

20 COUPLETS OF TARAFAH IBN AL-'ABD



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Note: The content of this book features 20 selected couplets that exemplify good character, leadership, generosity, knowledge, and good behavior, as expressed by the poet in his work.

Tarafah ibn al-‘Abd was a renowned poet from the pre-Islamic era, belonging to the tribe of Bakr ibn Wa’il. His full name was Tarafah ibn al-‘Abd ibn Sufyan ibn Sa’d ibn Malik. Known for his sharp wit and eloquent poetry, Tarafah was one of the famous poets whose work was included in the “Mu’allaqat,” a collection of pre-Islamic poetry. His life, however, was marked by defiance and rebellion, which ultimately led to his untimely death. Tarafah’s poetry, especially his elegies and laments, remains influential and is still studied for its literary and historical significance.

الْخَيْرُ خَيْرٌ وَإِنْ طَالَ الزَّمَانُ بِهِ
وَالشَّرُّ أَخْبَثُ مَا أُوعِيتَ مِنْ زَادٍ



*Al-khayru khayrun wa in taal al-zamaan bihi
wa al-sharru akhbathu ma aw'ayta min zaad*



**Goodness remains good,
even if time prolongs it,
and evil is the dreadful of provisions
you might store**



فَكَيْفَ يُرَجَّى الْمَرْءُ دَهْرًا مُخَلَّدًا
وَأَعْمَالُهُ عَمَّا قَلِيلٍ تُحَاسِبُهُ

*Fakayfa yurajju al-mar'u dahran mukhallada
wa a'maluhu 'amma qaleelin tuhasibu.*

**How can one hope for eternal life,
when his deeds will soon be judged?**

وَالصِّدْقُ يَأْلَفُهُ الْكَرِيمُ الْمُرْتَجَى
وَالْكَذِبُ يَأْلَفُهُ الدَّنِيءُ الْأَخِيْبُ

*Wa al-sidqu ya'lafuhu al-kareemu al-murta ja
wa al-kidbu ya'lafuhu al-daneeu al-akhyab*

**Truth is cherished by the noble
and esteemed,
while falsehood is embraced by the
lowly and contemptible**

وَالْإِثْمُ دَاءٌ لَيْسَ يُرْجَى بُرُوهُ
وَالْبِرُّ بُرٌّ لَيْسَ فِيهِ مَعْطَبٌ

*Wa al-ithmu daa'un laysu yurja buru'uh
wa al-birru buru'un laysafi-hi ma'thab*

**Sin is a disease with no hope of cure,
while righteousness is a remedy free
from any defect**

أَدُّوا الْحُقُوقَ تَفْرِ لَكُمْ أَعْرَاضُكُمْ
إِنَّ الْكَرِيمَ إِذَا يُحَرَّبُ يَغْضَبُ

*Addu al-huqooq tafir lakum a'raadu-kum
inna al-kareema idha yuharrabu yaghdab*

**Fulfill the rights, and your reputations
will be preserved;
indeed, the noble person becomes
angry when wronged**

سُمَحَاءُ الْفَقْرِ أَجْوَادُ الْغِنَى
سَادَةُ الشَّيْبِ مَخَارِقُ الْمُرْدِ

*Sumahaa' al-faqri ajwaadu al-ghinaa
sayyidu al-shaybi makhariqu al-murud*

**The generous are those who are
wealthy in spirit,
while the noble are those who are old and
wise, even if they appear foolish**

وَلَا خَيْرَ فِي خَيْرَتِي الشَّرِّدُونَهُ
وَلَا قَائِلٍ يَأْتِيكَ بَعْدَ التَّلَدُّدِ

Wa la khayra fi khayrin tara
al-sharra doonahu
wa la qailin ya'teeka ba'da al-taladud

**There is no good in any good that you
see evil in it, nor is there any benefit in
someone who comes to you only after
being fully enjoyed**

عَنِ الْمَرْءِ لَا تَسْأَلْ وَسَلْ عَنْ قَرِينِهِ
فَكُلُّ قَرِينٍ بِالْمُقَارِنِ يَقْتَدِي

*Ani al-mar'i la tas'al wa sil 'an qareenih
fakullu qareen bi al-muqaarin yaqtadi*

**Do not ask about a person, but ask
about his companion,
for every companion follows his
counterpart**

كَرِيمٌ يُرَوِّي نَفْسَهُ فِي حَيَاتِهِ
سَتَعْلَمُ إِنَّ مُتَنَا غَدًا أَئِنَّا الصَّدِيقُ

*Kareemun yurawi nafsahu fi hayatihi
sata'lamu in mutna ghadan ayyuna
al-sadeeq*

**A noble person nurtures himself in life;
you will know tomorrow, if we die, which
one of us is the true friend**

أَرَى الْعَيْشَ كَنْزاً نَاقِصاً كُلَّ لَيْلَةٍ
وَمَا تَنْقُصِ الْأَيَّامُ وَالذَّهْرُ يَنْفَدُ

*Ara al-‘aysha kanzan naqisan kulla Laylah
wa ma tanqus al-ayyam wa al-dahru yanfad*

**I see life as an ever-diminishing
treasure every night,
while the days do not decrease and
time continues to run out**

لَعَمْرُكَ إِنَّ الْمَوْتَ مَا أَخْطَأَ الْفَتَى
لَكَالطَّوْلِ الْمُرْخَى وَثَنِيَاهُ بِالْيَدِ

La 'amruka inna al-mawta ma akhta'a al-fata
laka al-tiwalu al-murkhaya wa thunayahu
bi al-yadi

**By your life, death does not miss the
young man,
just as the long robe is not missed when
its ends are held in hand**

أَرَى الْمَوْتَ أَعْدَادَ النُّفُوسِ وَلَا أَرَى
بَعِيداً غَدًا مَا أَقْرَبَ الْيَوْمَ مِنْ غَدٍ



*Ara al-mawta a'dada al-nufoos wa la ara
ba'eedan ghadan ma aqrab al-yawma
min ghadi*



**I see death as the equalizer of souls, and
I do not see tomorrow as distant; today is
as close to it as tomorrow**



سَتُبْدِي لَكَ الْأَيَّامُ مَا كُنْتَ جَاهِلًا
وَيَأْتِيكَ بِالْأَخْبَارِ مَنْ لَمْ تُزَوِّدْ

*Sa tu bdi laka al-ayyam ma kuntu jahilan
wa ya'teeka bil-akhbaari man lam tuzawwid*

**Time will reveal to you what you were
ignorant of, and
you will receive news from those whom
you did not prepare**

وَيَأْتِيكَ بِالْأَخْبَارِ مَنْ لَمْ تَبِعْ لَهُ
بَتَاتًا وَلَمْ تَضْرِبْ لَهُ وَقْتَ مَوْعِدٍ

*Wa ya'teeka bil-akhbaari man lam tabi' lahu
bataatan wa lam tadhrib lahu waqt mawa'id*

**And you will receive news from those you
never bought from at all,
nor did you set a specific time for them**

خَالِطِ النَّاسَ بِخُلُقٍ وَاسِعٍ
لَا تَكُنْ كَلْبًا عَلَى النَّاسِ تَهْرُ

*Khaliti al-naasa bi-khulqin waasi'in
la takun kalban 'ala al-naasi tahr*

**Mingle with people with a broad
character,
and do not be like a dog barking
at people**

إِذَا كُنْتَ فِي حَاجَةٍ مُرْسِلاً
فَأَرْسِلْ حَكِيماً وَلَا تُوصِهِ

*Idha kunta fi hajatin mursilan
fa arsil hakeeman wa la tuwsihi*

**If you are sending someone on an errand,
send a wise person and do not give
them instructions**

وَإِنْ نَاصِحٌ مِنْكَ يَوْمًا دَنَا
فَلَا تَنَأْ عَنْهُ وَلَا تُقْصِهِ

*Wa in nasiḥun minka yawman dana
fa la tan'a 'anhu wa la tuqsihi*

**And if an advisor approaches you one day,
do not distance yourself from him nor
dismiss him**



وَإِنْ بَابُ أَمْرٍ عَلَيْكَ اِلْتَوَى
فَشَاوِرْ لَبِيبًا وَلَا تَعْصِهِ

*Wa in babu amrin ‘alayka iltawa
fa shawir labeeban wa la ta‘sihi*

**And if a matter becomes
complicated for you,
consult a wise person and do not
disobey him**

وَذُو الْحَقِّ لَا تَنْتَقِصُ حَقَّهُ
فَإِنَّ الْقَطِيعَةَ فِي نَقْصِهِ

*Wa dhu al-haqq la tantaqi haqqahu
fa inna al-qati'ata fi naqsihi*

**And do not diminish the rights of
the rightful,
for estrangement lies in their
reduction**

وَكَمْ مِنْ فَتًى سَاقِطٍ عَقْلُهُ
وَقَدْ يُعْجَبُ النَّاسُ مِنْ شَخْصِهِ

*Wa kam min fata saqitin ‘aqluhu
wa qad yu’jibu al-naasu min shakhsihi*

**And how many a young man with a
deficient mind,
yet people are impressed by
his appearance**



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