182682 - Will a divorced woman attain the same reward as the widow who raised her children?

the question

There is a woman whose husband, after a few years of marriage, developed schizophrenia or paranoia. She tried hard to make him undergo treatment, but he stubbornly refused. He is not convinced that all that he is sick, which is a characteristic of this illness. All her attempts have failed, because his family refused to force him to seek treatment. She no longer felt safe with him, and in fact he threatened to kill her, then he divorced her. She has two small children, whom she is bringing up. She is very keen that they should uphold ties of kinship with their father and his family, and she has not remarried. My question is: will she, by Allah’s leave, attain the same reward as the widow woman who will rush to enter paradise with the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) because she devoted her life to raising her orphan children, as this woman is taking care of her two sons who are like orphans, because they have no father in their life?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Many people are unnecessarily concerned with finding out about some specific reward, and they forget about the general reward with which Allah will honour all the believers. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has promised all Muslims a great reward if they bear hardship with patience and show acceptance and contentment with whatever befalls them in this world of troubles and problems. Allah, may He be glorified, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Except those who show patience and do righteous good deeds, those: theirs will be forgiveness and a great reward (Paradise)”

[Hood 11:11]

“(Saying): ‘We feed you seeking Allah’s Countenance only. We wish for no reward, nor thanks from you.

‘Verily, We fear from our Lord a Day, hard and distressful, that will make the faces look horrible (from extreme dislike of it).’

So Allah saved them from the evil of that Day, and gave them Nadratan (a light of beauty) and joy.

And their recompense shall be Paradise, and silken garments, because they were patient,

Reclining therein on raised thrones, they will see there neither the excessive heat of the sun, nor the excessive bitter cold, (as in Paradise there is no sun and no moon)”

[al-Insaan 76:9-13].

It is not wise to overlook these great rewards that are mentioned in general terms, and look instead for some specific reward that is mentioned in a particular hadith that may not even be proven to be sound, and even if it is proven to be sound, it may be applicable only to widows and cannot be applied by analogy to divorcees.

Therefore our advice to you is to put your trust in Allah and focus on raising your children and giving them a good upbringing, and for every hour you spend on that purpose, you will have an immense reward from Allah, may He be glorified, in addition to your previous reward for your steadfastness in bearing the calamity of your ex-husband’s illness.

Secondly:

With regard to the hadith that speak of the virtue of the widow who refrained from remarriage in order to devote her life to taking care of her orphaned children, this is a da‘eef (weak) report that was not narrated via any sound chain of narrators from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). But we hope that the one who devotes her life to raising her children and giving them a good upbringing will attain the reward mentioned in this hadith, if it were saheeh (sound).

The first hadith:

It was narrated that ‘Awf ibn Maalik al-Ashja‘i said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

“I and the woman with dull cheeks will be like these two on the Day of Resurrection – and he held his forefinger and middle finger together. – That is a woman of high status and beauty whose husband died, and she devoted her life to caring for her orphaned children until they became able to take care of themselves or died.”

The woman with dull cheeks is one whose colour has changed because she has been a widow for a long time and she has given up adorning herself.

Narrated by al-Bukhaari in al-Adab al-Mufrad (no. 141); Ahmad in al-Musnad (39/432); Abu Dawood in an-Sunan (5149); Ibn Abi’d-Dunya in an-Nafaqah ‘ala al-‘Iyaal (1/232); at-Tabaraani in al-Mu‘jam al-Kabeer (18/56) – via an-Nahhaas ibn Qahm, who said: Shaddaad Abu ‘Ammaar told me, from ‘Awf ibn Maalik.

We say: This is a da‘eef (weak) isnaad, because of an-Nahhaas ibn Qahm. Yahya al-Qattaan classed his hadith as da‘eef. Ibn Ma‘een said: He is nothing. Abu Haatim said likewise. He was classed as da‘eef by Abu Dawood and an-Nasaa’i. Ibn ‘Adiyy said: His hadiths in which he is the only narrator from trustworthy narrators cannot be supported by any corroborating evidence. Ibn Hibbaan said: He used to narrate odd (munkar) reports from known narrators, and he differed from trustworthy narrators; he cannot be quoted as evidence. Ad-Daaraqutni said: His hadith is ill-founded. See his biography in Tahdheeb at-Tahdheeb (10/426).

There is another problem with this hadith, which is the break in the chain of narration between Shaddaad Abu ‘Ammaar and ‘Awf ibn Maalik. Saalih Jazrah said: He did not hear from him. See: Tahdheeb at-Tahdheeb (4/317).

Therefore this hadith was classed as da‘eef by Shaykh al-Albaani (may Allah have mercy on him) in Da‘eef Abi Dawood, in as-Silsilah ad-Da‘eefah (no. 1122), and elsewhere.

The second hadith:

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

“I will be the first one to open the gate of paradise, but a woman will come rushing to enter with me. I will say to her: What is the matter with you, and who are you? And she will say: I am a woman who devoted my life to caring for my orphaned children.”

Narrated by Abu Ya‘laa in al-Musnad (12/7); al-Khateeb al-Baghdaadi in al-Muttafaq wa’l-Muftaraq (2/1091); ad-Daylami in al-Firdaws (1/34) – via ‘Abd as-Salaam ibn ‘Ajlaan al-Hujaymi: Abu ‘Uthmaan an-Nahdi told us, from, Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him).

This chain of narration is also da‘eef (weak), because of ‘Abd as-Salaam ibn ‘Ajlaan. End quote from al-Jarh wa’t-Ta‘deel (6/46). Ibn Hibbaan said: He makes mistakes and his hadiths differ from those of trustworthy narrators. End quote from ath-Thiqaat (7/127).

If such a person is not deemed trustworthy, any hadith narrated by him alone is not to be accepted; rather the critics stated that he made mistakes and his hadith differed from those of trustworthy narrators. Therefore he was classed as da‘eef by al-Busayri in Ithaaf al-Khiyarah (5/488); and by al-Albaani in Da‘eef at-Targheeb wa’t-Tarheeb (2/81) and as-Silsilah ad-Da‘eefah (5374).

This hadith was also narrated by al-Kharaa’iti in Makaarim al-Akhlaaq (p. 212). He said: Nasr ibn Dawood al-Khalanji told us: Sahl ibn Bakkaar told us: ‘Abd as-Salaam Abu’l-Khaleel told us, from Abu Yazeed al-Madani, from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Allah has forbidden any human to enter Paradise before me, but I shall look to my right, and I shall see a woman racing with me to reach the gate of Paradise. I shall say: Why is she racing with me? And it will be said to me: O Muhammad, this is a woman who was beautiful, and she had to take care of her orphaned children, so she devoted her life to them with patience until they reached the age of independence, and Allah appreciated her deed.”

Shaykh al-Albaani (may Allah have mercy on him) said concerning this isnaad of al-Kharaa'iti: It is the same as the isnaad of Abu Ya'la, and the mistake was made by 'Abd as-Salaam when he said: "from Abu Yazeed al-Madani" instead of "Abu 'Uthmaan an-Nahdi. And he said: Perhaps it stemmed from the poor memory of 'Abd as-Salaam himself.

End quote from as-Silsilah ad-Da'eefah (11/625)

Al-Haafiz al-'Iraaqi said concerning this report of al-Kharaa'iti:

Its isnaad is da'eef (weak).

End quote from Takhreej al-Ihya' (1/500)

The third hadith:

It was narrated from Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

"There are three who will be in the shade of the Throne on the Day when there will be no shade but His shade: one who upholds ties of kinship, for Allah will increase his provision and extend his lifespan; a woman whose husband dies and leaves her with young orphans, so she says, 'I shall not get married; rather I shall devote my life to taking care of my orphans until they die or Allah makes them independent of means'; and a man who makes food and hosts his guest and spends generously on him, and he also invites the orphan and the needy, and feeds them for the sake of Allah, may He be exalted."

Narrated by ad-Daylami in al-Firdaws (2/99). In al-Jaami' as-Sagheer, it is attributed to Abu'sh-Shaykh in ath-Thawaab and al-Asbahaani in at-Targheeb, but we could not find its isnaad in either of them.

But Shaykh al-Albaani (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It is da'eef jiddan (very weak).

End quote from Da‘eef al-Jaami‘ (no. 2580); see also as-Silsilah ad-Da‘eefah (no. 3437). That is because of Yazeed ar-Raqaashi.

Conclusion:

The hadith is da‘eef (weak) and is not saheeh (sound), but its weakness is slight; it cannot be deemed severely weak or odd. In fact some scholars of hadith classed its isnaad as hasan, such as al-Mundhiri in at-Targheeb wa’t-Tarheeb (3/236)

What this means is that there is nothing wrong with a widow who devotes her life to caring for her orphaned children hoping for that reward which is mentioned in the hadith, in the hope that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, might grant that to her, but that should be without believing that this hadith can be attributed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

As for the woman who is divorced, this virtue is not mentioned in her case, so the best is to keep quiet about that and seek the reward for patience, which Allah has promised to all those who show patience, and the reward for bringing up children that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has ordained for those who give children a good upbringing.

And Allah knows best.