

The story of Umm Ma'bad R.A. One of the best descriptions given of Rasulullah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam)

Her name was 'Aatikah bint Khaalid al-Khuza'iyyah and Umm Ma'bad was her nick name. We find her name mentioned and connected to one of the greatest event in the Prophet's life, the Hijrah (migration) from Makkah to Madeenah.

She was a famous, chaste, strong and courageous woman and had a camp in Qudayd. She would sit down in the courtyard of her camp wrapped-up in her garment, generously providing food and drink to the travellers who passed by.

The Messenger of Allah (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his companions Abu Bakr, 'Amar ibn Fuhayrah, a freed slave of Abu Bakr and their guide, 'Abdullah ibn Urayqit (the guide), once stopped by her camp. This was at a time when people were suffering from a severe drought.

The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) and his companions had stopped to ask her for some milk, meat or date, which they were even willing to pay for. Sadly she was unable to provide any of these things to them and apologetically said,

"By Allah, if we had anything we would not lack in showing (all of you) hospitality."

The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) then saw a lonely goat within the shaded side of the camp, which was being kept away from other sheep due to its weakness. The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) asked Umm Ma'bad, "Does this goat have any milk?" Umm Ma'bad answered, "She is too weak to have any." He then said, "Would you allow me to milk her?" The woman replied, "May my father and mother be ransomed for you, if you see any milk in her you may milk her."

The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) then called for the goat and placed her legs between his own shank and thigh. He then stroked her udder with his hand and mentioned the name of Allah. The udder suddenly swelled and flowed forth milk. He then called for a vessel, big enough to carry milk for the entire group and squeezed a lot of milk into it. He then gave Umm Ma'bad and his Companions its milk until everyone was satiated, after which he also drank and explained, "The cup-bearer (the one who offers others to drink), drinks last."

He then milked the goat one more time and once again offered it to all of them. This time they drank slowly and took their time, unlike previously when they had quickly gulped it down due to severe thirst. The third time he milked the goat exclusively for Umm Ma'bah and after which he and his Companions mounted their camels and moved on.

After they had left, Umm Ma'bad's husband, Aktham ibn Abi al-Jawn al-Khuza'i came herding his emaciated flock of sheep. When he saw the milk or its remanants in the vessel he asked quite surprised, "Umm Ma'bad what is this? Where did you get this milk from... there is no goat with milk here?!" His wife answered,

"A blessed man passed by us."

The word 'blessed' slipped out of her mouth spontaneously, as she was still emotionally influenced from what she had seen. Abu Ma'bad asked his wife, "Describe him." She then explained and described to him what had happened in detail.

Umm Ma'bad described the Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to her husband in the most eloquent, precise and befitting manner. This is because out of wonderment she had observed the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) meticulously, as a result of which she had fully retained his picture in her mind.

The following is Umm Ma'bad's description of the Messenger of Allah (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him):

"I saw a man who is distinctly handsome and of a beautiful countenance. He is well-built, neither blemished by a big belly nor disfigured by an unusually small head. The pupils of his eyes are very dark, his eyelashes are very long and the area around the pupils is extremely white. His eyebrows are perfectly close. He has very dark hair, a rather long neck and a thick beard.

When he remains silent he is ever contemplative and when he speaks, eminence and splendour exhibit in his words. His words are like sliding stringed pearls. He is a gifted orator whose words are neither too few nor too many. He has the clearest wand and the most audible voice as he speaks. When you look at him from afar, he is the most handsome of all people, and when you move closer to him, he is the most pleasant of them.

You will never be tired of looking at him. He is like a branch between two branches.

He is the most handsome of the three and the most important of them. He has companions who honour him; when he speaks they listen to his words and when he commands they hasten to carry out his order. They serve and gather around him. He neither frowns or nags.”

Abu Ma’bad exclaimed, “By Allah! This is the man of Quraysh! If I see him I will follow him.”

In another narration he said, “I intend to follow him, if I am able to.”

This actually happened. Umm Ma’bad and her husband went to Madeenah, embraced Islaam, swore allegiance to the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) and stayed in his company as much as possible. With them was Umm Ma'bad's brother, known as Khunays (or Hubaysh) ibn Khalid, who reported this narration. He was honored with martyrdom on the day of the conquest of Makkah.

There are some noteworthy observations surrounding the story of Umm Ma’bad:

One: The tribe of Khuza’ah, to which Umm Ma’bad and her husband belonged, were allies of ‘Abdul-Muttalib, the Prophet’s grandfather before the advent of Islaam. When the light of Islaam illuminated into their hearts, they thus inclined toward the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam). After which they were sincere to the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam).

When the truce of Hudaibiyah was concluded, they became the Prophet’s allies and the tribe of Banoo Bakr entered into an alliance with the Quraysh. The Banoo Bakr violated this truce by attacking Banu Khuzay’ah (the tribe of Umm Ma’bad). ‘Amar ibn Saleem al-Khazaa’i then came to Madeenah seeking the support of the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam). ‘Amr recited a long poem to him,

“O Allah! I am imploring Muhammad,

In the name of the inherited and time-honoured alliance that is between his father and our father!”

To this the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) answered him, “You will indeed be helped, O ‘Amar ibn Saleem!”

This incident later led to the great conquest of Makkah.

Two: According to a report narrated by al-Waqidi and many others, the goat that the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) milked that day lived for a long time providing abundant milk. This is not surprising as Allah Almighty blessed the Prophet’s presence among the Companions.

Three: May Allah bless Umm Ma'bad, a woman who may have been considered an ‘illiterate Bedouin woman’, yet was a real daughter of the desert! Her eloquence was such that up until this day her words and expressions are studied at universities. This is despite the fact that she herself did not graduate from any university or go through any formal education. Even then, many Arabs have to pick up their dictionaries in hope of understanding her profoundly eloquent and subtle expressions.

Umm Ma’bad was therefore from among those people who are loved by Allah and his Messenger (sallallahu alaihi wasallam).

May Allah be pleased with Umm Ma’bad and please her! Aameen.