241838 - The way in which the wives of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) dealt with the inherent jealousy of women

the question

Assalam alaikum Can you give any positive hadiths about friendship/love between the wives of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him)? I have found one of Sawda giving her night to Aisha (masha Allah), but other hadiths I found were about jealousy or dislike.
Alhamdullilah, I have a cowife who joined our family nearly 6 months ago. She is very dear to me and our husband and Allah has been most merciful. But alas, her family, who follow cultural norms rather than Islamic teachings, have caused much upset for my sister by insisting that I am unhappy that she has joined the family, that I'm jealous, etc. Astaghfirullah. By Allah's grace and mercy, none of this is true. I have met her family to try and ease this backbiting through witnessing. I was blessed to be a guest at their nikka, alhamdullilah :-) But it seems to be getting worse. Mostly, I hear claims that, Astaghfirullah, the Prophet's own wives were discontent, so how can any women today be. Of course I know that we are all what Allah allows us to be, subhanallah. But they ask for hadiths. They say the one about Sawda giving one of her nights to Aisha doesn't apply to us because I am younger than my co-wife. Can you recommend any hadiths? I am a revert and my Arabic is weak. In sha Allah, I am learning, but in the meantime some advice would be most appreciated.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Undoubtedly the bond that governed the relationships between the wives of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was the bond of spiritual sisterhood and love for the sake of Allah. This is the basic principle that should unite all the believers in general. To that may be added their closeness to the light of Prophethood, as they all lived in the place where the revelation and the

message of Allah came down. Therefore piety and fear of Allah was what protected them from slipping into error and enabled them to think maturely at times of turmoil, when faced with difficult tests.

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) called co-wives sisters. Muslim (1408) narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “A woman should not ask for her sister to be divorced so as to deprive her of what is rightfully hers and so that she may be married in her stead; rather she will have what Allah has decreed for her.”.

So how about sisters who were the wives of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)?

Piety and fear of Allah formed the solid foundation that overcame the natural inclinations and jealousy of women and their competition for one husband. The Shaytaan had no hopes of causing any troubles in the household of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and they were far above such a thing, for they were pure and purified.

‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said in the hadith of al-ifk (the slander): The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) asked Zaynab bint Jahsh about me: “O Zaynab, what do you know, and what have you seen?” She said: O Messenger of Allah, I would not claim to have heard or seen something that I did not, and by Allah, I do not know anything but good.

‘Aa’ishah said: She was the one among the wives of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) who used to compete with me, but Allah protected her by means of her piety

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (2661) and Muslim (2770)

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Her words “I would not claim to have heard or seen something that I did not” mean: I protect my hearing and sight from saying I heard when I did not hear, or I saw when I did not see. ‘Aa’ishah’s words “she was the one who used to compete with me” mean: she used to boast to me and

compete with me in terms of her beauty and status with the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). End quote.

Sharh an-Nawawi ‘ala Muslim (17/113)

Al-Haafiz (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

From this hadith we learn that the Muslim should stand up and defend his Muslim brother, especially those who are people of virtue and piety, and the Muslim should deter those who try to harm such brothers. End quote.

Fath al-Baari (8/479)

Al-Bukhaari (2581) and Muslim (2442) narrated that ‘Aa’ishah said: …The wives of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) sent Zaynab bint Jahsh, the wife of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), who was the one who was the closest of them to me in status before the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). I have never seen any woman who was better in religious commitment than Zaynab, more fearing of Allah, more truthful in speech, more keen to uphold family ties, more generous in giving charity, or more keen to draw close to Allah, but she had a quick temper, although she would calm down quickly …

Her competition with her did not prevent her from speaking highly of her in terms that she deserved.

All of that did not prevent from happening among them (may Allah be pleased with them all) that natural jealousy which happens among women even among women who are distantly connected, so how about those who are co-wives of one man, and how about if the man who brought them together was the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), the noblest of all mankind?

It was narrated from ‘Urwah ibn az-Zubayr that ‘Aa’ishah, the wife of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), told him that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be

upon him) left her house one night. She said: I felt jealous about him, then he came and saw what I was doing. He said: “What is the matter with you, O ‘Aa’ishah? Are you jealous?”

I said: Why wouldn’t one such as me feel jealous about one such as you?

The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Has your devil come to you?”

I said: O Messenger of Allah, is there a devil with me?

He said: “Yes.”

I said: Is there a devil with every person?

He said: “Yes.”

I said: Even with you, O Messenger of Allah?

He said: “Yes, but my lord helped me with him until he became Muslim.”

Narrated by Muslim in his Saheeh (2815).

As-Sindi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The words “Has your devil come to you?” mean: he has made you think that I went to one of my wives, and because of that you are confused and wondering where I went.

End quote from Haashiyat as-Sindi ‘ala an-Nasaa’i.

Anyone who denies that jealousy may occur among pious co-wives does not know the nature of women and the way Allah has created them. But the point is that piety and fear of Allah prevent any evil consequences of that and protect them from wrongdoing and mischief.

Abu Dawood (3931) and Ahmad (26365) narrated that ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said:

Juwayriyah bint al-Haarith ibn al-Mustalaq fell to the lot of Thaabit ibn Qays ibn Shammaas, or a cousin of his, and she made a contract of manumission for herself. She was a very beautiful and attractive woman. ‘Aa’ishah said: She came to ask the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) about her contract of manumission, and when I saw her standing at the door, I did not like it, because I realized that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would see in her what I saw.

She said: O Messenger of Allah, I am Juwayriyah bint al-Haarith and there has happened to me that of which you are not unaware. I fell to the lot of Thaabit ibn Qays ibn Shammaas, but I have made a contract of manumission for myself and I have come to ask you about my manumission. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “How about giving you something which is better than that?”

She said: What is that, O Messenger of Allah?

He said: “I will pay off your contract of manumission and marry you.” She said: I accept.

The people heard that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) had married Juwayriyah and they released the captives they were holding and set them free, saying: The in-laws of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

We have never seen a woman who brought more blessing to her people than her. Because of her one hundred families of Banu’l-Mustaliq were set free.

Classed as hasan by al-Albaani and by the commentators on al-Musnad.

Despite the fact that she was jealous of her the first time she saw her, she described her as being a blessing for her people.

The policy of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) with his wives was an additional factor in creating closeness between them, as he showed kindness to all of them. He did not stay away from one of them until her turn came, which would make her feel lonely and increase any jealousy in her heart; rather he would meet with all of them together every night.

Muslim (1462) narrated that Anas said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) had nine wives, and when he divided his time among them, he did not come back to the first one until the ninth day. Every night they used to gather in the house of the one whose night it was.

And ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: Every night he would go around to all of us, and would come close to each wife without being intimate, until he reached the one whose day it was, and he would spend the night with her.

Narrated by Abu Dawood (2135); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh Abi Dawood.

Al-Qurtubi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in al-Mufhim (13/90)

He used to do that so as to comfort them and reassure them, until he would leave them and go to the one whose day it was, and he would leave them feeling content. End quote.

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This hadith demonstrates the good attitude that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) had and how he showed kindness to all. End quote.

Sharh an-Nawawi ‘ala Muslim (10/48)

Al-Bukhaari (4793) and Muslim (87) narrated that Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

When the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) married Zaynab bint Jahsh he offered a wedding feast of bread and meat. I was sent to invite people to the meal; some people would come and eat, then leave, then more people would come and eat, then leave, I called people until I could no longer find anyone to invite, then I said: O Prophet of Allah, I cannot find anyone else to invite. He said: “Clear away the food.” Three people remained in the house, talking. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) went out and went to the apartment of ‘Aa’ishah, where he said: “Peace be upon you, O people of the household, and the mercy of Allah.” She said: And upon you be peace and the mercy of Allah; how did you find your wife, may Allah bless you? He visited the apartments of all of his wives, one after another, and said to them the

same as he had said to ‘Aa’ishah, and they responded as ‘Aa’ishah had responded.

The report narrated by Muslim says: He went around to his wives and greeted each one of them, saying: “Peace be upon you, how are you, O members of the household?” And they would say: “We are fine, O Messenger of Allah. How did you find your wife?” And he said: “Fine.”

Al-Qurtubi said in al-Mufhim (13/15):

He went around to the apartments of his wives to check on them, and console them, or to reassure them and deal with any feeling they might have because of his marriage to another woman. Hence they responded with kind words, by saying to him: How did you find your wife, O Messenger of Allah?

The fact that they said such words on the night when this co-wife joined their number is indicative of their common sense, patience and good conduct, otherwise that was a time when women would ordinarily be angry and may behave foolishly. But they were pure and good. End quote.

Sometimes some jealousy would manifest itself in the presence of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), but he would manage to calm the situation down with his wisdom, justice and fairness – blessings and peace of Allah be upon him.

Al-Bukhaari (5225) narrated that Anas said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was with one of his wives, when one of the Mothers of the Believers sent a bowl in which there was some food. The one in whose house the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was struck the hand of the servant, and the bowl fell and broke. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) picked up the pieces of the bowl, then he began to collect the food that was in it, and said, “Your mother got jealous.” Then he made the servant wait until the bowl belonging to the one in whose house he was, was brought. He gave the intact bowl to the one whose bowl had been broken, and he kept the broken bowl in the house of the one who had broken it.

Sometimes he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would mix a little kindness and humour

with that fairness, thus making the matter good-natured and cheerful after it had been serious or hostile.

Abu Ya'la narrated in his Musnad (4476) that 'Aa'ishah said: I came to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) with some khazeerah (a dish made with meat and flour) that I had cooked for him, and I said to Sawdah, when the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was sitting between me and her: Eat, but she refused. I said to her: Either you eat or I shall surely throw some in your face. But she refused, so I put my hand in the khazeerah and smeared her face with it. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) smiled and gave her some with his hand, and said to her: "Smear her face." And the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) smiled at her. 'Umar passed by and said: O slave of Allah, O slave of Allah, and he thought that he was going to come in, so he said: "Get up and wash your faces."

Al-Haafiz al-'Iraaqi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Takhreej al-Ihya' (3/160): Its isnaad is jayyid. It was classed as hasan by al-Albaani in as-Saheehah (3131).

Then if there are any such feelings left in people's hearts, this is how people's hearts are, so if Allah wills it will be pardoned and overlooked.

It was narrated by Ibn Sa'd in at-Tabaqaat (8/79) and by Ibn 'Asaakir in his Tareekh (69/152) that 'Awf ibn al-Haarith said: I heard 'Aa'ishah say: Umm Habeebah, the wife of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) called me when she was dying and said: There has been between us what usually happens between co-wives; may Allah forgive me and you for whatever happened of that. I said: May Allah forgive you and pardon you for all of that, and absolve you of that. She said: You have made me happy, May Allah make you happy. And she sent for Umm Salamah and said something similar to her.

Conclusion:

What is required of the believer, male or female, in such situations and in all situations, is not to be swayed by human nature or by whims and desires. Rather he or she should let fear of Allah protect them from enmity and transgression, and should make the connection between him and

the believing slaves of Allah brotherhood and sisterhood for the sake of Allah. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, did not praise His believing slaves for being immune from whims and desires; rather He praised them for going against their whims and desires, and for striving to overcome their lower selves for the sake of Allah. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Then, for him who Tagha (transgressed all bounds, in disbelief, oppression and evil deeds of disobedience to Allah),

And preferred the life of this world (by following his evil desires and lusts),

Verily, his abode will be Hell-fire;

But as for him who feared standing before his Lord, and restrained himself from impure evil desires, and lusts,

Verily, Paradise will be his abode”

[an-Naazi‘aat 79:37-41].

See also question no. 36864

And Allah knows best.