

The Homeless Aunt

Khadijah listened as her aunt tearfully complained to them about her miserable situation. She was saying, "So you see, I have received nothing for my trouble. Both of my children disregard all that I have suffered for their sake. I sold my last gold ornament to send my daughter abroad. I have mortgaged my house twice to enable my son to become a doctor.

I sold a valuable carpet so that I could buy a colour T.V. to please my daughter. Do they appreciate or even remember such sacrifices? No. My son wants me to stay away from his home since his wife can't tolerate my presence in the company of her aristocratic visitors. She says she wants to be free in my son's house, as if I deprived her of her freedom."

"I thought that my daughter would be happy to have me live in her house. She is my only daughter. You remember how I helped her to live a life free from worry. Do you know how she treated me in return? Like a maid in her service who should clean her house for her and look after her child while she and her husband spent their time at theaters and clubs. Yesterday, she was out until one in the morning. Her child cried and cried and I couldn't calm him. When she finally came home, I was tired and complained about her behavior. I wanted her to treat me like her mother, not like a servant or a baby sitter...."

"Can you guess what she said to me? Without any shame, she told me that since she gave me shelter and food, I had no cause to complain. She also told me that she valued her freedom and was not ready change for the sake of either her child or her mother."

She wept bitterly, unable to continue. Khadijah gave her something to drink and Khadijah's mother tried to comfort her sister. Khadijah told her aunt gently, "...It is a pity that you have taken so much trouble to raise your children. You have brought them up in such away that you yourself produced the present state of affairs.

You thought that your daughter's happiness could be found in unlimited freedom, and, as a result, she did not learn what her responsibilities were towards you. You helped her neglect her religious duties. Your methods have backfired. She enjoyed life to the utmost without the least concern for Allah, and she forgot the high position Allah the almighty has assigned to a mother. She forgot the Qur'anic verse:

“And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve but Him, and goodness to your parents. If either or both of them reach old age with you, reprimand them not, nor chide them, and speak to them a generous word. And make yourself submissively gentle to them with compassion and say: Oh, my Lord! Have compassion on them as they brought me up.” (Al Isra, 17:23, 24)

And the Qur'anic verse:

“...and keep up prayer, surely prayer is timed ordinance for the believers” (Al-Nisa, 4: 103)

"You should have taught her the verse in the Holy Qur'an concerning hijab, " continued Khadijah,

“...and let them (women) wear their covering over their bosoms and not display of their ornaments...” (Al-Nisa, 4:31)

"The result of being raised with no regard to religious duties is always deviation from the right path. There is a great difference between one who spends long hours watching television and indecent films and a person who spends his nights reading religious books which tell him that caring for parents is equal to worshipping Allah, and that Paradise lies at the feet of mothers. You have sold your gold ornament," she continued, "and sent your daughter abroad, but you have forgotten that such travel can uproot all good instincts still buried within her conscience. She has returned to you a figure empty of compassion."

Her aunt sighed deeply and said, "You are quite right, Khadijah. It is my own fault, but I have realized this too late. I followed my husband's advice, which was to raise my children free of all complexes, and to allow them to have whatever they desired. Now, I see how mistaken I have been. Your parents, who brought you up with much attention to religious instructions, are quite happy with you." Khadijah replied, "They are happy as well with my husband and with my brother's wife. My husband encourages me to fulfill my duty towards my parents in order to please Almighty Allah."

Her aunt then said, "I wish I had chosen a righteous husband for my daughter to help her rid herself of all deviation. She should not have married a man who gambles and drinks."

Khadijah then asked, "Why did you agree to such a marriage?"

"It was his expensive car that attracted my daughter, and the high dowry impressed me and prompted me to accept him as a son-in-law," replied her aunt. Sorrowfully, Khadijah said, "Oh, how frank you are, dear aunt! It is a pity that you have realized the truth too late. May Allah save you from this loss, since you admit your fault."

The aunt spent a week in her sister's house, and during that time neither her daughter nor her son showed any concern for her well-being. Khadijah's mother wanted her sister to live with them, but their house was small. The aunt was seriously pressed for a place to live. One morning, Khadijah and her husband said to her, "Please come and stay with us. We really would like to have you. Don't disappoint

us."

"Oh, I am a broken-hearted woman. What can I do for you?" her aunt replied. Then she accepted their kind offer gratefully. Khadijah mentioned a narration of the Prophet of Islam (SAWS) in this regard, which states: A Muslim believer came to the Prophet (SAWS) and asked what he could do to please Allah. The Prophet (SAWS) asked him if he had a mother, and the man said: "No". Then the Prophet (SAWS) asked if he had an aunt, and he answered: "Yes". The Prophet (SAWS) recommended that he should look after her and love her because she had the same position as mother. The aunt feared that she would be a burden to them.

But Khadijah's husband said, "Please do not say such a thing. I lost my mother too early in life to enjoy her love and care. Perhaps Allah has sent you to make up for that loss. You can live with us and you can receive your son and daughter here whenever you like."

Khadijah's mother, who was seated nearby, said, "They are quite serious about wanting you to live with them. I would be very happy to know that you are near my daughter."

The aunt moved to her new home and was comfortable and at ease for the first time in her life. She never felt like an intruder, and Khadijah accompanied her when she attended religious meetings. The aunt benefited very much from these meetings and enhanced her religious knowledge. She compared Khadijah's happy marriage to her daughter's. She could feel the harmony and spiritual understanding between Khadijah and her husband, and recalled her daughter's life, which was full of quarrels resulting from jealousy, selfishness and indifference. She could easily differentiate between the normal, healthy life of her niece and the disturbed, unnatural one of her daughter. She could do nothing but pray to Allah to guide her daughter and son to the right path.

Early one morning a few months later, the doorbell rang continuously, and Khadijah hurried to open it. She was surprised to see her cousin standing at the door, carrying her child in her arms. Her eye was black and she looked pale. Khadijah welcomed her cousin and took her to her mother's room. The mother was surprised to see her daughter, and she rushed towards her to take her in her arms. She thought that her daughter longed to see her and she had regretted her past behavior. But her daughter sat down on the nearest chair without the faintest idea of her mother's feelings.

The daughter said, "My husband has turned me out of our house, as if I were a piece of used furniture that could be replaced." Her mother's face grew pale and she said, "He turned you out? When? How?"

Her daughter replied, "Oh, mother. You know how he is. He returns home late every evening, quite drunk. He throws himself on the bed dead with sleep. When I object to his behavior, he reminds me of our deal that we should respect each other's freedom. I can do nothing but keep silent, since this idea of freedom was my wish from the beginning. But things have grown worse recently. He has started to help himself by my salary and deprived me of my rights in my house.

"Yesterday he said he would no longer tolerate the chains of marriage and made me leave my own home. I spent the night in the garden. I have nowhere to go! My only brother won't allow me to stay in his house. I have none to turn to but you."

Her mother did not know what to say. She thought her niece was kind enough to have her in her house. Could she bring someone else to live with her? It was too much a favor to ask. Khadijah, who had heard everything, knew of her aunt's hidden suffering. She decided to save her the trouble. She told her cousin, "You have done the correct thing by coming to your mother. She will be happy to have you with her until things get better."

The distraught young woman thanked her cousin for her kind help and said, "Oh, how grateful I am to you, Khadijah! You have been so kind to my mother. Now you are doing me a great favor."

Khadijah smiled and said, "Oh, don't say such things. You should consider this house as your own." The aunt was so moved that she rushed to Khadijah and kissed her. She said, "How wonderful you are, my dear! What great faith you have."

Khadijah whispered into her ear, "Please, aunt ask your daughter to wear her hijab as long as she is in our house." The aunt answered immediately, "Oh, yes, I have already decided to do so."

She settled herself near her daughter and said "I have never felt such comfort in my life as I feel here. I have found in your cousin Khadijah and her husband love and care that I never found in you and your brother. You are my own children, but you showed ingratitude towards me, while my niece and her husband flood me with kind feelings. I wish you knew the reason." She was silent for a while. Then her daughter said, "Oh, mother, surely it is faith in Allah and His Pleasure that dominates their life, while we lack such faith."

"Praise is due to Allah the Almighty that you have realized the truth by yourself I" said her mother. "Therefore, you should start to show regret for the past and return to religion by first wearing your hijab." The daughter looked down at the floor and was silent. Then Khadijah said "...I think she has found out what happens when one neglects one's religion. She now feels the importance of Islamic ethics."

Her cousin looked up at her and said "You are right, Khadijah. I am tired of this life of pretence. I need someone to lead me and teach me true faith and real salvation with no submission to other's wishes and desires. But I can't help wondering what people will say about me."

Khadijah replied, "You always tried to please people in the past, which made you their slave. You have gained nothing from that but false happiness. You have wasted years, running the wrong way. Now, it is time for you to come back to your religion and understand Islamic values in order to gain happiness in this life and the Hereafter."

"Will Allah accept my repentance after years of deviation?" her cousin asked.

"Yes, of course, Allah loves those who repent and hates those who insist on doing wrong." Then Khadijah recited the Qur'anic verse:

***"Do they not know that Allah accepts repentance from his servants and takes the alms, and that Allah is All Compassionate? Say: Work and Allah will see your (good) work and so will His Apostle and the believers ..."* (At-Tawbah or Bara'at, 9: 104, 105)**

The cousin spent a few weeks with her mother. She was greatly affected by Khadijah's strong faith. Khadijah did her best to help her, and she gave her some Islamic books that she read and discussed later. Khadijah's cousin eventually became a good Muslim, and she knew she could no longer live with a man addicted to drinking and gambling. She filed for divorce. She gave up all her rights to her home in return for keeping her only child. She intended to raise him to be a good believer.

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