101938 - Proper etiquette when describing the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)

the question

Can it be said that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was a “Bedouin”?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is the noblest of creation and the leader of mankind, the most beloved of Allah’s creation to Allah. He has a station of praise and glory, a cistern to which many will come (on the Day of Resurrection). Allah chose him from among all the children of Adam, and selected him from among the best of the Arabs in descent and lineage. He was born in the greatest of Arab cities of that time, in Makkah al-Mukarramah, the best spot on earth, the most beloved of land to Allah, which the Holy Quran calls Umm al-Qura (Mother of Towns) because of its status in Arabia and in the whole world.

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And this (the Quran) is a blessed Book which We have sent down, confirming (the Revelations) which came before it, so that you may warn the Mother of Towns (i.e. Makkah) and all those around it”

[al-An’aam 6:92].

This noble status of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) generated complete respect in the hearts of his companions. Abu Bakr al-Siddeeq (may Allah be pleased with him) stepped back from his position leading the prayer so that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) could lead the prayer, and he said: It is not for the son of Abu Quhaafah to pay

in front of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Narrated by al-Bukhaari (684) and Muslim (421).

Abu Ayyoob al-Ansaari (may Allah be pleased with him) refused to go up on a roof beneath which was the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Narrated by Muslim (2053).

'Amr ibn al-'Aas (may Allah be pleased with him) used to say: I could not look him in the eye because of awe. If I were to be asked to describe him I would not be able to, because I could not look him in the eye. Narrated by Muslim (121).

When al-Bara' ibn 'Aazib listed, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did, the animals that are not permitted as sacrifices, he said: My fingers are shorter than his, and my fingertips are shorter than his, (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Narrated by Abu Dawood (2802); classed as saheeh by Ibn Daqeeq al-Eid in al-Iqtiraah (p. 121) and by Shaykh al-Albaani in Saheeh Abi Dawood.

And there are other kinds of etiquette in which the Sahaabah (may Allah be pleased with them) set the example for all of mankind in respecting and honouring the best of the Messengers and the leader of mankind, (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

As for describing him (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in ways that are not appropriate, or using inappropriate words, or narrating anything that implies disrespect towards him, this is an abhorrent lie and blatant kufr, because it is distorting facts and transgressing against the best of Allah's creation, and no one does that but one who does not know proper etiquette and who has no manners and no faith.

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

"If you ask them (about this), they declare: 'We were only talking idly and joking.' Say: 'Was it at Allah , and His Ayaat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) and His Messenger that you were mocking?'

66. Make no excuse; you disbelieved after you had believed. If We pardon some of you, We will punish others amongst you because they were Mujrimoon (disbelievers, polytheists, sinners, criminals)”

[al-Tawbah 9:65-66]

al-Qaadi ‘Iyaad (may Allah have mercy on him) says in al-Shifa (2/214):

It should be noted – may Allah bless us and you – that everyone who reviles the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), or criticizes him, or attributes some shortcoming to him in his character, lineage or religious commitment, or any of his attributes, or hints at that, or likens him to something by way of reviling him, disrespecting him, belittling him, derogating him or finding fault with him, is reviling him and comes under the same ruling as one who reviles him, and should be executed. … The same applies to one who attributes to him anything that does not befit his status by way of criticism, or who uses foolish words when talking about him, or criticizes him because of some of the calamities and disasters that befell him, or tries to undermine his position because of some of his human characteristics.

There is consensus on all of this from the scholars and imams who issue fatwas, from the time of the Sahaabah (may Allah be pleased with them) until the present day. End quote.

Undoubtedly using the word Bedouin or describing the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as a Bedouin is obviously a kind of belittling him and criticizing him, because describing someone as a Bedouin is derogatory, as it implies ignorance, frivolity and roughness, whereas the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was guided and taught by the Lord of earth and heaven. He is described in the Tawraat (Torah) as: “He is not coarse or uncouth, shouting in the marketplace.” And Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, described him as (interpretation of the meaning): “And verily, you (O Muhammad)are on an exalted (standard of) character” [al-Qalam 68:4]. So how can a liar dare to describe him in any other terms? Undoubtedly such audacity deserves to be punished in this world and in the Hereafter.

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“But those who annoy Allah’s Messenger (Muhammad) will have a painful torment”

[al-Tawbah 9:61].

Al-Nawawi said in Sharh Muslim (1/169):

The people of the desert are the Bedouins, among whom ignorance and harshness are prevalent. Hence it says in the hadeeth: “Whoever lives in the desert will become harsh.” Al-baadiyah (the desert) and al-Badu (the Bedouin) refer to that which is outside of the city as opposed to that which is civilized; the adjective is badawi. End quote.

The scholars have ruled that every description which detracts from the status of the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is kufr, even if it does not state it clearly. Ibn Wahb narrated that Imam Maalik (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Whoever says that the cloak of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was dirty, intending thereby to criticize him, is to be executed.

Ahmad ibn Abi Sulaymaan (one of the Maaliki scholars, who died in 291 AH) said: Whoever says that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was black, is to be executed.

The fuqaha’ of Andalus ruled that Ibn Haatim al-Mutafaqqih al-Tulaytali was to be executed and crucified, because of the testimony against him that he disrespected the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and called him during his debate “the orphan” and so on, and claimed that his asceticism was not deliberate, and that if he had had the means he would have eaten good food, and so on.

All of the above was mentioned by al-Qaadi Iyaad in al-Shifa (2/217-219), then he said:

Similarly, I say that the ruling on the one who belittles him, or criticizes him for tending sheep, or for making mistakes in prayer, or for forgetting, or for being bewitched, or for being wounded, or for some of his armies being defeated, or for being harmed by his enemies, or for going through some hardship, or for loving his wives, the ruling on all of that, for the one who intends thereby to belittle him, is that he should be executed. End quote.

Calling him (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) a Bedouin is an obvious lie, because he lived in Makkah, then migrated from there to Madeenah, which are the two best cities in the entire world, so how could he have been a Bedouin?

He did not live in the desert except when he was a small child, when he was nursed among the Bedouin of Banu Sa'd, by his wet nurse Haleemah al-Sa'diyyah. See: al-Seerah al-Nabawiyyah al-Saheehah by Dr. Akram al-'Umari (1/103).

Dr. Jawaad 'Ali said in al-Mufassal fi Tareekh al-'Arab qabl al-Islam (4/271):

Arab society was both Bedouin and settled, people of tents and people of houses. As for the people of houses, they were the settled inhabitants of the towns, who lived on farms with date palms and livestock, and travelled about in the land for trade. As for the people of tents, they were desert nomads who lived on the milk and meat of camels, moving about seeking green land and places where rain fell, where they would set up their tents and stay there so long as the land was fertile and their animals could graze, then they would move on, seeking pasture and water, and they were constantly on the move.

Settlement was known, and the settled Arabs were known as ahl al-madar (people of bricks). They were known as such because the buildings of the towns were built of madar, which were bricks of dried mud.

And it was narrated that the people of the desert were called ahl al-wabar because they had tents of wabar (hair), to distinguish them from the town dwellers who had buildings made of bricks.

The name 'Arab was given to the city-dwellers only, i.e., to the settled population. The people of the desert were known as A'raab. End quote.

Shaykh Muhammad al-Hasan al-Diddu (may Allah preserve him) was asked:

Why does Allah say that He only sent a Messenger from the people of the towns?

He replied:

With regard to the Prophets being chosen from among the people of the towns, as Allah mentions in His Book, that is more appropriate to their high status, because the desert-dwellers are always more arrogant and more ill-manners, and less clean than others. Therefore Allah said (interpretation of the meaning):

“The bedouins are the worst in disbelief and hypocrisy, and more likely to be in ignorance of the limits (Allah’s Commandments and His Legal Laws) which Allah has revealed to His Messenger”

[al-Tawbah 9:97]

Being a city-dweller is not the matter of lineage, so when a person is said to be a Bedouin, it does not mean that his father was also a Bedouin, rather it means that he himself is a Bedouin. So if a person from the desert settles in a town, then he is no longer a Bedouin. So this description has to do with an individual person and has nothing to do with his father, grandfather or lineage.

The Messengers (peace and blessings of Allah be upon them) were sent to guide and lead mankind. So they had to know how to run affairs and this is something of which the people of the deserts have no knowledge and to which they pay no attention. Rather the people of the deserts live by hunting or following their flocks, and they have many false notions and illusions. Ahmad narrated in al-Musnad that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever seeks game will lose some of his reasoning and whoever lives in the desert will become hard-natured.” Hence the Messengers were chosen from among the population of towns and cities. End quote. Silsilat Duroos Manshoorah (lesson no. 3/p. 9)

The great scholar ‘Abd-Allah ibn Jibreen (may Allah preserve him) said:

The same applies to anyone who mocks any of the signs of Allah, or the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It was narrated that a writer once wrote something attacking the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and saying that he was a Bedouin and that he tended sheep, and he lived at a time when there was no progress, and there was no such and such. Undoubtedly this is an attack on Islam, because this religion came to us through this noble Prophet, so the one who attacks him by saying that he was ignorant or that he was a Bedouin who

did not know anything, or that what he brought was just his own ideas, or that it was something that he imagined, or that he intended thereby to become famous and acquire followers and so on, is to be regarded as telling lies against Allah and as disbelieving the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) who brought this religion, and as rejecting the Quran and the entire sharee'ah. Undoubtedly this is also a slander against Islam and against 'aqeedah. This is what is mentioned in the verse (interpretation of the meaning): "Say: Was it at Allah , and His Ayaat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) and His Messenger that you were mocking?" [al-Tawbah 9:65]; what is meant by mocking Allah is mocking His names and attributes, or mocking His words and criticizing them. That also includes mocking the Quran, as Allah describes the kuffaar as saying (interpretation of the meaning): "Those who disbelieve say: 'This (the Quran) is nothing but a lie that he (Muhammad) has invented, and others have helped him at it.' In fact, they have produced an unjust wrong (thing) and a lie" [al-Furqaan 25:4].

Undoubtedly they have committed something that shows their lack of faith and religious commitment, and because of that Allah describes what they say as being kufr. The same applies to those who slander the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and say that he was ignorant or that he was a Bedouin, and so on. End quote from the shaykh's website

Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd (may Allah preserve him) said in Mu'jam al-Manaahi al-Lafziyyah (496):

Describing the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as a Bedouin is contrary to the Holy Quran, because he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was one of the Arabs who dwelt in towns, not a desert-dweller. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): "And We sent not before you (as Messengers) any but men unto whom We revealed, from among the people of townships" [Yoosuf 12:109].

Those who have doubts in their hearts always say things that prove their misguidance. In the 1390s AH, a Bedouin writer wrote an article in which he stated clearly that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was a Bedouin, but he was refuted by Shaykh Hammoud ibn 'Abd-Allah al-Tuwaijri al-Najdi in an essay entitled Manshoor al-Sawaab fi'l-Radd man za'ama anna al-Nabi sall-Allah 'alyhi wa salaam kaana min al-A'raab. And Allah knows best. End quote.

Shaykh Muhammad al-Mukhtaar al-Shanqeeti (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Silsilat Duroos Sharh Zaad al-Mustaqni' (lesson no. 395, p. 7):

If a person reviles the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) directly by cursing – Allah forbid – or belittling him such as describing the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in a way that belittles him, such as saying that he was a Bedouin who tended sheep, intending thereby to denigrate him (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and other such phrases, then he is judged to be a kaafir. End quote.

And Allah knows best.