending battle. The person perceives himself to be in danger and under an attack. That is why he gets the rage in the first place. Rage is a mechanism to protect the person from danger, making him to move away. It is a defense mechanism in the face of danger. It entails first a defensive posture, followed by a counter-attack...

As rage is about defense and attack, the person involved would mobilize all his assets under the influence of rage. The tension in the veins of the person feeling rage is a symptom of that mobilization. A tolerant and calm person can immediately turn into someone else. Sympathetic activation is replaced by a parasympathetic one. One assumes a defensive posture, and prepares for attack. Then comes a calm breeze, telling the person "the danger is over, you can relax now." And while relaxing, the person starts to refill the reservoirs he used in the emergency.

Continued rage, covering a day or two, would consume all the resources one has. The body would be in a defensive posture, and engaged in an attack, at all times. And akin to an experience continuous war depleting all the resources of a country, continued rage and conflict would consume the resources available in human body. A country in war cannot build up resources, for, faced with an emergency, it would be consuming more than it produces. The case with the people suffering rage is similar. They cannot build up resources. They just consume. For instance, growth hormone cannot be secreted under the influence of rage. The body would be focused on secreting the stress hormone instead. There would be no time for growth in that narrow strait of danger. Just like a country engaged in mortal defense halting its investments, a state of nervousness and worry takes over. All one can think about is the ways to protect the existing position.

The Need for Rage

Human beings are equipped with such a mechanism. That is the function of rage in humans. Sure, the feeling of rage has its uses. It provides a mechanism to defend in the face of danger. One needs the feeling of rage to fend off danger. The objects of rage are hardcoded in the genes of animals. For instance, eating, drinking water, and reproduction are among the basic functions of animal existence. When barred from access to food, the animal naturally feels rage. The same applies with the children as well, to a certain extent at least. Among the animals, rage is restricted to natural needs. As the animals don't have abstract thinking skills, they don't get to experience rage based on thoughts.

Humans, however, are different. They experience rage not only in the face of mortal danger, but also due to some abstract reasons as well. For instance, a person can be enraged due to another one's failure to nod as they pass by. Human beings think about all three dimensions of life: past, present, and future. They don't forget about the past, and remembering it they can get enraged. Some experiences they are having in the present may also lead to rage. And thinking about the future, especially a worrying one, would also inflame rage.

That is the case with human beings. But human beings are endowed with something else as well: reason. A human being can use his reason to keep his emotions in check. He needs to manage his

feelings correctly. And the feeling of rage should be kept under control. There is no person without any rage. The utter and complete lack of rage is not healthy. Just like the excessive application of rage causing some problems, the complete lack of rage also leads to trouble. Therefore, a certain balance is necessary. The feeling of rage is interesting. It entails pleasure as well. When enraged, the person can feel a kind of pleasure lurking deep down. Getting revenge can take the person to a whole different plain, as he feels very strong at that moment. Reason needs to be put to helm in order to prevent major issues as one is intoxicated by the pleasures involved in rage.

At times, rage occurs as an expression of a condition or depression one had in the background. That is how rage is expressed among patients suffering from latent depression. Among the women, depression leads to sadness, while among men, it often shows itself as rage. That is why some angry people need treatment. However, they may sometimes refuse such treatment. For, rage makes them feel stronger, and that is an enjoyable feeling. The patient does not want to let that pleasure go. He, in a sense, embraces his rage.

Indeed, rage has an aspect affecting the brain. The brain, in its turn, is the command center of behaviors. When the chemical messaging system in the brain is disrupted or distorted, it shows in the form of behaviors. Human beings are mostly influenced by their spirit. And the spirit is what counts at the court of God. Body acts as the means of that spirit, which we have yet to understand. The body can be abstracted into the organ we call the brain. Even though the brain is perceived to be the command center, it is but a channel for the spirit to express itself and act.

Therefore, the body and the brain, which is the means of the spirit, should be healthy. And for health, treatment, and therefore medicine, is a must. One needs to receive specialized medical assistance if he gets angry easily, and thus suffers from increased blood pressure.

Rage Management

Rage leads to a number of consequences: We realize the existence of rage with reference to these consequences. Behind the rage observed through the body lies something else, however. And that something else is fear: the fear to be hurt, and the loss of trust... The person

would feel to be faced by a danger. The person who feels that such a development could hurt him, would feel a spike in his safety scale. For instance, when you want to give some love to an injured animal, it would try to run away, because it feels that it is prone to suffering due to its injury, and thus reacts in the manner of getting away from you.

This point should not be ignored in family settings and in marriages, when discussing the treatment the spouses apply for each other. Do you know why your spouse is enraged? If your husband is in rage, he may be suffering from latent depression. Appropriate treatment should be sought in the face of this sensitivity. One should be delicate in handling him. He may feel in danger; he may be injured; your attitude may be hurting a wound he may have. It is probable that he is embracing a defensive mechanism as he seeks protection. In this context, he may feel rage.

Instead of pushing further with such a husband, he should be given some space and some time to recover. For, even the most normal of attitudes may startle him and make him angry. Take this example: The husband just returned from work. He had some problem at work. That problem brought him home in an angry state of mind. If you confront him further asking “look at yourself! I waited for you at home the whole day, and you are giving me the silent treatment”, he would suffer more from your words.

Rage is akin to fire, and the moment of rage is comparable to flames starting suddenly. That is why one should play the part of a firefighter before an angry person. Upon arriving the site of a fire, the firefighter would not start with asking the cause of the fire. He focuses on putting out the fire. He would first get rid of the flames, cool the site down, and only then he tries to find the starting point of the fire. And in the end, he would write a report to prevent similar incidents in the future. The place would then be reorganized in line with the report. The same process applies in the marriages and relationships as well.

In case someone is enraged, the correct attitude does not involve confrontation saying “you have no right to be angry! I don’t understand why you are so enraged!” The first thing to do is to abate the fire of rage. Understanding the causes should have a secondary place.

The most important model in managing the emotions is to change one's focus. For instance, you may be angry at someone because she failed to greet you properly, told you a lie, or delayed in opening the door. You may have said some harsh words, leading to a tense bitterness. What would the person who is the recipient of that rage (the spouse) do? If he responds in kind, the fire would only grow. That is not one should do. Staying silent at that moment is the better course of action. Doing so she would be giving the space necessary for the fires to abate. First the storm should pass. When faced with such a response, the enraged party would start thinking after a while, and will say to himself in a guilt-ridden confession "I broke her heart with my angry words. But she did not do anything. She just stayed silent. I did some injustice to her. I should better make up for it, and ask for her forgiveness."

At the Time of Rage

At the moment of rage, reason would no longer rule. The thinking brain gets replaced by a brain that is feeling mostly. In such a state, the brain would not think properly, and would assume fighting positions. In response, the individual should put his reason to work once again. For instance, the guy may have entered his home in a shouting fit. "He is perhaps trying to solve the problems by shouting them down. He is acting on the basis of his emotions rather than his thoughts. He is trying to win through a fight, and suppressing me." If, based on this line of thinking, you ask "you don't need to shout. Is there a problem? Let's talk so that I can understand you", all you will do is to make him angrier. For, doing so, you address the reasoning part of his brain. The answer you will get will be along the following lines: "Here, here... She wants to understand me, apparently!"

Yes, one should avoid, to the extent possible, pushing the other. The emotional state will remain hot as one is continued to be provoked. One should put reason to effect, instead of provoking the emotions. Making the guy think, instead of provoking him further... Avoiding joining the angry guy in his fervor, and instead calling and drawing him to calmer waters...

If you meet a swordsman with a sword, all you would do is to start a sword fight. But if you avoid using a weapon and instead use your mind and reason, you will be drawing the guy to your side. Venturing

into the zone of the enraged person is like playing on the away field. It would be a better idea to play on your own field.

If the enraged person wants to do away with the rage, he should try to change his state and position. If he is standing, he should sit down. If he is seated, he should take a walk. If he is walking around, he should go wash his face. Or perhaps the best thing to do would be to leave the topic of conflict behind, and to talk about something else.

Our prophet commanded “whenever you are enraged, go perform an ablution.” Through ablution, a person can reach to the court of God. And at the court of God, the person can wake up to his true existence, and doing so, reinforces the connection he has with God. A person who goes through ablution and arrives at the court of God, in kowtow position, would be relieved of his worldly self, as well as of selfishness. A person who reinforces his relationship with God should also keep a strong bond with each and every creation of God. For, a praying person would be well aware that hurting the creation of God is equal to hurting God himself. Therefore, belief is crucial. Remembering God at every junction is crucial. Remembering God at a time of rage, thinking of him at that junction is equal to a person remembering his own existence and boundaries. It is like getting up after a fall... Getting enraged is surrender to one’s nature, while remembering God and acting accordingly is moving beyond one’s nature.

When Abu Bakr got angry in the face of an injustice, our prophet said the following: “before you got angry, two angels stood by you to protect you. But when you got angry, they just left.” In other words, at the moment of rage, a person loses some things. A person who surrenders to his nature and self is bound to be left alone in his selfish attitudes. When a person gets angry, the devil continues to provoke his self. When a person gets up with anger, he would actually be falling into the pit of self.

But when a person acts with reason and mercy rather than anger, other things come to help that person. The angels intervene, and inspire the person in an ever better direction.

Therefore, in a moment of rage one should take shelter in the order of God. Surrendering to the great Creator who knows all and who can do anything. Desperation can be overcome only through this remedy. When a person falls into despair, he should ask the

help of God. And when he asks for God's help, that help would be coming surely. If the person does not seek shelter in God's order, and instead falls slave to the ephemeral pleasure rage entails, he would certainly be suffering. There are many stories of people who fall to the hands of the feeling for revenge, and destroying everything with the excitement of rage. Newspapers are full of their accounts. Nevertheless, most people fail to think about the consequences in a fit of rage. They act just as their feelings dictate at that moment. But "a person who just speaks his mind is bound to hear what he does not wish to. A person who does what he wants is bound to face what he does not want."

Even the pronunciation of the word rage has a violent resonance. Usually rage provides the first spark for violence. A person who gets angry would most probably end up in violence. However, violence in this context does not refer to just physical violence. Verbal violence, and thus verbal rage are also important. A person who speaks his mind without reservation would break the hearts of others. There were and are many instances where words really hurt. Just like a bullet hitting the target cause destruction, words uttered in rage can also knock the other person down. As the bullets tear into the body, bad words would wound and shatter spirits. Come to think of it; the wound inflicted by a bullet can heal in time. But often the wounds caused by ill-intentioned words do not.

"Don't Act Before Thinking!"

In this context, a method called "stop, think, and only then act!" is often recommended. Some people first act, and only then think. Therefore they act without thinking. The frontal lobe of the brain is crucial.

Just like we exercise to strengthen our arms and legs, we should also train our frontal cortex networks using the method "think, and only then act!" And that requires effort. One should be ready to suffer in doing so. The brain cannot develop without suffering. One should train the self through suffering, so that the neural connections on the frontal cortex of the brain can strengthen. It is completely doable. One can learn to stop and think, and to act after thinking over. One can act on this basis in daily life, marriage, bilateral and multilateral relationships.

One can come to recognize the boundaries of others through developing an awareness of his own boundaries. To stop and think is about knowing oneself. It entails cognition of one's existence, and action on that basis. A person who acts on the basis of knowledge of himself can be deemed to lead and rule over his body. A person who is incapable of leading himself cannot be expected to lead others. The concept of neuro-leadership is telling in this context. The individuals who train the frontal cortex of the brain often have leadership qualities. And that amounts to an awareness of knowing what to do and where. We are talking about a mental skill, a quality that requires wisdom. One can develop and enjoy these qualities, however through training, and efforts spanning years and years. Through exercise one can strengthen his muscles in a short while. But the muscles in the brain take longer. One would fall at times, and learn how to rise again on the basis of the lessons learned through the experience.

That is comparable to addition and subtraction in calculus. Experience helps develop the guidelines to help one make an assessment of gain and loss. It amounts to learning the calculus of this endeavor. That is why mathematics education strengthens the infrastructure of the brain. Indeed, mathematics is the first lesson in learning about the creation. The cause-effect relationship, and the comparison of analogies and differences are all sub-domains of mathematics. Therefore, mathematics of life entails building highways over the infrastructure we have in our brains. The infrastructure can be built by solving the problems. Thereafter, one makes an introduction to physics using this infrastructure. And thereafter, life and social studies...

Learning the Mathematics of Life

People who are ignorant about the mathematics and physics of life cannot succeed in social and life studies. They experience major problems in their dealings with others.

For instance, people who had been married for years still have difficulty in talking to each other, and expressing their emotions. And instead, they opt to expressing themselves through anger. No, their problem is not a lack of love. They indeed love their spouse and children. Yet, they cannot talk and communicate properly. They cannot express themselves through language. They always maintain and angry existence.

Of course every person has his own unique personality. Some may have received education, but nonetheless may be angry in nature. They live a life shaped by a tough form. And their expressions are often about their emotions. Angry people, the ones who can feel steam rising in the face of almost everything, are categorized in this group. If a person is an angry one by nature, he should be aware of that and act accordingly. But if he had been transformed into an angry person later on in the life, there should be a problem somewhere in the process. And that problem requires treatment. Anger stemming from one's nature, however, cannot be eliminated completely, however hard one may try. At best, it can be minimized.

Some people appear mild-mannered in social circles, but acts harshly at home. Such a person can behave roughly towards his wife and children, whereas he would be rather more tolerating on the street, in social life. One should remember this rule of thumb: In our cultural tradition, man holds the helm outside, while woman rules at home. Even a harsh and firm husband should be aware that, at home the woman should have the last word. He should not oppose the decision of the woman on certain domestic practices, such as the decoration of the house. If such a division of labor can be achieved, conflicts, and consequently the fits of rage disappear.

Sure, every person has his more or less unique temperament. Just like football players on a field taking up positions according to their roles in the team... A football player, an athlete, a contestant always needs an opponent. And he always strives for the target by overcoming the contestant. Unfortunately a similar mindset prevails in the marriages of today. The individuals engaged in the relationship often perceive the other party as an opponent to prevail over. So, there are marriages and relationships where the partners try to make an attack, score a goal over the other, and dribble past the opponent. The partners embrace a defensive position towards their spouses, and after capturing the ball, quickly seek to score a goal against them.

If the feeling of competition prevails in a relationship, naturally one would suffer the emotions of worry, anxiety, and fear of losing. And that would take calm and peace away. It is noteworthy that the athletes often suffer from vocational diseases in a psychological sense, as they try to maintain their competitive spirits in their future lives. For that is how their brains are programmed to work. They are

so used to the paradigm based on winning and losing, they cannot escape it. When a vocational habit is imposed into one's private life, problems ensue. Life and relationship is no game.

In a relationship, in marriage, a person who refuses or fails to connect and communicate, and who instead always resort to emotional reactions, would embrace defensive positions at all times. They always embrace a defensive posture as if they live in danger, and under the ever present threat of injury. The solution lies in making these people feel that they are not in danger. Making them feel that they are accepted and approved. For these people seek approval above all. And when they do not get that, they feel anger, and assume a defensive posture with rage, believing that they are thus safe. That is why it is necessary to try and gain their trust. It is necessary to show them that they are loved, and worthy of respect.

And to do that, sincerity is a must. One should go beyond token efforts, and actually express it through all acts and behaviors towards the person in question. If this can be achieved, one would soon see that those harsh and firm fathers who hitherto hold on dearly to their cocoon would evolve into butterflies. You'd see that they would open up, embrace you, and call you to joining them... When that happens, they find the chance to be more transparent and to communicate more clearly. If there is a problem, it would be fixed by talking and communication.

Case in Hand

Gül has a dominant personality. She always wants to prevail at home and in her close relationships. Turgut, in turn, is a rather passive and mild-mannered individual, who often represses his feelings, only to explode later on at a random point in time. And at each occasion of explosion Gül mutters to herself "see, this guy looks like an angel, but actually builds anger over virtually everything." One day, as they are on their way to leave house, Turgut waits in the car for approximately half an hour, for his wife to come. To boot, there are also some guests involved. In the face of this event, he thinks "I think I need to change my tactic. This woman will again leave me in an awkward position in the presence of these guests. She will make me sound like unreasonable even though I am right on this case."

And in conclusion, he manages to act in a rather different way, and keeps his cheerful outlook.

Gül finally arrives with her guests, but she is surprised to see her husband to be so cheerful. She feels confused and finally cannot help but ask “it is weird that you aren’t angry at all.” In response Turgut says “Nope, I made a new decision. Instead of getting angry with you, I will now be seeking an opportunity to make you wait in the car.”

And through this experience, Turgut leads his wife to a whole new paradigm through two instances of opportunity training:

1- I too can avoid reactions in guiding my behavior.

2- You should be ready for an incident that would make you empathize with me.

Example

If your spouse embraces an attitude based on criticizing you at all times, making you angry and red, if she enjoys provoking you, you can apply “surprise methods.” These methods include the following:

a. Record your conversations and make her listen them at a later time. Most people don’t want to hear their own voice making negative statements. You will see that your wife acts more carefully next time.

b. Whenever your wife starts grumbling, start to hum a tune. When your wife asks what you are doing, just tell her that you feel happy.

c. If you want to do something about the mess which apparently does not annoy your husband, take a video recording of the mess, and increase the effect of the recording with a voiceover. If your husband does not do anything about it, play the video to your guests.

d. When your wife starts yelling at you, don’t let your anger rise and consume you. If you do so, you would be drawn to her battle ground, where she would satisfy her ego on you. She is controlled by the emotional part of her brain at that moment. You can try to lead her to using the thinking part of her brain. If you do so, you will notice that she immediately stops yelling. A sentence as simple as “please talk a little bit slowly. I want to understand you” would do the job. Since one cannot yell slowly, she would definitely stop and be surprised.

COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY IN THE FAMILY

The human beings are characterized by their ability to talk, as well as to listen. Contrary to common opinion, listening is much more valuable than talking. That is why human beings have just one mouth but two ears. There is the idiom about “listening with both ears.” There is also “being all ears.” Communication occurs between the mouth and the ears. It entails a relaying of information from the mouth to the ears. If there are some ears to listen to, what the mouth says would be of some use. In the lack of any available ears, however, communication cannot occur. Even if someone does the talking, it does not amount to anything. If there are no ears to listen, the mouth that does the talking would be no more than a radio left on but unattended.

Verbal communications entails talking and the ability to speak. It entails two human beings providing the mouths and the ears engaged. Verbal communications, or conversation, is a solution applied often to convey a message or handle a problem. And that function assumes an ever more crucial role in relationships and marriages. Human beings are characterized by their ability to establish relationships. They are obligated to establish relationships with other people. There are no problem-free relationships. The existence of some problem is not an issue in and of itself. Problems are natural elements of any relationship. The inability to talk about the problem is the greater issue. If the parties involved are able to talk, any problem can be solved.

Some general rules apply for solving problems. These rules apply for problems concerning marriages as well. The issues to arise between man and wife and the children can be solved through these rules. Therefore, it is crucial to be aware of these rules. People who are knowledgeable about these rules can handily solve the problems.

The first rule is about recognizing the problem. What is a problem? One should be well aware of the details of a problem so that it can be defined. And a problem that does not elude definition would be amenable to potential solutions. Various solutions can be proposed and the problem could be handled through one of these.

And to do so, the parties in the problem should be talking to each other, and engage in verbal communications. Where one of the parties is withdrawn and reserved, no verbal communications can be possible. In case one of the parties consider herself to be absolutely right, and the other to be in the wrong, the parties can no longer be able to talk to each other.

Men and Women in terms of Solving Problems

Man and woman have different perspectives towards the solution for various problems encountered in a marriage. Upon encountering a problem, the man withdraws to his shelter, and chooses to elaborate about it. He would choose to stay alone, and try to understand and define the problem. The woman, however, has a brain that works differently. In the face of a problem, she would not withdraw, and instead share her experience. By openly discussing the issue with her circle, she would both share her experience, and waits for proposed solutions from others. For the social and empathic behavior skills of the women are rather more emphasized. As the man withdraws to his safe place, the woman opens up, and starts to consult with her husband more and more. In the face of this communication, the man would initially avoid responding with communication. But eventually, as the woman repeats her questions he would begin to sit down and have a chat with his wife. And that attitude on part of the woman is often mistaken as nagging. Yet, that emphasis is caused by good will on part of the woman, her intent to solve the problem.

It is a material fact that the man withdraws in the face of a problem, while the woman chooses to talk about it. However, the woman should act a bit more delicately at this junction. If she insists on talking to the man as he withdraws, if she pushes him to talking in spite of his natural inclination, and if she insists on pushing her own viewpoint with respect to the problem, she would be acting wrong.

Such an attitude would create pressure on the man, leading him to making a mistake. Man should be given some time and space. Of

course the woman should talk to her husband, but should do so in a conscious manner.

In terms of devising a solution for a problem, the man is mostly concerned with the solution, while the woman is concerned with the process... The man is interested in hard facts, while the woman would focus on the emotional states involved. One is positioned at one end of the spectrum; the other on the opposite end. Naturally, these different outlooks complicate the problem further. That is why the men should work on their understanding of emotions, while the women should improve their fact- and logic-based thinking skills. If they do so, they would meet at a common ground, achieving a kind of balance.

The deeds committed by a person are certainly important. But equally important is how those deeds are committed. The man is often interested in the answer to the question “what”, while the woman focuses on the answer to “why”. Female brain is stronger in terms of aesthetic perception, for the right side of their brain is the dominant one. Among the men, however, left hemisphere is the more dominant one. That is why men engage in analytical thinking, applying logic and reasoning to issues. In this context, different genders have different outlooks towards their approach to and solutions for different problems. Man and woman should train their other hemispheres as well, so as to find common ground with the other sex. The woman can contribute to finding a balance by training her left hemisphere, and the man can do the same by training his right.

Questions and a Road Map for the Problem

In the face of a problem, the following questions should be asked: “Do I take the emotions and rights of the other person into account?” “What does the other person feel?” “What do I feel? To what extent I’m right on my point?” “Do I base my judgment only on me, or do I develop it with reference to the family?” The answers to these questions play a major part on the solution of the problem. For these questions enable the individual in recognizing himself and his partner. In particular, people who are capable of presenting an objective picture of their views and standing would recognize the merits of the other party, and ascribe rights to them, similar to the rights they believe in for themselves.

A traveler guides his journey in the light of his map. He would check the map and decide which way to go.

The same applies in marriages and relationships as well. People decide what to do through an analysis of their own positions and activities. A person comes to learn what disturbs her as he gets to know herself better. And she would develop the awareness that the cases disturbing her would disturb another person as well. She would not do to someone, what she does not want to be subjected to.

A person aware of herself would also be aware of human existence. A person who knows about human existence would also know about the states of people. She would not just say what she thinks comfortably. She would not immediately take a position. She would prefer to talk after contemplating the state the other person is in. She would not start complaining about the problems the day brought, to her husband who just came home after a tiring day at work. And she does not feel the need to talk directly anyway. She would be aware that her face and the state she is in is already telling. Indeed, people often quote that verbal communications account for just twenty- to thirty-percent of all communications. Sure, it is possible for a person to convey information through talking. But she cannot express her emotional state by talking. The emotional state, corresponding to the remaining seventy-percent of communications is the larger element in human communications. In contrast to common view, most communications among individuals are based on states. The state one is in, the tone of her voice, her mimics, her face all provide clues about her feelings and the words she wants to say. Therefore, one does not need extended talks. A simple smile, a few nice words can cut the distances among people. Even if the husband returns home in a tired state, he still can help with the emotions of his wife by simply holding her hand.

Three Styles of Communication

There are three styles of communication: Healthy communications, conflicting communications, and lack of communications... In the case of healthy communications, both parties take part in the process, both providing both mouth and ears directed towards the other. They both talk to each other, and listen each other. In the case of conflicting communications, in turn, both parties believe in the correctness of their point, and thus don't really listen to the other party. They all care about conveying their own point. Both try to disprove the point of the other, and to show that the other person

is truly in the wrong. They don't really talk. They just have a fight over talking. The lack of communications, however, is the worst.

In the case of conflicting communications we still have two people talking. In the lack of communications, on the other hand, we no longer have two persons engaged. Both withdraw to their corners, and stop trying. And when a person withdraws, she would start moving away from the other. In a marriage, this would lead to divorce in the end. The withdrawing spouse would eventually move away from her partner.

One should choose to talk, and to communicate, in spite of everything. The ability to talk, and maintaining communications even if it is just a conflicting one, keeps the hopes up. People can get closer through fights as well. One can never write off the possibility that a simple touch or contact would melt all the ice. Indeed, the ability to talk is important. The spouses should be careful about it, and should learn how to talk through time. For, communications is an art form. Talking should not give way to exchanging punches. The words should not act as punches inflicted on the face of the other person. Talking is not about hurting the other individual. People often say "good words are worth much more, and cost little." There are also some cases where words actually hurt more than bullets.

Communications is about a space and a grounds. It is not just about conveying a message. It also involves other experiences as well. There are visible and invisible elements of any communications. As you talk about something, you may inadvertently make something else explicit. Reading between the lines can tell much about the intentions. That is why intentions are crucial in communications. Good intentions are important. On the other hand, ascribing non-existing intent to other people, claiming that they are hiding their true intentions through their words is not the way to go. Telling the other person, "no; you actually want to say something else" is effectively putting words to the mouth of the other person. To be honest, putting words in other people's mouths is not the habit of a mature person. It would sever the ties of communication.

People doing so would not bother to investigate the merits of the matter, and lead to consequences right away based on only their own presumptions. That is why one should avoid leading to definite conclusions without hard facts, and should not seek ill intentions on part of the others. One should think matters in depth, and lead to consequences only after being aware of all details involved.

People once asked Luqman “how did you come to possess this knowledge?” Luqman responded “I learnt it from blind people.” “How?” the asked further. Luqman described the process in response: “When they walk, at every step they check the ground first. They take every step after feeling and contemplation. That is what I did. I led myself to conclusions after questioning everything.”

The answer by Luqman summarizes the essence of communication techniques. A conclusion that is not based on knowledge would be an incorrect one. Socrates had three filters. A person came to Socrates and said “I want to ask you a question.” Socrates responded “wait now, let’s check these three filters. If what you have to say can pass through these filters, you can tell it. First of all, is the thing you will tell about correct? Secondly, is it something good? Thirdly, is it something useful? Be careful though. A statement that can pass through the first filter may not always do so with the second. And then there’s the third filter even if it was not held by the first two. Make sure that what you want to say would not be obstructed by these three filters.”

Indeed, one has to apply such a diligent perspective in talking and communicating. Talking just for the sake of talking, saying things without contemplating the results is not the right thing to do. For no words are confined to just making some waves in the air. They all have their targets. One should contemplate the words’ potential effect at the target. Al-Ghazali once said the following: “When you think about saying something, first think and contemplate! Think about it; would it be a burden for you if you withhold it? Will something fall short if you don’t say it? If your words would fill a gap, and if in the lack thereof a shortcoming would occur, then you can tell it. Otherwise, pray stay silent!”

And don’t forget the dictum of the Prophet Mohammad: “My God! I seek shelter in your rule, from useless knowledge.” For every word has its basis in facts. One should not just talk through one’s hat. Keeping quiet is much matter than just babbling. If your words will cause harm, or if there are no ears to listen to your words, you should not speak in the first place. For unnecessary speech would just cause noise. Noise, in turn, is deafening. It makes subsequent listening harder and rarer.

Involving Others in the Problem

A common mistake committed by spouses lacking in communications: The parties would talk with their parents about the problem, and

involve them in the process as well. The man and the woman proceeding to involve their families would in a sense, make the conflict bigger. There are some mother-in-laws who are only too happy to intervene.

It is a common mistake though. For the spouses are closer to each other than they are to their parents. How can one expect the people standing farther contribute to the solution of a problem that is beyond the capabilities of people standing close. They cannot possibly have the close insight the actual partners have about the problem!

The issue is essentially about the parties who are the subjects of the problem. Therefore, they are the ones who are naturally best positioned to understand the problem. In this context, they should be the ones doing the talking about the problem first and foremost. If they are doing the talking but are unable to solve the issues despite all their efforts, then they may tell about it to the more experienced elderly and relatives, asking their help. The relatives, the parents thus involved in the issue should, in their turn, act on the basis of objective principles, rather than keeping sides. They should be able to tell their son or daughter "you are wrong!" if she is so. If they approach the matter on the basis of the interests of the side they are on, rather than on the basis of principles, they would not contribute to a solution. To the contrary, they would be engaging in an injustice.

But a fair approach is a rare occurrence among parents who face such a conundrum. Therefore, the involvement of the parents often make the problem harder to solve. There are many stories of mothers-in-law who sought to separate the couple rather than trying to amend their differences. That is why the partners should be careful. Sure, no one can deny the existence of the parents, but the partners in marriage should always remember that they are the actually responsible individuals in that marriage. In the end, they would be the ones to reap the fruits and suffer the cost of the relationship.

They should choose to talk to each other, in spite of everything. No one should force his point to the other, and they should avoid transforming the matter to a war of egos. The man should not seek to make the woman similar to him. The woman should not try to carve out a man that is more amenable to her perspective. The man has his outlook; so does the woman. And then there is the fact the children born into the marriage are. The union of two individuals leads, eventually, to children.

Once the children are born, neither the man nor the woman can think only about himself or herself. The children they brought to this world have their own rights and have to be taken into consideration. One cannot simply behave like nothing happened.

But if divorce is unavoidable despite all the efforts, one should try to minimize its impact nonetheless. One should not seek revenge and try to inflict more pain on the other party. After the divorce, the parties need to fulfill their responsibilities. Making the issue more difficult, and seeking revenge with a view to inflicting more suffering on the other party would be unfair for the child as well. Doing so is like a plague. It is natural for people to get married and sometimes divorce. That is not the ideal, but it is not the end of the world as well. Therefore, after a divorce, the man and the woman should not try to disparage each other in the eyes of the kids. In the end, the man and the woman will still be the parents of the children who were born into that discontinued marriage. As the mother tries to disparage the father, the child can naturally ask “if he was such an awful person, why did you marry him in the first place?” The same applies for man as well. It was him that took that woman as his wife.

Transparency for Solving the Problem

Family environments and marriages are comparable to life in general. Especially because they occur in the heart of life. For, marriage is effectively a journey into the ocean of life. Near the shoreline, there would not be major problems. However as one goes to deeper blue seas, storms can set in suddenly, leading to panic in the boat. That can happen in any family, making the man or the woman burst in anger, and act in unconventional ways. A mild-mannered man can become totally someone else, engaging in violence. The gentle woman can be replaced by another one who makes a fuss about everything.

All married men and women may experience this. A case where the man beats the wife, right in front of the eyes of the children. Or a case where the woman starts yelling because of an insignificant thing, which was literally the last straw. In the end, both cases lead to violence and noise.

In the face of a storm, everyone involved got tense and had their share of the experience. After a while the parties start to think, and notice their errors in doing so. The woman who suffered violence

expects an apology from her husband. The man, in turn, realizes his mistake but has a hard time apologizing. He just appears to apologize. And the woman settles for that thin apology, thinking mostly about her children. The child who had been traumatized by the violence directed towards the mother would be told that the father was truly sorry, so as to prevent the development of any negative emotions towards the father. And that is partly lying, even if the intentions are good.

That is not the right attitude however. For, the child may learn about the exact nature of the matter later on, and found the lie in her mother's words. And that would only hurt her more. She would start thinking that her father is a violent and arrogant man, while her mother is a liar. Therefore, transparency is the key! Problems can occur in any family. People may have such unpleasant experiences. In the end, life is difficult, and people often feel inadequate in the face of life. One cannot always use reason and logic at all times. Sometimes an explosion of emotions can take the person to undesired destinations.

Thus, it is necessary to talk about the issue after a while, regardless of what may have come to pass. One should ask "what led us to this experience?" and try to understand his or her part in the developments. If the parents don't want their children to be affected, they should speak clearly to them, and tell the essence of the matter to them. They should tell them that life is not always a bed of roses, that every human being can err, and that the crucial issue is to draw some lessons from the mistakes.

That is the right way to solving the problem. But perhaps even more crucial is to avoid the ways leading to the problem... One should think about preventive medicine... One can fall ill due to some reason. A diagnosis would be made, followed by a treatment accordingly. But the more crucial part is about staying away from the causes of illness. A person who avoids the causes of illness would save himself from its consequences as well.

The spouses in a marriage should also avoid issues which would lead to fights and problems in a marriage. Sometimes, a simple sentence or a way of saying something can lead to great fights. Therefore, one should always be thoughtful about her actions, as well as the place and process thereof. Not everything can be talked about virtually any time and anywhere. One should be well-versed in manners. One should express an issue only at a certain time, place, and way so as to avoid offending the other person. The family of the husband

may be causing some harm for the marriage, but voicing that at an inopportune time and place would not help with the solution, but render it even more unreachable. Therefore, language and style are very crucial. A person should always be in command of his tongue and his sexuality. Those two are the causes of any problem a person may suffer. Pointless talking may cause pains. A bullet may not always be made of metal. Words also make up painful bullets.

Patience for Solving the Problem

Patience is one of the most important means available to human beings. In life, a person can experience many things. These cannot be avoided. Birth essentially exposes a person to any further experience to come. And our belief system refers to fate and accidents as well. As one goes through his fate, he gets to experience many accidents and incidents to shape his destiny. Our religion recommends to accept the occurrences we are exposed to. It recommends patience through acceptance. Modern sciences, in turn, describe patience as a “mediative” act.

Yes, patience refers to a painful form of action. Contrary to common belief, patience is not a state of mind, but an internal action. A person who is engaged in patience would contemplate about what happened, coming up with a definition and acceptance. And as the experiences are accepted, they stop being destructive. When a person acts in patience, the results of that patience would be fruitful. That is why people say “patience is a bitter seed, but its fruits are sweet.”

Indeed, patience is not about endurance. Something we merely endure continues to be painful. Patience, on the other hand, is about accepting what had already occurred. Patience is about thinking about the occurrence, wandering about the causes, and thus coming to understand it. That is why patience is defined as an active state of being. In the lack of patience, one would most probably act in the wrong way if he just reacts impulsively.

For, he cannot come to understand the background to the experience, and react only in a superficial way. But through patience, one can get a better picture of what happened, and thus decide on a more accurate reaction.

In this context patience is important in any marriage and in relationships. Some spouses decide and act in haste, only to be in the wrong in the end. And doing so they would put an end to a marriage which would otherwise remain intact. And that act can

be followed by the feelings of regret. In order to avoid regret setting on later, one should not decide quickly, and instead contemplate before saying the last word.

The partners in marriage should undergo a training for patience as well. The persons involved should try and break free from acting in haste. They should think that life goes on, and new things can lead to another form of reality. Sure the mother-in-law may be a pain at times, but the bride should know well that the in-law would not be there at all times. No one can now what tomorrow would bring. The in-law can be there today, but who knows about tomorrow? As we often think that life just goes on without much change, we are not really inclined to patience, and thus think that the problems are unbearable. Yet, every new day can bring along its share of new developments.

Case in Hand

“The essence is crucial, the method has priority.”

Deniz and Sadık have a disagreement on how to use the money they saved for a long time now. Every time it rains, Deniz voices her desire to have a paved track in the garden that turns into a swamp. Her husband Sadık, on the other hand, attaches greater importance to spiritual happiness, and wishes to use the money to help a poor person. So they cannot really reach an agreement. A wise elderly they consult with recommends this method:

Both parties would make a list of their needs, ranked by importance and priority. The couple, in the end, decides that helping the poor is important, but the need of the family household has priority. This month, they would get the track in the garden, and next month they would help the poor.

This issue which felt unsurmountable for Deniz and Sadık is thus settled through a wiser perspective, with steps taken to make both parties happy.

THE RIGHT FORM OF COMMUNICATION IN MARRIAGE

There are essentially two forms of communication: verbal and nonverbal. In the case of verbal communication, the person conveys his position through words. In the case of nonverbal communication, on the other hand, the flow is through the expression of emotions. Mimics, posture, and behaviors of the person tell about him and what he feels. Emotional expression also conveys some form of information. And that information takes two basic forms: social and internal...

Twenty percent of all communication occurs on a verbal basis, while nonverbal communication accounts for eighty percent. It is true that human beings are capable of talking. But perhaps more than they, they are experiencing creatures. A person is defined more by his state and posture, than his words. Just uttering kind and nice words does not suffice. His posture and the story it tells are also important. People would think "let's see if he truly lives what he preaches!" That is why communications through words has a rather limited impact compared to that of communications through state and posture.

Communication within the Family

The family is yet another setting where verbal and nonverbal communications occur. That is why one should be careful in that setting. As noted above, communications within the family can be analyzed with reference to three forms. The first one is "healthy communication." In a family, the parties may have reached an agreement on the grounds to talk about the issues. In such a case, they have a healthy communication regardless of the subject matter involved.

The second form of communications within the family is the “conflicting communication.” In this case, the parties fail to reach to common grounds around a shared sense of “us”, and instead maintained their own existence and perspective. And thus the issues are discussed through the lenses of “me” rather than “us.” As the parties put themselves to the center, they tend to see themselves to be right, and the other party to be wrong. Once they start picking sides, the talk would soon lead to a conflict, which would often evolve to a fight. The only things that such a fight breaks are not the vases and other household items. The hearts also get broken.

The third form of communication within the family, on the other hand, is simply lack thereof. And that is even worse than conflicting communication, for it simply entails no communication. The parties do not even bother to have a fight. They stand so far apart, that they cannot even talk. Thus, the issues remain unsolved. Such marriages are frozen in time, with extra-time being played by both parties. People may have fights in a marriage from time to time. That is only natural. One can discuss, but can also come up with a conclusion in the end. In marriages where the lack of communication prevails, however, the issues don’t get to be settled. Therefore these relationships cannot be sustained for long.

Cautious Optimism

As a rule, one should be optimist in a relationship. In a marriage, the individuals should not embrace a pessimist outlook, and should not emphasize the negative. In any case, embracing a positive outlook, and standing by the good are crucial. Optimism, in turn, is defined as maintaining a positive outlook at all times... Always thinking positively and ignoring the negative...

Optimism is perceived to be an advantage, but there is also another perspective: In a study carried in the University of California, from 1920s on people were categorized in two groups: the optimists and the others... They were then monitored for seventy years, and the optimists were found to fall ill more frequently. Do you know why? Because the optimist always thinks positively, and fails to notice the negative side of the things. Yet, good and bad both are natural elements of life. A person who embraces wholesale optimism would

be left without precautions as he fails to foresee the unfortunate developments, and cannot avoid undesirable consequences.

Sure, optimism is a good thing, but one also has to be careful. Human beings have this inherent will to avoid malice. It is a quality that protects a human from ill. As a rule, one should try to attract good, and avoid bad. We are capable of love and fear. We call for the things we love, and keep away from what we fear. That is why one should be an optimist, and a cautious one at that.

Rather than wholesale optimism, one should embrace a “cautious optimism.” When a person thinks, nothing can happen to me, and gets out without taking necessary measures, he would be exposed to all the elements. He should, instead, take precautions based on the state of the street and the case at hand. You cannot simply ignore the winter and the cold weather. You have to put on your attire accordingly.

In the same vein, one should hold on to a cautious optimism in a marriage. It is good to think positively about the other person. But in the end, she is just a person, a human being. And human beings are somewhat exposed to malice. That is how the spouses should handle each other and their children. For instance, a mother cannot simply leave the child to her own means. If she thinks “what can possibly go wrong”, the child would certainly come up with some creative answer to that question.

A gullible optimism is therefore not a good thing on its own. It leads one to imprudence, and forgetting about one’s responsibilities. On the other hand, pure pessimism is also not good. If one always worries about what malice may come, the life will soon turn into an unbearable burden. Incessant worry would soon consume the person. A gullible optimist faces dangers as he forgets about the precautions. On the other hand, an overly cautious person would fall ill due to excessive worry.

That is why our dictum is “precaution and alertness first, optimism second.” That refers to a state of equilibrium. Gullible optimism and ever-present pessimism refer to extremes. The balance lies in optimism once the person takes the necessary precautions.

And the human being is the one to achieve that, for he holds free will. And through that free will, he reaches decisions and makes choices. He often comes across an issue to think about, and often finds himself facing choices.

And at those junctions he would approve some choices while rejecting the alternatives, and vice versa.

The frontal cortex of the brain is home to the decision-making structures. In that part of the brain one reaches to the decision to do or not. Once the brain decides, the action would commence. According to Islam, human beings are characterized by that very free will. The human has the choice, but the rest does not belong to him. Making the choice between the right and the wrong is up to the human. But the act/state to follow as a result of that choice is often beyond the capabilities of the person involved. The limited will of the person is bound by his capability to choose. And the liability of the person is associated with that choice. If a person wants something evil, God Almighty would still create it. The creation of evil is not evil in itself. The desire for evil is the source of evil. This world is a place of trial. And the determining in that trial are the choices made by the human beings. One cannot talk about a trial in the lack of the possibility to make a choice. One can venture into evil by listening to his ego and worldly desires. But he should also think about the consequences. And he should also be aware that he would be rewarded for choosing the good in rebellion to one's ego and desires.

Existence and Continuity of Communication

The most important thing in a marriage is the sustenance of communications, even conflicting ones. Looking at the consequences of conflicting communications, one may seek improvements and come up with ways of healthy communications. An example may be helpful to underline the importance of even conflicting communications: Assume you are facing a palace with ten gates. You wish to enter that palace. But you would not just stand there looking at nine closed gates and think "how can I enter this palace?" Instead you use the one gate that is open.

Human beings are like that palace. You should not simply stop communicating with them as nine gates are closed. Therefore, rather than pointing at the closed gates of each other, the spouses in a marriage should approach the open one. This attitude can be called the language of diplomacy. When the overall goal is to solve the problem, talking and the ability to speak stand out as the crucial acts. If one

can remain on talking terms, dialogue would still continue, and the bridges still lay intact.

And till the bridges fall, one can always proceed for the open side of the other person. You can always speak a shared tongue with your spouse. That is why process/method is crucial in communications and relationships. Marriage, relationship, and communications require some form of diplomacy.

Yes, marriage and relationship is an art form, and as an art, it has some tricks into it. The spouses should be fluent in the techniques to approach to and make sense with each other. Telling the other one “this is how I think, and this is how you should be” is actually a confession of ignorance about that art. Such an attitude would sever the communication, and breaks the heart of the other party. Yet, the goal is to win over the other party. One should stick to the ways of getting closer with the other person involved.

For instance, exchanging gifts can go a long way in this sense. A person who is used to getting gifts since her childhood would, if her husband is not a huge fan of gifts, feel not loved. People often say “he didn’t even buy me some flowers.” A little smile, a couple of flowers would really make these people very happy. Another way of pleasing the other person and winning her over lies through little gestures. For instance, when she looks thirsty, getting up and offering her a glass of water would go a long way. Trying to assist her treatment if she falls ill, and helping her in the tasks she cannot achieve alone can also go a long way in terms of making her happy. Buying small gifts and making little gestures are more effective than just saying “I love you.” As the other person can easily see how loved she is through those gestures. And it is also important for the man to state his gratitude and satisfaction upon arriving home and finding the table already set. That is yet another verse in the language of love. Recognition of the efforts of one’s spouse, voicing praises would also strengthen healthy communications. Physical contact is also crucial. A girl who was raised with hugs and plays of carrying her on shoulders through her childhood would feel incomplete if in marriage she does not get all the touches she is used to. She would then feel unloved and alone. That is why physical contact is crucial in a relationship. Holding hands, hugging, touching one’s hair and so

on... Just holding the hand of and hugging a hurt and injured person would go a long way in healing the wounds in her heart.

Analyzed through this perspective, a healthy relationship and communication is possible in any marriage. Twenty percent of couples who seek a divorce through legal means were able to save their marriages when they were reminded about these communication techniques.

People often get divorces due to their ignorance about communication. When they learn about it, they get healthier marriages. In this context solving problems is also a means of communication. In the event of shortcomings in problem solving, even the smallest of problems can lead to wars of ego.

Most problems belong to one of these three categories: spending money, third parties' intervention in marriage, and the education of children... If man and wife manage to improve their problem-solving skills regarding these issues, they would go a long way in terms of overcoming the problem.

Conflicts in Communication or Marriages Lacking in Communication

A glance at such marriages often leads to the following observation: The man and wife exist as two parallel lines which do not intersect at all. One may be emotionally very active, expressing her emotions and expecting the other person do the same. But the other one may exhibit a completely opposite state of mind. He would be emotionally cool, calm, silent and withdrawn. I have been a witness to such a marriage. The woman is from Artvin, a true resident of the Black Sea, brimming with excitement, and feeling and expressing her emotions often. But her husband is just the opposite. Even though both are faculty members at a university, they suffered from communication problems. The woman was an extrovert, while the man was equally introvert. The woman found happiness by expressing herself, while the man sought it in withdrawal. As one would expect, it was the woman who engaged in a search for solutions. She was asking "what can I do? What can we do?"

Our response to this question applies for virtually any marriage suffering from similar problems. In our answer, we drew attention to the "golden sweet spot rule". According to this rule, each party should

take a step towards the other. A step by the husband, and a step by the wife. And further steps would ensue... The woman should slow down a bit, as the man stepped on the gas. Both would then meet at a common ground by changing themselves a bit.

If the woman just asks her husband to take action and move towards him, without even the slightest change on her own part, all she would achieve is to lose him completely. In that case the husband would perceive an attack and would think of ways to maintain his freedom. That is why the woman should try to get closer to her husband, rather than fixing him. And approaching him and assuming a position closer to his could help her open up some communication channels with him. Of course the husband would also be affected by this newfound connection, and would think of reciprocating in kind.

In malfunctioning marriages, usually the spouses try to fix the other one. The woman tries to fix the man, and the man tries to fix the woman. They don't often think about changing or fixing themselves. They always ascribe all error to the other person. That behavior entails a certain level of arrogance and narcissism.

Trying to bring one's spouse closer to one's own point is an immature attitude at best. Indeed, no one is perfect, and the perspective of a person cannot be universally applicable. Marriage is a context where the realities of two individuals meet. In this endeavor, both parties bring in something fair. As the marriage in our example shows, absolute extroversion or a strong posture of introversion cannot be considered absolutely good or bad. Both refer to extremes. The desirable and fair point lies in the middle though...

And that point refers to the spouses' efforts to notice and understand the interests of each other. If the husband prefers sitting at home and reading a nice book to traveling and an active life outside, the woman should find some way to take herself closer to books. The man, in his turn, should attach importance to the extroversion of his wife, and try to shed away some of his introversion and accompany her out.

Yes, communication requires some effort. Without efforts, one cannot achieve healthy and genuine communication. With efforts, however, the communication would surely come, if only a bit slowly in the beginning. Many books discuss communication. Many experts focus on this topic. One can make use of these resources.

Case in Hand

“I’m not a huge fan of money, but it is good for my nerves” This is a quote from a graffiti. Talking about money in a marriage often leads to a conflict of emotions, and paves the way for a concealed struggle.

This is perhaps stark clear in the case with Ayse.

A substantial inheritance comes Ayse’s way, from a relative who passed away. Also Ayse is employed and basically happy with her career. She wants to have a comfortable life, spend what she earns, and replace her car with a newer model while she’s at it. Her husband Cezmi, on the other hand, is a rather frugal person, and is definitely an economizer. His greatest dream is to own a house with a small garden. The inheritance Ayse receives presents a good opportunity for realizing the dreams of the family, but it also leads to a conflict at home.

Ayse wants to have the final say in terms of the budget, while Cezmi wants to keep control of the expenditures, and thus, they cannot really reach an agreement. In the end, they agree to seek arbitration from a trusted friend of the family.

The arbitrator Ali Bey searches answers to certain questions regarding the marriage of the couple. These questions are:

1. Are you able to meet your basic needs?
2. Does the family suffer from a financial crisis?
3. What can you tell us about the expenditure habits of the parties?
4. Does money serve as a shortcut for power, status, or safety?
5. What about the plans for the future?
6. Are the partners aware of how the other partner would feel, if each spends the money exclusively in accordance with his or her own plans?

And they all meet at an available time. They reach an agreement on a plan which would make both parties happy. Cezmi would be able to make the first deposit for the house of his dreams, and Ayşe would be able to replace her old car with an affordable but newer model. Doing so, both parties take a step towards the “golden sweet spot”, and in the end, they develop solutions in line with the win-win perspective, respecting the rights of each other.

AROUND HEALTHY PRACTICES

Making Eye Contact as You Talk, and Engaging in Communication

Keeping eye contact as you talk to someone, and maintaining communications, is a sign of self-confidence, and it points to an important quality in a relationship. Nonetheless, it is not an absolute necessity for the relationship and communication. In relationship and communication contexts, such clear-cut requirements do not apply. One cannot claim that eye contact is the primary ingredient of any healthy relationship and communication. For instance, some people don't feel very comfortable with eye contact, and try to avoid you if you insist on making eye contact. Others, on the other hand, can engage in effective communication without eye contact. Their hearts and emotions are so active, that they establish direct bridges with the other person.

Eye contact is not a value on its own. It is just one of the elements of communication. A person should express himself in whatever form or style he feels comfortable in. In the case of eye contact, some points are crucial: Can the one you are communicating hear you? Can he understand what he is hearing? How does he react? One would choose to look into the eyes of the other person to get answers to these questions.

Eye contact is crucial if it signifies an effort to comprehend. If, instead, is a means to getting the upper hand over the other person, it becomes repulsive. Eye contact is useful if it endeavors to understand if the person you are talking to is interested in what you say.

By doing so, you can opt to change the topic, or understand why the other person is acting in a given way.

I once had a patient who attached great importance to eye contact, and who even made an obsession out of it. He would say “I don’t ever talk to someone without eye contact.” And his definition of eye contact was quite peculiar: just staring without ever blinking... As he made that habit the central axis of communication, and as he acted accordingly, the other people were disturbed by his presence. His fixed gaze often made others avoid him. People who are obsessed with relationship and communication, who approach people on the basis of fixed formulas would eventually be considered repulsive, and would thus be left alone.

Certainly eyes are the bridges connecting the spirit to the outer world. They are the windows through which the person watches the rest of the existence. Surely that window is crucial. But one cannot spend his life simply sitting by the window... There is also the internal world, to which that window opens. The interiors of the house contain much more. If one just sits by the window and forgets about the rest of the house, he would be losing so much.

Forgetfulness and Effective Use of Memory

Some people are not good with names. They have trouble remembering the name of a close acquaintance. Even though he literally knows the name of the person, he cannot remember it when needed. This is a particularly common occurrence among teachers. So, is this a natural phenomena?

The 5W1H rule embraced by the media is actually borrowed from memory sciences. The questions involved are known as the loyal wardens of memory. So, who are these six wardens? The questions what, where, how, why and so on are these wardens. We remember the knowledge registered in our brains/memory through these six wardens.

If a person had hitherto been forgetful, and often had difficulty remembering names, he would be asked to work with methods to improve memory. But if such forgetfulness set in at a later time in life, one should investigate the possibility of some problems associated with stress and latent depression. The person would not realize he is

depressed, and that depression expresses itself through forgetfulness and tiredness. As a symptom, forgetfulness starts with difficulty in remembering words, followed by a habit of forgetting faces. Then comes forgetting events. One cannot remember events occurring as recent as yesterday. And at that stage, the person loses the awareness about his forgetfulness as well. That is the most advanced stage of the condition. Once Ayhan Songaf was asked “how can you diagnose dementia?” His answer was clear:

“If the person forgets about opening the door when he visits the toilet, he would be in the early stages. If he enters the toilet but forgets to close the door, then he would be deemed to be in later stages.”

A person who knows how to make good use of his brain can remember most things once again, if he uses the 5WH method. “And how can we use that method?”, you would ask... Assume that you had been involved in an incident, and you want to remember it at all times. To do so, you need to ask yourself the following questions: What happened? Where did it happen? When did it happen? Who were there? How did it happen? Why did it happen? If you register the incident in your memory, along with answers to these six questions, you can easily remember it in the future. For, you cannot forget the answers to all the questions involved. And when you remember the answer to one of the questions, it would naturally help you recall the other ones.

We are living in the information age. Therefore information should be memorized and protected. A person who is not confident in his memory should keep written records instead. Think about the cache mechanism used in computers. If the cache is overflowing with information, the computer would slow down. In order to prevent that slowing, one can close the unused files. If a person uses his memory as a scratching pad, trying to remember each and every bit of information, such as the to-do list for the day, he would be overworking his memory, and would naturally start to forget some. Therefore, a person should better take written notes to remember the things he is supposed to do. And he should act on the basis of those records. Upon starting to use written notes, his troubles with his memory will also go away.

One day, a guy visited our Prophet and asked “I am forgetting many things. What should I do?” Our Lord Prophet commanded

him to “ask the assistance of your right hand.” That is an allegory for taking written records. We cannot just say “I have a very strong memory. I don’t need to write.” A person cannot just keep everything in his memory.

Remembering stuff is mostly associated with focusing on that matter. For instance, we can forget what we ate yesterday, but we certainly would not forget the earthquake that occurred during the meal. The reason is that eating is an ordinary thing for us, whereas earthquake is bound to bring an intense reaction. The intensity of the emotion caused by the occurrence or development is thus crucial. The intensity of the emotions as you go through the experience, and the meaning we ascribe to the experience prevents forgetting it later on.

People tend to remember information they deem important, and forget information they deem trivial. Something written on sand cannot have the same longevity as something carved on a rock.

Cheating by the Spouse

Cheating by one of the spouses is a concept as ancient as the institution of marriage. People get married with the intent and will to stay loyal to each other in sickness and in health, till death do them apart. The intensity of the emotions felt prior to marriage, the mutual interest rising on top of that intensity, and the mutual inclinations as the expression of that interest should be obvious to anyone. The photos of affection, love and fondness fill out many photo albums. On the wedding day, no one harbors the will “to cheat later, to see someone else.” Yet, the number of people cheating on their spouse in the end is substantial.

Cheating is a human and social wound, a case of necrosis... One can easily criticize it saying “that is no behavior a human being can engage in!” A little bit of insight into human nature would lead to the view that it still can be possible at any time. The gender does not matter; human beings are fallible. The human nature, as well as unique conditions prevailing in a given marriage can also lead the parties to seeking something else outside the marriage. No, we are not trying to legitimize “cheating” as something normal. We are just trying to point out a fact, so as to develop a better understanding of the issue. Certainly cheating is not acceptable. Neither our belief

system nor the cultural and human foundations on which marriage rises considers it decent. Loyalty is crucial!

Every case of cheating has its own peculiar conditions. Some can fall to the siren calls of his nature and body despite having a happy marriage... Some begin to search for the peace eluding him at home... Some would realize his mistake soon, and thus suffer the pain of the wound in his conscience. Then, he would proceed to return home and beg for forgiveness of his wife. Some, in turn, does not feel such regret about his mistake, and only builds on them.

Often one thinks of the man as cheating is discussed. Women also cheat, but more often than not, it is the man that engages in this practice. And why is it so?

Let alone the sociological explanations, the biological nature of the man makes him more prone to sexual stimulus. Studies found that men ascribe a central importance to sexuality, while women put it somewhere else. The man is open to sexual stimulus, while the woman is open to stimulus in shopping. You see, the brains of man and woman are coded differently... This is the background to the widely accepted perception that man is often the one that does the cheating.

Cheating is one of the most fundamental problems, and a solid one at that, unfortunately. So, what should the spouses do in response? This is the first thing to say: The spouse that was cheated on should look at the mirror and ask: "did I play a part in the process leading up to this?" Of course the trauma suffered by that person makes thinking based on reason difficult. But it is what one should do nonetheless.

Why would someone cheat?

To what extent the state of affairs at home, and an increase in opportunities and stimulus play a role? Instead of proceeding directly to accusations, the first thing one should do is to embrace the very real existence of the danger for a man and woman who live a life dictated by the conditions. That is why man and woman should be helping each other at home. The woman should do her part to prevent her husband from engaging in such a mistake, while the man should not sever his ties with his wife, and should not withhold the fondness she craves. They should do whatever it takes to satisfy each other.

Sexuality, love, and drawing attention are natural needs of any human. The crux of the matter lies in meeting these needs on the right grounds. The man and the woman should live to be the spouses desired by each other. The kitchen is important; so is the bedroom. A marriage rises on numerous pillars. And the man and the woman should do what is expected of them with respect to those pillars. The spouses should satisfy each other on all matters.

In case cheating occurs despite all... If the cheating party regrets it, had confessed doing it, and had been suffering, he should swear against doing it again.

The person who was cheated would not forget it easily, but still should try and forgive. Saying “yes, I am really hurt. All I feel is pain now. I am not sure if I can move over and forget this, but your regret and the state of our marriage are also clear” makes more sense.

It is no easy thing to do, overcoming all that. Yet, in spite of everything, the incident they had should push the parties to more serious action. They should play a more sensitive part in terms of sexuality, and to act more carefully to meet the needs at home.

Unfortunately nowadays love is often reduced to something associated with sex. That is a grave mistake! Love is a more comprehensive and much more noble thing. It entails all layers of affection. Sex, on the other hand, refers to a more bodily and biological inclination. The person (man or woman) should be aware of that distinction, and thus should be able to stop the body and the bodily desires at all times. One should not disregard the rights of one's spouse and partner in marriage, just for the sake of bodily pleasures. Sex is a passing thing, while love truly lasts. A person will spend his life with his wife, and not with just any woman. One should really pay attention to his wife who would stand by him through sickness, old age, and come what may in life.

One should also check out the marriages where cheating occurs. If the spouses cannot find peace at home, the reasons may extend all the way back to the days before marriage. The decisions are made through moments of affection and awe, only to realize later on that the spouses are not really good matches for each other. They are not compatible in terms of age, culture, or nature... One sees white in an object, the other sees black... They share only a few things, but are

separated by much more... Naturally, it is not an easy task to keep relationships like these going. In the end, the parties involved move away from each other, and start to look for peace at other quarters.

Therefore one should think about this matter seriously from the first day of marriage on. The choice regarding the person to marry is a crucial matter. In terms of compatibility, age, culture, and the similarities of interests go a long way. The flirting days, and the emotional intensity experienced in those days may be misleading. Fondness is not the same thing as love, but one should check to see if fondness gradually evolves into love. That is the crux of the matter.

One should not hurry into a decision. Time is necessary for the feelings to settle. Fondness should evolve into affection, and affection should evolve into love. In the case of fondness, affection, and love, the intensity of the relationship between varies from person to person. In these three distinct states, the individuals feel different things. Therefore, there should be shared interests and emotions with deep roots.

Mamma's Boys or Invasive Mothers

The husband's excessive connection to his mother is yet another issue that may mar a marriage. There are multiple sources of such a lasting connection. The first and foremost one is the strong emphasis placed on motherhood, by our religion which is the cornerstone of our moral and cultural outlook. "The heaven lies at the feet of mothers." Being the son of a mother who was treated unfairly and who was left alone poses a religious as well as social setback... It is not acceptable to be a no-good son. This social perspective increased the sensitivities of men, and underlined their ties to their mothers. Any change in the level of connection with their mother would scare them, even if that occurs in marriage. And it would lead to a different form of treatment towards the wife, who is perceived to be the reason for that change.

The second reason is about the personal story of the man. He may have lost his father at an early age, leading the mother to assume the responsibilities of both parents. The story may be dominated by the founding position of the mother (woman) in every sense. Such a case is characterized by a man truly interwoven with the mother.

Both the man is devoted to his mother, and the mother is devoted to the man. The severance of the ties between the child and the mother is considered to be a disaster.

In this context emotional and material dependency is intertwined. The marriage of the man poses a material event of change. The mother vacillates between supporting the marriage of her child, and obstructing it. The idea of the child getting married makes her happy and fearful simultaneously. His marriage would make her happy, for the happiness of her child is just an extension of the happiness of the mother. But his marriage would also create a bond between the child and another woman. The mother would worry about sharing her son with another woman. She perceives the would-be bride as competition.

She fears that the love of her son would be directed towards that woman. And this makes her seek protection against this new woman. To do so, she starts to talk against the bride.

This is a pretty common occurrence in our country. It is also a serious problem. It leads to significant psychological and material consequences. Among the subjects involved in the problem, the man, often stands by his mother, due to the abovementioned special import attached to her, and defends his mother against his wife.

Some spouses, some women, respond as follows: They try to infiltrate their husband's world, and to draw him to their side through a number of intrigues. They come up with some plans based on feminine and feminist tendencies, and try to sway the mind of the man. They would try to push the leg of the husband, against his mother. And that would amount to trying to fix a wrong with another wrong. In a bid to fix the unjust suffering of the wife, the husband would be forced to doing wrong and causing unjust suffering on part of the mother.

Yet, one cannot ignore the position of the brides suffering because of the excessive connections between the man and his mother. Often-times the suffering brides are led into a difficult to bear life, without any solution to come. The woman cannot trust her husband, and the husband cannot trust her wife. In the lack of trust, the marriage evolves into a prison. After a while, they get to experience even more tragic problems. The woman leaves the house, and sets off for uncharted territory.

In avoiding these problems, three connections are crucial. Preserving love, respect and trust is imperative. And to be able to do that, one should be able to talk freely and without fear. The man should let his wife to speak, and actually listen to her words. And the wife should view her husband as a whole, and tell him "I get it, you are extremely fond of your mother. One cannot doubt her role in raising you up. I cannot ask you to abandon your mother, or to turn your back to her. I don't have that right. But I am your wife, and I came to join you in marriage as I left my own parents behind. I am also the mother of your child. I am also entitled to a part of your life. You should not ignore me."

The woman can make the husband listen to her without making disparaging remarks about his mother, or without ignoring the mother completely. A man cannot resist for long such sensible attitudes on part of the wife, and would, after a while, begin to listen to her as well, and to think about their conversation.

Indeed, in all relationships man bears the larger portion of responsibility. The same principle applies for this kind of relationship as well. The man has to strike a balance. In a sense, a man who loves his mother is also an advantageous one. For, a man capable of loving his mother, who is a woman, would be capable of loving another one as well. And a man who is so strongly connected to his mother would be sensitive towards the feelings of women. The wife should be able to notice this fine point. She does not get to work with a man who does not understand or cherish women. She gets to toil with a man who cherishes women, but who is having a difficult time in establishing a balance. The wife can build on these foundations, and help the man in establishing that very balance, guiding him through the way. She can develop her practice underlining the possibility to love both the mother and the wife simultaneously.

It is true that a man who has excessive bonds with his mother, or a mother who interferes a lot in the life of her son is a sensitive issue. And the consequences are really serious. A man who is a slave to his mother, or an invasive mother is not easy to live with. Therefore one should act with elegance and sensitivity. That is why one should delineate the limits clearly at the time of getting married. The borders for the man, the wife, and the mother-in-law should be specified explicitly. The man should be aware of his role

as a man. In the same vein, the wife and the mother-in-law should also be aware of their own responsibilities and domains. The borders should be drawn early on with clear lines, so as to prevent any violations later on. And one should embrace a determined position on this matter. Any violation should be raised as an issue. And that should be done with determination, but with elegance, trying not to hurt feelings. If the person is in the wrong, those wrongs should be fixed. But if there are violation of rights, one should be able to defend her position as well.

We should underline it once again: love, respect and trust are imperative. In a relationship and marriage, one should work hard to maintain these. Problems can happen even with marriages based on love, respect and trust. But such problems can always be fixed. The crux of the matter is the existence of these three: For, in their lack, even trivial issues can be unsurmountable.

Abusing a Wound!

A person does not get to choose the place of his birth. We cannot choose our parents, the land we are born in, or our race. That is why you cannot condemn or praise someone because of the conditions or place he was born in. Some are born into advantageous material conditions, and some are born into disadvantageous ones. Some parents are better or wealthy ones. Some fall short in terms of their responsibilities. They don't function well as parents.

Many people see psychiatrists and psychologists about their problems left over from their childhood. The individual may grow, but the neurosis of childhood may still linger on. Many a child who suffered in the hands of his father or his close circle cannot truly get over that. And failure to get over leads to a neurotic life.

This is a common occurrence in our country, as it is in all around the globe. He may have suffered even worse incidents. Children who suffered physical or emotional abuse would be inflicted with hard-to-heal wounds. That is why Freud focused on childhood as the source of all problems. He would try to gain insight about the childhood of the patient, so as to come up with a diagnosis and treatment.

One cannot deny this point: Any person is, in a sense, the result of his story. No one can deny the effect of his childhood. Nor can he

forget it. We cannot just go back and change our parents, the fact that we were born, and the experiences we had. The experiences are as material as the geography is an element of fate.

So, what should one do?

Some people have a hard time in forgetting their childhood and childhood traumas, and thus cannot get over such traumas, or forgive the parent that led to those traumas. These people always have fights with the ghosts of such parents. They appear to have forgotten about the past, ascribing it to inherent evil on part of the people involved. But in fact, what they do is to keep that past a part of their lives, as a negative experience. Even saying "I no longer have a mother and a father!" points out the effect they had on the person. No, these people had not really overcome their parents. They continue to ascribe defining roles to their parents.

We can safely view these as people mired in their past wounds. They may have noticed the wound, but not have received proper treatment. And the lack of treatment sustains the illness.

This is not a solution. Keeping the wound in mind, reopening it from time to time is not sustainable. The wound may be a result of fate, but reopening that wound every now and then is not about fate. Sure, a person should not just ignore the wound. But that is not sufficient alone. He should move one step further, and try to fix the wound as well. He should think about and define the trauma, and treat it, so that he can save himself and add it to his list of experiences. So, in a sense, he can benefit from that wound.

History is full of people who are mired in their wounds, and others who put that wound to some use. The story of every successful individual entails some kind of past experience being put to good use. The individual involved would not be trapped in the problem, but rather choose to stand up and rise above it, thinking about it.

We may have suffered in the hands of our parents, as victims of abuse and ill treatment. Now, we are grown ups who reached to a certain status. On the other hand, they reached old age. Now, they are in need of us. We are the strong ones now, as they got weaker. So what should we do? Is it right to be trapped by a feeling of revenge? We can say "it is only fair." And we may have a point there. But does that make us a better person? Venom to answer venom... Is it

the right way to go? Doesn't our religion point to another direction on this matter? Shouldn't one respond with goodness to anything and everything, including malice and evil? No, even if the answers we have with reference to justice and fairness are nominally correct, they don't always help the treatment of our wounds. One should break the chain of evil. They may have done bad things, but we can make the world and life more beautiful by responding them with goodness. And perhaps that response of good would serve as the greatest punishment against the people who treated us badly.

Motherhood or Working Woman in Marriages

The motherhood vs. career of the woman is a matter to discuss in any marriage.

Both man and woman, growing out of their personal stories come together at a distinct place. Thereafter, they start to have a new story. Sometimes both would proceed as working individuals. But often woman puts an end to her career after marriage, and often after giving birth. Or her continued work feels undesirable to herself or her husband, even if there is no child around yet.

But the flow of life often ignores our preferences. If the woman does not experience motherhood, and had still stopped working, she would get bored after a while. And even if she does not, she would still like to work on financial grounds. Her will to make economic contributions to household, or her boredom from just staying at home and waiting without doing anything would eventually convince her to the merits of working.

One point is crucial in the beginning: If the woman is married with child, it would not be easy for her to work. Looking after the child is a great responsibility on its own. The woman's efforts in raising the child are valuable in their own right. No job is as noble as motherhood. Motherhood is both time consuming, and is a major responsibility. Through motherhood, the woman is actually building up the future. In this sense, the woman plays a much more crucial role. She plays a determining role. If future generations will be the ones to build the future, the mothers who raise those future generations can be considered the architects of future. Even if the feminist and the modernist outlooks tell us otherwise, that is the case, plain and

simple. Views to the contrary are just extensions of bodily desires. They just push the worldly existence and ego of human beings. These may be pleasant in a physical sense, but in effect, they entail grave mistakes. Numerous studies show that home is the healthiest and the safest place for woman. The home, the husband, and the children are very valuable to a woman.

After noting these points about the possibility of woman working, a second perspective on the issue may follow. Assuming that a married woman who has yet to taste motherhood is just sitting at home, and waiting. She may spend a year or two, without doing anything substantial. This, in effect, amounts to the erosion of the person. One should not just write off the future of a woman, just because she got married. The woman should be able to contribute to life, and have her economic freedom. If she is trained in a profession, she should be able to work under appropriate conditions. Doing so would contribute to life.

And the man has some part to play in facilitating that contribution of woman. The macho outlook pumped up by the society is not a healthy one.

A man should not feel shame just because his wife is working. There are many professions and environments which are suitable for the nature of woman. The man should be flexible, and be cognizant of his wife's rights and life.

In Islam, the concept of bride wealth granted through the marriage institution, makes reference to the economic freedom of woman. The woman should have her rights on the economic front, so that her personality and rights are not violated at will. Preventing woman from taking up work, and thus posing an obstacle to her economic freedom is not correct in any sense.

A woman who wishes to work but is not allowed to, is effectively imprisoned in a certain way of life. In such settings, the woman would be enduring a necessary marriage, rather than living a happy one. And a marriage to be endured cannot be called a good thing. The woman who endures it would be neither happy nor in peace. And the lack of happiness and peace would render her incapable of making her husband happy. Marriage should not mean the death of the man or the woman.

Case in Hand

A lover wishes to preserve his psychological integrity through association with a strong ego. Or he may try to overcome his psychological shortcomings by putting the ego of someone else in place.

Protective bonding: Kübra is the eldest of seven siblings. She had always provided a protecting shelter for her siblings, and virtually acted as a mother to them. She then chose teaching as her profession, and continued to keep an eye on children. The husband she chose for marriage is Kerem, who is an introverted guy. Kerem easily trusts himself to Kübra, who, in turn, is a pretty angry and dominant person. That role makes, however, both happy. The man is happy with his choice of staying in the background. They don't suffer from any crisis in their marriage.

Problematic bonding: Both parties enjoy having a fight or two, and revealing the worst in them. They almost feel alive through those fights... Despite the problems such as alcohol, physical violence, and abuse, their relationship is mostly resistive of change, and they don't want any external help. Given the fact that they don't want a break-up despite the problems, one can envisage a truly rich and relaxing sexuality, followed by a calm respite. Problematic or corrosive bonding may prevail with worrying and avoidant reactions.

Mosaic bonding: Both parties have their own separate lives, and stay together only for their basic needs. They emphasize liberal preferences. They break up easily in the face of a crisis.

Rainbow bonding: This is an hierarchical form of bonding. Either man or the woman occupies the higher-level ego position, and holds the final say on any matter. The relationship is a competitive one. The family often goes through a struggle for superiority and power. It is the dominating model in patriarchal societies. And there is always a victim or a slave involved. This model of bonding is not characterized by particularly strong resistance to crises.

Marble bonding: In this form of bonding, the relationships are warm, close, and safe, as well as intertwined. The relationships for life are often based on this form of bonding. It is not expected to break up in the face of a crisis.

AN EXPERT'S 20 MAGICAL RULES FOR PARENTS

Here are 20 magical rules if you wonder “what kind of a parent should I be to raise a good, successful and happy child?”:

What is the greatest fortune that may befall on a child?

1. Never forget that the first and foremost fortune a child may have is “to grow in a peaceful environment, with compassionate parents who have established characters.”

2. It is natural for every parent to wish to know everything about the life of the child. Never forget that the child is yours, but he is not a part of you. Raise him so that he would feel both a part of the family, and a free individual. The child should experience the emotions of belonging and freedom in tandem.

3. As parents, you are not required to sacrifice your own happiness for the sake of your child. Every parent can strike a balance between the happiness of his child, and his own happiness.

4. You are not expected to protect your child from every imaginable hardship. Yet, teaching him to overcome difficulties together, is among your responsibilities.

5. A mother is not required to assume the whole burden and work selflessly, so as to make the whole family comfortable. Both the mother and the father is tasked with creating a team and handling life together.

6. You are not expected to prevent any disappointment on part of your child, or to keep him away from difficulties. But preparing him for the life would be the greatest service you will do for him.

7. You should let your child to voice his troubles, but you should also allow him to criticize.

8. As a parent, you are naturally entitled to obedience of your children. But you should also remember that the children are entitled to raising objections against unreasonable rules.

9. Never forget that it is necessary to lend an ear to the children voicing their problems, but that you cannot expect them to act like grown ups would.

10. Be aware that discipline and guidance is like snowfall. If it is sustained at a slow and soft pace, it would take a hold. The most effective form of guidance is to set an example. The most effective form of order is to offer options.

11. Always remember that the children of the parents who keep a close eye on the peers and social life of their children, but who do not intervene very much, would grow to be more mature individuals.

12. One of your basic responsibilities is about teaching your children how to go through life, rather than holding his hand through life.

13. As a mother, it is only natural for you to feel trapped and imprisoned at home, as you spend most of your time with your children. Freedom is a human right. People who are able to derive pleasure from ordinary events may experience a balance of freedom and responsibilities with a peace of mind.

14. Motherhood, fatherhood, being a spouse, and having a career are all subject to different conditions. Even in the household, different roles apply in the bedroom, in the kitchen, or in the guest room.

15. You are not responsible with being aware of every secret thought your child may have. However, you are responsible with providing him some space, so as to enable him in learning how to steer his own ship.

16. From time to time, you may be angry with your child, and say unpleasant words to him. The crucial issue is to make sure that your love prevails in the end, and that you can engage in auto-criticism. Don't be afraid in doing so.

17. At times, you may be so busy that you cannot find time to answer your child's questions. But never forget that you should devote him the attention he deserves.

18. The magical keywords for a child's education are love, attention, respect, patience, and trust. These magical words get activated as you make your child feel that you value his thoughts, and as you encourage him to expressing his views.

19. Patience should be directed towards a goal. A child who can do whatever he wants would grow to be a selfish person. A child who is always denied with his requests would, in turn, be a stubborn one. Strike a balance.

20. And most important of all, make sure to teach humane values and empathy to your child. The ideal person starts changing the world by changing himself. The key to empathy lies in the statement "do unto others as you would have them do unto you; wish unto others as you would wish for yourself."

The greatest fortune that may befall on a child is having parents who try to apply these!

Nevzat Tarhan

You can have this QR code scanned to download posters for each recommendation noted above, and put them at visible places around your home, office, or school.

REFERENCES

Baron-Chen. S.: *The Science of Evil on Empathy and the Origins of Cruelty*. Basic Books, New York 2012.

Brighouse, H.; Swift A.: *Family Values The Ethics of Parent- Child Relationships*. Princeton University Press, Princeton Oxford 2014.

Brisch, K. H.; *Treating Attachment Disorders, from theory to therapy*, The Guilford Press, New York, London 2011.

Gardner, H., Davis: *The App Generation.*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2013.

Kotin, Joel MD: *Eşinizi Etkileyerek Evliliğinizi Kurtarm*, Timaş, Istanbul 2001.

Ryan Aho, S.; *Annelerden Dersler*, HYB, Trans.: Tümet G. 1996.

Tarhan, N.; *Duyguların Psikolojisi*, Timaş, Istanbul 2006.

Tarhan, N.; *Güzel İnsan Modeli*, Timaş, Istanbul 2010.

Weishaar, M. E.; Klosko J. S.; *Şema Terapi*, Trans.: Soylu TV Litera, Istanbul 2009.