98640 - False ahaadeeth about calligraphers and tailors

the question

How sound are the following ahaadeeth?
The Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Calligraphers and tailors eat from the depths of their eyes” and he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “You should learn how to write well, for it is one of the keys to provision”.
What is the meaning of the first hadeeth?
May Allaah reward you with good.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

As for the first hadeeth, we could not find it in any of the reliable books of hadeeth, and we could not find any report that conveyed a similar meaning. It seems that it is a fabrication of the masses who attribute everything to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) without paying any attention to the warning issued to those who tell lies about him (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).

The meaning may be correct, for calligraphy and tailoring are skills that rely on good eyesight and involve extensive use of one's eyes; hence the livelihood of calligraphers and tailors comes from their eyes that they depend upon.

But the fact that the meaning is correct does not make it permissible for anyone to attribute to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) something that he did not say. Fabricators have attributed a great deal to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), especially with regard to trades and professions, so as to market their wares and boast about what they do well. Imam Ibn al-Jawzi even wrote a chapter in his book al-Mawdoo’aat (2/251) about tailoring, in

which he quoted some of the ahaadeeth that have been fabricated about this topic.

Secondly:

As for the hadeeth, “You should learn how to write well, for it is one of the keys to provision”, it is also a false and fabricated hadeeth which has no basis in the books of sound ahaadeeth. It was quoted by al-San’aani in al-Mawdoo’aat (39), al-Fatani in Tadhkirat al-Mawdoo’aat (135), al-‘Ajlooni in Kashf al-Khafa’ (2/71) and al-Shawkaani in al-Fawaa’id al-Majmoo’ah (147).

The poor style is obvious in the wording of the two hadeeths, and there is no sign of wisdom or the light of guidance in them; they do not resemble the speech of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) as it usually appears in his hadeeth.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him) said concerning the signs of a fabricated hadeeth:

Its wording does not resemble the speech of the Prophets, let alone the speech of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) which is Revelation (Wahy) which was revealed to him, as Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): “Nor does he speak of (his own) desire. It is only a Revelation revealed” [al-Najm 53:3-4], i.e., he only spoke Revelation that was revealed. So this hadeeth is something that does not resemble the Revelation and does not even resemble the speech of the Sahaabah, like the hadeeth “Three things improve the eyesight: looking at greenery, flowing water and a handsome face.”

Al-Manaar al-Muneef, p. 61, 62

Then he mentioned some other signs:

The poor style of the wording of the hadeeth, and the way it sounds silly to the ear, like the hadeeth: “Four things never have their fill of four things: the female of the male, the earth of rain, the eye of looking and the ear of news.”

Al-Manaar al-Muneef (p. 99).

Thirdly:

Although we have stated above that these two hadeeth cannot be attributed to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), we have found in the words of the scholars and writers of literature something which indicates that they regarded it as good to be able to write well and they regarded good handwriting as a sign of refinement and good taste. We will quote some of their words here:

Al-Maawardi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

Because good handwriting is so important, it is obligatory for the one who wants to acquire knowledge to pay attention to two things:

1. Forming the letters properly

2. Writing the vowel points correctly

Anything more than that, such as writing beautifully is something extra and is not a condition of its being correct.

'Ali ibn 'Ubaydah said; Good handwriting is the eloquence of the hand and the delight of the heart. Abu'l-'Abbaas al-Mubarrid said: Poor handwriting is bad manners.

Writing beautifully in addition to writing legibly is like speaking eloquently in addition to speaking clearly. Hence the Arabs said: Good handwriting is one of the two forms of eloquence. If the one who wants to be eloquent in speech cannot ignore grammar and style, even if he understands and makes others understand, the one who wants to write well must also write the letters correctly and give them a nice shape, even if he understands and makes others understand. There are people who developed fine handwriting and it became one of their main characteristics, until some of them became known scholars and masters of that field. But you find that scholars did not put too much effort into improving their handwriting because they are preoccupied with seeking knowledge, therefore you find that the handwriting of scholars is usually poor.

al-Fadl ibn Sahl said: It is a sign of a man's being blessed that his handwriting is poor, because the time that he spends in improving his handwriting distracts him from memorizing and studying.

Poor handwriting itself is not a blessing, rather the blessing is that he does not have something to distract him from seeking knowledge. Usually the one who has good handwriting is distracted from seeking knowledge by trying beautify his handwriting. In this sense, his poor handwriting means that he is blessed, even though poor handwriting is not itself a blessing.

And Allaah knows best.