

The dislike of praising someone in their presence

Translated by Abbas Abu Yahya

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allaah the most Kind the most Merciful

360 Chapter- The dislike of praising someone in their presence because you fear that he will be corrupted by conceit/arrogance etc and the permissibility of praising someone who is rightfully secure.

1797- From Aboo Moosa al- Ash'aree (رضي الله عنه)¹ who said: The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)² said 'You have destroyed or broken this man's back.'³

1798 – From Aboo Bakra (رضي الله عنه): A person was mentioned in front of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and another man praised him with goodness the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: 'Woe be to you! You have cut off the neck of your companion' The Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) kept repeating this statement, then he said: 'If one of you has to praise a person and there is no other option then say, I regard him to be such and such if you regard him as that, and Allaah is the one who takes him to account, and no one can testify about a person, above Allaah.'⁴

1799- From Hammam bin al-Haarith, from al-Miqdaad (رضي الله عنه) that a man began to praise Uthmaan (رضي الله عنه), al-Miqdaad sat up on his knees and began throwing small pebbles at his face.

Uthmaan said: 'What bothers you?'

He said: 'Indeed the Messenger of Allaah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: 'If you see those who praise people in their presence, then throw dirt in their faces.'⁵

Imaam an-Nawawee (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ)⁶ said:

¹ (رضي الله عنه) (rad iyallaahu `anhu) May Allaah the Most High be pleased with him

² (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)(sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him

³ Agreed upon by Bukhaaree and Muslim

⁴ Agreed upon by Bukhaaree and Muslim.

⁵ Collected by Muslim.

⁶ (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) (rahimahullaah) May Allaah the Most High have mercy on him

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‘These are Ahadeeth which prohibit praising a person in his presence, however there are many authentic Ahadeeth regarding the permissibility of doing this.

The scholars have said: The way we combine these (apparently opposing) Ahadeeth is:

If the one being praised has perfect ‘Eemaan, certainty, is secure in himself, trains his soul and possesses awareness to the extent that he will not be trialled or deceived by this praise nor will this praise play upon his conscience then in this circumstance it is not prohibited nor is it disliked to praise him in his presence.

If however, any of these above matters are feared and that person is not secure, then it is disliked to praise him in his presence, and it is disliked in the strongest terms. The differing Ahadeeth, are understood in this context and according to this explanation.

What is mentioned regarding the permissibility of praising a person in his presence; there is the statement the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) made to Aboo Bakr (رضي الله عنه): **‘I hope you are from them.’** Meaning, he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) hoped Aboo Bakr would be from those who will be called to enter Paradise from all its Gates.

In another hadeeth (the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said to Aboo Bakr (رضي الله عنه): **‘You are not from them.’** Meaning you are not from those who trail their garments below their ankles to show off.’

Also, the Messenger of Allaah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said to Umar (رضي الله عنه): **‘I do not see the Shaytaan, except that he follows a pathway other than your path.’⁷**

Shaykh Muhammed bin Salih al-Uthaymeen (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) said in his explanation:

The author brings forth an explanation concerning ‘praising another person’ and the question arises, is it necessary for a person to praise his brother with what he has or does not have? There are different situations to this scenario.

The first situation: That there is benefit in praising him and it is encouragement for him, motivating him to praiseworthy characteristics and noble manners. There is no harm in doing this because it is encouragement for your companion. Therefore if you witness generosity, being good to others, courage and sacrificing and you mention his qualities in front of him to others in order to encourage him and make him firm in order to continue with what he is doing, then this is good and is what is intended by the saying of Allaah (تعالى)⁸:

⁷ Taken from the text of ‘Riyadh as-Saleheen’

⁸ (تعالى) Ta’aala (He, The Most High)

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[Help one another in Al--Birr and At--Taqwa (virtue, righteousness and piety)]⁹

The second situation: That you praise him in order to make apparent his excellence amongst the people in order for this praise to spread amongst the people so they respect him, as the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) did with Aboo Bakr and Umar.

Concerning Aboo Bakr, the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) was speaking one day and asked: **'Who amongst you is fasting today?'**

Aboo Bakr replied: 'I am.'

Then the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) asked again: **'Who amongst you has followed a funeral procession today?'**

Aboo Bakr replied: 'I have.'

The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: **'Who has given charity today?'**

Aboo Bakr said: 'I have.'

The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) asked: **'Who amongst you has visited a sick person today?'**

Aboo Bakr replied: 'I have.'

The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: **'These matters are not gathered in a person except he enters Paradise.'**¹⁰

In addition to this the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) once spoke of the one who trails his garment on the ground out of pride and that Allaah will not look at him, and Aboo Bakr said: 'O Messenger of Allaah indeed one side of my garment loosens away from me though I attempt to keep it up.'

The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) replied: **'Indeed you are not of those who do it out of pride.'**

The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said to Umar: **'I do not see the Shaytaan, except that he follows a pathway other than your path.'** This means that when you O Umar follow a pathway then Shaytaan runs away from it and takes another pathway.

These are examples of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) explaining the excellence of Aboo Bakr and Umar, and there is no harm in this.

⁹ سورة المائدة – Soorah al-Maa'idah [5:2]

¹⁰ Collected by Muslim

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The third situation: To praise someone and to take it to an extreme and to describe him in a way that he is not worthy of. This is prohibited and it is lying and deception. For example mentioning a leader or minister or someone of this rank and extolling him and describing him with praiseworthy characteristics which he does not possess. This is not permissible and is harmful for the one being praised.

The fourth situation: someone praises another person with that which he does possess however he fears that the person being praised will be deceived by this and become amazed of his own self and becomes conceited with himself, and raise himself above others. This is also prohibited and not permissible.

The author mentioned ahadeeth regarding praising someone in his presence: **‘Woe be to you! You have cut off the neck of your companion.’** This means that it is as if you have slaughtered him due to your praise of him, this means that your praise caused him to raise himself (become conceited) which is why the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) ordered for dirt to be thrown in the face of the those who praise people in their presence.

If it is well known that someone does not sit in a gathering of noble standing and status, except that he praises those present, and this person is one who praises those of high status but he is not like the one who praises anyone and everyone. This person is the one whom you hear him praise anyone and everyone, [good or bad,] time and time again but the other type of person praises any senior person, judge or scholar etc, whenever he sits with them. In this case it is permissible to throw dust in their face because a man praised Uthmaan (رضي الله عنه) so al-Miqdad stood and took some small pebbles and threw them in the face of the person who praised. Uthmaan asked him ‘Why did you do that?’ He said, indeed the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: **‘If you see those who praise people in their presence, then throw dirt in their faces.’**

To conclude it is incumbent upon everyone to only speak good because the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: **‘Whoever believes in Allaah and the Last Day, then he should speak good or remain silent.’**

And Allaah is the One who gives success.’