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MALANKARA

SABHATHARAKA

October 2022

Volume 01

Issue 02

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Family
Meaning making love space



Sabha Prathinidhi Mandalam 2022



Mar Thoma Metropolitan being received by Clergy & Laity at United States of America

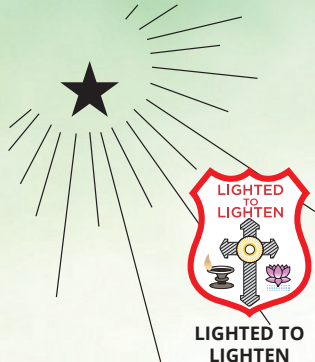


**Melpadam Attumalil Georgekutty
Merit Award Function**



Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar
Paulose Episcopa had
been elected to the WCC
Executive Committee

Congratulations



MALANKARA SABHATHARAKA

Volume 01

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OCTOBER -2022

LETTER FROM THE METROPOLITAN

Dearly beloved in Christ,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Praise be to God for the blessing in being able to conduct the Sabha Pradhini Mandalam at Thiruvalla, in the Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan Memorial Hall from the 13th to the 15th of September. A word of appreciation and thanks to the Mandalam members for their valuable presence and meaningful participation in all the proceedings at the meeting. The Episcopal Synod that met on the 16th and 17th of September ratified the decisions taken by the Mandalam. The resolutions of the Mandalam and the Synod have been conveyed to all through Circular Kalpanas. Let me exhort everyone to abide by the spirit of these decisions, and to continue in prayer, so that the activities of the Church would always be for the glory of God.

The service of consecration of Holy Mooron was held at St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Thiruvalla on 16th September at 7 am. The Bishops of the Church, along with the clergy-laity representatives, and other office bearers of the Church attended the sacred service. The Holy Mooron is prepared prayerfully by suitably blending a variety of spices. In the early Church, it was the apostles who inducted believers to the Church through baptism and the laying on of hands (Acts 2:4, 38,41; 4: 31). Later, as the number of candidates for baptism increased, the apostles found it difficult to reach everywhere. Thus, they consecrated the oil for anointing and entrusted it with the elders of the regional Churches. Every time the Holy Mooron is consecrated a small portion from the old oil is added to the new one, to symbolize apostolic succession.

I am happy to inform you that Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Poulouse Episcopa has been elected to the

executive committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC). It is a matter of pride that two of our Church members have been elected to prestigious posts: Smt. Aleyamma Thomas (Leena) has been elected as president of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), and Dr. Aswathy John (Vice-Principal, Serampore College) has been elected as the Dean of Research at SATHRI, a Research Department of Serampore College. We praise God for placing them at the helm of ecumenical and theological organisations. With joy I convey to them the greetings and best wishes of the Mar Thoma Church family. Two of our senior priests, Vicar General, Very Rev. Dr. P. P. Abraham (Adoor) and Rev. George Mathew (Nellikala) have been taken into the Lord's presence. We praise God for the blessed leadership given by them, with their families, to the Church, society, parishes and organisations for many years. We, as a Church, extend our deepest sympathies to the families in this time of grief. We express our sorrow and condolences. Adv. P. A Cyrus has gone to glory. He was a member of the Ebenezer Mar Thoma Church, Peroorkkada, Thiruvananthapuram. He had dedicated his life, through a distinct model of discipleship, to the service of the poor and the liberation of the marginalised. The Church had honoured him with the Manava Seva award at the recently concluded Pradhini Mandalam. We praise God for the selfless and relentless pursuit of the Gospel mission that his life exemplified. We extend our heartfelt condolences as a Church.

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Poolatheen
30.09.2022

**Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma
Metropolitan**

Family is the place where God's hope resides. It is the divine plan by which the manifestation of God's kingdom is being revealed to the world. The foundation of every family is based on the mutual relationship between the members. This relationship gets meaning only when God is woven into the fabric of this relationship. 'House' as a 'nest' is a place where our pains and emotions are poured out, and also the place where love is mutually shared and experienced. This is the reason why loneliness and homesickness continually haunt people who move away from their homes. The feeling that there is a home and there is someone waiting to receive us back, makes every journey a meaningful one. Families become spaces where relationships are celebrated. However, the family has fallen prey to the adverse wings of modernity. The easy availability and proliferation of electronic devices through which the entire world is confined to the finger tip have affected family relationships rather harmfully. This has led to the breakdown of our traditional legacy and culture, which has led to the formation of an individualistic and consumerist culture.

The pulse of the society is created and formed in family relationships. That is why we commonly consider family as the basic unit of the society. That is the reason why the breakdown and failure of family also adversely affects the society. It is only when families become advocates of the society that societal building becomes possible. The seed of societal values are sowed, sprouted, germinated and becomes fruitful through families. Therefore, any defect in the family affects the society as a whole.

The Gospels reveals that Jesus' life and ministry were mostly centred on families. The 'Holy family' was one which was built along with God. The Holy family was able to identify the depth and width of God's voice in the midst of the problems and difficulties they faced. That is the reason why, the family of Nazareth, which celebrated relationship, becomes a normative model rather than the first family established in the Garden of Eden, which was later subject to a rupture in its fabric. The 'sacredness' to mutually help each other and the 'purity' of vision are evident in the Holy Family. We shouldn't be evaluating families merely on the basis of material gains and worldly success. On

FAMILY: A PARADISE OF ENRICHING RELATIONSHIPS



the contrary, families should be moulded on the basis of sacrificial love and mutual commitment.

Dearly beloved, Family is the dream of God. It is the beautiful dream through which the earthly manifestation of God's kingdom is being revealed. It is to fulfil this dream of His Kingdom purpose that God calls people to familial lives. This makes every Christian family a sacramental entity and experience. May our paths that we walk together as a Church, the family of families be brightened by the strands of our interwoven prayers...

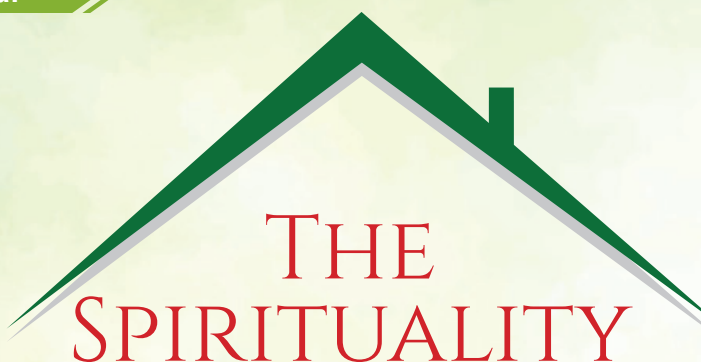
"Towards the end of every voyage

If there is a nest where we can run to

If there are shoulders that will embrace us

It is then, our journeys acquire significance..."

**Dr. Mathews Mar
Makarios Episcopa**



THE SPIRITUALITY OF HOME

In common perception, houses often exemplify the material dimension of human life. The failure to acknowledge and endorse their prospective spiritual potential degrades them into mere edifices, made of brick and mortar. Recognition of the warmth of spirituality within those spaces transform those structures into homes, nourished by, life experiences and evolving world views. The home has a spirit. Although empty spaces are widely believed to make houses beautiful, we must realize that vacuity has no aesthetics; its silence is sepulchral. Homes are made of relationships. The soundscapes of those spaces are conducive to relationships. Modern technology may enable construction of houses with minimal use of metals. But without the conjoining harmony of spirituality there can never be homes. Houses built on the foundation of merely concrete materials have a precarious existence; alterations in the material realm would unsettle them. But homes built on the transcendental ideals of spirituality and value systems stand the test of time.

Homes have metamorphosed by dint of the inevitable changes in times. The transformations are both structural and relational. Houses are being built simultaneously by the older generation, intimidated by this scenario, and the younger generation, inspired by the same. What does the metaphor of the rock in Jesus' parable of the house built on a rock imply? Does it also connote a house as strong as a rock? We know, there are houses built with laterite bricks. And in some places earthquake resistant technologies are used to construct houses. So, what does stability really involve? A strong foundation is a result of a felicitous blend of many factors. Faith, character, social commitments and experiences gained thereby, warm relationships, and a spirituality formed through an evangelical reverence etc. contribute to such a foundation. Families established on such principles are constantly transformed into Christ-likeness; they also shape their communities in the pattern of the Gospel of Christ.

The theme of this issue is 'Family: meaning making Love space'. The spirituality, psychology, sociology, and mediatized realities of the home are explored analytically. We are happy that in this 130th year of Sabha Tharaka, we have been enabled to start publication of the English edition too. To get an online copy please send an email to tharakachiefeditor@gmail.com. We are immensely grateful to the Metropolitan for all the encouragement. Our deep appreciation is due to Dr. Mathews Mar Makarios, for his able leadership. A word of thanks also to all who work behind the scenes, especially in editorial team and managing committee •

THE CHRISTIAN HOME: A VISUAL WONDER

PROVERBS 12:7

A note about Home reads like this: “Home : Fragile, Handle with Care.” Home is something to be treasured close to the heart as it might break easily like a toy. Home is a space where the children of God are to be trained on earth.

‘Home’ is one of the powerful words of any language. Many of our sweet memories are centred on this word. Its walls offer us shelter and the love we have received there is our strength. When faced with indifference from the world, we rush home as a place of refuge. The most beautiful experience of human life is the home which is a heaven on earth. The home is a colourful world of all goodness and a Christian home is visually beautiful and enticing.



Rev. C. K. Titus
Thiruvananthapuram

“The house of the righteous will stand,” says Solomon the Wise. The righteous is one who discerns the mind of God and lives accordingly. The home of such a person survives all situations of life, according to the Book of Proverbs. The house of the man who obeys God will never perish. This is what Jesus Christ says at the closing part of the Sermon on the Mount: “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on a rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock” (Matt. 7:24-25).

Let us examine the characteristic features of the home of the righteous.

1. Home : A Sanctuary of Sanity

Family is a concept conceived by God. Naturally, God has a blueprint about it, which is revealed through the Word of God. Home is designed as a sacred place for God to live with man on earth. In Genesis 3:8, God is seen as yearning to walk with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The Book of Revelations portrays Jesus knocking on the door of a family that stays inside closed doors (3:20). All this points to the fact that the home is a space for the fellowship of God and man.

If the place where God resides is known as the Temple of God, the home where God lives with man is also God's Temple. The concept of home as a temple is really unique. However, as said in St. John's Gospel, “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him” (1:11), many homes offer no space for God today. Such houses are sure to collapse. On the other hand, the houses of the righteous stay on forever by virtue of God's presence in them.

2. Home : A Shelter of Serenity

A Christian home is an enchanting place of serenity and tranquility. God reveals through Prophet Isaiah that a home should be calm, beautiful and free from fear. “My people will abide in peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings and quiet resting places” (32: 18). William Bennett says: “Home is a shelter from storms - all sorts of storms.”

God created the home to be an invincible fortress. Nevertheless, in the course of history the home has been under siege from forces that bring about its collapse. We live in an age when relationships

in the family are breaking up more than ever. The uncertainties of the job market and the hard work required to overcome them, the struggles to improve lifestyle, mental conflicts, anxiety about children's education and their future, quarrels, competition and rivalry, the busy schedule of social life, all destroy the tranquility, privacy and solidarity of the home. Thus, the time to be set apart for the home is lost, as well as the happiness that would ensue. What is more, it leads to the loss of love and unity in the family. As a result, the family itself comes to an end. A solution to this unenviable situation is given by the Psalmist : “Because you have the Lord your dwelling place - the Most High, who is my refuge - no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent” (Ps. 91 : 9-10). The home of the righteous continues to stand as he has made the Lord his refuge.

3. Home : A School of Sagacity

Home is where one starts from, says T.S. Eliot. It is in the home that one learns to talk and understand the meaning of love. We first hear of God in our homes, know Jesus and love him through the family. We also learn to pray and recognize the need to forgive others. The home is the first training ground for developing values, where children are disciplined to distinguish between right and wrong.

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22 : 6). It is the duty of parents to help their children find the purpose of their life and the proper way to achieve it. Each child is born with endless possibilities, and parents are entrusted with children having wonderful talents. Therefore, parents should carefully and patiently observe their children and bring them up in such a way as to realize their full potential. Parents should never force their dreams on their children; they should be brought up in accordance with the dreams of God. That way they will become a blessing to the home and society.

Family is not an accident. It is the eternal plan of God. A home is a beautiful plan of God to bring heaven on earth. God wants each home to be the noblest space where generations will be formed. May all our families be enabled for the fulfilment of that vision of God.

Translation : **Dr. Shiela Elizabeth Mathew,**
Tiruvalla

The biggest contribution of a family to the society is the gift of healthy, morally responsible and socially committed citizens. In the Biblical perspective, children are a blessing of God (Genesis 1:28). Apostle Paul opines that children should be nurtured in discipline, without hurting their personalities (Ephesians 6:4).

In accordance with Biblical principles, man's creativity is best revealed in the matter of procreation and the upbringing of children. So much of patience, insight and dedication are needed towards fulfilling this responsibility. Before the birth of a child, and especially during its infancy and childhood, the parents and other family members have a pivotal role to play. Compared to the yesteryears, people are now driven by hurry and worry, and experience alienation and seclusion. Consequently, families have to face several challenges.

The prenatal period

The general health condition of the parents, the desire and preparation of a mother to give birth, a peaceful family atmosphere, etc. are crucial factors that influence the growth of a child. Children born out of wedlock or forced coitus resulting in unwanted pregnancy may lead the mother into conflict and stress. In such situations a child is destined to grow up in the womb of a mother who undergoes anxiety, guilt complex, sadness,

negativity and shame. Such thought processes in the mind of a mother would severely impact the healthy development of a child, stunting and distorting its personality. On the other hand, if a child is born in the background of mutual affection, respect, prayer and dedication, that becomes a matter of utmost joy to the parents and everybody related to them. As we all know, the life clock of a child starts ticking in the womb of a mother. In the span of 270 to 280 days a single cell gets multiplied in an amazing manner to become a fully abled child as described in Psalms 139: 16.

When compared to the total lifespan of a human being, the gestation period is not as long, but no other phase involves such growth. Most of the development of the child is achieved during this period. During pregnancy the mental and physical well-being of the mother, socio-familial atmosphere and general well-being are as critical as genetic factors. The famous psychiatrist Elizabeth Hurlock observes that all these factors contribute positively or negatively to the growth and development of a child.

Women facing stress and conflict in workplaces, women who are victims of domestic violence, those who have to stay separated from the partner and family, the severely ill, those facing serious financial loss etc. face real challenges during their pregnancy. During such trying situations the love

Family and Personality Development of Children



Rev. Abraham Scaria
Mar Thoma Theological Seminary
Kottayam



and care of the partner and family members can support them to a great extent. Some women who cannot afford to have these provisions need to be taken care of by the Church and the society. There should be projects and programmes to help such less fortunate women. Love and care for children should start even before their birth.

Infancy

It is equally stressful for mother and child when the child comes out of the protected environment inside the mother's womb. The quality of the care and protection the child gets after birth builds the foundation of the sense of security and trust in the caregivers. In the initial days the child expresses all its needs through the expression of crying, which is the distress signal of the child. When we respond to this with care and calm, the child starts building up a base of security and trust, and learns to wait patiently for the mother and the other loved ones who are the caregivers. It is this patience and willingness that will later manifest as faith in God, as stated by Erik Erickson. John Bowlby has established that both deprivation and overindulgence contribute negatively to the development of a child's personality, which fact should be viewed seriously.

If both parents are working in different places, work-related stress and work/life balance create a deficit in the care and security that a child needs to get from the parents. In the olden times childcare was the responsibility of the mother and other women in the joint family, but in the present times we need an urgent change in the attitude of the people and a consensus between the partners regarding the sharing of responsibility.

Childhood

The period from 2 to 6 years is generally termed as early childhood. During this phase, children learn to interact independently with parents and also to express likes and dislikes. But since the child does not know how to use this new-found freedom in a mature way, his or her behaviour might lead to conflicts with parents, siblings and other members of the family. The child may incur the displeasure of others because of tantrums and stubbornness. During this time what others say about the child, both positive and negative, will play a significant part in the construction of his or her identity. It is a peculiarity of childhood that

the child observes everything with great curiosity and tries to imitate people and things. During the course of such imitations and experimentations, it's natural that the child may meet with accidents and frustrations. Children who have acquired a sense of security during the initial phase will be more confident to explore things outside the home and to interact with other children and strangers without problems. This is when parents should encourage the children in their observations and experiments, and offer comfort, solace and discipline in their frustrations. Children need three essential things during this period: affection, acceptance and achievements.

Children born as the result of unwanted pregnancy, those facing physical challenges, those segregated by cultural norms (for example girls born with dark skin tone in our culture) may have to face the pain of neglect and exclusion even from early childhood. It may happen that such people may lead themselves to self-loathing and misanthropy, resulting in the loss of ordinarily possible achievements. On the other hand, children who grow up enjoying the care and affection of parents and others tend to become self-respecting, socially committed people who become great achievers. In the case of children who have acquired rebellious minds out of negative Interactions with elders and family, good friendships and relationships with teachers may provide a healing touch. The scope of our Sunday School, Yuvajana Sakhyam, etc. in this context should be explored.

The society that we live in is lagging behind in developing healthy, wholesome personalities. Nuclear families almost secluded from the world around, children forced to grow up in homes far removed from people and nature, parents unable to play with or interact meaningfully with children, excessive interference of the digital media - all contribute to serious consequences. Drug addiction among teenagers, sexual anarchy, perversions, criminal instinct, suicidal tendency etc. may have their roots in the inadequate and improper upbringing of children. To build a socially committed future generation close to God is a sacrifice demanding great faith. Training families for this by giving them adequate help and support is the imperative of the Church ministry today.

(Translation: **Dr. Annie Susan Mathew**)

Ten Approaches that Tear down Matrimony and Possible Solutions to Avert Them



Dr. C. J. John
Senior Psychiatrist
Medical Trust Hospital, Ernakulam

Listed below are ten wrong notions that have to be avoided to attain satisfaction in married life:

- **Never Trust your Life Partner.** Suspicion and lack of trust among life partners with regard to their relations in social circle causes suffocation to each other and it eventually leads to rift among them.

Possible Solution

Peace can never be maintained at home if couples mistrust each other. The tendency to suspect one's mate is detrimental to the institution of marriage. It could be overcome by building up mutual trust and commitment. In rare cases, it could also possibly be a sign of ill health of mind – a situation that may necessitate the need of timely medical intervention.

- **Use deprecatory Talks to Intimidate your Life Partner.** The tendency to use disparaging comments regarding your companion while talking to others will ensure marital discord and break ups.

Possible Solution

A harmonious relationship is possible only if life partners open up their minds and try to understand each other. Such a relationship will enhance their companionship and confidence. All denigrating sorts of communication have to be avoided at all costs to achieve a fruitful matrimony.

- **Keep your Life Partner under your Thumb.** Some people try to control their companions by denying freedom to them to choose their dressing habits, financial dealings, and even insist that they seek permission to move around as if they are slaves. For them, life partners are like puppets controlled with strings in their hands.



Possible Solution

A happy wedded life is possible among life partners only if they share a sense of equality and freedom. The famous quotation, To err is human, to forgive divine should remind couples of the need to point out and correct each other's mistakes in a peaceful way by offering reasonable suggestions. The age-old male chauvinist attitude that women do not deserve freedom (Na Sthree Swathanthryam arhathe) will invariably lead to a tempestuous life, seemingly calm on the surface.

- **Deny the Prospects of Growth to your Life Partner**

Every person has the right to grow in their own way in their respective spaces. Those who deny conducive environment for the growth of their companions by not permitting them to take up employment, are actually forcing them to have a diminutive existence.

Possible Solution

A peaceful, happy married life is possible only if both the companions get the favourable environment to grow and nurture their talents. The notion that women are born to surrender unilaterally everywhere and always, is an outdated attitude. Happiness can be ensured in a matrimony only if both of the partners develop a compromising attitude towards every situation and issue they face in life. The dissatisfaction caused to one of the life partners will surely hamper the smooth flow of life. So, it has to be avoided at all costs.

- **Grab Full Credit of All Accomplishments of Family**

Taking full credit of all achievements of family including those of children, denying the role played by better half, is a widespread danger. People who share such a detestable nature tend to find fault with their life partners for minute lapses and try to belittle them in front of all.

Possible Solution

Matrimony presupposes team work and good result is possible only when the morale of the each one of the companions is protected and preserved. If life partners deny the encouragement due to each of them, the team spirit of that companionship is lost and nothing good of lasting importance will emanate from it. A husband or wife who disparages his/her companion in the presence of their children

is actually shaking the strong foundation on which the edifice of family is erected.

- **Resort to Physical and Verbal Assault to Vent Out Anger**

Anger, which is mostly the result of stress, irritation and feeling of dejection could be vented out by resorting to verbal as well as physical assault on the companion rather than adopting the conciliatory, compromising attitude. Such an approach would certainly pave the way for the snapping of the delicate chord that binds the sweet relationship between the companions.

Possible Solution

In our present complicated life scenario, it is quite normal for individuals to get angry, but the prospects of happy matrimony depend very much on how we express it, or contain it. The feeling that companions are punching bags to vent out anger, is wrong. A conciliatory discussion regarding the wrongful deed of life partner will certainly prompt them to correct their mistakes. Every other violent step initiated would invariably lead to fissures in the cohesiveness of family structure. Such a behaviour is observed as criminal offence and many women have become preys to such situations.

- **Blame the Companion for Monotony in Life**

We tend to believe that wedded life is not always the same. As the initial lustre is lost, it becomes monotonous. As they feel their love is lost they blame companions for anything and everything and openly declare that all their loss is due to the bad luck of their life partner. As they beget children, they will burden their companions with the list of troubles they have to undergo for family and the companion, in particular – problems they could have avoided, if their companions had not come into their lives!

Possible Solution

Only by customising life by bettering our compromising attitude and by offering support to our life partner can we face the changing phases of life. A companion in need is a companion indeed!!! Such companions will always try to implement novel approaches and attitudes in their family lives to avoid monotony and they will face all setbacks in their lives, jointly. As life partners assure their co-operation and full support to each other, the

warmth of love is enhanced.

- **Husband will Take Decisions and Wife will Obey**

In some families, domestic problems are not discussed with companions and it is the prerogative of the husband to implement unilateral decisions. They do not discuss even the design of the kitchen under construction with wives, because wives are deemed as “good for nothing” entities. Such situations where wives are ruled over by husbands in an autocratic manner, the women become preys to patriarchal hegemony and the resulting dissatisfaction gives way to disharmony in matrimony.

Possible Solution

A harmonious wedded life is possible by implementing a democratic approach – through proper discussion of issues, by accepting the suggestions of companions, and by appreciating their expertise in handling men and matters. The concept of “life” has to be re-defined in this modern era by keeping at bay our earlier notions of sexual disparities.

- **Marriage is a Financial Transaction**

The spouse and her family may be exploited by extracting money from them in all possible ways. If greed is not satisfied, the spouse can be assaulted both physically and mentally, demanding more money. She can be even threatened with “possibility of divorce”. All these immature and distorted patriarchal practices instituted for male supremacy will weaken the bond between companions.

Possible Solution

The greedy approach manifested in many of the matchmakings shows the sick mind of our society and uproots the basic concept of Matrimony that upholds the belief *Sthree thanneyaanu dhanam*. Matrimony begins with a discord at the moment the bride realises that she is chosen for her wealth rather than her personality. As greed for wealth overpowers true love, the bond between them gets weakened. Both men and women should take the initiative to end this social evil. It is a criminal offence and hence, those at the giving and receiving ends are equally punishable under the Criminal Law of India.

- **Retaliation through Denial of Sex**

Difference of opinion is quite natural among couples, but the punishment for dissent should not be denial of sex or sexual assault. Such a type of punishment will create an aversion for sexual love in the mind of the life partner. The companion will develop a feeling of insult and gradually will cease to believe that she is a life companion to her husband.

Possible Solution

Healthy Sexual relationship is a vital ingredient of happy wedded life. Partners should always consider the likes and dislikes of each other while performing sex. It should never be an one sided activity and should never be forced upon. Denial of sexual happiness is cruelty and if disagreements are dragged to bed, it will lead to mental ill health and life partners will be forced to seek the help of psychologists and sexologists to solve their problems. Mental incompatibility will severely hamper sexual activity, and also vice versa.

Guard yourself against these Possible Dangers

The bond of matrimony should be guarded against extra marital relationships, the evil dowry system and the male dominated patriarchal dogma. Married couples should be aware of the possible dangers of these social evils. Men and women joined through holy matrimony come from different families with different upbringings. They become life partners with different outlooks and scripts about their future life. As the successful filming of a movie is impossible with two different scripts, a successful family life is also impossible with two entirely different approaches of husband and wife. So, they should try to understand each other as far as possible and should strike an attitude of compromise in their “scripts of life” while customising a single script for their life. This customisation process will continue even after marriage as they openly discuss their interests and dislikes. They should never try to change each other to suit the other person’s life. A family that has a strong foundation of mutual respect will succeed in the long run and will create a good and healthy environment for their children at all times – especially during times of peril!

Translation: **Dr. Achamma Alex, Thiruvalla**



The Family: A Haven of Love



Rev. Dr. K. Thomas
(Karavalur) Family Counsellor

In the divine plan, the family has a mission. The family will not be meaningful unless the mission is realised. The family is an intimate community of life and love, and this is in fact its real mission. As far as the family is concerned, this mission involves kindling, protecting, and spreading love. A family involves different personalities and personal relationships that hold between spouses, between parents and children, among siblings, and among relatives. Love is the basis of all these different relationships. The objective of the family is to provide the space and context for the development and flowering of the love between husband and wife. A family is an institution where they provide love, mutual understanding, help and support, as they need each other till death separates them. If they are not together, this cannot happen. The real fount of nourishment for children in the family is marital love. Children are integral components in the life of a couple. Children are not the reason, but the fruit of their love.

The family: A haven amidst changing milieus

Changes wrought by changing seasons are several in the context of the family. Sometimes these changes may impact the family so powerfully that its very foundations may be shaken. To overcome such challenges, the family has to define its long-term goals and delight in them, for which specific efforts and projects are essential. Love may not be found when a couple seeks for it in each other, but it is actually realised when both aspire

towards the same goal. Love is perpetuated in the home. But in the current times we are trained to believe that stable, significant relationships are not built to last. The family is struggling not to be strangled by the modern motto which says that the home is coterminous with love. The stability of relationships is founded not on amenities but on sacrifice, which stems from the depths of inconveniences. To survive in the battle of amenities versus sacrifice, each family has to find for itself the necessary emotional stability, tolerance and self-control. Our Master is one who delights in the depths of the home, not its heights.

Family: A haven for emotions

The home is enriched by three emotions: gladness, sadness and madness. All gladness should be celebrated, all sadness received, and all madness respected. No emotion is innately negative, only negativized. The home is the real venue where emotions can be expressed. Stifled emotions push homes into crises. When emotions die, homes die too. Suppressed emotions create explosions, arguments and rebellion within the home. Unfulfilled emotions raise challenges and misunderstandings that lead to emotional injury. Since the heart is the seat of emotions, it is imperative that we acquire necessary heart skills. A home that cannot discern emotions nor express them will be perpetually disturbed. The emotions expressed in such an atmosphere will often be wrong, selfish, and unnecessary. The redemption of emotions is in fact the redemption of the home's real soul.

The family: A haven for thought

A family must be one that encourages thought. Marriage is the result of thought, not emotion. Good thoughts lead to good decisions. A mind that listens and seeks counsel is the strength of the family. The family should strive to respond thoughtfully to its ups and downs, and encourage its members to think. Instead, it is dangerous when we try to cover up shame by resorting to allegations, accusations and rejection. A family's head skills have to be nurtured inside the home. For this, self-respect and mutual respect are absolutely essential. The house built upon the rock is a reflection of combined intelligence, decision-making and tolerance. Now that celebrations

are superseding thought, time and interest for the latter are diminishing. How protectors turn destructors in the family should emerge as a topic for discussion.

The family: A haven for growth

The family is an institution nurtured by love and discipline. While love strengthens its inner space, discipline will strengthen its boundaries. This inner space is one of relationships bound by unconditional love. When both husband and wife take the tough decision to love the spouse irrespective of love reciprocated, it becomes the cornerstone of marriage. A family comes into being when a couple sanctifies and transforms each other through unconditional love. Marriage celebrates the love of God and man. In other words, it is a way of witnessing God's love here on earth through marriage. Children realise that God is love from the love between their parents. To love a person exclusively and consistently is the greatest sacrifice, and that is realised in marital relationship.

Love is to be expressed so that it can motivate a person to live. The growth of the members of a family happens through acceptance, respect and encouragement. To mould them into competent, creative and contented people, both the expression and practice of love are essential. Love is the saving grace that redeems a person from rejection in the face of crisis.

The family: A haven of spirituality

A family's spirituality is blessed threefold by the boundary of the Cross, the boundary of God's Word and the boundary of the Holy Sacrament. All who dwell in the family are blessed under the grace of these divine boundaries. But think: are the impressive structures of today calling themselves homes receptive to prayer and the Word of God? The unseen ramparts of the home are its spiritual boundaries. What prayer and meditation on God's word remind us is that God is on our side in the midst of our battle for happiness and contentment in the home. The redemption of spiritual habits that provide us peace and courage is the imperative of today. Each Christian family is called to be a living witness of God's love, and to exist as the reflection of the perpetual love of the Holy Trinity.

(Translation: **Prof. Dr. G. Koshy**, Thiruvalla)

Sudhir Khakar in his article 'The Indians' is of the opinion that if there is an 'ism' that governs Indian society and its institutions that 'ism,' is, no doubt, 'Familism.' This observation is most relevant regarding thoughts on the social media of the present day. The new media of the twenty first century has totally revolutionized the manner in which human beings communicate with each other. They are not only the source of communication but they offer a large number of possibilities in the manner of communication.

The New Media

The term 'new media,' generally refers to digital media that allows interactive two way communication, entirely different from the traditional media viz., telephone, radio and television. The new media are the new cultural forms that depend upon computers for their distribution and circulation. It is a multifaceted platform which shares interesting features like photos, videos, recollections, news items and events etc. According to recent studies there are about 3.5 billion active users of the social media the world over. Of these ninety percent are young men and women.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES



**Rev. Anson Thomas
Kulasekharam**

Indian society and the social media

The unprecedented rise in the use of social platforms like Facebook, Twitter, etc, has proved to be a double-edged sword in the functioning of democratic nations. On the one hand, it has democratized the entry into correct information; on the other, it has given rise to new challenges for the people and the system of democracy in general.

In 2020, in India there were about 63.9 crore people who were active consumers of the internet. The social media allows the democratization of knowledge and extensive communication. With the support of technical knowhow anyone who has the ability can create online content that is informative, authoritative, novel and fruitful. This gives rise to great expectations in this manner of communication for the Church and for all faith communities.

The new media within families

Studies show that at least one member in every household is active in the social media. Social media has brought into being a new style in defining the importance and priorities given to relationships between families and friends. Indeed the technology of social media does have its merits, but it remains a matter of doubt as to whether people are properly aware of and alert to the many problems they cause. We need to clearly understand how the social media changes family relationships and manner of communication. In this century social media has taken over communication with dozens of mobile applications and desktop applications – all intended to make life and living easier for everyone. Within the home each individual has cell phones, laptops and other equipment to enable them to make full use of the social media platform. However, very few among these individuals realize the great change brought about by the social media in family relationships.

In recent years people have begun to recognize the rifts brought about by the influence of social media within the family. It is long past the right time now for the general public and faith communities to engage in studies and discussions regarding the positive and negative effects of the social media and how it changes relationships within the family. The objective of this article is to begin a certain thought process regarding this matter.

Addictions that Change the Family Atmosphere

According to a study on the influence of the media conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation, children between the ages of 8 to 18 years spend seven hours or more each day on their electronic media. This is equal to spending 50 hours every week in front of a screen. Several research studies show that when children spend long hours before the screen, they lose their ability to have and maintain mutual relationships. Such addiction to the virtual platform will lead to obesity, inability to concentrate, to focus on topics. Worse still they may become unable to form and maintain relationships.

Such an addiction will eat into the communication and care within the family as well as the feeling of security it gives. Sherry Truckle's book 'Alone Together,' explains about a study in which parents and children were asked their opinion about technology. The results of the study were astonishing. Many of the children felt that their parents were addicted to their phones or computers. These children longed for parents who would spend quality time interacting with them. This study shows the growth of addiction to the social media within the family and the need for greater social intervention in the family.

Children and the Social Media Family

Studies have proved that children too will increase their screen time on par with that of their guardians. Children imitate what they are taught. When parents concentrate on their electronic gadgets even while spending time with their children, it is no wonder that not very acceptable changes happen in the behavior of the latter. Children who spend a major portion of their time on the sites of the social network do not care to maintain a good relationship with their parents nor do they wish for their support. Very often parents work from home and therefore spend more time with their electronic gadgets than with their children or spouse. They complain that cell phones, computers and the television have absorbed a large part of their time together. They have become the obstacle in fostering family relationships. Studies have made it clear that children who spend more time on electronic gadgets or sit glued to the electronic screen, find it difficult to understand the feelings of others and promote relationships unlike other children who are not burdened by technology.

Such children are more dependent on others for their emotional needs. Psychologically speaking children love spending quality time with the other members of the family. They love being hugged and being at the centre of attention. They do not want to enter into dispute with their parents for screen time. It is very important that quality family time without technological support should become a first priority. The whole family eating together, playing with the children, simply talking with each other without allowing telephones, computers and the television to intrude – these are the ways by which healthy family relationships can be built up and proper communication established among individuals.

Emotional Space, Social Media and the Youth

The social media has profoundly influenced the culture of communication within families. The youth of contemporary times are growing up in the social media culture. Much of their experiences and opportunities are the result of their familiarity with the social networking sites. As their lives are so closely intertwined with the social media, the baleful influence of social media on family relationships is a stark reality today. The influence that social network sites exercises on the development of the personalities of the youth of today gives rise to very serious questions.

Even though in Indian Society social media interventions do take place in the stead of family relationships, when one is alone and away from the family one experiences intense loneliness and extreme boredom. This is the bitter reality that is faced by the youth of today. This emotional need for the family underlies the existential importance that our society gives to the concept of the family. The first position for obtaining emotional strength obtained by the sharing of troubles and travails like illness, loneliness, disasters as well as joy and happiness belongs, without doubt, to the family and not to social media.

The Social media platforms have become an integral part of our lives. A life without social media cannot even be imagined. In fact it is extremely to get out of the lure of the social media today, just imagine the impact it has made on our lives. Social media has done irreparable harm to our family relationships. It is a common sight to see couples complaining about this. Moreover, social media also exercises a great influence on how

relationships are formed, nurtured, and later even ended.

All digital gadgets may have brought us close to each other, at the same time it has totally overturned the intervention of individuals. The only remedy or cure for this is that you should keep your mobile phones away when you are with your family.

Internet/Gaming Addiction

The number of persons who have become addicted to the internet and social media is on the rise. Internet addiction also, like other addictions, has a direct influence on the family. The results of such addiction are experienced by all members of the family. In fact this is a most common sight. The family members of internet addicts may experience feelings of isolation and abandonment. When an addict makes excessive use of social media and other internet outlets, he may cut himself off from his environment. Such addicts may withdraw from family gatherings and retreat from activities involving the whole family, turning a deaf ear to all attempts at communication. When a dear family member turns away from family gatherings and prefers seclusion, the family do not understand that this habit masks his addiction. Extraordinary changes take place in his relationship with his friends and his partner.

Those who are victims of internet and social media addiction often suffer from depression and anxiety. These problems of mental health adversely affect the members of the family. It is usual for those ‘slaves to the internet’ who spend many hours on ‘screen time’ to be affected by insomnia. In such cases it is only natural for cracks to appear on the domestic scene. Even though there is no specific treatment for internet addiction, the general treatment of therapy and counseling is effective. The time has come for the Church to engage in new mission activities regarding this social evil.

The need of the hour is to have a digitally literate Church and society. In today’s world the most relevant Christian mission that the Church has to take up is nurturing and encouraging the responsible use of the social media within each home and in all public spaces, particularly within the Church and all educational institutions.

Translation: **Dr. Susan Varghese, Kottayam**

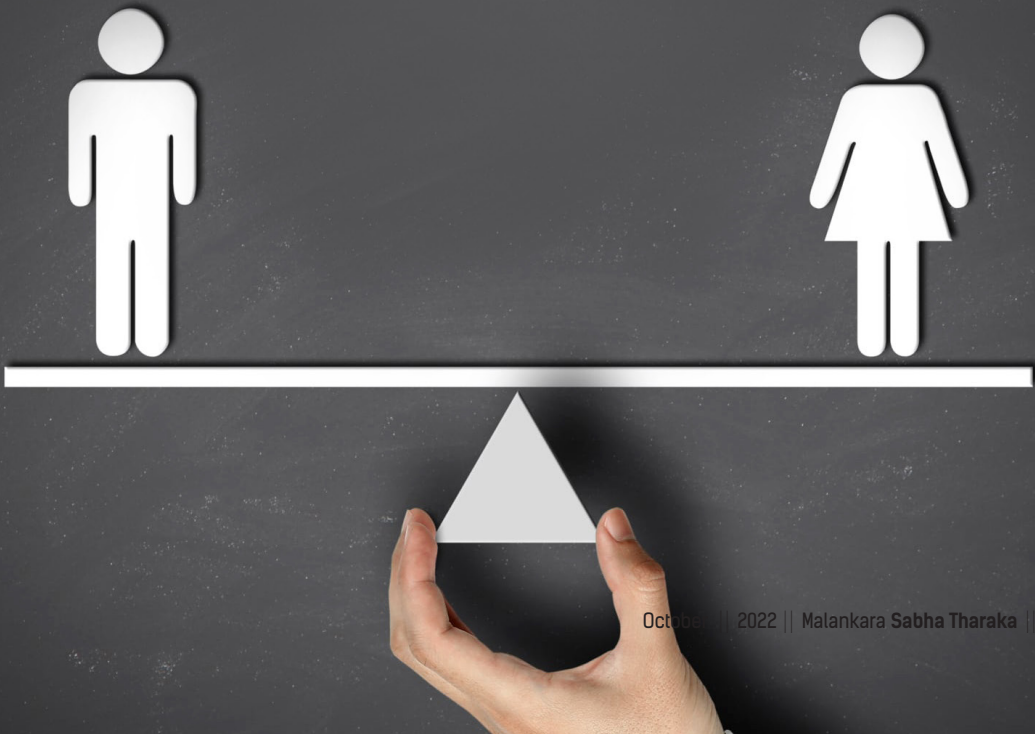
Women can be women if 'men won't be men'



Benitta Anne Chacko
Ahemdabad

Why is a woman afraid to step out for work at night? Why does a woman have to think twice before taking public transport back home from work? Why does a parent not allow their young daughter to return home late after a night with her friends? Why does a woman double-check herself in front of the mirror after getting ready, lest her clothes invite unnecessary male attention?

The answer to all these questions lies in the fact that there are privileged men in society who without any provocation may harm women believing them to be mere objects. Women every day go through self-doubt, fear, anxiety, and God knows what else because some men in society have never learned to respect the other gender.



A large part of this can be attributed to their upbringing. While women have a lot on their plate, and I don't intend to blame women any more than they already are in society, they do play an important role in raising a family. Child-rearing is not a single-handed job, and fathers play as much an integral role in it as mothers do. But here's something that mothers can bring to the table.

In many families, the son and daughter are brought up differently. The daughters are taught to be docile and timid, while the sons are allowed to be aggressive and bold. Very often, a son's mistakes and even misconducts are pushed under the carpet in the guise of 'boys will be boys'. A complaint of a boy bullying his female classmate is followed by statements like "Boys are meant to be naughty" or "He's a young boy". These 'men will be men' phrases often cover up the worst of behaviours. These pardoning acts may be driving a wrong message home, a message of entitlement and privilege by virtue of being a male.

Meanwhile, girls are told not to react when they are eve-teased. If they are stalked they are not allowed to step out of their home. A male sibling or parent accompanies a young girl to evening tuitions to keep her safe. Isn't that why girls often ask, "why should boys have all the fun?"

This privilege begins at home. When the son is

given differential treatment at home for being a boy, he grows up with a sense of entitlement. As the boys are raised to be providers and protectors, an important learning remains untaught. A lesson in equality.

This percolates to other matters in life as well. For example, contributing equally to household chores. In many homes, daughters are expected to learn early on to cook and clean, but the boys are told it's not for them. They are discouraged from entering the kitchen, they can't sweep or mop, lest even serve themselves food. Someday when they finally step out of this shell to study abroad or work in another country, mothers weep that their sons are finding it difficult to survive. Well, you know where the trouble began.

And this continues into their marital life, where the men fail to 'share the load' at home because they were brought up to believe it is not for them. Their wives, then toil away at home giving up on their dreams and aspirations. Once again male privilege leaves women to make the compromises.

Women can be a better woman as God intended her to be, live more freely, safely, independently and more importantly, equally, if men leave their unequal privileges behind. In every aspect of life- whether at home or outside- women can truly be themselves, only when 'men won't be men'.

LIST OF TRANSLATORS FOR THIS ISSUE

Dr. Achamma Alex, Thiruvalla, Alwin Alexander, Aluva
 Prof. Dr. Annie Koshy, Thiruvalla, Prof. Dr. G. Koshy, Thiruvalla
 Dr. Sheila Elizabeth Abraham, Thiruvalla
 Dr. Susan Varghese, Kottayam

THEMES FOR COMING ISSUES

നവംബർ: ശൈശവം സാധ്യതകളിലേക്കുള്ള കുതിച്ചുചാട്ടം
 November: **Childhood-leaping towards possibilities**

ഡിസംബർ: ക്രിസ്തുമസ്: ദൈവസ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ ജഡധാരണം
 December: **Christmas: Manifestation of God's love**

ജനുവരി 2023: പുതുവർഷം - പ്രകാശത്തിലേക്കുള്ള ഉണർത്ത്പാട്ട്
 January 2023: **New Year- A wake up call to the light**

WANTED

APPLICATIONS ARE INVITED FOR THE FOLLOWING POST AT MAR THOMA SABHA OFFICE, TIRUVALLA

	POST	NO. OF VACANCY	ELIGIBILITY
1	CLERICAL STAFF	3	Graduate with knowledge of computer DTP English and Malayalam, Tally are added qualifications. Age – Below 35 years
2	CLERICAL STAFF AT ACCOUNTS SECTION	1	Graduate in Commerce Preference shall be given to candidates who have completed CA Articleship. Age – Below 35 years
3	COMPUTER ASSISTANT AT EDP SECTION	1	Graduate in Computer Science or Electronics or Computer Application or Information Technology / PGDCA Preference shall be given to candidates having sound knowledge of Hardware and Software, Networking and Programming, Database Management, Digital Designing Social Media Management etc. Age – Below 35 years
4	ESTATE OFFICER	1	(Contract Basis) - Age below 60 years and be able to handle property, building and matters regarding tenants. Retired hands can also apply.
5	PEON	1	Below graduate. Valid LMV License is desirable Age – Below 35 years
6	PART TIME SWEEPER	1	(Contract Basis)

Note :

1. Only Marthomite candidates shall apply for the above posts.
2. Application shall contain the proof of age, self attested copies of certificates regarding educational qualifications, experience certificate and church membership certificate from the vicar.
3. Application shall reach Sabha Secretary, Mar Thoma Sabha Office, Tiruvalla, Kerala – 689 101 on or before 5.00 P M 31.10.2022

Tiruvalla
28.09.2022

Sd/-
Rev. C. V. Symon
Sabha Secretary

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