

Chapter on the Story Telling of Sayyidina Rasullullah Sallallahu Alaihe Wasallam at Night

This chapter is on the stories that Sayyidina Rasoolullah sallallahu alaihe wasallam related. The author has written two hadith here as specimens.

(240) Hadith 1

Aisha radiyallahu anha reports, "Once, at night, Rasoolullah sallallahu alaihe wasallam related an event to his family members. One of the ladies said, this story is just like the stories of Khuraafah. (The Arabs used the stories of Khuraafah as proverbs). Rasoolullah sallallahu alaihe wasallam asked, "Do you know what is the original story of Khuraafah? Khuraafah was a man from the tribe of Banu Udhray, whom the jinns took away. They kept him for some time, then left him among the people. He related to the people strange things of his stay there. The people were astonished. After that every amazing story is called Khuraafah."

Commentary

It is possible that the person had another name, and because the people took his stories to be fables and amusing, he became famously known as Khuraafah. In the time of the Jaahiliyyah, exorcism was widespread. The jinns troubled humans very much, they took them away, spoke to them, had intercourse with women, etc. of which there are many famous incidents. After the appearance of Islam their strength subsided, till some people began to believe that jinns existed before, and now they do not exist. The fact is that they do exist, but do not have the power they possessed previously. At the time of the birth of Sayyidina Rasoolullah sallallahu alaihe wasallam the events that took place, the wailing, trouble, etc. that the jinns experienced is a testimony to this. In the Sahih Bukhari a narration of Sayyidina Umar radiyallahu anhu is mentioned, where he states about the poetry of a beloved woman of a magician, named Janiyah, on grief, disgrace and the misfortune of the jinns. Imaam Suyuti has mentioned many incidents of this nature in his book 'Khasaa-is-Kubra'.

(241) Hadith 2

Hadith Ummi Zar'a. This is the second hadith of this chapter. Due to this story being lengthy and famous, special books have been written on it. Imaam Tirmizi has also given it a little prominence. This hadith has other names too, but is well known by this name. Due to the story being lengthy, every woman's story is mentioned separately with its commentaries.) Aisha radiyallahu anha reports, "Once eleven women assembled and made an agreement, that each of them would describe the true state of their husbands, without hiding any fact."

Commentary

The names of these eleven women are not confirmed in the sahih ahadith, although the names of a few are mentioned in a few narrations. These women were from Yemen or Hijaaz. There is a disagreement on their names, therefore they are omitted here. Their husbands were all away for their needs. They were alone and began talking of things to keep themselves occupied and happy. They subsequently made an agreement that each one of them would describe their husbands.

THE FIRST WOMAN said, "My husband is like the meat of a useless camel. (As if he is a piece of meat that has no life left in it, and also like the meat of a camel that is generally not preferred). And the meat also put on top of a mountain which is difficult to climb. The road to the top is not easy, so that it may be possible to climb it, nor is the meat of much value, that because of it one should separate it into a hundred lots and carry it down.

Commentary

That means he is so useless that no one can benefit from him materially or otherwise, and besides this he is proud, arrogant and ill-mannered. He is in such a state that it is difficult to contact him.

He is a medicine of no use and utterly useless, and because of his pride and arrogance it is difficult to reach him.

THE SECOND WOMAN said, "(If I do describe my husband what can I describe about him. I have nothing to say about him). I fear if I begin to describe his faults, there will be no end to it. If I begin I will have to mention all his inner and outer faults."

Commentary

She means if she begins, no matter how many faults she describes, he is full of faults. If someone has a few faults they could be described, but the one that is only made of faults, how many of them could be described or pointed out? It is such a long story that one would become bored. A few commentators have made an objection to this that she broke her promise by refusing to describe her husband. The fact is that, she described everything in a few words, that he is a body full of faults and these are not countable.

THE THIRD WOMAN said, "My husband is an 'A-shannaq' which means he is a very tall man. If I do comment on anything he will immediately give talaq (divorce), and if I keep silent, I just hang around."

Commentary

The tallness of the husband must have been mentioned due to the popular saying that tallness is a sign of stupidity. The statement made of the height relates to his stupidity, or it is mentioned because he was ugly. Like a tall tower that is without a suitable build, looks ugly and is also bad mannered. If I say anything or express a need, he will immediately divorce me. If I keep quite

and do not express my needs, he does not care. I am just hanging around. I cannot be counted among those who have a husband, as there is nothing like a husband, nor among those who have no husbands that I may look for one in another place. In some narrations there is also a sentence which translates, "I am always in such a state as if I am under a sharp sword. I do not know when my affair will come to an end."

THE FOURTH WOMAN said.. "My husband is mild mannered, like nights of Tihaamah. He is not hot nor cold, nor is there anything to fear of him, nor any displeasure".

Commentary

He is mild natured and is not very cunning or dull. One does not fear to live with him, nor do the nerves and mind become dull or tired. It is said that the name of this woman is Mahd bint Abi Harumah. Makkah and its surroundings areas are called Tihaamah. The nights of this area are always mild even if the days are very hot.

THE FIFTH WOMAN said: "When my husband comes into the house, he becomes a cheetah, and when he goes out, he becomes a lion. He does not care to investigate what happens in the house".

Commentary

It is said that name of this woman is Kabshah. The 'ulama differ in whether she praised her husband or criticised him. Both meanings can be derived from it. It clearly seems that she praised him. If it is taken to be criticism it will then mean that, when he comes into the house he becomes vicious like a cheetah. He does not say anything, nor does he have anything to do with the household affairs. When he goes out he is like a gentleman. If any difficulty arises in the house, he has nothing to do with it, he does not inquire, nor is it his worry. If this is taken to be praise, then it shall mean, that when he enters the house he becomes quiet, he does not know of anything and does not utter a complaint on any word. He does not become angry. He is so unaware, it is as if he is sleeping. Whatever we cook or eat, he does not interfere in anything, nor does he investigate anything, that, why was such a thing done, or why did this happen? When he goes out he is like a lion. Presses his teeth and thunders loudly. Whatever there is in the house for eating etc. he does not care, nor inquires that how and why was this spent? Whatever was brought to the house, was used by the household as they saw fit.

THE SIXTH WOMAN said: "When my husband eats, he eats everything. When he drinks, he does not leave anything. When he sleeps, he sleeps in his own sheet. He does not even touch me, so that he can know the disturbance in my mind".

Commentary

In these words too, both praise and criticism could be derived. In the fifth one there seems to be more praise, but in this one there seems to be more criticism as can be seen from the translation. If praise is meant, as is the view of some commentators, then it will mean the following: That when he eats, he eats anything; he eats fruits, nuts, all types of food etc. When he drinks, he sometimes drinks milk, sometimes a drink, sometimes a sharbat etc. In short he drinks

anything. All types of food are on his table. He spends and is not a miser, if there is daal, there is no meat. If there is water then there is no milk. He keeps away from quarrels. He does not put his finger in other people's problems, that is he does not look for the faults of others or their shortcomings. If it is to be taken to be criticism, as is the view of the majority, it will mean that the time of eating, whatever comes before him he polishes it off, nothing is left for the family members. Like a buffalo he eats up everything. When it is time to drink, he gulps down the whole well. He sleeps like a stranger in his own sheets. Forget embracing me, he does not even touch my body so that he may know or feel the heat or coldness in my body.

THE SEVENTH WOMAN said: "My husband is impotent and unmanly. He is such a dunce that he cannot even speak. Whatever sickness a person has in this world, he possess it. His manners are such that he may break my head or injure my body, or do both".

THE EIGHTH WOMAN said: "My husband is soft like a rabbit when I touch him. His smell is like the fragrance of za'faraan (saffron)"

Commentary

It is said the name of this woman is Naashirah bint Aws. By her praise she means he has a soft nature, he is not harsh and ill mannered. Both pleasure of the body and soul are found in him. He has a tender body which makes me want to embrace it, or he is soft-natured that there is no sign of anger. Fragrance is constantly emitted from his body. In some narrations this sentence is also added which means. "I dominate him, and he dominates all other people. My domination is not due to his humbleness, because he dominates others. My domination is because of love, or the politeness in him."

THE NINTH WOMAN said: "My husband is of high status, generous, hospitable, owner of a high dwelling. He has a lot of ashes. He is tall built. His home is near the majlis and Daarul Mashwarah (House of Counsel)".

Commentary

This woman has mentioned many praises. The first is that her house is very high. If a big mansion is meant here, then it shall mean wealth and leadership, because a high mansion can only be built by a wealthy person. If by high dwelling it is meant that the house is built on a raised ground, like it was common amongst 'Arabs for generous and hospitable people to build their houses on raised places, so that strangers and travellers could see it and come to it. In this case it will mean he is generous and hospitable. Some 'ulama state that by a high dwelling, it is meant that he descended from a high and noble family. The second praise is of his hospitality, due to this it is natural that there will be a lot of ashes in the house, because a lot of food is cooked for visitors. The third praise is his height. To be tall, provided that it does not exceed that which is deemed moderate, is laudable and praiseworthy for a man. By this big house near the majlis (assembly) means that he is wise and a man of counsel. There is always someone who comes to seek his advice. The opinion of this humble servant, is that it is possible that this may also mean that he keeps the Daarul Mashwarah (House of Counsel) near his

house, so that he will not say in humbleness etc. to those who gather there, that my house is a distance away. He keeps his home near, so that a long time is not spent in preparations for hospitality, and because of it an occasion for an excuse may not arise.

THE TENTH WOMAN said: "My husband is Maalik, and what can I describe about Maalik. He is more generous than all those who have been praised, or he is more praiseworthy than all the praises I may shower on him. He owns many herds of camels, which are kept near the house. They are seldom taken out for grazing. When the camels hear the sound of the mizhar, they are sure that their end is near".

Commentary

It is said that the name of this woman is Kabshah bint Maalik. She praised the generosity of her husband, which is explained thus, if the camels go out to graze in the fields, then at the time of hospitality and attending to the guests, time is wasted in herding them back. There are all ways visitors at his home. The camels are not sent out to graze but fed in their pans, so that when a visitor arrives a camel could be slaughtered immediately. Some have translated the sounding of the mizhar as, that whenever a visitor arrives, in happiness and in the visitors honour, this instrument is sounded. By hearing the sound, the camels know that the time of their slaughter is near, as a visitor has arrived. According to 'Arab custom this meaning seems more appropriate, that when a visitor he is immediately entertained by being served drinks, tid-bits, music etc. By the sound of the music the camels know that meal times are near, and for its preparations, the time for their slaughter is near.

THE ELEVENTH WOMAN Umm Zar-a, said: "My husband was Abu Zar-a', and how can I praise Abu Zar-a'? He made my ears bow with jewels. He made my sides (by feeding) full of fat. He kept me so happy and contented, that due to self admiration and haughtiness I thought I was virtuous. He found me from such a poor home, that lived with hardship, owning only a few goats for a living. From there he brought me into such a prosperous family who owned horses, camel oxen for ploughing, and gardeners (and possessed all types of wealth. Besides all this he was so good natured) that he did not criticise me scold me for anything. I slept till late in the morning, and no one was allowed to wake me up. Food was so abundant that after filling myself I just left it (and it never got finished). The mother of Abu Zar-a' (mother-in-law), in what manner can I praise her? Her huge utensils were always full. Her house was very spacious (She was very rich, and according to the habit of women, was not a miser. By the vastness of the house it is meant that many visitors were entertained). The son of Abu Zar-a', in what manner can I praise him? He was also a light upon light. He was so thin and skinny, the sleeping part of his body (ribs etc. was thin like a branch, or a sword. A side of a lamb was enough to fill his stomach. (i.e. There was no great formalities for a brave one to sleep like a soldier he slept a little in a small place. In the same manner he ate simple food, but befitting a warrior. Two or three pieces of meat was his food). The daughter of Abu Zar-a', how can she be praised? She obeys her mother and father. She is fat and healthy, and a jealousy for the second wife (The second wife feels jealous on her excellence. Among the 'Arabs it is desirable that a man be thin and tall, and a woman fat a healthy). And how can I praise the slave girl of Abu Zar-a'? She

never gossiped about our house affairs to anyone. She did not even use foodstuffs without permission. She did not let the house become dirty and untidy, but kept it clean. (The days passed wonderfully). One morning whilst the utensils of milk were being churned Abu Zara went out of the house. He found a woman, with two cheetah like children playing with pomegranates. (The similarity of cheetah is with playing, and the pomegranates are either in reality pomegranates which the children were spinning and playing with, or breasts of the women are intended here). He loved her so much, that he divorced me, a married her. (I was divorced because as a second wife, she would become heartsore, and by divorcing me the new wife would have greater regard for him). In one narration it is mentioned that he married her. He then divorced me. Subsequently I married another chief and noble man, who was a prince and soldier. He showered on me many gifts. And from each type of animal i.e. camel, cow, goat, etc. etc., he presented me a pair and said to me, 'Eat as much as you want yourself, send to your parents as much as you wish'. The fact is this, if I add up all his good qualities etc. then too he will not excel the little thing that abu Zar-a' bestowed upon me". Sayyidatina 'Aayeshah Radiyallahu 'Anha says: "After Sayyidina Rasulallah Sallallahu 'Alayhi Wasallain completed this story, he said to me. 'I am also to you as Abu Zar-a, had been to Umm Zar-a'

Commentary

In another hadith it is stated that Sayyidina Rasulallah Sallallahu 'Alayhi Wasallam also thereafter said: 'I will not divorce you'. It has been mentioned in Tabraani that Sayyidatina 'Aayeshah Radiyallahu 'Anha replied: 'O Messenger of Allah, what truth is there about Abu Zar-a'. May my mother and father be sacrificed on you. You are much more to me than him'. May Allah Ta'aala grant every Muslim husband and wife the following of the footsteps of Sayyidina Rasulallah Sallallahu 'Alayhi Wasallam on this subject, because this is the result of chastity. Aameen. Some 'ulama are of the opinion that those women who criticised their husbands committed backbiting, and this was narrated in the assembly of Sayyidina Rasulallah Sallallahu 'Alayhi Wasallam. If Sayyidina Rasulallah Sallallahu 'Alayhi Wasallam related this story himself, then there is even a greater perplexity. But the fact is, that this is not entering the boundaries of backbiting. To discuss something about a person whose name or other details are not known to the people, certainly cannot be included in the category of backbiting.