

Humorous Anecdotes

From the Lighter Side of
Islāmic History

الطائفية
الطائفية

Compiled by

MOULĀNĀ AFZAL ISMAIL



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The Value of a Smile

Smiling is a form of Ṣadaqah.

A smile is a bounty from Allāh. Appreciate it and be grateful for it.

Smiling is Sunnah because Nabī ﷺ smiled in abundance.

Making people smile is an act of 'ibādah (worship).

Smiling softens hearts and fosters love.

Aishah ؓ narrates that the laughter of Nabī ﷺ was a broad smile. (Shamā'il Tirmidhī)

Transliteration Key

أ - 'ā	ض - ḍ
آ - ā	ط - ṭ
ب - b	ظ - ṣ
ت - t	ع - 'a, 'i, 'u
ث - th	غ - gh
ج - j	ف - f
ح - ḥ	ق - q
خ - kh	ك - k
د - d	ل - l
ذ - dh	م - m
ر - r	ن - n
ز - z	و - ū
س - s	ه - h
ش - sh	ي - y, ī
ص - ṣ	

ﷻ - Used after the name of Allāh, translated as, “Praise be to Allāh Who is pure and elevated.”

ﷺ - Used after the name of Nabī Muḥammad ﷺ, translated as, “May Allāh’s peace and blessing be upon him.”

ﷺ - Used after the name of a prophet of Allāh, translated as, “May Allāh’s peace be upon him.”

ﷺ, ﷺ - Used after the name of a Ṣaḥābī (companion) of Nabī Muḥammad ﷺ, translated as, “May Allāh be pleased with him / her.”

ﷺ - Used after the names of more than one Ṣaḥābī (companion) of Nabī Muḥammad ﷺ, translated as, “May Allāh be pleased with them.”

ﷺ - Used after the name of a pious person, translated as, “May Allāh’s mercy be upon him.”

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Foreword

by Moulana Hassen S Dockrat جنظر اللہ

نحمدہ و نصلی علی رسولہ الکریم

باسمہ تعالیٰ

In a time when gloom and despondency have become widespread and many are at the throats of others Moulānā Afzal's book, 'Humorous Anecdotes' is indeed a breath of fresh air. Perhaps we have forgotten that humour is also a part of Islām. The books of Islām are replete with anecdotes of humour and many works have been compiled solely on this subject. In fact the compilations of ḥadīth contain special chapters of lighthearted humour reported from Nabi ﷺ. Our pious predecessors of recent times were also not oblivious of this human trait. Who can forget the lightheartedness of Muftī Mahmūd Ṣāhib Gangohī رحمۃ اللہ علیہ and the open humour and laughter of Ḥaḍrat Moulānā Ḥakīm Akhtar Ṣāhib جنظر اللہ? Unfortunately, some of us have become so miserly that we can't even offer a smile.

I recall a headline I came across on BBC asking, "Is there any humour in Islam?" Of course their understanding of humour is totally contrary to what we understand it to be. There is indeed a great difference between ridicule and lightheartedness. *Alḥamdulillāh*, the preface of this book explains this concept quite vividly.

I have read a substantial portion of this book and I know that I will refer to it often again. Laughter is, after all, the best medicine. I would recommend this book to everyone so that it can help remove the monotony and dullness which many of us face in life. May Allah ﷻ accept this sincere effort and reward Moulānā abundantly. *Āmīn*.

Hassen S Dockrat [Moulānā]

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Preface

All praise is due to Allāh, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Peace, blessings and salutations be upon our leader and role-model Nabī ﷺ.

Islām encourages a life of balance rather than extremism. A divinely-taught blend of worship and relaxation is the key to the door of happiness which western culture has failed to open. The western system advocates a lifestyle of extremes. This mentality, drowned in materialism and capitalism, is then dosed with extremes of pleasure and entertainment in the form of movies, sport, music, comedy, etc. Unfortunately, a substantial proportion of these rely on obscenity and vulgarity which only serve to arouse the base desires, and further toss the human soul into an abyss of torment and unhappiness.

The Islāmic concept of life is simple and profound: man has been created to worship and obey his Creator, and refreshing the mind with humour should serve as an aid to this objective. Entertainment and humour is not the objective of life. True peace of mind and contentment of heart is in the worship of Allāh. Allāh, in His absolute wisdom, knows that man requires lighthearted nourishment which tickles the mind and soul, and hence provided this example in the lifestyle and conduct of His appointed final prophet, Nabī ﷺ. It is proven from authentic sources of ḥadīth that Nabī ﷺ smiled and occasionally indulged in good lighthearted humour.

The compilation of this book has been inspired for various reasons. Firstly, the human soul requires relaxation, and in the absence of sound and permissible literature in the English language to satisfy this need, Muslims often resort to other questionable alternatives. Humour which is based on falsehood and obscenity is unacceptable. Secondly, classical Arabic authors such as Ibn Jawzī, Al-Jāhiz, Khaṭīb Baghdādī, Ibn ‘Abdī Rabbihī and others have recorded many narrations and stories in this field and an English speaking audience can greatly benefit from this outstanding source of thought and wisdom. Thirdly, amidst all the negative propaganda that is spewed out by the western media, one untruth is that Islām is dull, boring, monotonous and harsh. On the contrary, one who studies Islāmic culture and teachings will be convinced that Islām is balanced. It incorporates the best of morals, worship, etiquette and spirituality. Not only

is humour acceptable within Islām, but it is encouraged within limits. Fourthly, a paradox of our time is that despite modern man's claims of sophistication in technology and lifestyle, people seem to suffer from increasing levels of depression, sadness, anxiety and despair. Tears and sighs of desperation are more frequent in comparison with the smiles and laughter reminiscent of a progressive world. The snowballing effects of sin and immorality coupled with the roller coaster effects of a crumbling financial and social system are strong contributory factors to the world of doom and gloom we live in. The system of Islām which wonderfully balances humour and seriousness in the proportion of salt in food shines out as a ray of light amidst this darkness.

It should, however, be remembered that humour should be occasional, lest it becomes an obsession. One should not become so engrossed in it that it removes one's sense of shame or diminishes one's honour. Excessive laughter and amusement kills the spiritual heart.

Further, humour should not offend or mock at any weakness in others. It should be free from slander and gossip and should not incorporate any such sinful elements that incite hatred or resentment from others. A gravely harmful form of humour is that which mocks or ridicules the divine or any aspect of Islām. To relate or propagate all such forms of humour is not permissible. May Allāh protect us!

The reader should keep in mind that all the narrations mentioned in this book are true and factual. Nabī ﷺ warned and discouraged fabrication of lies in order to amuse others.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to all those who assisted in this compilation, particularly Mufti Husain Kadodia, Moulana Moosa Kajee and Moulana Imraan Kajee for their reading of the manuscript and invaluable suggestions; Sister Hafsa Carim for her editing; and Moulana Yusuf Abba for proofreading. May Allāh reward you well. May Allāh accept this short compilation of humorous anecdotes and make it weighty in the scales of the author's good deeds in the Hereafter. Āmīn.

Afzal Ismail

Rabī'ul Awwal 1434 / January 2013

Humour in Islām

Nabī ﷺ and Humour

Lighthearted humour can be proven from the life of Nabī ﷺ. Anas ؓ narrates: Nabī ﷺ would mix with us to the extent that he once said to my younger brother, “O Abū Umair, what has happened to Nughair?” Nughair was a particular type of bird which he used to play with before it died. (Muslim, Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah)

Anas ؓ also narrates: A man once requested a conveyance from Nabī ﷺ. Nabī ﷺ said to him, “I will give you a baby camel to ride.” The man asked, “What can I do with a baby camel?” Nabī ﷺ explained, “Isn’t every camel the baby of another camel?” (Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd)

‘Ā’ishah ؓ narrates: Nabī ﷺ raced with me and I beat him. When I gained some weight, we again had a race and he beat me. Nabī ﷺ then said, “This one cancels that one.” (Abū Dāwūd)

Hanzalah Al-Usaidī ؓ narrates: Abū Bakr ؓ met me and asked, “How are you, O Hanzalah?”

I replied, “Hanzalah is guilty of hypocrisy!”

He said, “Subḥānallāh! What are you saying?”

I said, “When we are with Nabī ﷺ and he reminds us of the Fire and Paradise, it is as if we can see them with our own eyes. Then when we depart from Nabī ﷺ and attend to our wives, our children and our business, then we forget much of this.”

Abū Bakr ؓ said, “By Allāh, we also experience the same.” So I went with Abū Bakr until we came to Nabī ﷺ. I said, “Hanzalah is guilty of hypocrisy, O Nabī of Allāh.”

Nabī ﷺ said, “And how is that?”

I said, “When we are with you, you remind us of the Fire and of Paradise and it is as if we can see them with our own eyes. Then when we depart from you and attend to our wives, our children and our business then we forget much of this.”

Nabī ﷺ said, “By Him in whose hand is my soul, if you remained continually as you are when you are with me and in remembering (Allāh) then the angels would shake hands with you upon your beds and upon your paths. But O Hanzalah, (there is) a time for this and a time for that, (there is) a time for this and a time for that, (there is) a time for this and a time for that.” (Muslim)

The Ṣaḥābah ﷺ and Humour

‘Umar ﷺ mentioned: “It pleases me when a man is like a child amongst his family, but when a need arises he is a man.”

‘Umar ﷺ once noticed a bedouin performing Ṣalāh rather hastily. After completing, the bedouin made dua: “O Allāh, marry me to a damsel in paradise.” Umar remarked, “Your cash payment was substandard but you are proposing for the finest!”

‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib ﷺ mentioned: “Amuse the hearts and engage in some light-hearted wit because hearts tire as bodies do.” In another narration he also said, “Hearts tire as bodies do, so engage in some light-hearted wit.”

‘Aṭā ibn Sā’ib رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ narrates: “Sa’īd ibn Jubair رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ would narrate incidents reducing us to tears and at times he would not leave the gathering until he would make us laugh.”¹

The Righteous رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ and Humour

Ibn Zaid رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ mentioned, “My father said to me that ‘Aṭā ibn Yasār رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ would lecture to Abū Ḥāzim رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ and myself until he would make us cry and he would then lecture to us until he would make us laugh. He would then remark, “There is a time for this and a time for that.””

Ibn Jawzī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ compiled his book on the stories of fools for three reasons: Firstly, upon hearing their stories an intelligent person will realise the value of his intelligence and appreciate that which they have been deprived of. This will encourage him to express gratitude to Allāh. Secondly, the mention of these stories should inspire a wise person to abstain from all causes and avenues of foolishness when humanly possible. Thirdly, occasional mention of these stories helps in lifting the spirits of a person. The human soul naturally goes

1 Al-Murāḥ Fī al-Muzāḥ, p38

through periods of exhaustion and fatigue and hence requires some form of light-hearted, but permissible, diversion.

Ibn Jawzī رحمته الله mentioned, “Ulamā always expressed an interest in light-hearted humour and would lift the spirits of others because humour relaxes the soul and relieves the heart of its burdens.”

Ibn Jawzī رحمته الله also mentioned : “It is permissible at times to make a person laugh... It is makrooh (disliked) for a person to habitually make others laugh as a little laughter is not discouraged. It is a fact that Nabī ﷺ would laugh to the extent that his front teeth were visible. Frequent laughter is detested because Nabī ﷺ said, ‘Abundant laughter kills the heart.’ Occasional humour is like salt in food.”

Nabī ﷺ prohibited that a person should concoct lies in order to make others laugh. As this prohibition refers to lies, it does not prohibit narrating the true stories of the foolish ones which incite a person to laughter.¹

1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p12-15

Misers

I have not seen anybody more unfortunate regarding his wealth than a miser. In this world he is blamed for hoarding and in the hereafter he will be held accountable for holding back. In this world he is not content due to his anxiety and neither will he be saved from punishment in the hereafter due to his sin. His life in this world is that of a pauper, but his reckoning in the hereafter will be that of the wealthy.

~ Ḥasan al-Baṣri رحمة الله عليه



Ash‘ab was famous amongst the Arabs for his miserliness and greed. He lived in the first century of Islām and passed away in 154 Hijrī. He was famously known as Ṭām‘i, one who is greedy. If one wanted to show the level of greed in another person, he would say, “He is the Ash‘ab of the time,” or “He has even surpassed Ash‘ab.” This phrase is still frequently used by the Arabs.

Aṣma‘ī states that once some children prodded behind Ash‘ab and began annoying him. In desperation, he decided to lie to them to get them away from him. He said, “Go to Sālīm ibn Abdullāh. He is distributing dates.” On hearing this, the children scampered off to Sālīm’s residence. When Ash‘ab saw this, he too ran behind the children, thinking, “Perhaps what I said is true and Sālīm is distributing dates.”¹



Ḍaḥḥāk narrates that the covetous Ash‘ab once passed by some people who were manufacturing trays with the intention of selling them. Ash‘ab said to them, “Make them larger.” When asked why, he replied, “It is possible that someone may bring me a gift in one of these trays.”



1 Tārīkh al-Baghdād vol7, page508

Ash'ab says, "Whenever I attended a funeral and saw two people discussing something privately, I always thought that perhaps they were discussing a bequest which the deceased had made in my favour."¹



Abū 'Āṣim narrates: One day, I noticed Ash'ab following me closely and I asked him what the problem was. He said, "I noticed that your *topi* (Islāmic headgear) was about to fall off and thought of taking it for me if it did." I removed it from my head and handed it to him.²



Ash'ab was asked what type of woman he would like to marry. He replied, "A woman whose appetite would be satisfied if I were to belch in her face and if she were to consume the leg of a locust, she would feel sick from overeating."³



A man narrates that he invited Ash'ab to join him for supper but Ash'ab expressed his apprehension, "I fear that a food lover may join us."

"It will only be the two of us," I assured him. We proceeded to my home and after we performed Ṣalāh, we sat down to eat. Shortly thereafter, someone knocked at the door.

Ash'ab remarked, "What I feared has come to pass."

I said, "I know ten of his qualities and none of them will offend you, and if any one does, I will ask him to leave."

He agreed and I said, "Firstly, he will not eat with us."

Ash'ab interrupted, "In that case, you may allow him to join us, I have no

1 Tārīkh al-Baghdād vol7, p509

2 Al-Nawādir al-Dhahabiyah, p16; Tārīkh al-Islām Li al-Dhahabī

3 Al-Taṣnīf al-Mawdhū'ī Li Tārīkh Baghdād, p448

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interest in his other nine qualities.”¹



Ash‘ab fed his young goat with his wife’s breast-milk and when it had grown, he went to Ismā‘īl ibn Ja‘far and said, “Here is a gift from me. This is my son because it has been raised on my wife’s breast-milk. I do not regard anyone more deserving of it than you.” Ibn Ja‘far looked at it for a while and then ordered that it be slaughtered, fearing the discord it might cause. After the meat had been prepared, Ash‘ab turned to Ibn Ja‘far and demanded compensation, which Ibn Ja‘far refused to pay. Ash‘ab then went to Ismā‘īl’s father, Ja‘far, and began weeping uncontrollably. He alleged, “Your son Ismā‘īl pounced upon my son and killed him in front of my eyes.”

Ja‘far was shocked and exclaimed, “That is terrible! How much do you desire as compensation?”

Ash‘ab replied, “By Allāh, I cannot speak to Ismā‘īl nor will anybody listen to my story, besides you.” Ja‘far led him into the house and handed him two hundred dinars, whereafter he proceeded to address the matter with his son. “Ash‘ab claims that you killed his son!”

“No, all he did was bring me a goat,” and Ismā‘īl explained to his father what had happened. After the father realised what had transpired, he realized how they had been duped and he would often say, “Ash‘ab, you annoyed me, may Allāh do the same to you!”

Ash‘ab would reply, “The anger your son caused me by killing my goat is far more than your anger regarding the two hundred dinars.”²



A bedouin found himself having breakfast with Muzabbad, who asked him, “How did your father pass away?”

1 Al-Nawādir Wa al-Laṭā‘if, p189; Nathr al-Dur

2 Al-Nawādir Wa al-Laṭā‘if, p193; Al-Aghānī

The bedouin began to explain, while Muzabbad continued eating. When the bedouin realized Muzabbad's motive, he immediately stopped and asked, "And how did your father pass away?"

Muzabbad answered, "Suddenly!" and continued eating.¹



A miser used to eat his meal only after half the night had passed. When asked why, he replied, "At that time the water is cold, the flies are out, and I am safe from the sudden entrance of a visitor, the screams of a beggar and the crying of a child."²



A woman sent her son to the miserly Abū al-Aswad asking him to loan her a pot. She also advised her son to inform him of the importance of her request as she had taken an oath to feed the entire village. When the boy arrived, Abū al-Aswad said, "Return and ask your mother whether my pot was mentioned in her oath. If not she should request it from elsewhere."³



A woman handed a piece of bread to a man who was reciting prayers at the graves of the deceased and requested him to please recite a prayer at the grave of he son.

The man recited, "On the Day they will be dragged into the Fire upon their faces, (it will be said to them): taste the touch of Hell."

She objected, "How can you recite such a verse at the grave?"

1 Akhbār al-Ẓirāf Wa al-Mutamājinīn, p105

2 Al-Nawādir Wa al-Laṭā'if, p94; Nathr al-Dur

3 Nathr al-Dur, vol3, p199

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He replied, “What did you expect when you handed me only a piece of bread? Did you expect me to recite, ‘Reclining upon the couches lined with silk brocade?’ For this you should have given me one dirham.”¹



When a visitor would arrive at the home of an inhabitant of Marw, or unduly prolong his visit, he would ask, “Have you already had meals today?”

If the guest replied in the affirmative the host would say, “Had you not yet eaten, I would have presented you with a delicious meal.” If the guest replied in the negative, the host would say, “Had you eaten, I would have given you five glasses of nabīdh² to drink?” In both cases the host would avoid having to serve anything to his guest.³



A group of people from Khurasān decided to live together in a room. To minimise costs, they avoided using a lamp as long as they could, but eventually were compelled to purchase one. They each contributed an equal sum, except one who refused to join them. When they began using the lamp they would blindfold him by tying his eyes with a cloth. In this way they would prevent him from benefiting from the light. Just before retiring to bed they would switch off the lamp and remove the blindfold from his eyes.⁴



Ash‘ab happened to be standing next to Marwān ibn ‘Uthmān one day in Ṣalāh. Marwān was fairly chubby and mistakenly passed wind loudly as he changed posture. Thinking quickly, Ash‘ab terminated his Ṣalāh and left, giving people the impression that he had passed wind. Later Ash‘ab paid Marwān a visit at

1 Akhbār al-Zirāf Wa al-Mutamājinīn, p140

2 A drink made from dates.

3 Al-Bukhalā’, p41

4 Al-Bukhalā’, p42

his home and requested for payment of diyyah (blood money). “What diyyah are you talking about?” Marwān asked in surprise.

“The passing of wind which I bore on your behalf. If you do not remunerate me for this favour, I will expose you,” Ash‘ab threatened. He left after he was given a decent sum.¹



A man narrates: “I spent a night at the home of an affluent man from Kufa. I noticed him turning his children from one side to the other while they were asleep.” The next morning I asked him to explain his actions and he replied, “These children of mine eat and then go to bed lying down on their left side. They awake in the morning with a hungry stomach so I turn them onto the right side so that their food does not digest quickly.”²



A particular tribe was exceptionally miserly. They would compel their servants to undertake six tasks simultaneously. They had to carry a child, grind flour by walking in a circular motion with the aid of a band tied around their waist, churn milk into sour-milk in a jar suspended from their backs, crush grains by trampling them underfoot, add wheat into a hand mill, and chase away sparrows that happened to be searching for food.³



A man who had become legendary for his miserliness would discreetly address every dirham that would come into his possession, “May my parents be your ransom! You have certainly taken a while to come to me. How many lands you have traversed, how many purses you have forsaken, how many destitute men you have elevated and how many affluent men you have humiliated. In

1 Mawsū‘atul Fakahah Wa al-Ḍaḥik, p413; Nathr al-Dur

2 Mawsū‘atul Fakahah Wa al-Ḍaḥik, p117; Nihāyatul Arab

3 Al-Nawādir Wa al-Laṭā’if, p94; Nathr al-Dur; Al Tadhkirah al-Ḥamdūniyyah;

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my possession you will never be exposed nor will you have to bear the heat of the sun.” He would then cast the dirham in his purse and say to it, “Remain at ease, in the name of Allāh, in a place where you will not be disgraced, embarrassed or humiliated.” He would never remove it again thereafter.¹



A group of people were eating fish at the home of a friend when Ash‘ab knocked at the door. “Ash‘ab is known for his passion when it comes to food. We would be wise to place the bigger fish in a dish far away from him so that he only has the choice of eating from the smaller one in front of him,” one of them suggested. They agreed and Ash‘ab was allowed in.

“What do you feel about eating fish?” they asked once he was seated.

“By Allāh, I am filled with rage and fury at the mention of fish because my father passed away while at sea and fish consumed his body,” Ash‘ab explained.

“In that case, we suggest you take revenge on your father’s behalf,” they remarked. Ash‘ab was quite happy to join in and dished out from the small fish. As he raised it to his mouth, his eyes fell upon the larger fish at the other end of the room. “Do you know what this little fish is saying to me?” he asked.

“No,” they replied.

“It is saying it did not witness my father’s demise because it was too young at the time. It suggests that I take my revenge from that large fish which you have on that side because that was the fish which ate my father,” he said astutely.²



Two companions were on a journey, when the one turned to the other and suggested, “Since we are companions upon the same path, why don’t we have our meals together. After all, the hand of Allāh is with the group, and

1 Al-Bukhalā’, p158

2 Al-‘Iqd al-Farīd, vol 7, p199; Mawsū‘at al-Fukāhah Wa al-Ḍaḥīk, p406

there is barakah in unity. The food of two suffices for three, and that of three suffices for four.”

His companion refused the request, “If I didn’t know that you are so eager to devour my food, I would have taken your words as good advice.” The next morning, he again proposed that the two join in meals, but his companion remained adamant, “I have my piece of bread and you have yours. Your eagerness to eat with me is undoubtedly based on an evil motive. Do you really propose to have meals with me because you desire my company and conversation? If this is so, then we can most certainly do so, but each of us will consume only his own bread which is before him. I have no doubt that if you eat your bread and half of mine you will find barakah therein, but it would have been more appropriate if I would have enjoyed that privilege instead of you.¹



When the inhabitants of Marw would embark on a journey they would purchase their meat as a group. It would then be distributed equally amongst them. Each would tie a piece of string to his share and they would then all place it in a single pot, into which vinegar and other spices had already been placed to make the gravy. After it was cooked, each would draw his own piece by means of the string which he had clearly marked previously. They would then distribute the gravy equally. They would also squeeze their strings to extract every drop of gravy. These strings were all kept together for future use because they would not absorb much more fat, having previously been saturated with fat and gravy.

Their reason for cooking this way was not because of their unity, but because their portions of meat were too small to be cooked individually. Cooking in a single pot is more efficient than each of them cooking in separate pots as it makes the task easier and saves firewood, vinegar, garlic and other

1 Al-Bukhalā’, p42

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spices. And the dish they would prefer would be Sukbaaj because it does not go off as quickly as other foods.¹



Some individuals from the people of Marw were constrained to wearing their shoes for six months at a time without removing them. So to save the soles from being worn out quickly they would walk upon their toes for three months and upon their heels for three months. The shoes would then appear as if they had only been worn for three months and in this way they would prolong the age of their shoes, but increase the strain upon their physique.²



A miserly money-exchanger borrowed two dirhams and one qiraat from a greengrocer whose shop was in the vicinity of his home. When he settled the debt after six months, he repaid two dirhams and the equivalent of three grains of barley in silver. This infuriated the greengrocer who protested, “Subhānallāh! You own a hundred thousand dinars whereas I own but a hundred falas and earn a living on a profit of one or two grains. Labourers were requesting their wage at your door while you and your deputy were away, so I paid them two dirhams and the equivalent of four grains of barley in silver. After six months, when you decided to repay, you present two dirhams and the equivalent of three grains.

The money-exchanger explained, “Silly man, you loaned me the money in summer and I am settling the debt in winter. Three moist grains produced in the winter months are weightier than four dry grains grown in the summer months. I have no doubt that you have in fact profited from our deal.”³



1 Al-Bukhalā', p46

2 Al-Bukhalā', p51

3 Al-Bukhalā', p58

A bedouin met Abū al-Aswad just as he sat down to have a meal. The bedouin greeted and Abū al-Aswad replied inattentively, his attention focused on the food before him. Hopeful of an invitation to join in the meal, the bedouin initiated a conversation, but Abū al-Aswad was not interested in the least.

“I just happened to pass by your home,” the bedouin began.

“Your rounds are bound to take you that way,” Abū al-Aswad replied.

“Your wife is pregnant,” the bedouin announced.

“I was expecting that,” Abū al-Aswad replied.

“And she has given birth,” he continued.

“Like all expectant mothers, she too had to give birth,” Abū al-Aswad replied.

“She has borne twins,” he exclaimed.

“Just like her,” Abū al-Aswad answered.

“One of the babies has died,” the bedouin continued.

“She would never have been able to breastfeed both,” Abū al-Aswad explained.

“The other one also died,” the bedouin remarked.

“He could never have survived after his brother’s passing away,” Abū al-Aswad replied.

“And their mother has also passed away,” the bedouin continued.

“She was surely overcome by grief over their deaths,” he answered.

“How delicious your food appears to be!” the bedouin declared, finally coming to the point.

“It is for this reason that I am eating it all alone and I will not even allow you to taste it, dear bedouin,” replied Abū al-Aswad, bringing the conversation to a close.¹



‘Umar ibn Yazīd al-Asadī, a notorious miser, was once afflicted with a stomachache. A doctor advised that he ingest a substantial quantity of oil so that his stomach could be cleaned out. The miser instructed his servant

1 Al-Muṣṭaṭraf, p240

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to gather all the oil he excreted from his stomach and utilize it to light their lamps, so that none of it would go to waste.¹



Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm was an extremely miserly man. One day his colleagues said to him: “We do not wish to inconvenience you by remaining at your home longer than you desire. It would be a good idea if you indicate to us in some way when you are tired of our company.”

“Fine,” he replied, “a sign of me having had enough of you is when I say to my servant, ‘Bring in the food!’”²



Aḥmad al-Makkī narrates that he said to Abū Sa’īd, “You are wealthy and well-informed yet your qamīs (robe) is filthy. Why don’t you have it washed?”

He replied, “If I was poor and less knowledgeable than you, what would you have said? In any case, I have been pondering over this issue for the last six months, but have not arrived at a solution to date.

On the one hand, I say to myself: ‘A filthy garment eats away at the flesh just as rust eats into iron. A filthy garment which is continuously soaked in perspiration, dries, accumulates filth and sticks to itself has its fibre eaten away and its threads damaged. This is in addition to its nauseating odour and repulsive appearance. In addition, I am one who frequents the doors of debtors, and their employees are oppressors. What would you expect when they notice me in filthy, tattered rags akin to that of a blacksmith. They would either receive me harshly or turn me away coldly, resulting in financial loss to me. Ideally, one like me should avoid every such matter which assists a debtor in withholding payment, and prevent any sort of rage or dislike overpowering him.

Now, when these thoughts overwhelm me, I am determined to have it washed, but then other thoughts by way of logic and foresight enter my

1 Al-Muṣṭaṭraf, p235

2 Al-Muṣṭaṭraf, p240

mind. The foremost among them is the loss that I will incur through the use of water and soap. In addition, when the servant has more to wash, she also requires more to eat. Soap is made of lime and lime not only eats away at the cloth but tears it apart. The garment remains in danger of perishing until it is handed over to be bleached and washed-out. When it is hanged to dry it is stretched, rubbed and pulled. On the day it is washed, I will have to remain at home and whenever I do so the doors of domestic expenditure and other desires are thrown wide open. To be washed, garments have to be beaten and when we do so ourselves they are predisposed to tearing. If we hand them over to a laundry the risk of damage is magnified, and the possibility of other harms are ever looming. Another harm of me sitting at home is that my creditors spread rumours about me that I am ill and in problems, which provides them with an ideal opportunity to evade payment. Such a situation would never develop if I remain engaged in my work outdoors. Now, when I finally wear the clean, beautiful, dry and comfortable garment, the filth on my body and my long hair becomes apparent. A clean body is after all associated with a clean outfit and, as I only saw to the cleanliness of one and not the other, I become conscious and concerned of that which I did not before. I am then compelled to visit the public bath, which comes at a substantial cost, together with the risk of my clothes being stolen. I also have to mention that I have a beautiful, young wife who, when she notices that I have removed my hair, washed my head and bleached my garment, will protest that she also wants to apply perfume and dress in her best clothing. When she perceives an interest from me she will make excessive demands. I will be obliged to warm the water for bathing and acquire the services of a wet-nurse if she falls pregnant. We will then end up in a problem which has no bounds.¹

1 Al-Bukhalā', p167

Condolences & Sympathies

Sickness and death can be very traumatic. When visiting those in sorrow ensure that your presence provides comfort rather than distress.



Mullah ‘Alī Qārī رحمہ اللہ علیہ has narrated that once a group of people visited the famous Sufi, Surrī Saqatī رحمہ اللہ علیہ, who was in great discomfort due to stomach pain. They remained seated for a long time. Eventually they said, “Make du‘ā’ for us before we leave.” The pious man supplicated, “O Allāh, teach them the etiquette of visiting the sick.”¹



A friend of Ḥamid ibn al-‘Abbās was unwell and latter advised his son to pay his respects to the sick man. He advised, “Son, be seated at the most elevated point of the room after entering. Then ask the sick man what is the problem. When he answers, say to him, ‘This is good, Insha-Allāh.’ Then ask him which doctor is seeing to him. When he replies, say that the doctor is an excellent one. Then proceed to enquire about the food he consumes. When he replies, say that it is wholesome.

Accordingly, the young man arrived at the home of the sick man. He noticed a long pole and attempted to sit upon it as he had been advised. Unfortunately, it collapsed onto the chest of the sick man and injured him.

He then asked, “What sickness do you complain of?”

Agitated, the sick man replied, “I am dying.”

“This is good, Insha-Allāh,” the young man reassured him.

“Which doctor is seeing to you?” he continued.

“The angel of death!” the sick man replied.

“An excellent doctor!” the young man retorted.

1 Tarāshe, p56; Mirqāt al-Mafātīḥ

“And what are you consuming?” he asked.

“Deathly poison,” the sick man shouted.

“This is wholesome food, indeed,” the young man advised.¹



A man narrates: I visited a sick friend who had a severe eye problem. One of my companions asked the sick man, “How is your eye?”

He answered, “It is causing me considerable pain.”

My companion continued, “By Allāh, a friend of mine also had a similar problem and after a few days lost his eyesight.” I was so embarrassed that I quickly excused myself and left.²



As a man was leaving the home of a sick acquaintance, he advised the family, “Previously, you did not inform us when so-and-so died. Do not repeat such behaviour this time around. When he dies please let us know so that we can perform his Janāzah Ṣalāh.”³



An old woman visited the family of a deceased person to pay her respects. Incidentally, she noticed a sick person and remarked, “To Allāh we belong and to Him will we return. It is a burden upon me to walk. May Allāh grant you solace and ease with regard to this man as well.”⁴ She paid her condolences in advance, expecting that he would die from his illness.



1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā' Wa al-Mughafilīn, p142

2 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā' Wa al-Mughafilīn, p130

3 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā' Wa al-Mughafilīn, p128

4 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā' Wa al-Mughafilīn, p129

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Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Tirmidhī رحمته الله, a prominent jurist of the Shāfī Madhhab, narrates: I arrived at the home of Al-Zujāj, a scholar of Arabic grammar, to console him on the demise of his mother. A number of scholars and influential people had similarly gathered there, when Ibnul Jaṣṣās arrived laughing, “All praise be to Allāh, I am very pleased, Abū Ishāq!”

Al-Zujāj was rightfully upset as were the others.

Somebody asked, “How can you be happy when Al-Zujāj and all of us are sad?”

He answered, “Shame on you! I had received news that Al-Zujāj had died, but when the confirmation came that it was his mother it pleased me greatly.”¹



A fool visited a sick man to pay his respects. People remarked, “He will live long.”

But the fool declared, “Soon he will die, Insha-Allāh.”²



A man came to console Abū Usaid concerning a particular calamity that had befallen him. Abū Usaid, who was notorious for his rash choice of words, remarked, “May Allāh also grant me the ability to recompense you in a similar manner.” In other words, he hoped that a calamity would befall the kind man so that he too could pay him a visit.³



A man went to visit a sick person, and remained seated there for a long time. The sick person was perplexed and agitated. Eventually, realizing that this

1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā' Wa al-Mughafilīn, p41

2 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā' Wa al-Mughafilīn, p119

3 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā' Wa al-Mughafilīn, p35

man had no intention of leaving, the sick person remarked, "The multitude of people coming here has agitated me."

The man still did not get the hint and said, "If you command, I will close the door, so that nobody else comes in!"

The sick person, in desperation, said, "Please do so, but from outside."¹

Marital Humour

And among His Signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, so that you may live with them in tranquility, and He has created love and mercy between you. In these are signs for those who reflect.

~ Qur'ān



A wife, one day, complained to her husband regarding his miserliness in spending on her. "I take an Oath in Allāh, the rats only live in your house due to their patriotism, but they actually search for food from the homes of our neighbours."²



A man married a woman who was extremely short. When asked the reason for doing so, he explained, "A woman is by nature evil. The less the evil the better."³



1 Tarāshe, p56; Mirqāt al-Mafātīh

2 Akhbār al-Ẓirāf Wa al-Mutamājīnīn, p157

3 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā' Wa al-Mughafilīn, p122

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A marriage broker advised a prospective husband, “I would like to introduce you to a woman who is like a bouquet of Narcissus flowers.” The man was fascinated by the description and married her, only to find that she was an unsightly old hag.

“You deceived me!” he complained to the broker.

“By Allāh, I did not! I likened her to a bouquet of Narcissus flowers because her hair is white, her face is yellow and her shins are green.”¹



A bedouin proposed for a particular woman without seeing her. Her family asked him, “How much are you prepared to give as mahr?” He then looked at her but disliked what he saw.

He promptly remarked, “I do not have any cash and I dislike generating a debt upon myself.”²



A group of people from the Quraish went out to their farms and were accompanied by a bedouin from the tribe of Banū Ghiffār. Enroute they were engulfed by a violent wind which caused them to lose all hope of survival. Miraculously, they were saved and each of them freed a slave as a token of appreciation for Allāh’s mercy upon them. The bedouin exclaimed, “O Allāh, I do not own a slave which I may free, hence I divorce my wife three times for Your pleasure.”³



A student once asked his friend, “What are your present interests?”

He replied, “I am planning to marry the king’s daughter.”

1 Akhbār al-Ẓirāf Wa al-Mutamājīnīn, p157

2 Nawādir al-Aa’rāb, p121; ‘Uyūn al-Akhhbār

3 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p92

The student remarked, “What great ambitions you have! Have you been successful in your intention?”

He answered, “Yes, I have already accomplished half the task.”

The student asked, “What do you mean?”

He answered, “I am happy to marry her but she does not want to marry me.”¹



A woman complained to a governor about her husband. He was her senior in age, but this did not prevent her from complaining about him. After hearing her objections, the husband said, “Amīrul Mu’minīn, the worst portion of a woman’s life is her latter half while the best portion of a man’s life is his latter half. As a woman ages, she cannot bear children, her tongue is more abusive and her temperament worsens. On the contrary, when a man ages his counsel is sought, his forbearance increases and his ignorance diminishes.”²



Arab women of bygone days would teach their daughters how to put their husbands to test. Mothers would say to their newly wed daughters, “Test your husband before attempting to be stern with him. Remove the head of his spear from its shaft. If he remains silent slice the meat upon his shield. If he remains silent chop the bones with his sword. If he bears all of this patiently then place a saddle upon his back and mount him because he is fit to be your donkey.”³



A woman came to a judge and informed him that her husband had divorced her.

1 Haḍrat Thānwī Ke Pasandīdah Wāqī’āt, p164

2 Mawsū’at al-Wafā Fī Akhbār al-Nisā’, p304

3 Al-Murāḥ Fī al-Muzāḥ, p54

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“Do you have any witnesses?” he enquired.

“Yes I do, my neighbour,” she replied.

When the neighbour was called the judge asked him, “Did you hear this woman being divorced?”

The man answered, “Master, I had gone to the market to purchase meat, bread, syrup and saffron.”

The judge interrupted, “Answer the question, did you hear this woman being divorced?”

The man continued, “I left these items at my home and again set out for the market to purchase some wood and vinegar.”

“Would you please answer,” the judge cautioned, “and narrate what you are being requested to.”

“It is so much better to tell the story right from the beginning,” the man explained, “I was casually strolling around in my home when I heard them arguing. I heard three divorces but I cannot confirm whether he divorced her or she divorced him.”¹



Khālīd ibn Ṣafwān proposed to a woman and said, “I am Khālīd ibn Ṣafwān. You are aware of my noble personality and I am sure you have heard about my abundant riches. I have such qualities which I would like to mention to you and you may then accept my proposal or reject it.”

“What are those qualities?” she asked.

“When a young woman approaches me, she annoys me, but when she distances herself from me, she upsets me. None have access to my dinars and dirhams. When I am annoyed I sometimes lose my head.”

She replied, “I have understood your words and memorised them. You have such qualities that I will not even recommend you for the daughter of Iblīs (the devil). You may leave and may Allāh have mercy upon you.”²



1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā' Wa al-Mughafilīn, p129

2 Mawsū'at al-Wafā Fī Akhbār al-Nisā', p300

There was once a very saintly man who had an exceptionally bad-mannered wife. Despite his virtues and sterling personality, she looked upon him with contempt. One day, he made a du‘ā’, “O Allāh, grant me the ability to perform a miracle which will cause my wife to soften in her approach towards me.” His du‘ā’ was accepted and Allāh granted him the power to fly like a bird. He then flew over their home a number of times while his wife sat in the courtyard, amazed at the sight. When he arrived back home, he asked her, “Did you notice anything extraordinary today?”

“Yes,” she replied, “I saw a pious saint flying in the air. He can rightfully be called a saint, not one like you who roams about on the earth.”

Happily, the saint explained, “I was the one you saw flying overhead.”

“Then why were you flying so crooked?” she asked.¹



Imām Aa‘mash and his wife were not on talking terms, so he requested one of his jurist colleagues to intercede and restore harmony between them. His companion arrived at their home and said to her, “Your husband, Abū Muḥammad, is a senior scholar. Do not be put off by his diseased eyes, his thin legs, his flimsy knees, his foul-smelling armpits, his bad breath and his stiff palms.”

After hearing his colleague’s submission, Imām Aa‘mash declared, “Please depart at once! You have disclosed such deficiencies of mine which she was previously unaware of!”²



Sheikh Sa‘dī رحمته الله was once travelling through Palestine when one of the Crusade armies captured and imprisoned him. He was then sent to Libya and forced into hard labour to dig trenches. The saintly man resigned himself to his fate and endured the suffering with patience. After some time, a noble personality from Aleppo happened to pass by the area and recognised the

1 Haste Hasāte Wāqī‘āt, p4

2 Al-Mustaṭraf, p615

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Sheikh. Disheartened with his plight, he had him released on the payment of ten dinars and brought him back to Aleppo. The kind-hearted soul married the Sheikh to his beloved daughter with a deferred mahr of a hundred dinars. Unfortunately, the woman turned out to be extremely foul-mouthed and would frequently abuse her husband.

“You are the same person who my father purchased for ten dinars,” she mockingly said to him one day.

“Yes, your father purchased me for ten dinars and sold you for a hundred dinars,” Sheikh Sa’dī رحمته اللہ علیہ promptly replied.¹



A man from the tribe of Banū Nawfal ibn ‘Abd Manāf married a second wife who was fair and pretty. Umm Maḥjan, his first wife, who was dark in complexion, was upset when she heard the news. Jealousy and disappointment drove her to confront her husband, but he explained, “By Allāh, Umm Maḥjan, there is no need to jealously guard me anymore. I am an old man. You too are old and there is no need for me to be jealous over you. Nobody can be more honoured in my sight than you; neither does anybody enjoy a greater right over me than you. I, therefore, advise you to accept my decision and avoid bad thoughts from taking hold of you.” These words pleased her and she felt comfortable. A few days later, he said to her, “Wouldn’t you like to live together with my new wife? I think it would create harmony between us. Further, it will be a means of systematic organization within our home and it will prevent outsiders from making nasty remarks against us.” She agreed and he gave her a dinar, saying, “I dislike your co-wife seeking superiority over you simply because she sees you enjoying some speciality. Take this and prepare some special gift which you can give to her tomorrow when we meet.”

He then approached his new wife and said, “I intend to unite you with Umm Maḥjan tomorrow. She wants to honour you and I dislike her making any attempt to be superior than you simply because you enjoy some speciality.

1 Haste Hasāte Wāqī‘āt, p129

Take this dinar and purchase for her a gift so that she does not regard you with scepticism. But do not mention anything to her about the dinar.”

He then approached a trusted friend and sought his assistance, “I have arranged for my new wife to meet with Umm Maḥjan tomorrow. I would like you to visit us at breakfast, at which time I will insist that you join us. When we are done with the meal, you should ask me which wife I hold dearer. I will express my displeasure at the question, following which you should insist upon oath that I answer you.”

The next morning, his new wife visited Umm Maḥjan and his friend came around as agreed. After they had eaten, his friend turned to him and asked, “Which of your two wives do you love more?”

He replied, “Subḥānallāh! Do you dare ask a question of this nature while both my wives are listening to our discussion. This is a grave question indeed.” But when his friend insisted on an answer, he declared, “I love that wife who was given one dinar. I will not utter a word more than this.” Each of the wives chuckled in pleasure, thinking that she was the one alluded to.¹



Mughīrah ibn Shu‘bah ؓ narrates: Nobody ever defeated me, except a youth from the tribe of Banū Ḥārith ibn Ka‘b. I happened to propose to a young woman from the Banū Ḥārith tribe and the youth was present when I arrived. He secretly mentioned to me, “Amīr, she is not a righteous woman.”

“What is wrong with her,” I enquired.

“I noticed a man kissing her,” he explained.

Based on his advice, I abandoned my intention to marry her, only to later learn that the youth had married her. I confronted him and asked, “Did you not warn me that you saw a man kissing her?”

“Yes, it was her father!” he remarked.²



1 Kitāb al-Adhkiyā’, p108

2 Al-‘Iqd al-Farīd, vol 7, p99

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Abū al-Aswad al-Dualī had a dispute with his wife regarding their son. He wanted custody of the boy but his wife refused and they decided to take the matter to Ziyād, the governor of Basrah. Ziyād first asked the wife to explain her case. She said, “May Allāh guide you. This is my son. My stomach served as his sanctuary, my lap served as his courtyard and my bosom served as his drinking vessel. I protected him when he slept and I guarded him when he awoke. Seven years long did I care for him thus, until he was weaned, his features were fully formed and his limbs were firm. When I hoped to benefit from him and see the rewards of my efforts, he intends to seize him from me forcefully. Assist me, O Amīr! He wants to subdue me and coerce me to relinquish my right.”

Abū al-Aswad al-Dualī said, “May Allāh guide you. This is my son. I bore him before she could do so and I discharged him before she did. I nurtured him, provided for him, educated him and taught him patience until he finally matured in his thinking and reasoning.”

“I agree,” his wife continued, “but he bore him when he was light and I bore him when he was heavy. He discharged him in a state of passion while I gave birth to him in pain.”

“Return the boy to his mother as she is definitely more deserving of him,” Ziyād proclaimed.¹



While having a meal with his wife, a miserly husband remarked, “How delicious this dish would have been had it not been for the crowd.

“What crowd are you talking about? It’s only you and me,” she remarked in amazement.

“I would have preferred if it was only me and the dish!” he explained.²



1 Al-Amālī Fī Lughat al-‘Arab, vol2, p12

2 Mawsū‘atul Fakahah Waḍ Ḍahik, p113; Jam‘ul Jawāhir

A man had an argument with his wife one day and decided to divorce her, but she pleaded, “Ponder for a moment how long we have lived together.”

“By Allāh, that is precisely the problem,” he replied.¹



Abū al-Qamaqim persistently questioned a tribe regarding the financial status of a woman he intended marrying. In desperation they asked, “We have informed you of her wealth, but tell us what wealth you have?”

He replied, “Why do you question me about my wealth? What she owns will suffice for both of us.”²



A scholar who was once delivering a sermon mentioned: “When a person intends giving Ṣadaqah, seventy Shayāṭīn³ prevent him from doing so by clamping down on his hands, feet and heart.”

A devotee from amongst the gathering heard these words and proclaimed, “Today, I will fight and overpower these seventy Shayāṭīn.” With determination and resolve, he left the masjid and returned home, where he began to fill a bag with wheat. As he was about to leave to distribute it as Ṣadaqah, his wife caught hold of him. She began to convince him to abandon the idea, but he refused. A quarrel ensued between them and she eventually succeeded in snatching the bag from his hands. The man returned to the masjid, dejected and defeated.

As he entered the scholar asked, “What happened?”

He replied, “I defeated the seventy Shayāṭīn quite easily, but their mother arrived on the scene and defeated me!”⁴



1 Nathr al-Dur, vol3, p160

2 Al-Bukhalā’, p151

3 Plural of Shaitān (devil) . .

4 Tafsīr Al-Rāzī, vol 1, p101; Jawāhir Pāre, vol 1, p142

The wife of Ibn Maḍaw al-Rāzī was ill and asked him, “What will you do if I die?”

He replied, “Nay, what will I do if you do not die?”¹

Wit & Wisdom

The difference between ordinary men and intelligent men is that the former rely on their senses and emotions while the latter transcend the apparent and rely on divine guidance at the crossroads of life.



A man asked Khalīf Ma’mūn to stop and listen to his request, but Ma’mūn continued walking. The man then remarked, “Amīrul Mu’minīn, Allāh stopped the prophet Sulaimān ibn Dāwūd عليه السلام to make him listen to an ant. In the sight of Allāh, I am not more insignificant than an ant and neither are you superior to Sulaimān عليه السلام.”

“You are right,” Ma’mūn exclaimed and stopped to hear his request.²



A person once said to Shāh Ismā’īl Shahīd رحمته الله, “Growing a beard is contrary to human nature because a baby is not born with a beard.”

Shāh Ismā’īl Shahīd رحمته الله replied, “Then you should also remove your teeth because a baby is not born with teeth.”³



1 Nathr al-Dur, vol2, p148; Al-Ajwibah al-Muskatah Lil Jannān, p.158

2 Al-Ajwibah al-Muskatah, p.137; Ḥayātul Ḥayawān

3 Haste Hasāte Wāqī’āt, p236

Imām Ghazālī رحمه الله was an Imām of his time and renowned for his quick-witted replies. Once, a Christian came to him and in a gloomy tone recounted the events of the battle of Karbalā'. He then remarked, "The grandsons of Nabī ﷺ were inflicted with such injustice at Karbalā', but despite Nabī ﷺ being the beloved of Allāh according to you, he did not intercede in the court of Allāh on their behalf."

Without any emotion, Imām Ghazālī رحمه الله replied, "He certainly interceded, but Allāh said to him, 'O Nabī, you are concerned about your grandsons, but what about my son who was placed on the cross by certain folk?'" The reference was to 'Īsā عليه السلام who the Christians regard as the 'son of God'. The Christian was dumbfounded at the reply.¹



A man rented a house but the wooden panels of its roof began cracking. "I suggest you have the roof repaired, as the wood is cracking," he said to his landlord.

The landlord replied, "Don't worry about that! The roof is making tasbīh."

"I fear that it may become so weak that it may end up in sajdah!" the man exclaimed.²



A bedouin who was well-versed in the affairs of women was asked what the qualities of an evil woman were. He replied, "The worst of women is one who is lean, skinny, predisposed to menses and sickness, empty handed and ill-omened, nauseatingly difficult to deal with, proud and authoritarian, repulsive, impulsive and bold. Her tongue is like a spear, she laughs without explanation, cries without reason and is quick to declare war on her husband. Her nose is in the air and her bottom in the water, her hamstring is like iron, her jugular vein is swollen, her words are warnings and her tone is harsh. She hides good and exposes evil, plots against her husband and never assists

1 Fiqhī Laṭā'if, p379

2 Akhbār al-Zirāf Wa al-Mutamājīnīn, p141

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him to overcome trials. She has no compassion for him, nor does she fear him. When he enters she leaves and when he leaves she enters. When he laughs she cries and when he cries she laughs. She is quick to accuse, but slow to listen. She eats excessively, complains much and exposes her body. Her children are neglected and her home is a rubbish dump. She speaks by pointing with her fingers and cries in public places. She is exposed despite her ḥijāb and she barks like a dog from the door of her home. She cries despite being the oppressor and testifies despite being absent from the scene of the crime. Her tongue droops with lies while her tears flow with wickedness. May Allāh afflict her with destruction, ruin and calamities.¹



“I was once fooled by a woman,” explained Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمته الله. “She indicated towards a purse lying on the road. Thinking it to be hers, I picked it up and took it to her.”

But, she remarked, “Now that you have it in your hands, take good care of it until you find its owner.”²



Ash‘ab one day said to his son, “I am now growing old. I suggest you start earning a living for yourself.”

His son replied, “Father, I am like a banana tree. It does not bear fruit until its mother dies.”³



Once Iblīs confronted ‘Īsā عليه السلام and said, “Do you believe that you will only be afflicted with that which Allāh destines for you?”

“Yes,” ‘Īsā عليه السلام replied.

1 Al-Muṣṭaṭraf, p601

2 Akhbār al-Zirāf Wa al-Mutamājinīn, p159

3 Tārīkh al-Baghdād, vol7, p507

“Then throw yourself down from this mountain. If Allāh has destined safety for you, no injury will come to you,” Iblīs suggested.

“Accursed one, Allāh has the authority to test His servants. A servant of Allāh has no right to test his Creator,” ʿĪsā ﷺ remarked.¹



A man was arrested together with a group of traitors and brought before ʿAbdul Malik ibn Marwān on the treacherous charge of plotting to overthrow him.

“Kill him!” ordered the Khalīf.

“Amīrul Muʿminīn, this is not the appropriate punishment for me,” the man pleaded.

“What punishment should you be given?” the Khalīf asked.

“By Allāh, I joined the group of traitors in your best interests because I am an ill-omened man. Whenever I join a group of people, they are always overpowered and defeated. As I am now before you as a prisoner, you can see the truth of my words. I am better against you than a hundred thousand who fight by your side.” The Khalīf laughed and set him free.²



Bahlūl passed a group of people who were standing beside a tree. They turned to him and asked, “Bahlūl, will you accept the challenge of climbing this tree. We will give you ten dirhams as a prize if you succeed?”

Bahlūl replied, “Yes I will.” They handed him the money, which he carefully tucked away in his sleeve. He then turned to them and said, “Now bring me a step ladder.”

“This was not part of our agreement,” they argued.

“It was part of mine!” he responded.³



1 Al-Adhkiyāʾ, p25

2 Al-Adhkiyāʾ, p107

3 Akhbār al-Ẓirāf Wa al-Mutamājīnīn, p100

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

There once lived an old woman in Madinah whose gaze would adversely affect anything which she liked. When Ash'ab was on his deathbed advising his daughter, the old woman paid him a visit. When Ash'ab noticed her, he buried his head in his hands and exclaimed, "By Allāh, if you have a liking for anything you see in me at this time then send durūd upon Nabī ﷺ, as I fear that your gaze may harm me."

This annoyed her and she remarked, "What in the world can I have liking for in you at this time? You are at the point of death."

"I know," he replied, "but I said so to warn you in case you view the ease of my last moments in a favourable light. This will result in difficulty for me at this time."

The old woman left cursing him while those who were seated around him began laughing. Shortly thereafter he passed away.¹



The Khalīf Mahdī was on a hunting expedition when he found himself alone at the tent of a bedouin. He asked for some food and the bedouin graciously brought him some bread made of barley. He then requested for a drink and the bedouin offered him some milk. After drinking it the Khalīf asked, "Do you know who I am?"

The bedouin answered, "No."

The Khalīf explained, "I am from amongst the special servants of the king."

The bedouin exclaimed, "May Allāh bless you in your position," and handed him another cup of milk.

The Khalīf drank it and again asked, "Dear bedouin, do you really know who I am?"

The bedouin replied, "You have just said that you are a special servant of the king."

The Khalīf continued, "No, I am actually a courtier of the king."

The bedouin prayed for his long life, and gave him another cup to drink. The Khalīf again asked, "Do you know who I am?"

1 Ahlā al-Ṭarāif, p102; Al-Aghānī; Nihāyatul Arab

The bedouin replied, “You have just said that you are a courtier of the king.”

The Khalīf said, “No, in truth, I am the Amīrul Mu’minīn.” This time the bedouin seized the coffee pot and threatened, “Away with you! If I give you another cup of milk you will claim to be a prophet!” The Khalīf laughed so much that he fainted. After some time his courtiers and soldiers arrived. The bedouin was shocked, but the Khalīf smilingly told him not to be afraid and ordered that he be given some clothing and a substantial gift.¹



Bahlūl used to save all the money he received from a friend of the Kindah tribe. When he had the opportunity, he would bury it in privacy. One day, he acquired ten dirhams and decided to bury them in a deserted ruin. Unfortunately for him, a man noticed him and after he had left, the thief dug up the money and took it for himself. Later that day, when Bahlūl arrived to retrieve his money he could not find it, but he remembered seeing a suspicious man at the ruin when he buried it. Bahlūl paid him a visit and said, “My friend, I have buried dirhams at many places and I would like to gather them all in a place where I today buried ten dirhams. This particular place is the most secure, but I need your help to count how many dirhams I have in total.” The man agreed.

Bahlūl continued, “I have twenty dirhams here, fifty there and he continued until the total reached three hundred.”

After Bahlūl had left, the man thought to himself, “It would be better if I return the ten I have taken and then dig up the three hundred he intends burying.” He returned the money and waited. Bahlūl arrived and, after retrieving his ten dirhams, covered the area with soil. As soon as Bahlūl was out of sight, the man emerged and dug up the area, but found nothing. He then realized how Bahlūl had tricked him.

1 Al-Mustaṭraf, p61

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

A few days later, Bahlūl returned and asked the man, “Please add up the following for me: twenty, fifteen and ten dirhams.” The man leaped forward to beat him up, but Bahlūl fled.¹



On one particular Jumu‘ah, Abū al-‘Anbas ascended the pulpit and, after praising and glorifying Allāh, he began shaking due to his nervousness. “Do you know what I intend speaking to you about?” he asked his congregation.

“No,” they replied.

“What benefit is there for me in speaking to you then?” he asked and stepped down.

The next Jumu‘ah, he again ascended the pulpit and began to shake. “Do you know what I intend speaking to you about?” he asked his congregation.

“Yes,” they replied this time.

“What need is there for me to lecture you on something you already know?” he asked and stepped down.

On the third Jumu‘ah he asked the congregation the same question. Some replied that they knew what he was about to speak to them about while others said that they did not. “In that case, those who know should inform those who do not,” he exclaimed and again stepped down.²



Abū al-‘Aynā narrates that his friend came and told him that he had an intention to visit a certain governor and he required a letter of motivation. He had heard that Abū ‘Uthmān al-Jāhīz was his friend and he would greatly appreciate it if Abū al-‘Aynā could request him to write the letter. He agreed and asked Al-Jāhīz, who said that he would send it to him the next day. When it arrived, he instructed his son to deliver it to his friend, but his son was sceptical, “Al-Jāhīz is a mysterious person and I suggest we open the letter and have a look at its contents before we hand it over.”

1 Al Nawādir Wa al-Laṭā‘if, p167; Nathr al-Dur

2 Al-‘Iqd al-Farīd, vol4, p201

He agreed and when they opened the letter, it read, ‘My letter to you is through an acquaintance who I do not know well. He has spoken to me about a man who has no right upon me. If you fulfill his need I will not thank you and if you decline I will not blame you.’ He immediately went to Al-Jāhīz to seek an explanation. When he noticed Abū al-‘Aynā he asked, “I know that you dislike the contents of my letter.”

“Why should I not?” he said.

Al-Jāhīz said, “There is no need to be upset. This is my standard manner of intercession for someone who I care about greatly.”

Abū al-‘Aynā said, “I am yet to find somebody who understands you! What did you intend for my friend? When he would have read the letter he would have cursed your mother. I would have asked him why he is being vulgar to you and he would have said, ‘This is my standard manner of thanking somebody.’”¹



Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Sahl narrates that as they proceeded in the convoy of Ma’mūn, Abū Dalf began to slacken behind because he was walking and others were riding. After a while, Ma’mūn asked him, “Why are you walking so slowly?”

“I am ill,” Abū Dalf replied.

“May Allāh cure you and grant you good health!” Ma’mūn exclaimed, “Here, ride on this conveyance.” In a flash, Abū Dalf leaped onto the conveyance.

“Such a leap is not indicative of one who claims to be ill!” Ma’mūn remarked.

“I have been cured by your du‘ā’, Amīrul Mu’mīnīn,” explained Abū Dalf.²



1 Tārīkh al-Baghdād, vol4, p290

2 Al-Taṣnīf al-Madhūī Lī Tārīkh Baghdād, p633

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

A wine-merchant opened his business in Makkah where he would prepare liquor. When people began to frequent it, a complaint was made to the governor who banished him to ‘Arafāt. From there he sent a message to his patrons, “Why don’t you visit me like you did before?”

“How can we when you are far away in ‘Arafāt?” they replied.

“Quite easily,” he explained. “Simply hire a donkey for two dirhams and it will bring you to me.” Soon his business began to grow again and the people of Makkah once again complained to the governor about the deteriorating condition. The wine-merchant was summoned and the governor reprimanded him, “Enemy of Allāh, I expelled you from the Ḥaram and you now have the audacity to continue your evil business in the blessed land of Ḥajj.”

“What you have been told about me is all lies,” he tried to explain.

The inhabitants continued, “We can prove our case quite easily. We can round up the donkeys of Makkah and they can be let loose in the direction of ‘Arafāt. If, by habit, they do not seek out his place from all the others, you can disregard our complaint.”

“This is an excellent idea which will serve as a proof and witness,” the governor agreed. The donkeys were gathered and after being set free they all found their way to the home of the wine-merchant.

“What further evidence do we require?” the governor declared. As the order for him to be whipped was about to be executed, the man asked, “Do you have to whip me?”

“Yes,” he was informed.

“By Allāh, what I fear more than my whipping is that the people of Iraq will laugh at us saying that the Makkan’s accept the testimony of donkeys!”¹



On one of his expeditions, Hārūn al-Rashīd was separated from his main group of courtiers and soldiers. As he proceeded with two of his close courtiers, Ṭsā ibn Ja‘far and Al-Faḍl ibn Yaḥyā, he came across an old man riding on a donkey. Noticing that the old man had an eye infection, Al-Faḍl asked, “Can I suggest a cure for your eyes?”

1 Akhbār al-Zirāf Wa al-Mutamājīnīn, p131

The old man replied, “That will not be necessary.”

But Faḍl mischievously continued, “I suggest you take some wind stalks and water dust, place it in a shell the size of an atom and use it as an ointment. It will prove immensely beneficial.”

The old man leaned forward, breaking wind loudly and said, “Take this as payment for your prescription. And if you advise further, I will recompense you similarly.” Hārūn al-Rashīd almost fell from his horse out of laughter.¹



The Khalīf Ma’mūn narrates that he was silenced by wit on three occasions. “I consoled a woman on the death of her son by explaining that she should regard me as her son instead. She replied, ‘Why should I not be sad when I have acquired a son like you?’

On another occasion, I asked a man who claimed prophethood what his name was. He replied, ‘Mūsā ibn ‘Imrān.’ I exclaimed, ‘Mūsā ﷺ produced signs of his prophethood. Why do you not do likewise so that I may consider bringing faith upon you?’ He replied, ‘Firawn was shown these signs when he claimed that he was God, Most High. If you make a similar claim I will produce the signs you request.’

On a further occasion, some inhabitants of Kufa came to me complaining about their governor, ‘He is the worst of governors. In the first year, we gave him our assets and furniture. In the second year, we handed over our estates. In the third year, he evicted us from our city. We have no choice but to complain to you.’ I replied, ‘You lie to me! He is one whose system I approve, one whose religion I am pleased with and I specifically chose him, knowing of your dislike for governors.’ They replied, ‘You are right, Amīrul Mu’mīnīn, but you limited his justice to our city only. Why do you now not allow him to extend his justice and kindness to others by appointing him as governor in another area?’ I had no choice but to dismiss him as a governor.²



1 Al-Mustaṭraf, p614

2 Al-Nawādirul al-Dhahabīyah, p39; Tārīkh al-Islām Lil Dhahabī

Al-Jāhīz narrates that the only person who succeeded in humiliating me was a woman who led me to the shop of a jeweller and said to him, “Make it like him!”

I was dumbfounded and asked the jeweller what she meant. He replied, “She requested me to engrave the image of the devil, but I explained that I did not know how the devil looked. She then left and returned with you after a short while, instructing me to use your form as a model for the devil’s image.”¹

Beggars

Nabi ﷺ said: “It is better for you to load a bundle of firewood on your back (and sell it) than begging from someone who may give or refuse.”

~ Bukhārī



A beggar stood at the door of a home and asked for something. A woman from within exclaimed, “We have not baked any bread today.”

“Then give me a handful of flour,” he asked.

“We have not purchased any flour as yet,” she explained.

“Why do you not loan a loaf of bread from your neighbour?” he requested.

“They do not give us loans,” she replied.

“When they are good to you, you can request a loan from them. But when you do not pay back, they would naturally refuse to give you a loan the next time around,” he remarked.²



1 Al-Mustāṭraf, p355

2 1000 Ṭurfatun Wa Ṭurfah; p217; Nathr al-Dur

A beggar once presented himself at the door of Mu'āwiyah ؓ and requested the doorkeeper to advise his master that his brother is at the door.”

Mu'āwiyah ؓ could not visualise the beggar even after the doorkeeper had provided a physical description of him and finally said, “It would be best to usher him in.”

When he arrived, Mu'āwiyah ؓ asked him, “How are you my brother?”

He replied, “I am the son of Ādam and Ḥawwā.”

After hearing the reply, Mu'āwiyah ؓ instructed his servant to give the beggar a dirham.

The beggar asked, “How can you give only one dirham to your brother?”

Mu'āwiyah ؓ said, “If I were to give something to every single brother of mine from the children of Ādam and Ḥawwā, you would not even receive a dirham.”¹



A family noticed a beggar standing before the door of their home and said to him, “May Allāh open your way.”

Not satisfied with their attempt to get rid of him, he asked for a slice of bread.

They replied, “We do not have any.”

“Some wheat, chicken or barley?” he persisted.

“Sorry, but we do not have any,” they explained.

“Some fat, olive oil or milk?” he begged

“We do not have any of these either,” they replied.

“Then some water, if you please,” he pleaded.

“We do not have any water either,” they replied.

Frustrated, the beggar asked, “Then what are you sitting and doing? Join me in begging, as you seem to be more in need than I am.”²



1 Al-Adhkiyā', p36

2 Al-Muṣṭaṭraf, p620

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

Azhar al-Sammān arrived at the court of Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr. The Khalīf knew him, and after inviting him warmly, asked him why he had come. Azhar replied, "My home is in ruins, I have a debt of four thousand dirhams and my desire is to build a home for my son, Muḥammad."

The Khalīf generously handed him twelve thousand dinars and remarked, "Azhar, we have fulfilled all your needs, please do not come again to me begging." Azhar took the gift and left. After a year, he again arrived at the court of the Khalīf.

"Why have you come?" the Khalīf asked.

"I have come to make salām to you" Azhar replied.

"My gut feeling is that you have come to ask for help," the Khalīf continued.

"I have only come to greet," Azhar explained.

"I am now giving you twelve thousand dinars. Depart and do not return begging or with the intention of greeting me." Azhar took the money and left. After a year, Azhar arrived yet again.

"Why have you come?" the Khalīf asked.

"I have come as a visitor," Azhar replied.

"My gut feeling is that you have come to ask for help again," the Khalīf continued.

"I have come as a visitor," Azhar explained.

"I am again giving you twelve thousand dinars. Depart and do not return begging, with the intention of greeting me or to visit me." Azhar took the money and left. After a year, Azhar was back again.

"Why have you come?" the Khalīf asked.

"I heard you making a du'ā', O Amīrul Mu'minīn, and I have come to write it down," Azhar replied.

The Khalīf laughed and said, "That du'ā' is of no use to you. It was not accepted because I prayed to Allāh that He would not bring you to me again. I am giving you twelve thousand dinars and you are free to come to me again whenever you wish. All my efforts to keep you away from me are exhausted."¹



1 Al-'Iqd al-Farīd, vol1, p192

A man once came to Khalīf Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr and remarked, "I have not performed Ḥaj as yet."

The Khalīf replied, "Then you should proceed for Ḥaj."

"But I do not have any money," the man explained.

"Then Ḥaj is not compulsory upon you," the Khalīf remarked.

"Amīrul Mu'minīn, I came to you requesting financial assistance. I did not come to you for a fatwā (verdict)," the man exclaimed.¹

False Prophets

When you pretend to be what you are not, you deceive none but yourself.



Ma'mūn asked a man who claimed prophethood, "What miracle can you show?"

"You request the miracle and I will oblige," the man boasted.

"Open this lock," Ma'mūn requested, pointing to a closed lock in front of him.

"May Allāh have mercy on you! I said that I was a prophet, not a locksmith," the man answered shrewdly.²



A man claimed prophethood during the era of Mu'taṣim.

"Who were you sent to?" Mu'taṣim asked him.

"To you," the man replied.

"I testify that you are a silly fool," Mu'taṣim exclaimed.

1 Laṭā'iful Luṭf, p24

2 Nathr al-Dur, vol2, p157

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

“A prophet is after all like those he is sent to,” the man retorted.¹



During the reign of Ma'mūn, a person claimed prophethood. When people asked him to perform a miracle he declared, “When I throw this stone into water it will dissolve.” They challenged him to prove his claim. He took a stone from his pocket and it dissolved as he threw it into the water.

“This is nothing but a trick,” they protested, “Now we will hand you a stone and you should make it dissolve.”

“Do not become extremists. You do not enjoy the magnificence of Fir'awn, nor am I as remarkable as Mūsa ﷺ. But Fir'awn did not hand his staff to Mūsa ﷺ and request him to change it into a serpent!” Ma'mūn laughed and let him go.²



A man who claimed prophethood was brought to the Khalīf Ma'mūn, who asked, “Do you have any sign proving that you are a prophet?”

“Yes, I know what your thoughts are,” the man replied.

“And what am I thinking at the moment?” Ma'mūn asked.

“You are thinking that I am a liar,” the man answered.

“That is true,” Ma'mūn admitted, but still ordered that he be imprisoned. After some days, the man was released and brought before the Khalīf who asked, “Has any revelation come to you yet?”

The man replied that none had come. He was asked what the reason for this was so he said, “Angels do not enter prisons!” Ma'mūn was amused and let him free.³

1 Nathr al-Dur, vol2, p157

2 Nathr al-Dur, vol2, p157

3 Al-Mustaṭraf, p620

Dreams

The first step in making your dream a reality is to wake up from your sleep.



Ash'ab narrates: I had a dream which proved to be half true. When he was asked what he meant by this he explained, "I saw myself carrying a huge purse filled with dirhams. Due to its tremendous weight upon me I soiled my clothing. When I awoke, I noticed the impurity on my clothing, but the purse had disappeared."¹



A man saw a dream in which he was offered eight dirhams for his goat, but when he opened his eyes he saw nothing. He quickly closed them again, stretched out his hand and said, "Fine, give me four."²



A woman arrived at the court of a judge seeking an annulment of her marriage. Her complaint was that her husband would urinate in his bed every night. But the husband responded, "Judge, do not be hasty in passing judgment. Allow to me explain my case. In my dream, I see myself on an island in the middle of an ocean. On the island is a huge palace with an enormously high dome. On the dome is a camel carrying me on its back. When the camel decides to have a sip of water from the ocean and lowers its head this is so frightening a scene for me that I cannot hold back my urine."

When the judge heard the story, he was so terrified that he too urinated in his clothing.

1 Al-'Iqd al-Farīd, vol8, p123

2 'Uyūn al-Akhbār, vol4, p38

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

Turning to the woman he declared, “Dear woman, just listening to the frightening story has caused me to urinate. What would you expect from one who has seen it.”¹



Qāḍi Tanūkhī related the incident of a man who became wealthy after a prolonged period of poverty. I asked him about his story. He looked at me deeply and then said, “I inherited a huge sum of wealth but I spent it all wastefully. A time finally arrived when I had to sell even the doors and roof of my home. I did not know what to do. I had no food and had to suffice on the food my mother prepared from the income she earned by spinning wool. After a time, I began to regard death as better for me than life. One night, I had a dream in which a man said to me, ‘Your fortune is in Egypt. Depart immediately!’ The next morning I requested my neighbour who was a judge to write me a note that would assist me on my journey and to help me find some work on my arrival in Egypt. He obliged and I set out to find my fortune.

When I arrived in Egypt, I searched for a job but all my efforts were unsuccessful. My little provisions were soon expired and I contemplated begging, but my conscience would not allow it. One night, a policeman arrested me and asked me who I was and what I was up to. I replied that I was destitute. He did not believe me and began to lash me. I begged him to listen to my story and he eventually agreed.

When he heard my story he exclaimed, ‘I have not met a greater fool than you! I have seen a dream for many years in which a person is commanding me to retrieve my fortune from Baghdad at this address. In front of the house there is a garden in which there is a tree. Hidden in the ground beneath the tree are thirty thousand dinars. He keeps instructing me to go and retrieve my treasure! I am not a fool to believe a dream like this. You are a fool to leave your city and come to Egypt all because of a dream.’ Incidentally, the address he mentioned was my very own home in Baghdad. That gave me courage. I slept in the masjid for the night and left for Baghdad the very

1 Al-Mustaṭraf, p617

next day. On arrival, I dug up the spot in my garden and found a bag which contained thirty thousand dinars. I retrieved them and purchased property and provisions which have sustained me until now.”¹



Sharīk ibn ‘Abdullāh was a judge during the time of the Khalīf Mahdī. One day, he arrived at the court of the Khalīf, only to be informed that the Khalīf was intent on killing him. Astonished at his sudden and strange change of fortune, he asked why such a decision was made.

The Khalīf replied, “In a dream I saw you walking on my bed with your back turned towards me. When I related this to an interpreter of dreams he explained that you are fake in your obedience to me. Deep down you defy my instructions.”

When the judge heard the explanation he remarked, “Amīrul Mu’minīn, your dream is not that of Ibrāhīm ؑ and neither was the interpreter Yūsuf ؑ. Do you intend shedding the blood of Muslims based upon misleading dreams?”²

High Hopes

I will mislead them and I will create in them false desires.

~ Shaiṭān



A man hired a worker for two paise to carry a drum of oil to a particular place. The worker loaded the drum onto his head and, as he walked, his thoughts began to wonder. “With these two paise I will purchase two eggs. When the chicks are born I will allow them to grow and they will in turn produce more

1 Ahlā al-Ḥikāyāt Min Kitāb Thamarāt al-Awrāq, p147

2 Fiqhī Laṭā’if, p389

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

chicks and chickens. I will then sell them and purchase goats. They will also give birth to many goats which I will sell and purchase cows and then oxen. With the sale of my oxen I will earn plenty of money. I will then open a shop and earn lots of money with which I will purchase a palatial home. I will then propose for the princess's hand in marriage. The king will realize my status through my business and assets and will marry her to me. She will bear me a son who will be my pride." As he thought about his son he shook his head in pleasure and the drum fell to the ground, spilling all the oil.

"What have you done?" the owner shouted.

The worker replied, "You have only lost one drum of oil. I have lost my entire family and business."¹



A recluse had a jar filled with melted butter hanging on the side of his bed. One day, while lying down with a stick in his hand, he began thinking to himself, "If only I can sell this jar for ten dirhams I will purchase five goats, each of which will give birth to two kid goats every year. When their number reaches eighty I will sell them and purchase eight cows. These will be a huge source of income for me and I will be able to purchase many slaves. My slave-girl will bear me a son who I will educate and discipline. If he disobeys me I will beat him with this stick." He waved his stick in the air imagining how he would strike his son. Instead, it struck the jar shattering it into pieces and causing the butter to run down onto his face.²

1 Haḍrat Thānwī Ke Pasandīdah Wāqī'āt, p65

2 Al-'Iqd al-Farīd, vol 8, p135

Only Fools

Reading the stories of fools allows the intelligent to appreciate the value of intelligence and be grateful to Allāh for this blessing. They also allow the wise to identify and abstain from all causes and avenues of foolishness.

~ Ibn Jawzī



A fool was leading a donkey by its reins. A cunning man noticed this and said to his colleague, “Do you think I will succeed in robbing him of his donkey without him knowing?”

“How do you propose to do that when the reins are in his hand?” he asked.

Without saying a word his companion quietly stepped forward, loosened the reins from the head of the donkey and slipped it over his own head. “Now, take the donkey and disappear as fast as you can,” he instructed his companion who obeyed, while he continued being led by the fool. After a short while, he stopped suddenly. The fool pulled on the reins but he did not move. Upon gazing back, the fool saw the man and asked, “Where is the donkey?”

The man replied, “I am the donkey.”

“But, how is that possible?” the fool asked.

The man explained, “I was disobedient to my mother with the result that I was transformed into a donkey. Until now I was in your service. My mother has finally forgiven me and I have reverted back to a human being.”

“*Lāḥawlā wa lā quwwata illā billāh!*¹ How could I have used your services thinking you to be a donkey!” the man cried out in distress.

“What is done cannot be undone,” the man remarked.

“You are free to go,” the fool said to the man, who made his way back to find his companion.

1 A statement reflecting regret and surprise.

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

When the fool arrived home he explained the experience to his wife, “We utilised the services of a human being as a donkey! How can we ever atone and seek forgiveness for this?”

“Give out as much as you can in Ṣadaqaḥ!” she recommended. After remaining at home with her for a few days, she said to him, “You are born to be a donkey-driver! Go to the market and purchase another donkey for yourself.” When he reached the market, he noticed his old donkey for sale. He stepped closer and whispered into its ear, “Have you again disobeyed your mother?”¹



A man was ill and when his health began deteriorating further, he instructed his family members to fetch as many tambourines, flutes and other musical instruments they could lay their hands on. They discouraged him from engaging in such futility during his last moments, but he insisted, “I have heard that the angels do not enter a home in which there are musical instruments. As the angel of death is also one of the angels, I will endeavour to repel him by means of these.”²



A government official was remarkably punctual in all his Ṣalāḥ. After Fajr Ṣalāḥ every morning, he would remain seated without speaking to anybody, in accordance with his spiritual mentor’s instructions. As he was a man of influence and clout, various people would approach him with bribes. He would indicate by means of his fingers the sum he demanded. Two fingers meant two hundred, five fingers meant five hundred and so on. If a person would request a discounted price he would generally refuse, by means of signs. After

1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p153

2 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p148

concluding the deal, he would indicate that the money be placed beneath his muşallah.¹



A guru and his disciple arrived at Annayawpur, literally translated as a city of injustice. In the market they enquired about various types of food and were informed that the price of everything was the same. Meat, salt, wheat, butter and all other commodities were priced at sixty Ser.

When the guru noticed this he turned to his companion and said, “Let us move on. We certainly cannot live in a city where food prices are fixed.”

But his disciple disagreed, “I would love to stay here. We will be able to purchase foodstuff at cheap prices and eat well.” Despite the guru’s attempts to convince him to leave the city, the disciple remained adamant. Finally, they decided to remain in the city for a while. The disciple began eating well and picked up considerable weight. Incidentally, one day they found themselves at the court of the king where a thief was presenting his case. It so happened that, one night, he and his fellow thief broke into a house. One of the thieves entered while the other remained on guard outside. While inside, a wall collapsed on him, killing him. His colleague complained to the king that the owner of the home should be punished for building such an unstable structure.

The owner was summoned and explained, “It was not my fault. It was the builder who built the wall.”

The builder was summoned and he explained, “It was not my fault. My labourer was the one who made the cement too soft. As a result the bricks were not attached firmly.”

The labourer was summoned and he explained, “It was not my fault. The water-carrier added too much water to the mixture.”

The water-carrier was summoned and he explained, “It was not my fault. An elephant belonging to the state came running towards me and, out of fright, the water container fell from my hand.”

1 Haḍrat Thānwī Ke Pasandīdah Wāqīāt, p33

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The care-taker of the elephant was summoned and he explained, "It was not my fault. The elephant was angered by a woman whose jewellery clattered loudly as she walked by."

The woman was summoned and she explained, "It was not my fault. The jeweller attached a bell to the jewellery."

The jeweller was summoned but could not present any excuse. He was accordingly sentenced to be hanged. He was led to the gallows, but the noose would not fit snugly around his neck because he was too thin. The king resolved that a person who was fat enough should be hanged in his place. After searching the city, the only person who was fat enough was the poor guru's disciple. As he was being taken away, he asked his guru, "What should I do now?"

The guru replied, "I had advised you not to remain in this city, but you would not listen. Now you may bear the brunt of your decision."

"Please do something," the disciple cried, "I am your student, after all."

Quickly, the guru thought of an idea. The two of them began to argue. Each insisted that he be hanged. The news was relayed to the king who summoned them both and asked for an explanation.

The guru explained, "This is such an hour wherein one who is hanged will instantaneously be blessed with eternal happiness and peace. We are therefore quarrelling with each other as we do not know when such an opportunity will present itself again."

"In that case, hang me instead," the king ordered, "I would like to enjoy that privilege." Accordingly, the king was hanged.¹



A bedouin found a pair of trousers in a deserted open plain. He assumed that it was a robe and decided to take it for himself. But he did not know how to wear it. He cast it aside and fled. Somebody met him and asked why he was

¹ Haḍrat Thānwī Ke Pasandīdah Wāqī'āt, p29

running. He replied, “I found one of Shaiṭān’s robes and I am afraid that he will reprimand me if he gets to know that I wanted to take it for myself.”¹



A philosopher arrived at a shop to purchase some oil. As he entered he noticed a bell hanging around the neck of an ox and asked the owner, “What is the reason for this?”

The owner replied, “We are working-class people. As we have to accomplish all the work with our own hands, we do not have the time to see to the ox. The sound of the bell indicates to us that the ox is walking and doing its job. When we do not hear the bell we realize that it has stopped and we can then get it moving again.”

“But,” the philosopher explained, “the ringing of a bell is not necessarily a sign that the ox is in motion because the ox may just stand still and shake its head.”

“Fortunately, my ox has not learnt any logic or philosophy. I suggest you depart quickly so that my ox does not decide to become a student of yours,” the owner exclaimed.²



Abū Bakr al-Khaṭṭāt narrates: A particular jurist had an awful handwriting and his colleagues used to say to him, “Nobody has a handwriting worse than yours.” Their remark annoyed him, but he said nothing. One day, he passed by a bookseller who had a book which was written in an uglier handwriting than his. Its price was inflated, but he decided to purchase it to prove a point to his colleagues. When he met them they again ridiculed his writing, but this time he said to them, “I have found a book which has uglier handwriting than mine and I have paid a substantial price for it in order to stop being mocked at.” He handed it over to them and they began examining it. On the

1 Mawsū‘at al-Fukāhah Wa al-Ḍaḥik, p152; Jam‘u al-Jawāhir

2 Haḍrat Thānwī Ke Pasandīdah Wāqī‘āt, p190

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last page they found his name. He had written it during his youth and did not recognize it.¹



An Indian ḥakīm once found himself in the company of an unwise minister of the state. The minister asked, “Which branch of knowledge is the most important in your opinion?”

The ḥakīm replied, “Medicine.”

“I am well-acquainted with medicine,” the minister explained.

“In that case, tell me,” asked the ḥakīm, “what is the cure for pleurisy?”

The minister replied, “Its cure is for the patient to die so that the heat of his chest can be alleviated. He can then be treated with cold medication so that life may return to him.”

Surprised, the ḥakīm asked, “Who will bring him back to life after death?”

The minister explained, “This has to do with another branch of knowledge which is to be found in the books of astrology. With regard to this science I have only studied the chapter of life and not the chapter of death. My study of astrology has taught me that, for a human being, life is better than death.”

The ḥakīm replied, “Minister, for an ignoramus, death is surely better than life.”²



A man set out for the market to purchase a donkey. On his way he met a friend who asked him where he was going. “I am going to the market to purchase a donkey,” he answered.

“Say Inshā-Allāh!” his friend rightly advised.

1 Al-Adhkiyā', p104

2 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā' Wa al-Mughafilīn, p78

“There is no need to say Inshā-Allāh. The donkey is in the market and, in my pocket, I have the dirhams to purchase it,” he explained and continued on his way. At the market, his money was unfortunately stolen and he returned home disheartened.

His friend met him and asked, “What happened?”

He replied, “My dirhams were stolen Inshā-Allāh.”

“This is not the appropriate time to say Inshā-Allāh,” his friend advised.¹



Abū ‘Alī al-Numairī narrates: We sighted the moon of Shawwāl and arrived at the home of Judge Sawār ibn ‘Abdullāh to testify to this. His doorkeeper received us and said, “You are all insane! The judge has not dyed his beard nor made any preparations for Eid. If his gaze falls upon you, he will order each of you to be whipped two hundred times. Leave!” We departed and people fasted on the day of Eid.²



A man once asked Sha’bī, “What is your opinion regarding a man who abuses me using vulgar language on the first day of Ramaḍān? Will he be rewarded?”

Sha’bi replied, “If he had referred to you with the words ‘O fool’, I am hopeful that he will be.”³



A man had the need to perform ghusl one bitterly cold night. He did not like the idea of immersing himself into the icy water, so he looked around for a container in which he could warm it. Finding nothing, he removed his

1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p122

2 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p85

3 Al-‘Iqd al-Farīd, vol7, p48

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clothes, swam across the river and returned after borrowing a container. He then warmed the water therein and had a ghusl.¹



A bedouin noticed people in Makkah spending in Ṣadaqah and freeing slaves for the pleasure of Allāh. Not willing to be left behind, he exclaimed, “O Allāh, You are well aware that I possess nothing. I make You my witness that I divorce my wife for Your pleasure, O Most Merciful!”²



Muzabbad was notified about the demise of a certain grave-digger. He commented, “May Allāh distance him from His mercy. One who digs holes of a malicious nature, will eventually fall into one himself.”³



A fool set out from his village with ten donkeys. He rode upon one of them and counted nine of them. But, when he climbed down he counted ten. After doing so repeatedly, he declared, “Walking and gaining an extra donkey is better than riding and losing one donkey.” He then walked all the way to the next village and nearly died of exhaustion.⁴



Some dirhams were stolen from a man. A friend tried to console him, “We hope that these will be in your scales.”

1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p118

2 Nawādir al- A’arāb, p111; Jam’u al-Jawāhir

3 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p38

4 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p123

He replied, “But, they were stolen from my scales!” He did not realize that his friend was referring to his scales of deeds in the Hereafter.¹



‘Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad narrates: I asked a man how many days of the month had passed. He replied,” By Allāh, I don’t know because I am not from this city.”²



A witness gave testimony against a person in court. The defendant protested, “Judge, how can you accept his testimony when he hasn’t performed Ḥaj, despite possessing twenty-thousand dirhams?”

The witness replied, “But I have performed Ḥaj.”

The defendant argued, “In that case ask him about the well of Zamzam.”

The witness remarked, “I performed Ḥaj before the well of Zamzam was dug and therefore did not see it.”³



Two fools found themselves on a journey. The first said to his companion, “The road is long, but we can make it seem shorter by entertaining each other in conversation. Make a wish.”

His companion replied, “I wish I owned a flock of sheep so that I could profit by their milk and wool.”

The first continued, “I wish I had a pack of wolves which I would let loose amongst your sheep so that they would devour all of them.”

“How nasty of you! Is this how you propose to deal with a friend?” his companion replied, irritated. They began yelling and arguing, grabbing each other’s collars. Fortunately, some sense prevailed and they agreed to have the

1 Akhbār al-Ḥūmaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p119

2 Akhbār al-Ḥūmaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p138

3 Akhbār al-Ḥūmaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p154

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matter arbitrated by the first person they met. The arbitrator turned out to be an old man riding a donkey. After having heard their dispute, he poured out all the contents of a bottle of honey he had on him and exclaimed, “May Allāh cause my blood to flow out from my body like this honey flowed out from the bottle, if the two of you are not fools.”¹



A bedouin entered a masjid as the Imām was delivering his sermon.

“What is this?” he asked somebody.

“He is inviting people to a meal,” he was informed.

“But what is he saying?”

“He is saying that bedouins prefer not to attend a function, unless they are allowed to carry away food with them.”

The bedouin made his way through the crowd to the front and then said to the Imām, “Only the fools amongst us do this.”²



A bedouin noticed a man staring at the moon and said to him, “What are you staring at? The moon has such defects which, if they were to be found in a donkey, the purchaser would return it to the seller.”

“What are you talking about?” the man asked.

The bedouin explained, “It causes aging, it hastens death, it draws payment dates closer, it eats away at cotton, it dulls colours, it causes meat to rot, it outshines the stars and it guides thieves!”³



A person passed by a group of men who were beating up another man. He asked one of them why they were doing so.

1 Al-Mustaṭraf, p27

2 Nawādir al-Aa’rāb, p24; ‘Uyūn al-Akhhbār

3 1000 Ṭurfatun Wa Ṭurfah, p149; Nihāyat al-Arab

The man replied, “I have no idea, but I noticed the others beating him up, so I joined them for the pleasure of Allāh and hopeful of His reward.”¹



A person known as Qutnubah was once present for Eid Ṣalāh in a particular area when the Imām delivered his discourse on the historical incident of Ibrāhīm ؑ and Ismā‘īl ؑ. A man who was seated close to Qutnubah began weeping loudly. When Qutnubah heard his sobbing he leaned towards the man and remarked, “For how long are you still going to weep? Did you not hear the Imām last year explain that he was eventually saved from being slaughtered?”²



Abū Mūsā Muḥammad ibn al-Muthanna said : “Our tribe of Anazah is honoured because Nabī ﷺ performed Ṣalāh facing us. It is narrated in a Ḥadīth that Nabī ﷺ performed Ṣalāh facing Anazah.” He mistakenly assumed that the word Anazah referred to his tribe whereas it referred to a spear which Nabī ﷺ used to carry with him and thrust into the ground to serve as a sutrah when he performed Ṣalāh.³



Al-Aḥwāzī al-Faqīh narrates: I was with Yaḥyā ibn Sā‘id when a woman approached us and asked him, “O Shaikh, what is your ruling regarding a well in which a chicken has fallen and died? Is the water of the well pure or impure?”

Yaḥyā replied, “Shame upon you! How can a chicken fall into a well?”

She answered, “The opening was not covered.”

1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p144

2 Al Durarul Kāminah Fī Aa’yān al-Mi’ah al-Thāminah, vol 2, p43

3 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p65

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Yaḥyā continued, “Why did you not cover it so that nothing could fall therein?”

Al-Aḥwāzī continues: I then explained to her, “If the colour of the water has changed then it is impure, otherwise not.”¹



A man from Madinah was one day standing in Ṣalāh in the first row when the Imām suddenly terminated his Ṣalāh and ushered the man forward to lead the Ṣalāh in his place. The man remained standing for a long time without any movement. When the congregation finally became weary of standing any longer they recited Subḥānallah, but the Imām remained motionless. After some time, they pushed him aside and ushered another person forward to complete the Ṣalāh. They rebuked the man but he explained, “I thought the Imām had ushered me forward to safeguard his place until he returned.”²



During the course of his lecture, an orator remarked, “On the day of Qiyāmah, an enormous head will emerge from the Fire with such-and-such features.” Amongst the listeners, one particular man was shaking violently out of fear.

The orator turned to him and asked, “What is the problem? Do you deny the power of Allāh?”

“No, he replied, “I am a hairdresser and I will be clueless if the task of shaving the head is given to me.”³



A villager once heard a scholar mention in his sermon that Allāh is in control of everything and man needs to develop hope and tawakkul (trust) in Allāh.

1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p69

2 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p89

3 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p134

He proceeded to the forest and sat down, hoping for Allāh's assistance. After waiting for a considerable time, there was no sign of any food coming. As his thirst began to grow, he noticed a traveller who stopped to have a drink of water from a nearby well. The villager did not move or make a sound. The traveller drank to his full and proceeded on his way. Later another traveller passed by, drank from the well and continued. Now, the villager could no longer bear the thirst and began contemplating over his situation. Incidentally, another traveller happened to stop. He drank some water and ate some of his food. This time the villager coughed to draw his attention. The traveller turned around and noticed the villager in a pitiable state of hunger and thirst. He handed him a slice of bread and left. The villager ate the bread and immediately left to find the scholar.

“Your explanation of tawakkul was fine, but you forgot to mention one crucial point,” he advised, “One also needs to cough while hoping for Allāh's assistance. Why did you leave this out and cause such inconvenience to those who wanted to practise on your advice?”¹



Ibrāhīm ibn Mazīd owned a rooster which he loved dearly. On the occasion of Eidul Aḏḥā, he did not have an animal to slaughter so he advised his wife to slaughter the rooster and prepare a meal with it. He proceeded for Ṣalāh while his wife tried to trap the rooster, but it escaped from her hands. She pursued it as it ran from one neighbour's yard to the next. Surprised by her behaviour they enquired what was going on. She explained the difficult circumstances of her husband and their need to slaughter the bird.

“We are truly saddened that he has reached such a pitiable state,” they exclaimed. Each of them began sending some sheep, oxen and goats and their yard was soon full of animals ready for slaughtering. When Ibrāhīm arrived home he was quite surprised and enquired from his wife what had transpired. After hearing her story he exclaimed, “This rooster is honoured in Allāh's sight. The sacrifice of Ismā'īl, the Nabī of Allāh, was replaced by

1 Haḍrat Thānwī Ke Pasandīdah Wāqī'āt, p170

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only one sheep while this rooster has been replaced by so many animals for sacrifice.”¹



A bedouin, by the name of Mujrim, performed Ṣalāh in the first row. The Imām recited a portion of the Sūrah al-Mursilāt. He recited the verse

أَلَمْ نُهْلِكِ الْأَوَّلِينَ

“Did We not destroy the former ones?”

The bedouin stepped back into the second row. The Imām then recited,

ثُمَّ نَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْآخِرِينَ

“So shall We make subsequent ones to follow them.”

The bedouin stepped further back into the third row. The Imām continued with his recitation,

كَذَلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ

“In this way do We deal with the Mujrimīn (sinners).”

This time the bedouin abandoned his Ṣalāh and fled exclaiming, “I do believe that I am the one being pursued!”²



A bedouin who was in a hurry performed his Fajr Ṣalāh following an Imām who recited Sūrah al-Baqarah (The Cow). As a result, he could not honour his appointment. The next morning, he again arrived at the masjid, but this time the Imām began to recite Sūrah al-Fīl (The Elephant). The bedouin promptly

1 Al-Muṣṭaṭraf, p471

2 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p94

terminated his Ṣalāh and departed, complaining, “Yesterday, you recited Sūrah al-Baqarah and only completed after half the day had passed. Today, you intend reciting Sūrah al-Fīl. I do not assume that you will complete it until half the night has passed.” He incorrectly based his assumption of the length of the Sūrah on the size of the animal mentioned in it.¹



A bedouin by the name of Mūsā stole a purse containing some dirhams. He then proceeded to a masjid to perform Ṣalāh. Coincidentally, the Imām recited the verse

وَمَا تِلْكَ يَمِينِكَ يَا مُوسَى

‘And what is in your hand, O Mūsā?’ (Sūrah Taaha, verse 17)

The verse referred to the Prophet Mūsā’s ﷺ conversation with Allāh, but the bedouin mistakenly thought that he was being addressed. Throwing down the purse, he fled from the masjid shouting, “By Allāh, you are a magician!”²



Abū Ishāq al-Habbāl narrates: Our teacher recited a Ḥadīth to us.

لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ قَتَاتٌ

In the audience was a person who earned a living selling fodder. After hearing the Ḥadīth, he stood up and began to cry, saying, “I seek forgiveness from Allāh for the sale of fodder.” He incorrectly understood that the word qattāt in the Ḥadīth refers to fodder, whereas it actually rebukes a backbiter who carries tales.³



1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p94

2 Al-Muṣṭaṭraf, p612

3 Al-Nawādir al-Dhahabiyah, p65; Tārīkh al-Islām Li al-Dhahabī

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A bedouin once made du‘ā’: O Allāh, forgive only me!

Somebody suggested to him, “Why don’t you include all people in your du‘ā’”? Allāh’s forgiveness is surely all-encompassing.”

He explained, “I dislike placing a burden upon my Allāh.”¹



A bedouin was feeling bitterly cold. When he eventually found a fire, he drew near to it to warm himself. He then prayed, “O Allāh, do not deprive me of fire in this world and the hereafter.”²



An orator who used to narrate stories once advised his audience: Shaitān does not draw near to that food and drink upon which Allāh’s name has been taken. I, therefore, advise you to consume bread flavoured with salt without taking Allāh’s name. Shaitān will then join you in the meal. Thereafter, drink water by taking the name of Allāh. He will not drink with you and subsequently die of thirst!³



A man noticed a person performing Ṣalāh on one leg and asked him why he was doing so. He replied, “Impurity splashed on the other leg and I did not have the opportunity to wash it off. For this reason I have kept that leg out of my Ṣalāh.”⁴



1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p93

2 Al-Ḥayawān, vol4, p485;1000 Ṭurfatun Wa Ṭurfah

3 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p107

4 Fiqhī Laṭā’if, p94

An Imām was leading the Ṣalāh with three Muṣallīs behind him when his wudhū broke. Without nullifying the Ṣalāh, he drew one of the Muṣallīs towards the front to continue leading the Ṣalāh, while he proceeded to perform wudhū. One of the two remaining Muṣallīs, who could not accept that the Imām had left and appointed another person to lead the Ṣalāh, asked in astonishment, “What is going on here?”

The second Muṣallī replied, “Keep quiet, this is acceptable at times!” As both of them had spoken, their Ṣalāh was nullified.

The newly appointed Imām then exclaimed, “Who should I now lead in Ṣalāh, as both of your Ṣalāhs are nullified?” This statement nullified his Ṣalāh as well.¹



A person from Madinah exclaimed, “My love for Nabī ﷺ is unparalleled in human history.”

When asked to explain how this was so, he remarked, “I would love to please Nabī ﷺ by having his uncle Abū Ṭālib accept Islām while I pass away as a disbeliever.”²



While performing Ḥaj, a bedouin entered Makkah before the crowds could do so. He caught hold of the cloth of the Ka’bah and made du‘ā’, “O Allāh, forgive me before the people crowd around you.”³



Yaḥyā ibn Ja’far relates : I had a Persian neighbour who possessed the longest beard that I had ever seen. He would shed tears every night. One night, his sobbing and wailing awakened me. I could hear him striking his head and chest

1 Fiqhī Laṭā’if, p272

2 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p133

3 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p92

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while repeating a verse from the Qur'ān. I was now determined to discover which verse had overwhelmed him to the extent that he had disturbed my sleep. I carefully listened to what he was reciting and it turned out to be a most unusual verse:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ قُلْ هُوَ أَذَى

“They ask you regarding menstruation. Say: it is a pollution.”

I then realized that he was a fool.¹



A fool once heard that the fast of ‘Āshūrā was equivalent to the fast of one year. He decided to fast from before dawn to Ḍuhr and then remarked, “The reward of six months is sufficient for me.”²



A person narrates: Sometime during summer, I noticed a bedouin submerging himself into a river. He then emerged and, with his fingers, passed a bead through a string. He then immersed himself in the water a second time and, after emerging, passed another bead through the string. He did this a number of times. After watching him for a while, I enquired what he was doing.

He explained, “I am performing qaḍā of all my past ghuls during summer which accumulated during winter.”³



1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p109

2 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p134

3 Nathr al-Dur, vol6, p306; 1000 Ṭurfatun Wa Ṭurfah, p156; Al-Muṣṭaṭraf

A man was advised, “You have a substantial amount of wealth, but your mother is old and infirm. If you pass away she will inherit your wealth and squander it.”

He replied, “She will not inherit from me because my father divorced her before he passed away.”¹



Mughīrah Ibn ‘Abdur Raḥmān رضي الله عنه was a brave warrior who had lost sight from one eye due to an injury sustained in the battles against the Romans during the reign of Maslamah ibn ‘Abdul Malik. He was also very generous by heart and would slaughter a camel and invite people to join in the meal wherever he went. On one occasion, a bedouin arrived, but did not partake of any food. He stared at Mughīrah رضي الله عنه persistently.

Mughīrah رضي الله عنه asked, “Are you not going to partake of the food? I see that you are staring at me continuously.”

The bedouin replied, “Your food seems pleasant enough, but your eye is doubtful to me.”

Mughīrah رضي الله عنه asked, “What do you doubt regarding my eye?”

He answered, “I see that you have vision from one eye only and that you are feeding people. These are the qualities of Dajjāl!”

Mughīrah رضي الله عنه explained, “Dajjāl’s eyesight will not be harmed due to fighting in the path of Allāh.”²



A bedouin heard a person reciting the verse of Qur’ān,

الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ

“The believers are only those who, when Allāh is mentioned, their hearts tremble with fear...” (Sūrah Anfāl, verse 2)

and

1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p142

2 Tārīkh Madīnah Dimishq, vol 60, p69

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تَخْشَعُ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

“...that their hearts should humble themselves to the remembrance of Allāh...” (Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, verse 16)

He exclaimed, “May Allāh not make me from amongst them!”

When he was asked why, he replied, “Their hearts would not have trembled if they were not evil men.”¹



Aṣma'ī narrates: A bedouin stepped forward to lead the Ṣalāh. He recited Sūrah Fātiḥah and then said, “Successful is one who gives due importance to his Ṣalāh, discharges his Zakāh, feeds the poor from his date produce, abstains from vulgarity and those who perpetrate it, and guards his camels and sheep.” Those who were following him broke out into laughter when they heard this.

He was surprised and remarked, “Why are you laughing? By Allāh, I was taught this by an old woman from our tribe who met the prophet, Musailamah!”²³



Aṣma'ī narrates: A bedouin heard a man reciting the verse,

هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعِيَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صَنِيعًا

“Shall We tell you the greatest losers in respect of (their) deeds. Those whose efforts have been wasted in this worldly life while they thought that they were doing good deeds!” (Sūrah Kahf, verse 103-104)

1 Al-Nawādir Wa al-Laṭā'if, p25; Nathr al-Dur

2 Musailamah was a false prophet.

3 Al-Nawādir Wa al-Laṭā'if, p26; Nathr al-Dur

He confidently remarked, “I know who these people are.” When asked who they were he replied, “Those who cook a dish of bread and gravy and then feed it to others.”¹

Wise Men

*A day in the company of a wise man is more beneficial than years
in the company of a fool.*



A man brought his son to Imām Aa‘mash and explained, “Abū Muḥammad, my son knows the Qur’ān, the laws of inheritance, poetry, Arabic grammar and jurisprudence.” Imām Aa‘mash remained silent. The man then asked the Imām for a ruling on a particular matter.

Imām Aa‘mash promptly replied, “Ask your son.”²



Abū Ja‘far al-Mansūr requested Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمته اللہ علیہ to assume the position of judge, but he refused. He was then imprisoned. After some time, the Khalīf called him and asked, “Have you agreed to my request?”

Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمته اللہ علیہ replied, “May Allāh guide you, Amīrul Mu‘minīn. I am not competent enough to serve as a judge.”

The Khalīf exclaimed, “You are lying.”

Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمته اللہ علیہ remarked, “With this statement you have concurred with my sentiments that I am not eligible for the position. You have called me a liar and if I am a liar I can never qualify to be a judge. And

1 Al-Nawādir Wa al-Laṭā‘if, p28; Nathr al-Dur

2 Akhbār al-Zirāf Wa al-Mutamājinīn, p61

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if I am truthful, I say to you in all truth that I am not eligible to be a judge.” The Khalīf had no option but to return him to prison.¹



Yaḥyā ibn Aktham assumed the position of judge of Basrah at the age of twenty. The inhabitants of Basrah thought him to be too young for the position and arrived as a delegation to debate the matter with him.

“How can a young man like you decide over us and pass judgments in our conflicts?” they questioned.

Yaḥyā lowered his head for a moment hoping that they would come to their senses.

But they asked, “How old are you?”

He replied, “I am older than Attāb ibn Usaīd ؓ who Nabī ؑ appointed as the judge of Makkah when the city was conquered. I am also older than Mu‘āz ibn Jabal ؓ who Nabī ؑ appointed as the judge of Yemen. And I am older than Ka‘b ibn Suwaid who ‘Umar ؓ appointed as the judge of Basrah.” His explanation silenced them.²



A man came complaining to Sulaimān ؑ, “O Prophet of Allāh, a neighbour stole my goose.”

Sulaimān ؑ called the people to the masjid and then delivered a sermon in which he said, “How can one of you steal a goose from his neighbour and then enter the masjid with its feathers still on his head.” The guilty man stroked his head to verify the statement. Sulaimān ؑ noticed him and had him arrested.³



1 Al-Ajwibah al-Muskitah, p121; Nathr al-Dur

2 Al-Ajwibah al-Muskitah Li al-Jannān, p.139; Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān

3 Al-Adhkiyā’, p24

Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī رحمته الله remarked: A man cannot gain weight when he is in fear, but when his fear of the Hereafter and his worldly livelihood is removed, he eats voraciously and becomes like an animal.

During the previous generations, there was a king who was very obese and could not lose weight. He gathered all the doctors of his time and said to them, “Develop for me a cure to lose weight.” But they were all unsuccessful. After some time, a wise doctor, who was also a scholar of literature, was summoned. The king informed the doctor regarding his problem and also promised him a great reward if he succeeded in curing him.

The doctor explained, “Allāh have mercy upon you, I am a doctor who studies the stars. Grant me grace until tomorrow so that I may study the stars tonight and decide on a cure for your problem.” The next morning, he arrived and said, “Beloved king, if you guarantee my safety I will continue.” The king reassured him and asked him to proceed.

“Well, your stars indicate that you have only a month to live. If you desire, I will commence treatment. But if you require proof of my claim, detain me. If my claim proves to be true you can then release me and if it is false you may punish me.” The king detained him and, at the same time, curbed all forms of merrymaking and futility in his palace. He secluded himself and, as each day passed, his anxiety increased. In a short time, he lost considerable weight and after twenty-eight days had elapsed he summoned the doctor.

“What do you say now?” he asked.

“Allāh have mercy on you, King! I certainly have no knowledge of the unseen. I have no idea what age I will live to, let alone you. I had no cure for you except fear and I had no way of inducing fear in you except through this means. Fear and anxiety melted away your fat.” The king was impressed and sent him off with a handsome reward.¹



A man visited a doctor, complaining of a stomach ache.

The doctor asked, “What did you eat?”

He replied, “Burnt bread.”

1 Kitāb al-Adhkiyā', p155

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The doctor requested for some powder to place in his eye.

“But my stomach is paining and not me eye,” the man interrupted.

“I know,” the doctor explained, “but we need to cure your eyesight so that you can notice burnt bread and abstain from eating it in future.”¹



A man asked Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمته الله عليه, “After removing my clothes to have a ghusl in a stream should I face qiblah or not?”

Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمته الله عليه replied, “It would be wise of you to face in the direction of your clothes to ensure that they are not stolen.”²



Hākim Qābūs once arrived at the surgery of ‘Alī Sīnā with a young family member who had been ill for some time. All the doctors who had seen to him were baffled with his symptoms and were completely unable to diagnose his illness. ‘Alī Sīnā examined the patient and checked his urine and pulse. The young man appeared remarkably pale and worried. The doctor then requested whether anybody from Jurjaan, the city of the young man, could come to him and answer some questions. The doctor then asked him to name the various districts of the city while he kept his finger on the pulse of the patient. The mention of one particular name caused a significant change in his pulse. The doctor then requested for a man from that district who was acquainted with the street names. When he arrived and began mentioning the names the patient’s pulse reacted significantly at the mention of a particular street. He then called for a man who knew all the homes in that street. At the mention of one particular home, the pulse again reacted strongly. The doctor then requested for a man who knew the names of all the members of the family that resided at that home. At the mention of a particular young woman, the pulse reacted as it had previously. Having diagnosed the young man’s illness, the doctor explained, “At so-and-so address there is a young

1 1000 Ṭurfatun Wa Ṭurfah, p215; Nathr al-Dur

2 Al-Murāḥ Fī al-Muzāḥ, p43; Nathr al-Dur

woman who he is madly in love with. Had I openly questioned him about the matter he would have denied it, therefore I used others to determine the truth while monitoring his pulse. I suggest that he be married to this young woman as soon as possible and he will be instantly cured.”

The young man was quite embarrassed with the diagnosis but admitted that it was true. The young man was married to the young woman and, in due course, was completely cured of his illness.¹



A man from Baghdad who suffered from depression was taken to numerous doctors, but all forms of treatment were unsuccessful. The patient developed the idea that an earthen pot was permanently attached on top of his head. As a result he would lower his head whenever he walked through a doorway or beneath a low roof. While walking in public he would mind his step, in fear of knocking into somebody and upsetting the pot in the process. This false suspicion caused him immense discomfort, but, due to his mental state, a remedy remained elusive. Eventually he was taken to Ḥakīm Awḥaduz Zamān who realized that the cure for his doubt could only be through the creation of another doubt. He proceeded to devise his treatment and solicited the assistance of two of his apprentices.

He asked the first of them to climb onto the roof with an earthen pot and drop it to the ground when he made an indication to him. The second apprentice was given a stick which he was required to swing just above the patient’s head. He then called in the patient and sat him down in the courtyard close to the roof. He then began speaking to the patient until he perceived that he was comfortably immersed in the discussion.

Upon indication, the apprentice with the stick suddenly emerged and swung it over the patient’s head. A second later, the apprentice on the roof dropped the earthen pot from the roof close to the patient. The operation was

1 Aṭibbā’ Ke Hairat Angez Kārñāme, p57

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done with such precision that the patient was convinced that the earthen pot on his head was smashed to the ground and he was cured of his suspicion.¹



In June 1955, a patient consulted Ḥakīm Sayyid Khālīd Akbar Hāshimī regarding persistent hiccups which had affected him for five consecutive days. The man's face was yellow and he could not utter a word. He wrote down his symptoms and presented these to the Ḥakīm. He also listed some of the medications he had unsuccessfully tried. After examining the notes and prescriptions the Ḥakīm reached the conclusion that medications would not cure him. With a proposed treatment in mind he quietly whispered a word or two to his compounder and then returned to read his patient's pulse.

As he was busy with this, his compounder suddenly shouted out aggressively to the patient, "You are a thief! You stole five rupees from me!" The patient was surprised and gazed at the compounder fixedly. He wanted to defend himself but was unsuccessful.

The Ḥakīm also began to rebuke his patient, "You surprise me! Are you not ashamed of your behaviour?"

The patient was stunned at the allegation against him but his hiccups prevented him from speaking. Shortly thereafter, his hiccups decreased a little and the Ḥakīm exclaimed, this time in a louder voice, "This is a thief! Call the police so that they may arrest him! I am sure he has the stolen five rupees in his pocket."

At the mention of the word police the patient's face reddened with rage. His silence broke and he began shouting out to defend his innocence. To protect himself from being assaulted by the angry man, the Ḥakīm ordered that he be confined to a room for fifteen minutes. During that time, the Ḥakīm continued asking whether the police had arrived in order to further anger his patient. When the time had elapsed, the Ḥakīm entered the patient's room and said to him, "You are now cured of your difficulty. Anger and rage was the only means which would have stopped your hiccups. I hope that you do not

1 Aṭibbā' Ke Hairat Angez Kārñāme, p64

take offence to the approach I used to provoke you.” The patient realized the wisdom of the treatment and thanked the Ḥakīm profusely before leaving.¹

Superficial Sages

The most misled is one who misleads others.



A disciple mentioned to his superficial mentor that he had seen a strange dream in which he saw his mentor’s hands coated with honey and his own hands covered with filth.

The mentor explained, “The dream depicts our spiritual condition precisely.”

The disciple then continued, “I have not completed narrating the dream. I then saw you licking my fingers while I was licking yours.”

“Get out of here, you fool!” the mentor screamed.

“I may be a fool, but this is what I saw in my dream,” the disciple protested.²



A bogus sage requested a miller to grind his wheat.

“I am busy,” the miller replied.

“Grind it or I will curse you, your donkey and your mill,” the sage threatened.

“Are you *mustajābut da‘wāt* (one whose du‘ā’ is readily accepted by Allāh)?” the miller enquired.

“Yes,” the sage answered.

1 Aṭṭibbā’ Ke Hairat Angez Kārñāme, p176

2 Ḥaḍrat Thānwī Ke Pasandīdah Wāqī‘āt, p26

“In that case, I suggest you make du‘ā’ that your wheat is ground by itself. This will be better for you.”¹



A student of Abū al-Atāhiyah was a self-proclaimed dervish. After losing sight from his one eye he remarked, “Observing the world with two eyes is wastefulness.”²

Judges & Verdicts

Nabī ﷺ said: “One who has been appointed as a judge amongst men has been slaughtered without a knife.”

~ Tirmidhī



Ma‘mūn enquired from an inhabitant of Hims regarding their judge. He answered, “Amīrul Mu‘minīn, our judge does not seem to understand much and, when he does understand, he errs in his judgment.”

Ma‘mūn asked, “What do you mean?”

The man explained, “On one occasion, a man came to his court and claimed that he was being owed twenty four dirhams. The defendant, who was also present, acknowledged the debt. The judge requested him to hand over the money, but he refused saying, “My donkey is my means of income. Every day I earn four dirhams. One dirham I spend on the donkey and one upon myself. The remaining two dirhams I would save until I accumulated the sum owed. However, when I intended to hand over the money to my debtor he was nowhere to be seen, so I spent it upon myself. I suggest that you imprison the claimant for twelve days during which time I will save the required sum.”

1 Al-Nawādir Wa al-Laṭā‘if, p107; Nathr al-Dur

2 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p111

The judge agreed with the suggestion and had the claimant imprisoned until the sum owed was paid to him.”

After hearing the ridiculous judgment, Ma'mūn had a good laugh and removed the judge from office.¹



Iyās Ibn Mu'āwiyah says: Only one man ever succeeded in getting the better of me. One day, I was in court when a man testified that a certain garden of so-and-so size belonged to a particular person.

To test the truth of his statement I asked, “How many trees are there in the garden?”

For a moment, he remained silent and then asked, “Honourable judge, for how many years are you a judge in this court?”

After hearing my reply he asked, “How many beams are there in the roof?”

I had no choice but to admit to the validity of his argument and accepted his testimony.²



A friend of Abū al-Khair al-Khayyāt narrates: I entered Taahart (a city in Al-Jaza'ir) where I was told of a man who was appointed as the judge of the city. One day, an offender appeared before him who had committed a crime which had no stipulated punishment in the Qur'ān or Sunnah. He, therefore, gathered the jurists and explained, “The offender has committed a crime for which the Qur'ān and Sunnah has not stipulated any particular punishment. What do you advise?”

They all agreed that, in such a case, the judge should mete out an appropriate punishment.

The judge explained, “I propose to randomly open the Qur'ān three times and thereafter act upon whichever verse comes up.”

1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā' Wa al-Mughafilīn, p83

2 Al-Wāfi Bi al-Wafayāt, vol9, p262t

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They replied, “May you be guided.”

Upon opening, the following verse came up:

سَنَسِمُهُ عَلَى الْخُرْطُومِ

“We shall brand him over the nose!” (Sūrah al-Qalam, verse 16)

Consequently, he cut off the culprit’s nose and set him free.¹



A man presented his case in court. A man owed him thirty dinars, but he could only prove this through the testimony of one witness instead of the mandatory two. “In that case,” the judge ordered the defendant, “Pay him fifteen dinars until such a time when he can produce a second witness.”²



A man testified in the court of Judge Sawār who asked him, “What is your occupation?”

“I am a teacher of the Qur’ān,” he answered.

“Unfortunately we cannot accept your testimony,” the judge said to him.

“But, why not?” he asked.

“Because you accept payment for teaching the Qur’ān,” he was told.

“But you also accept payment for giving verdicts in cases between Muslims!” he argued.

“I was forced into the position of judge,” he replied.

“But were you also forced to accept payment?” the man asked astutely.

“Fine, you may present your testimony,” the judge acceded.³

1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p84

2 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p84

3 Mawsū’at al-Fukāhah Wa al-Ḍaḥīk, p103; Al-Baṣā’ir Wa al-Zakhā’ir; ‘Uyūn al-Akhbār

Children's World

Children sometimes think up ideas which baffle the wisest of men.



Bishr al-Ḥāfi بشير الحافي narrates: One day I knocked at the door of Al-Ma'āfi ibn 'Imrān. From within, his young daughter called out, "Who is it?"

"Bishr al-Ḥāfi," I answered.

"If only you would think of purchasing a pair of shoes for two dāniqs, the title Al-Ḥāfi¹ would no longer be associated with you," she called out.²



Imām Aa'mash emerged laughing from his home one day and asked his colleagues, "Do you know why I am laughing?"

"No," they answered.

He explained, "I was seated in my home and noticed my little daughter staring intently at my face. When I asked why she was looking at my face so carefully, she replied, 'I am amazed at my mother's choice of you as her husband!'"³



A man visited his friend and left his donkey unattended outside the door of the home. When he emerged he found a young boy sitting upon it.

The man asked, "Why did you mount my donkey without my permission?"

The boy answered, "I was afraid that it would run away, hence I safeguarded it for you."

The man exclaimed, "I would have been happier if it had run away."

1 One who is bare-footed.

2 Al-Taṣnīf al-Mawdhū'i Li Tārīkh Baghdād, p450

3 Al-Nawādir Wa al-Laṭā'if, p57; Nathr al-Dur

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

The boy remarked, “In that case you may hand it over to me and regard it as having run away. In addition, I will be most grateful to you for your kind gesture.” The man was left speechless.¹



One day, the students of Imām Aa‘mash asked him why he was laughing as he came out to teach Aḥādith. He explained, “My little daughter asked me for something and I replied that I did not have it. She then went to her mother and asked, ‘Did you not find anybody to marry besides him?’”²

Food Funnies

Eat and drink, but do not waste.

~ Qur’ān



A bedouin was put up as a guest by a man who lived in a city. The host, who lived with his wife, two sons and two daughters, had many chickens in his backyard. He narrates: I said to my wife, “Roast a chicken and serve it for supper. When we are all seated, I will ask our guest to divide it amongst us.”

When the chicken was served, the host, whose intention was to have a good laugh, asked his guest to divide it amongst the family. He replied, “I am not very good at such a division, but if you are happy with my distribution I will proceed.”

“We will accept your distribution,” his host reassured him. He then severed the head and handed it over to the man, “The head is for the head of the household!” He then cut the wings and explained, “Two wings for the two

1 Al-Nawādir al-Dhahabiyah, p34; Tārīkh al-Islām Lidh Dhahabī

2 Al-Nawādir Wa al-Laṭā‘if, p59; Nathr al-Dur

boys!” He then proceeded to sever the legs and said, “Two legs for the two girls.” He then cut the tail and said, “The rear for the old lady.” The remaining portion, which constituted the bulk of the chicken, he kept to himself and remarked, “The breast for the guest.”

The next day, I said to my wife, “Prepare five chickens for today.” When mealtime arrived, I again advised our guest to divide them between us.

“Would you like them divided evenly or in odd numbers?” he asked.

“In odd numbers,” I replied.

He continued, “You, your wife and a chicken make three,” and handed us a chicken. “Your two sons and a chicken make three,” and handed one over to them. “Your two daughters and a chicken make three,” and handed them one. “Two chickens and myself make three,” and he kept the remaining two for himself. When he noticed us looking at the two birds before him, he remarked, “It appears as if you dislike my division.”

“Why don’t you divide them in an even number between us,” we requested. He took back all of them and began, “You, your two sons and a chicken make four,” and passed one over to us. “The woman, her two daughters and a chicken make four,” and handed one over to them. “The remaining three and myself make four,” he declared and concluded the distribution. He then raised his gaze to the heavens and remarked, “All praise be to you, O Allāh, who granted me the understanding of this.”¹



A learned person once attended an invitation for meals where his hosts constrained him to eat to his fill. He ate to such an extent that he could consume no more. One of them then remarked, “You have not yet cleaned the utensils thoroughly, despite it being Sunnah to do so.”

In desperation, the learned man replied, “Yes, cleaning the utensils is Sunnah, but to save one’s life is Fard. Should I practise on the Sunnah or the Fard?”²



1 Akhbār al-Zīrāf Wa al-Mutamājīnīn, p114

2 Fiqhī Laṭā’if, p331

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

Ḥajjāj appointed a bedouin as governor of a village community where he remained in authority for a long time. One day, the bedouin came to see Ḥajjāj, who laid before him a meal. The bedouin was quite hungry and began eating, while Ḥajjāj began questioning him about various aspects in the village.

“How is my son ‘Umair?” Ḥajjāj asked.

“He is very well and has many offspring,” the bedouin replied.

“And how is the mother of ‘Umair?” Ḥajjāj asked.

“She is well too,” the bedouin explained.

“Is their home in good condition?” Ḥajjāj asked.

“The family is quite happy,” the bedouin answered.

“And how is Īqā, our dog?” Ḥajjāj questioned.

“Barking all over the village,” the bedouin replied.

“And my camel, Zuraiq?” Ḥajjāj asked.

“Just as you would like it to be,” the bedouin replied.

Ḥajjāj then instructed his servant to remove the food. The bedouin was still quite hungry, but Ḥajjāj turned to him and continued, “Repeat what you have just said to me.”

“Ask as you please,” the bedouin replied.

“How is Īqā, my dog?” Ḥajjāj questioned.

“It is dead,” the bedouin replied.

“How did it die?” Ḥajjāj asked.

“It choked on one of the bones of Zuraiq, your camel,” the bedouin explained.

“Is Zuraiq also dead?” Ḥajjāj asked.

“Yes,” the bedouin replied.

“How did it die?” Ḥajjāj questioned.

“Due to carrying much water to the grave of the mother of ‘Umair,” the bedouin replied.

“Is the mother of ‘Umair dead?” Ḥajjāj asked.

“Yes,” replied the bedouin.

“How did she die?” Ḥajjāj asked.

“Due to her excessive sorrow over her son, ‘Umair,” replied the bedouin.

“Is ‘Umair also dead?” Ḥajjāj asked.

“Yes,” replied the bedouin.

“How did he die?” Ḥajjāj asked.

“The house collapsed upon him,” the bedouin replied.

“Has the house collapsed?” Ḥajjāj asked.

“Yes,” replied the bedouin. Upon hearing this, Ḥajjāj grabbed a stick and pounced upon the bedouin who fled for his life.¹



Al-Jāhiz narrates: A young man in our city loved a young girl. One day he wrote her a letter, ‘May I be sacrificed for you! Please send me a sweet dish and some bread as I have some guests who are reciters of the Qur’ān.’ She complied. The next day, he wrote to her again, ‘May I be sacrificed for you! Please send me a sweetened drink, as I have some singers as guests.’

She wrote back, ‘May Allāh protect you! Love is in the heart and its effects manifest in the various limbs of the body. Your love, however, appears to be confined to your stomach! You appear to be an uninvited guest whose love is to eat.’²



A bedouin arrived at the home of a man who was busy eating some figs from a bowl in front of him. When the man noticed the bedouin approaching he hid the figs beneath his clothing. The bedouin noticed this but did not say anything. After he was seated the man asked the bedouin to recite a verse from the Qur’ān. The bedouin agreed and recited,

وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَطُورِ سَيْنِينَ

“By the olive and by Mount Sinai.” (Sūrah Tīn, verse 1)

“What happened to التَّيْنِ (the fig)?” the man asked.

1 Al-Mustaṭraf, p240

2 Al-Taṭfīl, p77

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

“The fig is beneath your clothing,” the bedouin answered.¹



‘Allāmah Rashīd Riḍhā رحمته الله of Egypt once visited Dārul ‘Ulūm Deoband and had breakfast with ‘Allāmah Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī رحمته الله. The former ate the sweetmeats with a spoon while the latter used his fingers.

“Why don’t you eat with a spoon?” suggested ‘Allāmah Rashīd Riḍhā رحمته الله.

‘Allāmah Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī رحمته الله replied, “My natural spoon is superior to your hand-made one for a number of reasons. My fingers can change the shape and adjust the size of a morsel easily whereas your spoon cannot. Secondly, my fingers have a sense of touch. They can determine the heat of the food and I can then decide whether or not to place it into my mouth. Your spoon cannot do this. Thirdly, my fingers are soft and delicate when in contact with my mouth. They do not cause harm, unlike your spoon which is hard and pointed and has the potential for injury. Fourthly, my fingers are affectionate and licking them gives me pleasure. Your spoon has no affection and you derive no pleasure in licking it.”²



Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abdul Ḥakam narrates: We were in the company of Imām al-Shāfi‘ī رحمته الله when a police officer entered. He noticed a bowl of dates and drew it towards him. He then began eating the dates until all were finished. He then turned towards Imām al-Shāfi‘ī رحمته الله and asked, “What is your opinion regarding the consumption of food without invitation?”

“You should have asked the question before eating all the dates!” Imām al-Shāfi‘ī رحمته الله replied.³



1 Al-Adhkiyā’, p87

2 Laṭā’ife Maḥmūd, p36

3 Al-Taṭfīl, p64

Dabul narrates: We were in the company of Sahl ibn Hārūn, but he did not dare to eat anything as he would have been compelled to invite us to join him in the meal. When hunger overpowered him he called out, “Shame on you, O servant, bring in the meal!” The servant arrived with a dish which contained a cooked rooster and a little gravy. Sahl studied the rooster and realized that its head was missing.

“Where is the head?” he asked his servant.

“I have discarded it,” the servant replied.

“I dislike a person who discards a foot, let alone the head. Did you not know that the head is the master of all the organs. By means of it the rooster crows, and were it not for the crowing of a rooster I would not consume it. A portion of it is blessed, while its eye is proverbial: a drink like the eye of the rooster. Its brain is a cure for painful kidneys. And you will not find a bone more delicious than the bones of the head. And if you were perhaps thinking that I do not eat the head, why did you not conceive the possibility that somebody else might eat it. Please go and find the place where you discarded it and bring it to me.”

“By Allāh, I do not know where I discarded it,” the servant explained.

“I know exactly where you discarded it: in your stomach. May Allāh deal with you appropriately,” he threatened.¹



Aa‘mash one day said to an acquaintance, “Do you desire to eat bread and delicious vinegar with a blue-eyed fish which is white on the inside, and black on the outside?”

“Of course,” he replied.

“Then follow me,” Aa‘mash said to him.

When they arrived at his home, he served two slices of dry bread and some vinegar sauce.

“But where is the fish you mentioned?” the man asked in disappointment.

1 Al-Mustaṭraf, p236

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

He replied, “There is no fish. I only asked whether you desired to eat fish.”¹



Ibn ‘Atīq said to his wife: “How I wish we would receive a skinned animal as a gift so that we could prepare with it a delicious dish!” Their neighbour happened to hear part of their conversation and assumed that he had requested his wife to prepare the dish.

She anxiously waited until meal time and then knocked at their door. “I smelt the aroma of a delicious pot of food and I would like to taste some of it,” she requested.

Surprised, Ibn ‘Atīq said to his wife, “You are divorced from me if we continue living in such a home where our neighbours can smell our hopes.”²



A man asked a miser why he never invited him for a meal. The miser replied, “You chew intensely and swallow quickly. The moment you have placed one morsel in your mouth you welcome the next.”

“Do you expect me to perform two rakāts of Ṣalāh before placing the second morsel in my mouth?” the man asked in surprise.³



Mūsā ibn Janāh invited a group of people to join him for Iftār during the month of Ramaḍān. After they had performed Maghrib Ṣalāh, he advised them not to eat hastily. He also said, “If one of you extends his hand for a drink, the rest of you should stop eating until he has completed. If you are not mindful of this, you will put him to discomfort in many ways. Firstly, you

1 Al-Murāḥ Fi al-Muzāḥ, p41

2 Mawsū‘at al-Fukāhah Wa al-Ḍaḥik, p347 Jam‘ul Jawāhir

3 Nathr al-Dur, vol3, p188; Muḥādarat al-Udabā’

may compel him to interrupt his drinking if he thinks that you may finish all the food before he can complete his drink. Secondly, you may upset him to the point that he may find it impossible to keep up with you, tempting him to hastily gulp down a hot morsel which will lead to his death before your own eyes. At the very least, you will stir within him a sense of greed and the need to swallow large mouthfuls. It is for this reason that when a bedouin was asked why he ate the meat before the bread, he explained, ‘The meat disappears quickly and the bread remains.’¹



An uninvited guest joined a traveller on his journey. The traveller asked him to proceed to the market and purchase some meat to which he replied, ‘I cannot manage to do so.’ The man then went himself and purchased it.

He then requested his companion to cook it, but he again refused, ‘I am not a good cook.’ He proceeded to cook the meat himself.

He then requested him to prepare the gravy, but the man remained adamant, ‘By Allāh, I am exhausted.’ He prepared it himself and then requested his lazy companion to dish out the meal.

But the man again declined, ‘I am afraid it may soil my clothing.’ The man had no choice but to dish out the meal, and then invited his companion to join him.

This time the man agreed, ‘My refusal of your every suggestion until now has caused me substantial embarrassment.’ He stepped forward and joined in the meal.²



1 Al-Bukhalā’, p153

2 Kitāb al-Adhkiyā’, p163

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

An uninvited guest arrived at a meal with other guests. When the host asked who he was, he replied, “Had you not invited me and had I not come of my own accord, it would have been very unfortunate.”¹



Bunān was a man renowned for arriving at functions without being invited. One day, he passed by a wedding function and requested entry, only to be turned away. Not willing to give up so easily, he proceeded to the local greengrocer and purchased ten jars of honey on credit. He left his ring with the owner as deposit. He then returned to the wedding function and called out, “Doorkeeper, please let me in.”

The doorkeeper asked, “Who are you?”

He replied, “It seems that you have not recognized me. I was sent by the organisers of the wedding to purchase ten jars of honey for them.” The door was opened allowing him in. He joined the other guests and after eating and drinking to his fill, he picked up the jars and said to the doorkeeper, “Please let me out. The guests prefer pure honey instead. I will need to return this.” He was allowed to leave, after which he promptly returned the jars to the greengrocer and took back his ring.²



While on his deathbed, a person whose habit was to attend wedding functions uninvited advised his son, “When you enter a function then do not cast your gaze like one who is doubtful as this may give others the impression that you were not invited. Choose a seating place that is amongst the general crowd. If the gathering is large, make as if you are one of the organisers and direct people around. Never look directly into the eyes of any of the husband’s or wife’s family members. In this way each family will think you to be from the opposite family. If the guard at the door is nasty initiate the discussion with

1 Kitāb al-Adhkiyā’, p164

2 Kitāb al-Adhkiyā’, p161

him cordially by instructing him to do something. Never reprimand or scold him. Your tone should be one of advice and guidance.¹



A man who habitually attended functions without being invited noticed a group of criminals who were being led off to the gallows. As they were all dressed immaculately he assumed that they were on their way to a walimah² and decided to join them. They soon reached the gallows and when the unfortunate man realized his mistake he pleaded to the police officer for his life. "This will not save you," the police officer exclaimed and ordered the executioner to proceed.

"May Allāh guide you, if you insist on punishing me, command the executioner to strike my stomach as it led me into this fix." The police officer laughed and investigated the man's claim. He was informed that he was a famous uninvited guest and set him free.³



A person narrates: I was on a journey and lost my way. I noticed a house in the open desert and approached it. A bedouin woman came up to me and asked, "Who are you?"

I replied, "I am your guest."

"Welcome, welcome honoured guest," she exclaimed, "Come in and relax!"

I entered and she soon presented me with some food and water. While I was eating, her husband arrived and asked, "Who is this?"

"A guest," she answered.

"He is not welcome! What have we to do with guests?"

1 Kitāb al-Adhkiyā', p163

2 A meal arranged by the groom after the wedding.

3 Al-'Iqd al-Farīd, vol7, p206

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

As soon as I heard his words, I stood up and left. The next day I noticed another house and approached it. The woman of the house came to me and asked, "Who are you?"

I replied, "A guest."

"Guests are not welcome here!" she retorted. As she spoke, her husband arrived and noticed me. He asked who I was and welcomed me warmly. He brought some food and water and kindly invited me to partake of it. I recalled my encounter of the previous day and smiled to myself.

"Why are you smiling?" my guest asked.

I recounted my experience with the husband and wife and their strange behaviour.

"There is no need to be surprised," he explained, "the bedouin woman you met yesterday is my sister, while her husband is my wife's brother!"¹



A guest knocked at the door of a miserly man who was just about ready to begin his meal of bread and honey. He quickly had the bread removed, but the guest entered before he could hide the honey. Assuming that the guest would not eat the honey by itself he asked, "Are you in the habit of eating honey without bread?"

"Yes," the guest replied to his surprise and began licking it with his finger. "Wait, my friend, eating honey like this will burn the heart."

The guest exclaimed, "Yes, it will burn your heart."²



A monk provided lodging for a traveller and served him with four slices of bread. The monk then left to fetch some lentils which he could have with the bread. When he returned, the man had already eaten all the bread. He left to fetch some more bread, but when he returned the man had eaten up

1 Al-Mustaṭraf, p240

2 Al-Mustaṭraf, p250

all the lentils. Ten times he went and returned, only to find that the man had eaten up all that he had brought.

Curious to learn more about his strange guest, the monk asked, “Where are you going to?”

“To Jordan,” he replied.

“What do you aim to do there?” the monk continued.

“I have heard that there is a good doctor there who can cure me of my stomach problem. I have a very poor appetite.” he explained.

“I have a request to make to you,” the monk remarked.

“What is that?” the traveller asked.

“When you are cured of your stomach problem, please do not visit me again,” the monk pleaded.¹



An uninvited guest was asked why his skin appeared to be so yellow. He explained, “This is due to the time period between two courses of a meal when I fear that the food may be depleted before it reaches me.”²



An uninvited guest once arrived at a function. The host recognised him and asked, “Did I tell you to come?”

The man replied, “Did you say that I should not come?”³



Maṣṣūr ibn ‘Alī al-Ḥaḍramī narrates: I had a neighbour who would attend meal functions without being invited. He was handsome in appearance, eloquent in speech, well-dressed and would always apply fragrant perfume. It was his habit to follow me whenever I proceeded for a function. My hosts

1 Al-Muṣṭaṭraf, p247

2 Al-Taṭfīl, p110

3 Al-Taṭfīl, p114

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

would honour him, thinking that he was my colleague. One day, Ja'far ibn al-Qāsim al-Hāshimī, the Amīr of Basrah decided to host a function on the birth of his son. I anticipated an invitation and thought it an ideal opportunity to disgrace my neighbour who would naturally accompany me. When the invitation arrived, I dressed up and left my house. As I expected, my neighbour was eagerly waiting for me on his veranda and began following me closely. On entering the host's home, we sat down and the meal was served. People were seated in groups and my neighbour sat next to me. As he was about to stretch out his hand to eat, I exclaimed, "Nabī ﷺ said, 'One who enters the home of people without their permission and eats their food, has entered as a thief and left as a swindler.'"

As soon as he heard this he remarked, "By Allāh, rectify your statement! Every person seated here will assume that you are objecting to him being here. Are you not ashamed to make such a remark at a meal that is being served to us by such an honourable host? Further you are attempting to be miserly with the food of others. In addition, you choose to narrate from Darast ibn Ziyād who is a weak narrator and Ibān ibn Tāriq whose narrations are rejected by the scholars. He attributes such a directive to Nabī ﷺ which is opposed by all the Muslims because the hand of a thief is cut while a swindler is to be punished as the Imām sees fit. Further, don't you know the Ḥadīth in which Nabī ﷺ said, 'The food of one suffices for two and the food of two suffices for four while that of four suffices for eight.' This is a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth.

Maṣūf ibn 'Alī says: I was dumbfounded and speechless. As we left the function, he diverted from his normal habit and walked on the opposite side of the road. I could hear him happily reciting the following words of poetry:

"One who thought that he would not be injured by entering a battle, thought wrongly."¹



One day, somebody said to Bunān, "One who enters the home of people without their permission and eats their food, has entered as a thief and left as a swindler."

1 Al-Adhkiyā', p162

“But, all the food I consume is ḥalāl,” Bunān insisted.

“How is that?” he was asked.

“The host always says to his cook, ‘Prepare a little more of every dish. If we intend feeding a hundred people, prepare for a hundred and twenty. At any function you have people who are invited and those who arrive without an invitation.’ And I, my dear friend, am from amongst those who are not invited.”¹



One day, a man said to Bunān, “Haven’t you eaten enough already? Be careful that you do not die due to overeating!”

Bunān replied, “When death has been predestined, I would prefer to die on a full stomach rather than on an empty one.”²



Muḥammad ibn Sa’d narrates: I advised a person who had the habit of attending functions without invitation, “How can you consume ḥarām food?”

“But I only consume ḥalāl food,” he maintained.

“How is that?” I asked.

“When I enter a home, I proceed to the females’ quarters. The inhabitants then shout out, ‘No, no, this way!’ Their statement ‘this way’, constitutes an invite. Hence, I consume only ḥalāl,” he explained.³



Bunān narrates: I memorised the entire Qur’ān and then forgot it, with the exception of two words,

1 Al-Taṭfīl, p80

2 Al-Taṭfīl, p128

3 Al-Taṭfīl, p80

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

آتِنَا غَدَاءَنَا

“Bring us our breakfast.” (Sūrah Kahf, verse 62)¹



An uninvited guest joined a feast and began eating with the other guests. This embarrassed the host as he did not want his guests to assume that he had invited the man. He therefore treated him as he treated the guests, but remarked, “I do not know who to really thank: all of you who accepted my invitation or this man who came without an invitation!” This clarified to the guests that the man was an uninvited guest.²



A man who had the habit of attending meals without being invited passed by a house wherein a group of people had gathered for a meal. They locked the door preventing him from entering, so he scaled the wall and called out, “You prevented me from coming in on land, so I have come to you from the skies.”³



An uninvited guest attended a function but the door was locked and he could find no way of entering. He enquired whether the host had a son who was present. He was told that his son was out of town. He then took a blank scroll, rolled it up and sealed it. With this in hand, he knocked at the door, pretending to be a messenger delivering a letter to the host on behalf of his son. He was allowed in and met the father who was happy to receive news from his son.

“How is my son doing?” he asked.

“He is well, but I cannot tell you more due to hunger,” the man replied.

1 Kitāb al-Adhkiyā’, p165

2 Al-Taṭfīl, p118; Nathr al-Dur

3 Al-‘Iqd al-Farīd, vol7, p201

The host ordered that he be fed and then asked, “I believe he has sent me a letter?”

“Yes,” he replied and handed the scroll to him.

The host immediately noticed that it was freshly prepared and asked the man why.

“Yes, it is freshly prepared and further, due to your son being engrossed in hard work, he could not write a word,” he explained.

“Are you one of those who arrive at functions without an invitation?” the host asked.

“Yes, may Allāh guide you!” he answered.

“Continue eating, but know that you are not welcome,” he remarked.¹



A person who would attend meals uninvited was once asked, “Which is your favourite Sūrah of the Qur’ān?”

He replied, “Al-Mā’idah (The food table).”

He was then asked, “And what is your favourite verse?”

He replied,

ذَرَهُمْ يَأْكُلُوا وَيَتَمَتَّعُوا

“Allow them to eat and enjoy,” (Sūrah al-Hijr, verse 3)

then,

آتِنَا غَدَاءَنَا

“Bring our breakfast,” (Sūrah Kahf, verse 62)

then,

ادْخُلُوهَا بِسَلَامٍ آمِنِينَ

“Enter it in peace and safety,” (Sūrah al-Hijr, verse 46)

then

1 Al-‘Iqd al-Farīd, vol7, p200

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

وَمَا هُمْ مِنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِينَ

“And they will not leave it.” (Sūrah al-Ḥijr, verse 48)¹



An uninvited guest arrived at a wedding but was refused entrance. He then took a toothpick and started cleaning his teeth with it. Giving the impression that he had just eaten, he returned with one shoe in his hand and another in his pocket. He said to the porter, “I ate with the first group of people, but because I had to tend to some urgent business I left in a hurry and forgot one of my shoes behind. Will you please fetch it for me.”

The porter replied, “I am busy, you may enter and fetch it.” He entered, ate to his fill and then left with the other guests.²



A man who habitually attended functions without being invited happened to pass by a group of people who were having a meal. He greeted and sat down amongst them. As he was about to extend his hand to dish out, they asked, “Do you recognise any of us?”

“Yes, I recognise this,” he answered, pointing to the food before him.³

1 Mawsū'at al-Fukāhah Wa al-Ḍaḥik, p124; Al-Muṣṭaṭraf, p622

2 Al-Taṭfīl, p119; Nathr al-Dur

3 Al-ʿIqd al-Farīd, vol7, p200

Self-righteousness

Do not assume yourself as righteous. He (Allāh ﷻ) alone knows who is righteous.

~ Qur'ān



A bedouin was performing Ṣalāh when he heard people speaking highly of his behaviour and good qualities. He promptly terminated his Ṣalāh and declared, “In addition to this I am also fasting?”¹



A bedouin was present amongst a group of men who were discussing the merits of Tahajjud Ṣalāh. They turned to him and asked, “Do you also awaken at night?”

“By Allāh, yes,” he answered.

“How do you spend your time?” they enquired.

“I urinate and then return to bed.”²



Muḥammad al-Makhramī relates: We were seated in a gathering when I perceived an unpleasant odour. I looked around and noticed a man who had smeared human excreta upon his moustache.

In astonishment I asked, “What are you doing?”

He replied, “I am displaying my humility before my Creator!”³



1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā' Wa al-Mughafilīn, p94

2 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā' Wa al-Mughafilīn, p94

3 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā' Wa al-Mughafilīn, p109

Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥusain asked Al-Marwazī, “For how long are you a resident of Iraq?”

He replied, “Twenty years, and I have been fasting all year round for the last thirty years.”

Ṭāhir remarked, “I asked you one question and you gave two answers.”¹

Students & Teachers

I complained to Wakī^c about my poor memory;

He advised me to abstain from sin.

Knowledge is divine light, he told me;

And the divine light of Allāh is not imparted to sinners.

~ Imām al-Shāfi‘ī رحمته الله عليه



A student asked his classmates, “Would you like to hoodwink our teacher today?”

“Yes,” they replied.

“Fine. Let us all suggest to him that he appears to be ill,” he suggested.

One of them went up to the teacher and said, “You appear weak and ill. I suspect that you are about to have a fever. Why don’t you return home and rest?”

The teacher turned to another student and enquired, “So-and-so student claims that I look ill.”

The student answered, “He is right. It is no secret. Ask any of the students and they will tell you likewise.” The teacher did so and all the students insisted that he looked unwell.

1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p109

Finally, convinced that all of them could not be wrong, he declared, “There will be no classes today. You may all go home and return tomorrow!”¹



Al-Jāhīz relates: I passed by a teacher who was dictating to his student

وَإِذْ قَالَ لِقَمَانٍ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ

لَا تَقْصُصْ رُؤْيَاكَ عَلَىٰ إِخْوَتِكَ فَيَكِيدُوا لَكَ كَيْدًا

وَأَكِيدُ كَيْدًا فَمَهْلِكُ الْكَافِرِينَ أَهْلَهُمْ رُؤْيَا

“You have mixed up the verses of various Sūrahs,” I protested.

“Yes, I know. The father of the student mixes up the months by not paying his fees on time. I, therefore, do the same. As a result, I do not take anything as payment, neither does the child learn anything.”²



Al-Jāhīz narrates: From amongst the weird and wonderful things I noticed was a teacher in Kufa who was sitting all by himself and crying. When I asked him why, he replied, “The children have stolen my bread!”³



A bedouin frequented the lessons of the renowned scholar of Ḥadīth, Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah, and heard approximately three thousand Aḥādīth from him. When he decided to part ways, the scholar asked him, “From all the Ḥadīth you have heard from me, which appealed to you most?”

1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p113

2 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p114

3 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p114

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

The bedouin replied, “Three Aḥādīth stand out for me. Firstly, the Ḥadīth narrated by ‘Ā’ishah in which she states that Nabī ﷺ loved sweetmeats and honey. Secondly, the Ḥadīth in which Nabī ﷺ stated that if supper is served and Ṣalāh is about to commence, then one should begin with the supper. Thirdly, the Ḥadīth narrated by ‘Ā’ishah in which Nabī ﷺ stated that fasting while on a journey is not a compulsory act of piety.”¹



Al-Jāḥiẓ narrates: I visited a teacher of little children who had a long staff, a short staff, a curved rod, a ball, a drum and a trumpet in his classroom. Astonished at his variety of goodies, I asked, “What are these for?”

He explained, “I have to teach these little rascals and when I instruct them to recite from their slates they respond by breaking wind. I then attempt to strike the culprit with my short staff, but he retreats. I then try with my long staff, but he escapes. I am then constrained to place the ball in the curved rod and throw it at him. When it has injured him, the other children move towards me in retaliation. They attempt to beat me up with their slates, so I quickly place the drum over my head and raise the trumpet to my lips. I begin beating the drum and blowing into the trumpet creating a fair bit of noise which alerts the villagers who run to my rescue.”²



A mother brought her naughty little boy to the village teacher complaining about his bad manners.

“If you do not give up your ways, I will beat up your mother,” the teacher warned.

The mother continued, “Teacher, words mean nothing to him. I suggest you implement your warning so that he sees it in practice, causing him to

1 Al-Muṣṭaṭraf, p614; Nathr al-Dur

2 Al-Muṣṭaṭraf, p618

reform his ways.” Accordingly, the teacher rose from his place and beat up the mother.¹



A teacher would lead his young learners in ‘Asr Ṣalāh. When in rukū‘, he would place his head between his knees and look back at his students, some of whom would inevitably be playing the fool. He would then exclaim, “O son of the green-grocer, I saw what you just did. When I complete the Ṣalāh, I will punish you accordingly.”²



Al-Jāhīz narrates: A mother one day brought her son to a teacher who had a particularly long beard and requested, “My son refuses to obey me. Please scare him a bit.” The teacher placed his beard into his mouth, shook his head and gave a dreadful scream. This so terrified the mother that she broke wind.

“I asked you to scare my son, not me,” she exclaimed.

“When punishment is meted out it afflicts both the righteous and the wicked,” he explained.³



A man narrates: I once passed by a group of students who were beating up their teacher and pulling out the hair from his beard. I attempted to intervene and stop them, but he prevented me, saying, “Leave them alone! I have an agreement with them. If I arrive for lessons before them I beat them up and if they arrive before me they are permitted to beat me up. This morning I

1 Al-Mustaṭraf, p618

2 Al-Mustaṭraf, p618

3 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, footnote, p113

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

woke up late, but tomorrow I will arrive after half the night has passed and you can then see what a thrashing they will receive.”

One of the boys turned to him and remarked, “I will spend the night here and beat you up when you arrive tomorrow.”¹



Al-Jāhīz narrates: I passed by a dilapidated old house, in front of which I heard a teacher barking like a dog. I stood and watched in astonishment. After a short while, a young boy appeared from inside the house, and the teacher caught hold of him, spanking and yelling at him at the same time.

“Please explain to me what is going on here,” I asked.

He explained, “This spoilt boy does not want to learn and runs away into the house when I call him. He has a dog which he plays with. When he hears me barking like a dog, he assumes that it is his dog and comes out to have a look. I then grab hold of him.”²



Al-Jāhīz narrates: I passed by a classroom where I noticed a teacher sitting inside all by himself. When I enquired from him where his students were he replied, “They are playing and screaming in the street outside.”

“I would like to see them,” I requested.

“I would not advise you to do so,” he responded.

When I insisted, he warned, “When you reach the corner of the street, mind your head as they may mistake you for their teacher and slap you in the face.”³

1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p114

2 Al-Mustaṭraf, p618

3 Al-Mustaṭraf, p618

Business

Nabi ﷺ said: "Allāh has mercy upon a person who is forbearing when he buys, sells and claims his dues."

~ Bukhārī



A man required the services of a labourer and after he had found one enquired, "How much would you like to be paid?"

The labourer answered, "Feed me to my stomach's fill."

When the man asked whether this was his best price, the labourer said, "I fast every Monday and Thursday."¹



Ash'ab was haggling about the price of a bow he wanted to purchase. The seller suggested a dinar as the price. Ash'ab replied, "By Allāh, even if this bow could shoot a bird in the sky and it would fall roasted in between two slices of bread, I will never give you a dinar for it."²



Al-Jāhīz relates that he was once walking through a famous street of Basrah when he passed by an upmarket shoe shop. He walked in and chose a beautiful shoe. When he asked the price the owner replied that it was ten dirhams. The price was exorbitant and Al-Jāhīz was quite annoyed as he was anxious to purchase it.

1 Akhbār al-Zirāf Wa al-Mutamājīnīn, p97

2 Al-'Iqd al-Farīd, vol7, p199

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

He remarked, “Even if this was made from the hide of the cow which the Banū Isrāʾīl slaughtered on the instruction of Mūsa ﷺ, I would not pay more than one dirham for it.”

The owner lowered his head for a moment and then looked up at him and replied, “Even if you presented me with one dirham from the dirhams of the Aṣḥābul Kahf¹, I would not sell the shoe to you.”²



A man purchased some fruit from a fruit seller, but upon tasting found it to be extremely bitter. As nobody wanted to eat it, he returned to the seller and asked him for a refund. He refused. The buyer then sat down in front of his shop and addressed every person who came to buy from the shop, “I purchased this fruit from this shop and it was extremely bitter. Taste it if you do not believe me! Do not buy from here!” Soon the fruit seller began losing customers and realised that he had no choice but to refund the man and send him off.³



An exquisitely decorated bottle which was found amongst the treasures of Kisra was presented to Al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf. On breaking the seal, another similar bottle was found therein. The ruler then announced, “Who would like to purchase this bottle and its contents from me?”

His courtiers and nobles began bidding for it until they reached a price of five thousand dinars. Al-Ḥajjāj looked at it again and remarked, “I would not be surprised if it contains something completely ludicrous.”

He then concluded the deal and stipulated upon the purchaser the condition of opening the bottle so that he could see what it contained. Upon

1 Literally means 'Companions of the Cave'. Refers to those youth who hid in a cave to escape their tyrant ruler, as mentioned in the Qurʾān.

2 Fiqhī Laṭāʾif, p383

3 Al-Nawādir Qalyūbī, p260

opening, it revealed a note which read, 'One who intends to lengthen his beard should comb it from the bottom up.'¹



A man used to sell milk which he would mix with an equal quantity of water. After business one day, he left his money in a cloth beneath a tree and went to relieve himself. A monkey grabbed hold of the cloth and climbed up the tree. When the man returned he saw the monkey with his cloth and money, but as hard as he tried he could not retrieve it. He eventually sat down beneath the tree, exhausted. Incidentally, there was a well near the tree. The monkey bit the cloth open with his teeth and began throwing one coin in the well and another at the man until the cloth was empty. After collecting exactly half of his earnings, he remarked, "Milk from milk and water from water," meaning that the money he had earned from the milk portion had come to him but the money he had earned from the water portion was now in the water.²



One night, Khalīfah Hārūn al-Rashīd was quite restless, and said to his vizier, Jāfar ibn Yaḥyā al-Barmakī, "I am quite depressed and cannot fall asleep. I do not know what to do."

His servant Masrūr, who happened to be standing nearby, burst out laughing, and the Khalīfah exclaimed, "What are you laughing at? Are you mocking at me?"

Masrūr replied, "I take an oath by your relationship to the leader of the Prophets, Nabī ﷺ, that I am not laughing at you. It was just that, last night, I was outside the castle, walking towards the bank of the river Tigris, when I saw many people gathered around a joker, by the name of Ibn al-Maghāzalī. I recalled some of his words, and this caused me to laugh. I beg your pardon, O *Amīr al-Mu'minīn!*"

1 Al-'Iqd al-Farīd, vol8, p132

2 Laṭā'if Maḥmūd, p67

HUMOROUS ANECDOTES

Hārūn al-Rashīd commanded, “Bring him to me immediately!”

Accordingly, Masrūr went out in search of the joker. When he had found him, Masrūr said to him, “The *Amīr al-Mu’minīn* wants to see you.”

Ibn al-Maghāzalī replied, “To hear is to obey!”

But Masrūr continued, “I will take you to him on condition that if he presents you with a gift, a quarter of it will belong to you, and the rest to me.”

Ibn al-Maghāzalī replied, “No, half will be mine and half yours.” But Masrūr would not agree.

Ibn al-Maghāzalī again proposed, “I will keep a third of it and you can have the remaining two-thirds.” After a great deal of haggling, they finally agreed to this.

When he was brought to the palace, he greeted and introduced himself in an impeccable manner. Hārūn al-Rashīd said to him, “If you make me laugh, I shall give you five hundred dīnārs, but if you fail, I shall give you three blows with this sock.”

Now Ibn al-Maghāzalī thought to himself, “What are the odds of me getting three strokes with the sock?”

He thought that the sock was empty. Accordingly, he began to joke and play such tricks which would have made even a rock laugh. But, Hārūn al-Rashīd did not laugh. He did not even smile. Ibn al-Maghāzalī was initially astonished, then grieved and finally frightened.

Hārūn al-Rashīd said to him, “Now you deserve the blows.” He then took up the sock and twisted it. In the sock there were four stones, each of which weighed two *ratals* (a unit of measurement). When he struck Ibn al-Maghāzalī once, the latter yelled out in pain.

He remembered the condition Masrūr had imposed upon him and exclaimed, “Pardon, O *Amīr al-Mu’minīn*, listen to only two more words of mine.”

Hārūn al-Rashīd replied, “Say as you wish.”

He continued, “Masrūr and I have an agreement to the effect that he will have two-thirds of the reward I receive, and one-third will be mine. He had

agreed to this after much bargaining. *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* has decided that the reward would consist of three blows, of which my share would be one, and Masrūr's two. I have received mine, and now it is his turn."

Hārūn al-Rashīd laughed, called for Masrūr and struck him. Masrūr groaned from pain and said, "I give him the remainder as a gift!"

The Khalīfah laughed again and ordered them to be given one thousand dīnārs. Each received five hundred, and Ibn al-Maghāzalī left expressing his gratitude.¹

Thieves

Wretched are those who utilise their divine bounty of intelligence to deceive, cheat and swindle.



A man who was a thug and cheat died, leaving behind a wife and son. When they could no longer make ends meet, the son asked his mother, "How did father earn a living?" She explained that he used to swindle and cheat people of their money.

"I am his son and I will follow in his footsteps," he exclaimed. His mother tried to persuade him against this, but he would not agree. His mother prepared for him some food and he left the home. While walking, he arrived at a small village where he found four young women filling water from a well.

"What village is this?" he asked them.

"This is the village of robbers and fraudsters," they replied.

This pleased him greatly. He then proceeded to enquire what each of their names and their father's names were. As they were about to return to their homes, he asked them to take him with them as he was a stranger in

1 Al-Mustaṭraf, vol 1, p473

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the area. They agreed and left him at a famous meeting place in the village. He carefully noted which house each of them entered. Around evening time, their spouses arrived home from work and noticed the stranger in their midst. After meals, they all gathered at the meeting place to have their usual ḥuqqah¹ and discuss the day's happenings.

One of them suggested, "Besides our usual talk, we should play a game." The others agreed. They decided that each of them would have an opportunity to tell a story, but if it was proved to be false, the falsifier would have to pocket out five hundred rupees as a penalty.

The first of them said, "My grandfather had a cow that gave milk sufficient for the entire village to make khīr². The young man agreed, "Very possible. That was an age of barakah and goodness."

The second said, "My grandfather had a cow in whose urine a ship could sail."

Again the young man agreed, "Possible. If a cow can give milk for a village, why should it be farfetched to believe that a cow can urinate so much?"

The third said, "In my grandfather's time, one grain of rice was so large that the entire village could eat from it." The young man agreed to this as well.

The fourth then spoke, "My grandfather had such a long staff that he would strike the clouds, causing it to rain."

The young man agreed, "It is because of the blessings of this staff that the milk and rice were so valuable.

They then turned to the young man and asked him to narrate a story.

He said, "My father performed my marriage when I was very young. My wife was older than me and we were not compatible and one day she left me. My father married me to a second woman who was also older than me and left me on the same grounds. In this way I married four times and all my wives left me. As I was not mature at the time I could not divorce them. Today, as I entered this village I noticed four women filling water at the well. I looked at them carefully and realized that they were my wives. He then stated each of their names, their father's names and where they were living

1 A smoking pipe.

2 A type of desert made from milk.

currently. If you believe what I have said to be true then I request each of you to return my wife to me, and if you say that I am speaking a lie then each of you are compelled to hand me five hundred rupees.”

They each handed him five hundred rupees and he returned home, saying, “I am the son of a thug, am I not?”¹



A thief from the tribe of Banū Aqīl who decided to steal a horse narrates his experience: “I entered a tribal village and began searching for the stables. I then made my plans and decided to seek refuge in one of the homes. The night was pitch dark and a husband and wife were seated for a meal. As I was hungry, I joined them and reached out for some food from their plate. The man smelt a rat and caught hold of my hand. Thinking quickly, I caught hold of his wife’s hand with my other hand.

“Why are you holding my hand?” she called out to him. He thought that he was now holding onto her hand and released my hand. I then released her hand and we all resumed eating. Shortly thereafter, the woman suspected that something was amiss and caught hold of my hand.

Quickly, I grabbed the man’s hand and he asked her, “Why are you holding my hand?” She released my hand and I immediately released his hand. Soon both of them retired for the night while I left the house and escaped with a horse.²



Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl as-Samīrī narrates: “A pious old woman used to live in our village. She would fast excessively and perform Nafl Ṣalāh in abundance. Unfortunately, she had a son who earned a living by dealing in interest and was heavily involved in gambling and consuming liquor. By day, he would attend to his business and, around evening time, he would return

1 Laṭā‘if Maḥmūd, p 64

2 Al-Adhkiyā’, p 172

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home and hand over the money he had earned, to his mother for safekeeping. His nights were spent in sin and vain pleasures.

One day, a thief decided to steal his money. He quietly followed him home and entered the house without difficulty. He then concealed himself and waited. The young man handed the bag of money to his mother and left the house. She placed it in a particular room, wherein all their other valuables were also kept. The room was reinforced with solid timber walls and the door was made of iron. She then sat down in the same room and partook of her meal after the day's fast. The thief thought to himself that she would soon lock up the room and retire for the night and he could then emerge from his hiding place, open the door and take the bag. To his dismay, she remained where she was and began to perform Ṣalāh. She prolonged the Ṣalāh to such an extent that half the night passed. The thief was agitated and soon began fearing that she would continue her worship till daybreak. He quietly began searching the house and soon laid his hands upon a cloth and a string. He tied the cloth around his waist and lowered himself down a stepladder. From there, he called out in a loud tone in order to frighten the old woman. But she was wise and immediately realised he was a thief.

Giving the impression that she was afraid, she asked in a nervous voice, "Who are you?"

The thief answered, "I am Jibra'īl. I have been sent by the Lord of the worlds to guide your son. I have been instructed to advise him so that he abandons his sinful ways."

In an uneasy tone the old woman requested, "Jibra'īl, I beg you to be kind to him as he is my only son."

The thief replied, "I have not been sent to take his life."

"But why have you been sent then?" she asked.

"I have been instructed to take away his bag of money so that he is grieved by the loss. After he repents I will return his money."

The old woman continued, "Fine, you may proceed with your order."

He then requested, "Please step aside from that door." She complied.

He then entered the room and began gathering all the valuables. The old woman quietly shut the door, and tied the lock, trapping him in the room.

The thief realised that he was now in a predicament and desperately began searching for an opening to exit from the room, but there was none.

Frantically, he cried out, “You may now open the door as your son has accepted my advice.”

The old woman replied, “Jibra’īl, I am afraid that your celestial beauty will blind my eyesight.”

“I will extinguish my celestial beauty so that it does not harm you,” he tried to reassure her.

But she persisted, “Jibra’īl, what prevents you from exiting through the roof or flying over the walls with the aid of your wings? In this way, my eyesight will not be threatened.”

Now, the thief realised that he was dealing with a wise old woman. He endeavoured to soften her by apologising and repenting, but she ignored him.

“You will have to remain in the room until morning,” she exclaimed and resumed her Ṣalāh. He continued pleading until sunrise when her son returned. She related to him what had happened. He summoned the police who promptly arrived and arrested him.¹



Ibn Mājishūn رحمته الله was a distinguished scholar of the Mālikī school of thought. One day, a friend of his came to visit and explained, “Today I had a unique encounter. I was walking towards my orchard when a stranger suddenly confronted me, demanding, “Remove your clothing!”

I enquired, “Why?”

He replied, “Because I am more worthy of it than you.”

I enquired, “And who are you?”

He replied, “I am your brother. I do not have any clothing while you do.”

I asked in astonishment, “Then we should divide it between us equally.”

He replied, “Never! You have worn these clothes for a period of time. I now intend to wear them like you are doing now.”

1 Al-Adhkiyā’, p177

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I then asked, “Do you want me to remove these clothes and become naked?”

He replied, “I have heard a Ḥadīth narrated by Imām Mālik رحمته الله that performing ghusl (regulatory bath) whilst in the nude is permissible, and you are proceeding to perform ghusl.”

I asked, “But are you also requesting me to be naked in public?”

He replied, “This is a secluded place. Had I known that people would be passing by, I would not have made such a request.”

I requested, “At least allow me to reach my orchard. From there I will send these clothes to you after removing them.”

He replied, “Never! Once you reach your orchard, I suspect that you will send your servants to capture me and lead me to the king to be punished.”

I assured him, “No, I take an oath that I will not deceive you.”

He continued, “Imām Mālik has narrated a Ḥadīth that a promise made to a thief is null and void.”

I pleaded, “I take an oath that I will not deceive you in my promise to hand over my clothing to you.”

He replied, "But your promise is being made to a thief and holds no weight."

I pleaded, “Let's leave our debates aside! I take an oath that I will send them to you willingly.”

He thought to himself for a while and then answered, “Do you know what I am thinking about?”

“No,” I replied.

He explained, “I reflected upon the lives of all the thieves since the era of Nabī ﷺ, but I could not recall any of them dealing with their victims on credit. I, therefore, do not desire to introduce such a bid‘ah (innovation), the burden of which I will have to bear until the day of Qiyāmah.”

His explanation left me speechless. I removed my clothing and handed it over to him.”¹

1 Akhbār al-Zirāf Wa al-Mutamājīnīn, p 86

Miscellaneous Anecdotes

Sealed in Fate

Man plans and so does Allāh. And Allāh is the best of planners.

~ Qur'ān



Abū al-Qāsim al-Tambūrī lived in Baghdad. He possessed a pair of shoes which had seen many years of service. Whenever they tore, he would mend them. A time finally arrived when they became just too cumbersome to wear due to the sheer number of patches, and people coined the proverb, ‘More cumbersome than the shoes of Abū al-Qāsim al-Tambūrī.’

It so happened that one day, Abū al-Qāsim entered the market of the glass merchants and one of the brokers said to him, “A trader from Aleppo is selling some gold-plated glassware, but he has not yet found any buyer for it. Why don’t you purchase it from him and I will make the necessary arrangements?”

Abū al-Qāsim agreed and paid the price of sixty dinars. He then entered the perfume seller’s market where a broker similarly convinced him to purchase a fragrant rose-scented ʿīṭr. He paid the agreed price of sixty dinars and placed the ʿīṭr in the glass container he had just purchased. When he arrived home, he placed the container carefully on a shelf and then proceeded to the public bath. Here he happened to meet a friend who recommended that he change his shoes for a new pair, “They are in poor shape and you are after all a wealthy man.”

“I will do so,” Abū al-Qāsim promised. As he left the public bath and was about to wear his shoes, he noticed a splendid pair next to his. He wore the new pair and came home. Now, it so happened that the judge of the city had come to the public bath that day and could not find his shoes.

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“The one who wore my shoes must have left his own behind,” he declared. After a brief search, the famous shoes of Abū al-Qāsim were found and when they later searched his house, the judge’s pair was retrieved. Abū al-Qāsim was arrested, beaten, imprisoned and eventually released upon payment of a hefty penalty. Abū al-Qāsim decided to rid himself of the shoes and threw them into the Tigris River.

Now, it so happened that a local fisherman had cast his net, and out came the shoes. “These belong to Abū al-Qāsim. I am pretty sure he misplaced them and they ended up here.” He carried them to the home of Abū al-Qāsim, who was out at the time. He tossed them through the window into his house. As chance would have it, they landed upon the shelf, displacing the bottle of perfume, which crashed to the floor and shattered to pieces.

When Abū al-Qāsim arrived home he was devastated with the sight before him, “These shoes are reducing me to poverty.” That very night, he determined to dig a hole and bury them once and for all. Unfortunately for him, his neighbour heard the sound of the shovel, and fearing the workings of a thief, sent news to the governor. The police were summoned and presumed that Abū al-Qāsim was attempting to raid the home by means of a tunnel. He was arrested and only succeeded in having himself released after settling the appropriate fine.

Abū al-Qāsim, now at his wits end, tossed them into the sewage gutter. As luck would have it, the gutter clogged up and the plumbers were called in to investigate the cause of the blockage. Abū al-Qāsim’s shoes were found to be the offending source and their owner was again hauled before the governor, who imposed upon him a substantial fine.

“I have to get rid of these shoes,” Abū al-Qāsim declared. He washed them and placed them upon his roof to dry out. A dog mistook it for some dried meat and carried it away. As it reached the neighbour’s roof, the shoes fell from its mouth and landed upon a pregnant woman who miscarried as a result. When investigations were conducted, the cause of the miscarriage was identified as Abū al-Qāsim’s shoes. He was again dragged to the governor who imposed upon him the blood-money for the still-born baby boy.

Abū al-Qāsim was reduced to poverty in settling the payment, after which he grabbed hold of the infamous pair and arrived at the office of the judge. After narrating all his experiences, he begged, “Please write out for me a

guarantee note which will indemnify me from this pair of shoes. I wish to separate from them and have nothing to do with them ever again. They have rendered me penniless.” The judge laughed and sent him off with a small gift.¹



Shallow Thinking

Religion is based on divine teachings, not superficial logic.



Hoja’s neighbour passed away so he instructed a grave digger to dig him a grave. Unfortunately, they could not agree on a price and exchanged some unkind words. Hoja then left for the market where he purchased a piece of timber for two dirhams. When he returned carrying it, he was asked about it and explained, “The grave digger did not want to offer his services for less than five dirhams. I was wise enough to purchase this piece of wood for only two dirhams. We can use it to hang the body up. In this way we will save three dirhams, and the deceased will be safeguarded from the anxiety of the grave and also from the interrogation of Munkar and Nakīr.”^{2,3}



Pursuing Base Desires

Nabī ﷺ said: “No man is alone with a woman except that the third is Shaitān.”

~ Tirmidhī



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- 1 Ahlā al-Ḥikāyāt Min Kitāb Thamarāt al-Awrāq, p149
 - 2 Angels that question the deceased in the grave.
 - 3 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p37

A man went out in search of two of his family's lost donkeys. While searching, he noticed a woman who was adorned in ḥijāb and niqāb. He was so infatuated with her that he forgot all about the donkeys. He followed her and pleaded with her. She finally agreed to remove the veil from her face, which revealed an unusually large mouth and long teeth that stuck out between her lips. When he saw her teeth he remembered his two donkeys and remarked,

ذكري فوك حماري أهلي

“Your mouth reminded me about my family's two donkeys.”¹



Arrogance

Do not avert your face from people out of arrogance and do not strut about arrogantly on the earth. Allāh does not love the arrogant boaster.

Qur'ān



Moulānā Rūmī رحمہ اللہ علیہ narrated an incident of a grammarian who needed to cross a river in a boat. Boastfully he asked the boatman, “Do you know anything about grammar?”

“I do not,” replied the boatman.

“Poor man, you have wasted half your life,” he mocked.

The boatman did not say anything further. After sometime, the boat hit a rock and began to sink. Now the boatman asked the grammarian, “Do you know how to swim?”

“No,” he replied.

“Then you have wasted your entire life,” the boatman exclaimed.²



1 Mawsū'at al-Wafā Fī Akhbār al-Nisā', p200; Nathr al-Dur

2 Haste Hasāte Wāqī'āt, p165

Shame and Modesty

Nabī ﷺ said: "Every religion has a unique individuality and the unique individuality of Islām is modesty (ḥayā')."

~ Ibn Mājah

The 'Abbāsī Khalīf Mutawakkil had a beautiful slave girl whom he loved very dearly. One day, as she stepped out of the public bath she felt a strange weakness in her arms and raised them in the air. But when she tried to bring them down, she could not. They had become paralysed. The Khalīf was considerably troubled when he saw her in this state and immediately summoned all the doctors he knew. They all declared that they could not cure her. One of the ministers suggested that they summon Ibn Sā'id, an expert doctor from Kufa. After Ibn Sā'id examined her he declared, "I can cure her on one condition."

When the Khalīf asked what that was he explained, "I have an oil which I have personally prepared, however my student will need to massage it on her entire body."

The Khalīf objected, "How can a strange man be allowed to rub oil on her body?"

"This is the only way she can be cured," the doctor insisted. Reluctantly, the Khalīf agreed to allow the doctor to effect the treatment.

At the appointed time, the slave girl removed all her clothing and the doctor's student was brought before her to begin the massage treatment. When the slave girl saw the young man she panicked out of embarrassment and shame. Blood began to flow through her arms and she quickly ran to cover herself. Without realising, the paralysis of her arms had disappeared. The Khalīf was pleased and instructed that the doctor be rewarded.

"I will only accept a reward if my student is also rewarded as he was instrumental in the treatment and is more deserving of a reward," the doctor suggested.

The Khalīf agreed and called for the student, but was taken aback with his long beard. Ibn Sā'id stepped towards him and pulled on his beard, which

was instantly detached from his face. Standing before them was not a man, but a woman! The doctor had attached an artificial beard to a woman's face so that the slave girl's honour and dignity was not compromised by the solitary presence of a strange man. The Khalif was quite impressed and pleased with the wisdom of the doctor and rewarded both him and his student handsomely.¹



Friendship

Nabī ﷺ said: "The example of a good friend and a bad friend is like that of the seller of musk, and the one who blows the blacksmith's bellows. As for the seller of musk, he will either grant you some, or you will purchase some from him, or at least you will enjoy a pleasant smell from him. As for the one who blows the blacksmith's bellows, either he will burn your clothes or you will get an offensive smell from him."

~ Bukhārī



Bunān advised, "Never befriend a weaver, barber, tailor, hirer or broker. A weaver spends his entire day talking about how much he has weaved. He will complain about the thickness and width of the cloth and how difficult it is to weave it. A barber is engrossed in backbiting. From the time you arrive until you leave, he speaks about who came to him, how much they paid him and who is generous and miserly. A hirer will speak only about how much he earned in renting donkeys and your days will be wasted with him. A tailor knows inside stories about all his clients and will waste your time telling you who is in love with who. A broker will tell you only about the homes he has sold, the people who are wealthy and who is being investigated by the taxman. Don't ever befriend any of these people. They will dishonour and humiliate you in the sight of your colleagues. Rather befriend a cloth

1 Aṭṭibbā' Ke Hairat Angez Kārñāme, p20

merchant, a perfume seller, a money exchanger, a cotton merchant, a flour merchant or a pharmacist.”¹



Superficial Knowledge

It is not below the dignity of man to say, "I don't know."



A person once asked a philosopher: “A rat fell into my well and died. According to Sharīah is the water pure for me to utilise?”

The philosopher thought to himself, “If I reply that I do not know the answer my reputation will be tarnished. Hence, I will reply in such a complicated manner that the questioner will not realize that I do not know the answer.”

He explained, “The rat falling into the well has one of two possibilities: it either fell in of its own accord or it was thrown in by someone. If somebody threw it in then there are two possibilities: it was either thrown in by an animal or by a human being. If it was a human being it was either a male or a female. If it was a male, there are two possibilities: a young boy or a man. If it was a man there are two possibilities: he was either a scholar or a fool. If he was a scholar there are again two possibilities: he was either educated in the secular or the Islāmic field. If he was a scholar of Islām there are two possibilities: he was either a scholar of Ḥadīth or a jurist.”

The questioner exclaimed, “I hope you have completed. I no longer require an answer to my question.”²



1 Al-Taṭfīl, p147

2 Fiqhī Laṭā'if, p153

The Temptation of Wealth

Nabī ﷺ said: "If a man were to own one valley of gold, he would desire to own a second, but nothing will fill his mouth except the sand (of the grave). And Allāh turns with mercy to him who turns to Him in repentance."

~ Bukhārī



Ash'ab relates: My slave girl left a dinar with me in trust and I placed it beneath my muṣallā. After a few days, she came and asked me to return it to her.

I replied, "Check beneath the muṣallā. If the dinar has given birth to a child, take it and leave the dinar in its place." In her absence I had placed another dirham alongside the dinar.

When she raised the muṣallā she noticed the dirham and took it.

"If you leave the dinar here it will give birth to a dirham every Friday," I advised.

The next Friday she arrived to claim her dirham, but found nothing as I had pocketed the dinar. When she noticed it missing she began to cry and yell.

"What is the matter?" I enquired.

"You have stolen my dinar," she retorted.

"No, your dinar died of nifās¹," I attempted to explain. But she refused to believe me and continued yelling.

"How is it that you believed me when I said it gave birth, but you refuse to accept that it died from nifās!" I remarked.²



1 The bleeding a woman experiences after child-birth.

2 Al-Taṣnīf al-Mawdhū'ī Lī Tārīkh Baghdād, p449

Comprehension Dilemma

Speak according to the intelligence of your audience.



A man had an extremely lazy servant. One day, he sent him to purchase some grapes and figs. The master had to wait a long time for him to return and he brought only one of the two items requested of him. The master reprimanded him, “When I request you to fulfill any errand in future, you should combine two tasks at once.”

Some days later, the master fell ill and requested the servant to call for a doctor. The servant left and brought back with him a doctor and another man. When his master asked who the other man was, he explained, “Did you not command me to fulfill two tasks at once? I have brought a doctor who will see to your health, but if you do not recover, this man will dig your grave.”¹



Unwise Counsel

Seek the counsel of the wise and experienced.



Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Harīmī narrates: At Khurasaan, there lived a villager who owned a calf. One day the calf got its head stuck in a well after drinking water. The villager tried his best to get it out without causing any damage, but his efforts were in vain. The village teacher was called to assist. After assessing the situation he announced, “I will sort the matter out. Bring me a knife.” He then slaughtered the calf causing the head to fall into the well. He then grabbed a rock and broke the well.

1 Al-Mustaṭraf, p428

Annoyed and irritated, the villager exclaimed, “How wise of you! You have killed the calf and broken the well.”¹



Imitation

Wisdom demands insight and contemplation, not mindless imitation.



While on a journey a man stopped at a spiritual retreat for the night. It so happened that the devotees had not eaten for several days. That night, they tricked the traveller’s servant and stole his donkey. They sold it in the market and bought food with the money. They ate and drank to their fill and even invited the traveller to join in the meal. After the meal, they called a singer to entertain them with some verses. They also requested him to sing along, “The donkey is gone, the donkey is gone!”

The traveller happily joined in. The next morning, he could not find his donkey. His servant advised that the donkey had disappeared during the night. “I tried to inform you about this, but I heard you saying ‘the donkey is gone,’ and thought that you had already heard the news.”

“How could I have known? I was just singing along with everybody else,” the traveller foolishly exclaimed.²



Landlords and Tenants

True men keep their agreements even when the outcome is not in their favour.



1 Akhbār al-Ḥumaqā’ Wa al-Mughafilīn, p115

2 Haḍrat Thānwī Ke Pasandīdah Wāqī’āt, p182

Al-Kindī was a landlord who advised his tenants and even his neighbours, “In my home, there is a pregnant woman who sometimes miscarries due to the cravings of a fragrant pot of food. So, when you do decide to cook, send through a spoonful or even less as her craving is satiated by little. If you do not do so after I have now requested and if she miscarries you will be responsible for the blood-money. As a result, his home had a regular supply of dishes from neighbours and tenants which would last for days at a time. Many realized his deception but turned a blind eye to it. He would often silence his family by advising, “You are better off than them. Each of them have only one dish, while you have a variety.”¹

Maʿbad narrates: We rented at the house of Al-Kindī for over a year, paying his rent promptly and faithfully adhering to all his demands. One day, I said to him, “I fully understand your request to pay the rent promptly and to fulfill the demands, but what do you mean by complying with the terms?”

He replied, “Compliance with the terms means that tenants should take care of their animal’s and sheep’s droppings and their leftover fodder. Further, they should not throw out the bones or dirt that is swept out from their homes. In addition, they should carefully dispose of their date pits and pomegranate peels and finally, a spoonful from every dish cooked in their homes should be sent for the pregnant woman in the landlord’s home.” He was quite accommodating in this regard, while his tenants would shoulder his demands due to his jolly nature, excessive miserliness and jovial dialogue.²

Maʿbad narrates: One day, my cousin and his son paid us a visit, when immediately I received a note from Al-Kindī, my landlord “If your two guests decide to stay a night or two I will bear the burden, even though their stay of a single night raises my hopes of them staying many nights.”

I replied, “They desire only to stay a month or so.”

He wrote back, “You pay a rental of thirty dirhams while you are six. That equals five dirhams per person. Now that you have added two more

1 Al-Bukhalāʾ, p102

2 Al-Bukhalāʾ, p103

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visitors, you will be required to pay ten dirhams extra. The total rental will therefore now be forty dirhams.”

I replied, “What harm does it do to you when they are staying with me? The weight of their bodies is borne by the earth which endures the weight of mountains, while the burden of seeing to their expenses is upon me, not you! Please write to me your justification for increasing the rental so that I may comprehend your logic.”

Little did I realize that I had opened up a hornets nest for myself which drew me into more problems, for he wrote back, “The reasons for the rental increase due to an increase in occupants are many, obvious and undisputable. Firstly, the toilet pipes fill up more readily and there is a proportionate increase in the labour required to clean them. Secondly, with more feet there is an increase in footsteps on clay-covered surfaces, plastered floors and staircases. This results in scaling of the clay, peeling of the plaster, damage of the stairs, not to mention the wearing out of the joints upon which the roof stands. All of this damage is due to the excess weight caused by the added traffic. Thirdly, the increased movement in and out, up and down, the opening and closing, locking and unlocking leads to the weakening of doors and damaging of hinges. When the number of children and family members increase, door-nails come loose, metal plates on doors come off, screws are separated and other items suffer from wear and tear. Little holes are dug into the ground for playing games in addition to the holes being knocked into walls for metal pegs and wooden shelves. Fourthly, when there is an escalation in visits from family, visitors, guests and acquaintances the need for water increases and many more large drums and water tanks are brought in. Now, how many walls have had their base eaten away, their top fragmented, their foundation cracked all because of water dripping from tanks, excessive amounts of water being used from wells and bad planning. In proportion to the number of inhabitants, there will be a need for baking bread, cooking food, using wood and lighting fires. Now, fires spare nothing, and houses together with all their fittings serve as perfect fuel. How many homes have been burnt to the ground and tenants like yourself then burden the landlord with extensive repairs. Often, these come at a time when money is tight and conditions are tough. At times, the fire and damage spreads to the

homes of neighbours and lives and property are lost. At such a time, if people would leave the landlord to suffer the effects of his misfortune, these may be bearable. But they accuse him of being unlucky, minimize their discussions with him and increase in their accusations and insults.

And, yes, tenants then tend to make their kitchens on the upper floors and roofs despite the adequate space on the ground floor and courtyard of the house. This comes with the danger to life and property and the unnecessary exposure of the women-folk to mischief-makers if there is ever a fire at night. These mischief-makers will then have easy access to hidden secrets, fugitives in hiding, undercover guests, owners in hiding, forbidden drinks, banned literature and enormous wealth that was meant to be buried but was not due to the fire. In short, many private matters will be exposed to the public in such a situation. To add fuel to the fire, they then set up their ovens and pots on the roof surface where there is no barrier between the fire and the roof beams except a tiny layer of clay. It would have been so much less stressful to them if they had just thought it out carefully. Now, knowing the consequences, it would be really surprising if you still go ahead with this. And, if you think nothing of safeguarding our possessions, neither do you care for your own belongings it will be even more surprising!

Then again, many of you tenants delay in paying and delivering the rental timeously. After many months have passed with rental overdue, the tenants elope, leaving the landlords starving and remorseful over the response to their kindness and leniency in requesting what was due to them. Their reward and thanks comes in the form of their rights being withheld and their sustenance being denied to them.

At the time of occupation, we sweep and clean the homes so that they are appealing to the tenant and attractive to the onlooker. But, when they leave the place it is like a garbage can, requiring great expenses to restore it to its original clean state. Then they carry away with them the door latch, staircase, all detached furnishings and the icebox. They clean their clothes and grind their foodstuff on the floor of the home. They bang on stone supports for the roof, pillars and light fittings. And if the floor is plastered or bricked, even though the landlord has deliberately made an area for the pounding and grinding to protect the remaining floor, the tenants' contempt,

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hard-heartedness, dishonesty and wickedness leads them to pound wherever they are seated with total indifference to the damage they are causing. They do not compensate for the damage caused, nor seek the landlord's permission beforehand, nor privately seek forgiveness from Allāh. After all this, they find it difficult to contribute an extra ten dirhams a year, but do not find it excessive for the landlord to fork out a thousand dirhams a month. Do they ever ponder over the measly returns we receive and do they not see the tremendous benefits they receive?

Remember also that during the period of occupation, fastened items are broken, new fixtures become old and the workers reduce the fittings to pieces just as one splits a rock. The house is taken full advantage of, just like something moist is dried, then shrunk into nothingness.

A house has a limited lifespan and it is the tenant who enjoys its benefits and utilises its comforts. He is the one who wears out their novelty and removes their glitter. Through his poor planning they become dilapidated and shabby. If we have to compare the expenses incurred in restoring and repairing them with the rental income I have received, the loss to the landlord equals to the profit derived by the tenant. The only difference is that the expenses I have paid are a lump sum while the rental income paid to me is in instalments. Further, these instalments are accompanied by lengthy delays in payment by the tenant and numerous requests by the landlord to settle the arrears, in addition to the hatred shown by the tenant to the landlord and the love shown by the landlord to the tenant. The landlord, after all, loves to see the tenant healthy, his business thriving if he is a trader, and his services in demand if he is an artisan. In sharp contrast, the tenant's only love is that Allāh distracts his landlord from him in any way possible, whether it be in the way of personal problems, misfortunes, imprisonment and even death. Further, he does not care how he is distracted, only that the more he is preoccupied the greater will be his sense of comfort and security as a tenant. To top it all, if perchance, his business drops he hastens to request a discount and respite. On the other hand, if Allāh grants him a profit in his business, he never considers imparting an extra qiraat or advance payment.

Furthermore, when he pays with genuine coins it is in instalments, and when he pays in portions he slips in various types of counterfeit coins and

tries to hoodwink the landlord in any way possible. And, when his fake coins are returned to him, he takes false promises that they were never his and that he had never seen them before. If the landlord returns the fake coins with his servant his response is deceptive and abusive. All of this excludes his spying on his neighbours, interfering with their womenfolk, slaughtering their chickens and complaining to us about their wrongs. He frequently despises them and pries into their faults and weaknesses. He gives them interest-free loans, tricks them into false aspirations and opens up to them new avenues of spending so that they end up in debt and he can profit thereby. When he finally has them chained and in his control, he pressurizes them into selling or pawning a portion of their home. He then says to others that it is sold, but it is in fact only pawned, in which case he demands prompt payment of the debt and makes an early claim to purchase the property.

In his attempt to seek respite in payment of the rental he goes to the extent of claiming that he has a silent partner in the agreement, who then becomes another legal plaintiff. Sometimes he poses as a prospective tenant, spends the night in the premises with an evil woman and then returns the key. At other times, he rents the place and after discovering something which needs to be repaired, he obtains the appropriate materials and employs the necessary artisans. When they are all busy and diverted, he takes hold of what he can and disappears, leaving the landlord in a bigger problem. On other occasions, he rents out a place close to the prison so that his imprisoned partners can dig through the wall to escape. Sometimes, he rents close to a money-exchanger to break into his shop because this is an ideal technique which gains him time and safety. At times, the tenant commits a crime like murder which necessitates the demolition of the house. The state sheriff then arrives to impose the order even though the owner of the property may be an orphan, in poverty or absent.

In the final analysis, houses are bound to perish and their owners are the unfortunate victims. They are the worst afflicted by others deceptive schemes and the most depressed of people. This is no surprise since one who hands his home, its beams, its furnishings, its doors and metal panels and its gold-plated ceilings to a total stranger takes a huge risk and lays it open to innumerable dangers. He becomes one who has given something in trust

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to another, and unfortunately for him, rented houses tend to be the most exploited of trusts. The best of tenants are those who do the necessary repairs after discovering faults, but take a cut after adding on a fictitious amount to the total expenses. What can you then say about this group of people called tenants, when the best of them behave in this manner! You people then often sub-let the premises to others for an amount in excess of what you are paying to your landlord. So deal with us like how you deal with them and pay us in the same way you expect them to pay you. You people also often decide to build upon the land, despite it belonging to another person, and you then claim a share in the property. You treat it like it is yours and let it out almost as if you acquired it by way of inheritance from your forefathers.

Another crime is that you have ruined the capital value of my assets, destroyed my income and, by your poor management, produced a depreciation in the value of the properties and the revenue they generate. Their value has dropped in the sight of the wealthy and affluent and even the common folk and destitute, all of whom try to avoid you and prefer spending their wealth in other ventures. Even a distinguished scholar such as 'Uбайдullāh ibn Al-Ḥasan has coined the proverb, 'Rental income is only sufficient to keep one alive and the income from date-palms is barely sufficient. Income in reality is that which is generated from crops, camels and sheep.' This is the reward I receive for my kindness in requesting my dues and for my patience over your appalling payment record. You are in the habit of paying in instalments whereas you need to pay in full. Further, you dillydally, despite knowing that the payment needs to be prompt. For these reasons, rental income is pathetic and property investments are the worst performing of all investments, despite the huge capital outlay and expenses incurred.

You tenants are worse to us than the Indians, Greeks, Turks and the Daylamites because you are perpetual in your abuse and trouble-making. This is your conduct, character and plots when you are bound in a contract. What could be expected of you when you are free to exercise your own will and have many avenues of choice?

Couple this with your testimony that renting is easier than purchasing a property because the purchaser is bound and constrained to pay its full price. One who lets out a property, sets up an adversary who does not fulfill his

obligations nor can he be challenged. If he is absent from his property, he does not feel at ease. If he is present, he is plagued by hardships and difficulties. Evil neighbours torment him, the masjid is a distance from him, he cannot frequent the market and his needs are left unfulfilled. He begins to regard his purchasing of a property as a mistake and oversight. He is a slave of his own home and a servant of his neighbour. On the other hand, a tenant is free to choose and has the option of utilizing any property for either recreation, trade or residing. He suffers no humiliation, injury or inconvenience. He has no need to fear oppression, the enmity of the envious, nor the excuses of others. In comparison, the landlord has to swallow the bitter medication, drink from the cup of anger, toil for his dues and stomach disgrace even if he be proud. If he chooses to forgive he succeeds only in swallowing his anger and then they attribute this to his weakness. If he chooses to retaliate he ends up worse off. Nabī ﷺ said: 'Analyse a neighbour before a home and a companion before a journey.'

You have assumed that paying your rental in instalments is easier, but you forget that difficulties befall the landlord at the same time. The purchase price paid by the owner is paid as a lump sum and its disbursement causes a substantial void in his savings. And, remember that not every void can be filled, neither is every payment refunded. A tenant is safe from fire, flooding, leaning pillars, damages, weakening foundations, falling walls, troublesome neighbours and envious rivals, whereas a landlord is either in problems or anxiously anticipates problems. If the landlord happens to be a trader, utilizing the purchase sum of the house in another business venture or enterprise is more profitable. If he is not a trader, he would still be hesitant to purchase due to the pitfalls of being a landlord which I have mentioned previously. When the property market plunges, it affects the value of all property and allows tenants to become bold by withholding rentals and seeking a respite.

And you think that you are doing me a favour by referring prospective tenants to me because of the potential benefit! In fact you have no intention to benefit us. Your only intention to get them to rent is to prevent them from buying. People should be judged according to their actions and conduct, and all of these despicable qualities are a part of you. They serve as evidence of your

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evil character and stand as proof for others to be wary of you. Not a single noteworthy quality or trait can be found in your behaviour towards me!

I have already explained to you that guests are in the same category as residents, and that anything additional will raise the rental to be paid. O my Basri brother, if I overlook your extra two guests, it would not be farfetched of you to pay the same rental whether one or a thousand guests reside at the premises. The place will then become a thoroughfare for visitors and travellers alike. Had I not requested the additional rental from you, you would have not appreciated my kindness upon you. A poet explains,

‘Ingratitude is the unfortunate reward shown to the benefactor.’

And another poet says,

‘My kindness is rewarded by ingratitude; by one who disregards my kindness upon him.’

Your claim against me is reminiscent of the abhorrence the Mu‘tazilah have of the Shī‘ā, the enmity between the people of Kufa and Basrah, the animosity between the tribes of Asad and Kindah and reveals the dislike a tenant harbours within his heart for his landlord. May Allāh assist me against you. As Salām.¹



الحمد لله رب العالمين

Alḥamdulillah, all praise is due to Allāh ﷻ for allowing this book to reach completion. May Allāh ﷻ accept it and add it to the author’s scale of good deeds in the Hereafter.

*One in need of Allāh’s mercy and forgiveness,
Afzal Ismail*

1 Al-Bukhalā’, p104

Glossary

- Amīrul Mu'minīn - title for the leader of the Muslims
barakah - divine blessings
diyyah - blood money
du'ā' - supplication
fardh - an obligatory act
fatwā - religious verdict issued by an Islāmic scholar
ghusl - ritual bath
ḥakīm - A herbal physician
īṭr - fragrance or perfume
iḥṭār - meal at the time of breaking fast after sunset
Inshā-Allāh - If Allāh wills
Jumu'ah - Congregational Friday prayer
khalīf - leader of the Muslims
muṣallah - prayer mat
muṣallī - a person performing Ṣalāh
niqāb - veil covering the face
qaḍā - fulfilling those duties that one may have missed due to some reason
ṣadaqah - optional charity
sajdah - prostration
subḥānallāh - Literally means 'Allāh is pure'. Used to express the greatness of Allāh or as an expression of surprise.
sunnah - an act which Nabī ﷺ said, did or approved
sūrah - a chapter of the Qur'ān
sutrah - an object serving as a screen for one who is performing Ṣalāh.
tasbīḥ - expressing the purity of Allāh
tawakkul - trust in Allāh
topi - headgear worn by Muslims

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