Learn to live artfully, Dear Hubby!

"As justice should not only be done but should be seen to be done, similarly valuables should not only be possessed but should also be displayed..."

by D.P. Sabharwal

If one is true and faithful to one's wife, one would definitely admit that married life has its plus points—more often than not, these are in the abstract form and one has to have an open mind to see, accept and appreciate them.

One abstract and rare advantage of having a wife is that you do not need a dictionary or an encyclopaedia. Whenever the need arises to seek clarification about a point in dispute, the wife is there to help, advise and guide you.

Even if you are sure that she is nowhere near the correct answer, it really does not matter. Because, the interpretation and subsequent implementation of the disputed point has to be as per her wishes.

Ours is a typical Indian drawing-room. There is a sofa-set, 2 easy chairs and a settee. There are 2 huge show-cases—full of routine stuff, like photos depicting the phases of growth of the family members and family elders, photo albums, prize-cups, mementos and whatever you can, and cannot, think of! The remaining naked parts of the walls have been covered with paintings, wall hangings and calendars.

The vacant space on the floor is covered with 2 table lamps, 3 pots with money-plants and a 4-piece stereo system. A 5-band radio is present on the shelf. A colour television is proudly displayed in yet another corner.

The only costly acquisition, missing from the drawing-room is the refrigerator. Not because I did not like it there, but because the small room refused to accept it, unless it was hung from the ceiling!

Now, I am sure, if a person, who has heard about a museum but has not seen one, is brought in here, he would at once call it that. Not that he would be right, for, even museums are not packed so badly.

Well, the day of my enlightenment was the day we purchased our VCR. While she was trying to locate a corner for it, I told her the basic and simple fact of geometry that a room, whatever be its size, has only 4 corners.

Giving me a dirty look, she said, "If you cannot help me, then do not trouble me either. Please go."

"Look, darling, it is not me who should leave the room, but our television and VCR."

She exclaimed, as if stung by a wasp, "A drawing-room, without these things!"

I explained that moving these things to the other room would serve 2 purposes. First, the kids would be able to watch the TV programmes uninterrupted, whenever our friends and guests drop in. Secondly, there would be some free space in the room, which would be pleasing to the eye.

"Where did you learn that vacant space is pleasing and soothing to the eyes?" she questioned.

"And which book says that drawing-rooms should be stuffed as badly as the second-class compartments of our railways?"

"How dare you compare it to train compartments?" she flared up. "Is that the respect you have for my art and for my education?"

"I did not find fault with your art nor did I blame your education, my dear."

"I know you, my dear hubby," she said sarcastically. "You never say it with words but your tone implies that. Anyway, let me remind you that I am a graduate in home-science, and interior decoration was one of my subjects."

"But, darling, you graduated about 12 years back. Things and concepts do change over such a long period."

"Not in the field of art. Unlike your engineering field, where everything undergoes a change with the advances in science and technology, art is art forever," she said, and looking straight into my eyes, added, "And do not forget, you are a Bachelor of Engineering, whereas I am a Master of Arts."

After a pause she added, "I don't blame you. Husbands never realise the true worth of their wives. Well, you nourish doubts about my aesthetic sence? Then, ask your friends and find out what they have to say about our drawing-room. All of your friends have appreciated it."

"How can they say anything else? Being husbands, they lack the courage to call a spade a spade even at home! Moreover, decency demands that they praise everything made by the fair sex," I wanted to say but kept quiet, fearing that it would further sidetrack the main issue.

Instead, I said, "I agree that peo-



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ple have admired your art. But still tell me one thing: Why do you want to display a VCR in this very room?"

"Have you heard the saying that justice should not only be done but should be seen to be done?"

I had heard that.

"Similarly, valuables should not only be possessed but should be displayed as well," she said. This set me athinking.

After some thought she asked, "You had said that a drawing-room should have some free space which will be pleasing to the eye, while sitting and relaxing there. But why should one relax there?"

I could not control myself any more. In plain and simple but harsh words, I said:

"Look, dear, the use of the drawing-room by the family members is fully justified because it covers about 20% of the floor area; because besides 2 bedrooms, there is no other room in the house; and because the furnishing of this room has cost us a fortune and, thus, must be made use of.

"Moreover, if the house is to be insured, the stuff inside this room would amount to about 40% of the total value."

Her face was expressionless. I realised that my extempore peroration was of no use. I should have known that trying to convince wives with statistics was as futile an exercise as making a buffalo respond to music! In desperation, I got up to walk out.

"Hey, where are you going?" she asked, pulling my arm. Cheer up what I am going to tell you now will be good news for you."

I looked expectantly at her. But what came out was totally unexpected. "I have decided to display here magazines and journals carrying your articles."

I was taken aback. "You mean you will acknowledge publicly that in some field of arts, your husband is one-up on you?"

"How naive you are! Well, you see, if a husband fails, the fault is purely his. But if he succeeds, the credit goes to his wife."

"How smart you are!" was all that I could mutter.

"This is not smartness, dear. It is an art of which you are definitely not the master," she said, giving me a tantalising and teasing look, and added:

"It is the art of living, the art of achieving results. Don't you see what I have achieved? I have not only retained the TV set, but have added a VCR, and something more.

"Isn't it something like selling not only a comb but also shampoo to an absolutely bald man?"

"Oh, yes, dear," I admitted.

"Then adopt me as your *guru*," she said and after a moment added smilingly, "and learn the art from the Master of Arts, the art of living artfully."

I nodded sheepishly. What else could I do? Once again, as usual, she had won the battle. □□