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Think and Answer

Lesson 8: The Tradition of Thaqalain and Noah's Ark

The documentation of the Tradition of Thaqalain One of the famous Traditions among the 'ulama of the Sunnis and Shi'ites is the Tradition of Thaqalain.

A large group of the Companions, without any break, recorded this Tradition from the Prophet and some of the great 'ulama say that 30 of the Companions have mentioned it (Sirah Halabi, vol. 33, p. 308)

A large group of the recorders have mentioned this in their books and there can be no doubt as to this Tradition.

The great scholar, Sayyid Hashim Bahrani, in his book, Ghayat al-Maram, mentions this Tradition with 39 documentations from the Sunni scholars and 80 documentations from the Shi'ite 'ulama Mir Hamad Husayn Hindi, another great scholar who studied this issue further, mentioned 200 Sunnis who have recorded this Tradition and he has compiled them in 6 volumes.

Among the individuals of the famous Companions who have recorded this are Abu Sa'id Khudari, Alm Dharr Ghifari, Zayd ibn Arqam, Zayd ibn Thabit , Abu Rifa', Jabir ibn Matam, Huzaifah, Damarah Islami, Jabir ibn Abdallah Ansari, and Umm Salimah.

The basic Tradition, according to Abu Dharr Ghifari, is that once when he was in the Ka'bah, he turned to the people and said that I heard that the Holy Prophet had said, "I leave two things of value among you: the Quran and my family. These two will never separate from each other until they enter unto me in the Fountain of Abundance (kawthar) in Paradise. Thus, take care to follow what I have recommended."
(Recorded from Jama' Tarmidhi as from Niyabi' al-Mawadah, p. 37)

This Tradition is found in the most reliable of the Sunni sources such as Sahih Tarmidhi, Nisai', Musnad Ahmad, Kanz al-'Amal and Mustadrak Hakim, etc.

In many of the books this Tradition has been called *thaqalin* (two valuable things) and in some it is called *khalifitin* or two successors which do not differ in meaning.

It is interesting to note that in the various Traditions of Islam, this verse has been used by the prophet for the people on different occasions.

In the Tradition of Jabir ibn Abdallah Ansari, we read that he said this on the hajj on the day of Arafah.

It is recorded in a Tradition of Abdallah ibn Khattab that in Juhfah (an area between Makkah and Madinah where some of the pilgrims enter the state of *ihram*).

It is recorded in a Tradition of Umm Salimah where this is said at Ghadir Khum.

It is recorded in a part of the Tradition during the last days of his blessed life, while he was on his death bed.

It is recorded in a Tradition he said this upon the pulpit in Madinah (*al-Marajat*, p, 42)

Even famous Sunni scholars mentioned in Ibn Hajar in his book, *Sawafiq al-Mahraqah* says from the Holy Prophet , "The Holy Prophet of Islam, after saying this Tradition , took 'Ali's hand and pulled him up and said, 'It is 'Ali and the Quran and the Quran and 'Ali. They will not separate from each other until they enter unto me m the Fountain of Abundance.'" (*Al-sawa'in al-Malzraqah*.p. 75).

In this way, it becomes clear that the Prophet has expressed this as a principle many times and emphasized this and that he made use of many opportunities to express it so that it would never be forgotten.

The Content of the Tradition of Thaqalain

Here, several points should be noted:

The introduction to the Quran and his family as 'two caliphs' or 'two valuable things' is clear proof that Muslims must never turn away from these two, especially with the condition in many Traditions where it states that, "If these two are released or freed from each other, you will never be lost."

The placing of the Quran beside his family and his family beside the Quran is proof that the Holy Quran will never be altered and that it will be preserved, the family of the Holy Prophet had the position of infallibility.

In some of these Traditions, it has been stated that the Prophet said, "On the Day of Resurrection, I will question you about how you behaved towards these two great souvenirs, to see how you have acted towards them.

No matter how we interpret the ahl al-bayt, 'Ali is the best confirmation. According to repeated Traditions, he will never be separated from the Holy Quran nor the Quran from him.

In addition to this, in repeated Traditions, we read that when the verse was revealed about mubahilah, the Holy Prophet called 'Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn, peace be upon them, and said, 'This is my ahl al-bayt.' (Mashkat al Hasbaih, p. 568, printed in Delhi and Riyadh al-Nafarah, vol. 2,p. 248, recorded from Muslim and Tarmidhi).

Even though it is not clear to us who are enclosed in this world what will be questioned of us, but on the Day of Judgment, we know from the Traditions, that the meaning of the Fountain of Abundance which is a special stream in Paradise with many special privileges is for the real believers, the prophets and the ahl al-bayt and the followers of that school.

From what has been said, it becomes clear that the leadership of the ummah of Muslims after the Prophet is through 'Ali and after him, also, through the Imams from this family.

The Tradition of Noah's Ark

An interesting statement is recorded from the Holy Prophet, in both Sunni and Shi'ite books on Traditions, which is the famous Tradition of Noah's ark.

In this Tradition, Abu Dharr says, "The Prophet said, 'My family are like Noah's ark. Whoever uses it will be saved and whoever separates from it will drown.'" (Mustadrak Hakam,vol. 3, p. 151).

This Tradition, which is also among the famous Traditions and mentions the necessity for the people to follow 'Ali and the family of the Prophet after his death, has been emphasized.

Noting that the ark of Noah is a place of refuge and a means of salvation for when the great storm comes, this truth becomes clear that the Islamic ummah will be saved in the storm which came after the death of the Prophet through the ahl al-bayt.

Think and Answer

1. What does the Tradition of Thaqaalain say and what benefits does it prove for the ahl al-bayt?
2. Who recorded the Tradition of Thaqaalain?
3. What does Thaqaalain mean? And can other interpretations be given about its meaning?
4. In what situation did the Prophet say it?
5. Describe the Tradition of Noah's Ark from the point of view of its content and documentation.

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