

# THE PARENTS' CHAT ROOM

By: Dr. Maulik Trivedi

**Q.** My mother-in-law has moved in with us for a period of one year. The initial reason for her arrival was the birth of our second daughter and she has been most helpful now that I am back at work. The reason for this email is for help from you in figuring out how to get her to stop creating problems between my husband and I. My husband and I both work, we come home at around the same time. As soon as we get home, she starts talking about how modern wives like their career more than their children. I am working out of the home because my husband had lost his job for a few months and right now even with two incomes, we are barely able to pay our bills. I have tried to explain this to her and she says she is not talking about me. Every time there is a show on TV that has children doing drugs, she looks at me and says why can't their mothers stay home and discipline these children? There was a show about bootcamp, and she started talking about how mothers should be sent to bootcamp to learn how to be mothers and take their job seriously. My husband laughs it off and doesn't think she is hinting anything towards me, but all the conversations between my mother-in-law and I are about negligent mothers and the effects of a mother's career on her children's life. Is it really my imagination and what can I do to not feel like I do?

**R.** Thank you for your question. Like your family, having multiple generations living together is a frequent scenario nowadays. This type of living arrangement has its pluses and minuses. Although it proves practically very useful, there are costs associated with it that families endure in the form of strained relationship. Your question goes directly to the heart of the whole matter. So, figuring out a way to resolve your dilemma would have tremendous benefit for everyone in the family.

There are several ways to figure out your answer. So first, you will need to choose which question is more important for you to answer. Is it your priority to understand your mother-in-law's actions or is it more important for you to know that what you are doing is right for your family. Once you make this choice, your answer will be self-evident.

Lets go a bit deeper into understanding the scenario. From the perspective of each individual in your family, lets consider the following. Often in life, we become distracted from what is a righteous and natural way to live. As a consequence, we suffer without realizing the reason for our suffering.

This idea of 'righteous living' is reflected in Eastern thought as 'Dharma'. Dharma implies a conscientious, orderly & holistic way of conducting one's life. Furthermore, it is also said that all the problems we experience during daily life originate in ignorance, and the method for eliminating ignorance is to practice Dharma. (<http://aboutdharma.org/what-is-dharma.php/>)

The 10 Rules of Dharma

According to ancient sage Manu, there are 10 essential rules for the observance of dharma: Patience (dhriti), forgiveness (kshama), piety or self control (dama), honesty (asteya), sanctity (shauch), control of senses (indraiya-nigrah), reason (dhi), knowledge or learning (vidya), truthfulness (satya) and absence of anger (krodha). Manu further writes, "Non-violence, truth, non-coveting, purity of body and mind, control of senses are the essence of dharma". Hence,

'Dharmic' laws govern not only the individual but all in society.

One purpose of dharma is to suggest a code of conduct that is intended to secure both worldly joys as well as a spiritual happiness. For example, it endorses the idea that it is one's dharma to marry, raise a family and provide for that family in whatever way is necessary. The practice of dharma gives an experience of peace, joy, strength and tranquillity within one's self and makes life disciplined. (<http://hinduism.about.com/od/basics/a/dharma.htm>)

Therefore, in the best interest for yourself and for each

individual in your family, focus on what is your righteous duty to your family. Do not get distracted by your mother-in-law's actions. Through higher reasoning, based on truthfulness, and in absence of any angry feelings, you can rise above your current dilemma. Please recognize that this will require certain self-control at first. Mind you, all of this applies just as well to everyone in your family. Each person has much to gain by better adhering to their 'Dharmic' duty.

Develop patience and compassion for your mother-in-law's actions. By doing so, you will undoubtedly create a more peaceful feeling inside yourself. Not only that, you will also create a serene family environment outside that will benefit each individual in your family. Try it out and see for yourself.

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