
The status of a husband

In most families, the oldest man makes the rules. He can order or forbid his wife and children things like going to church or even leaving the house. I don't understand why, but many women like "strong" characters. Strong in the sense of dominant and possessive. A wife is a good woman if she obeys. Part of this phenomenon seems to be cultural, but there are other kinds of dependencies, as well. It is hard enough for most people to pay for their living and it is just cheaper to share a place.

According to a friend of mine, society expects people to have a spouse, children, a living place of their own and a car before there are 30. Most people, however, live with their parents up to old age, so there is always an older man.

Olga*¹ told me of one couple where the woman is almost blind. Therefore, she obeys her husband and does not go to church. Other women come up with excuses on Sunday morning. One woman, upon showing me her house, told me how she had promised to her late husband that after his death, she would do everything that he had been forbidding her to do. She would go to church every Sunday!

Other women, as soon as no man is around, wonder loudly whether it is possible and all right, that is suitable for his manhood, to ask a husband to take part in domestic chores. I was asked a lot about the situation in Germany.

I was annoyed when Olga's husband was about to visit. Many things had to improve or to change. Just because a man was coming, the house that is usually not very clean needed to shine. It didn't make a difference to me that I cleaned on a different day, I was just annoyed of the reason.

Then, we needed different food. A man needs meat. Luckily, Olga likes her own meat dishes more than anyone else's so that I didn't need to be involved in the cooking. But I did bring home vegetables and fruits these days, otherwise there might not have been any. The animals that usually sleep downstairs (dogs) and in her bed (cats) needed to stay outside. Since her husband behaved like some kind of earl, I made sure to be in my room as much as possible. After his departure, Olga called many people to tell them that one night, he had allowed the animals inside.

¹ name changed

Children – who they are and how to treat them

People – in my eyes – have a rather special view of children. There is little objective of teaching young people to become independent. What happens “in the West” is not love for children. Children are people that you foster and care for. And that you tell what to do and what not to do, all the time. Any people that you foster, care for, and tell what to do are your children (as long as they are younger than you are).

Olga talks about her Sadchikovka kids although the youngest of them is 13 and the oldest 18. At the German centre, a teacher mentioned that her children needed to pass the language test to be able to immigrate to Germany.

- Which children? Do they make children take immigration tests?
- Well, adolescents.
- At which age do you have to take the test?
- From 18 onwards.
- How old are the people in your group?
- Well, about from 22 to 32.
- You call them children?
- Of course I do. They are my children. I care for them and I taught them all the German they know.

This was a conversation over lunch. People laughed about my astonishment and joined in the talk. One woman said that when she was 69, her mother died. At this moment, she understood that she was not a child anymore and that it was now her job to take care of her younger family members.

[...]