

Part 14: Some Hadiths to the Contrary

There are some hadiths which appear to be contrary to what we have said. But their contradiction is either superficial or due to the fact that owing to some misunderstanding they were misquoted by one of their transmitters. In the first case the contradiction disappears when we go deep into the reports and in the second case the mistake can be rectified by comparing the hadiths in question with other reports on the subject. We give below an example of each type. Let us take the second case first.

A hadith has been mentioned in al-Bukhari's al-Sahih on the authority of Yahya bin Yamar, according to which Ayesha, Mother of the Faithful, says that she asked the Holy Prophet about the epidemic of plague.

He said: "It was a scourge sent by Allah unto whom He willed. Now it has been made a blessing for the Muslims. A person who stays in the affected town, shows patience and believes that nothing will befall him except what Allah has ordained, will receive the same reward as a martyr".

Now we quote another hadith on this very subject. It is mentioned in al-Kafi, Vol. VIII. According to it Ubaydullah al-Halabi asked Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a) whether a person was allowed to move out of a place where plague had broken out?

The Imam (a) said: "There is no harm. The Prophet only forbade the leaving of a place which was situated in front of the enemy position. When plague broke out there and the people began to flee from it, the Prophet said that he who fled from there, would be considered to have run away from a battlefield. The Prophet said so because he did not want the Muslims to desert their position.

It is clear from the explanation given by Imam Sadiq that the reason why the Holy Prophet forbade fleeing from plague on a particular occasion was that he wanted to impress upon the Muslims that they must stick to their duty and must not expose themselves to a bigger risk. He did not issue a general instruction that the Muslims should not take precautionary measures against plague and should sit simply awaiting what was in store for them. A Muslim is duty bound to protect his life property.

As the saying of the Holy Prophet passed through a number of transmitters, it took the shape of a

general rule as we find it in its present form in al-Bukhari. Fortunately the real intention of the Holy Prophet has been disclosed by Imam Sadiq, who naturally knew it better than anybody else, for he himself was a member of Ahl al-Bayt al-Rasul (the Holy Family).

It is also possible that the hadith of al-Bukhari may have some other background and intention. The Holy Prophet might have asked the people not to move out of a plague-ridden town so that they might not transmit the epidemic to other places. In olden days there existed no means of treating this disease, nor there were any quarantine arrangements. The only possible precaution against the spreading of the disease was that the people should not move out of the infected place.

Recounting Umar's Journey to Syria Ibn Abi al-Hadid in his commentary on the Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 132 says: "On hearing that plague was raging in a particular town of Syria, Umar decided not to visit that place. In reply to Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah, who had objected to his fleeing from a Divinely ordained destiny, he said that Abd Al-Rahman ibn Awf had told him that the Holy Prophet had said; "If plague breaks out in a place, do not enter it, if you are not already inside it, but if you are, do not leave it".

Either, the hadith of Sahih al-Bukhari is related to that incident which has been explained by Imam Sadiq or it is an instruction to the effect that the people of an infected area should not go to any other place. In either case it is certain that its significance is not what it apparently indicates, and that its transmitters have misunderstood it.

There is another report in al Kafi, Vol. II. According to it Imam Sadiq is reported to have said:

"One day Imam Ali (a) was sitting with some people under a dilapidated wall. Someone asked him not to sit under that wall because it was tottering. The Commander of the Faithful said that one's appointed time (time appointed for his death) guards him. No sooner he left the place than the wall fell down".

Imam Sadiq (a) added that the Commander of the Faithful used to do such things often. That is what is called *Yaqeen* (Conviction).

It may be said that this hadith is not in keeping with what we mentioned earlier and according to which Asbagh bin Nubatah reported that Imam Ali (a) moved away from the bent wall and on being criticized for fleeing from one divinely ordained destiny, he said that he was fleeing from one divinely ordained destiny to another. How is it that when Ali, himself moves away from a bent wall and he is criticized for doing that, he says that he was fleeing from destiny to another and when he is asked by someone else to do that, he says that the 'appointed time' guards him?

Further, according to the Islamic law it is not permissible to sit under a tottering wall. Then how is it that Imam Ali did not leave the place under the plea that he was guarded by his 'appointed time'?

It appears that keeping in view what we have said earlier, this hadith can be interpreted in a way that it

would neither be inconsistent with the hadith of Asbagh bin Nubatah nor with the legal principle enjoining the protection of one's own life.

While discussing the spiritual factor we said that the sequence of the causes affecting a destiny could not be confined to the three dimension material causes of this world. The spiritual causes are also equally effective. Some times it so happens that when we look at an event from its material angle only, it appears that the sequence of its causes is complete, but if we look at it from another angle and observe some secret aspects of it, we realize that some spiritual causes to the contrary and other good deeds performed with good intention make an impact on the system of causation. If somebody has a sense additional to those senses which we all normally have, his judgement in certain cases may be quite different from that of ours. This case may be illustrated by an example.

We are three-dimensional beings. Our judgements about three-dimensional matters will naturally be different from that of two-dimensions. But as far as two dimensional matters are considered, our judgement and their judgement will be the same. The people who are endowed with 'conviction' have an additional sense and they look at things from a different angle. Naturally on certain occasions their judgement is different from ours.

We may regard a thing as a cause of death, but a man of conviction may not think so, because he has an eye on certain inner force at work. From spiritual point of view there is no reason why we should not believe that certain things are spiritually effective in causing prolongation of life, maintenance of health and expansion of the means of living, and that the people endowed with conviction are aware of them.

Anyway, this hadith can be explained, though it requires a lengthy explanation.

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