

Stories from Kalam Kohistan

A hunting adventure

I am almost 90 years old. One time I went out for hunting. I got up at night. I woke up my wife. I said, "Make tea for me and cook bread." I tied my pads around my legs. I tied my pads and my wife was baking bread for me.

It was night, there was no light in the sky, the time was around 4 o'clock, and the Azan had not yet been called. This was not summer, but it was in the last days of autumn. Our elders called it Sir Khid (winter solstice). This was the autumn season. There was snow in the area.

My father was sleeping on his bed. He got up and asked me where I was going. I said, "Father, I am going on a hike to Bishai. I am going for an outing." He told me that there is snow and you will have to cross the boundary to the other side. That is the pasture of Mazoom Shah. "You should not cross the border of Mazoom Shah's pasture. A person will freeze to death there." He reminded me about this matter. I said, "I will not cross the boundary." Look, by the grace of God my plan really was not to go to that other side. I went up the mountain and reached the top of Bishai.

There is a cave under a rock. I spent the night in this cave. There was snow there. I cut some branches of a tree and spent the night in the cave. In the morning I went and brought some snow inside. Water was not available. I decided to bring the snow and boil it and make tea for myself.

After taking tea when I came out I saw that there are footprints of a deer in the same place from where I brought the snow. When I went two steps forward I heard the voice of the deer. The deer was in front and I went to chase her.

During the chase I reached Shai (a plane), where there is a ravine. I climbed up on a peak. The deer had gone to the plane side. I tried a lot but could not come down to that place. I could not go and just follow the footprints of the deer. I tried a lot but I could not go down and then I returned.

Having returned, I took out some bread from a cloth. It was late already, because the autumn days are very short. The redness of sun I could see above the pasture of Jijilaat. When I ate a morsel from the bread it was just like a piece of snow. My hands were not working, so I could not take any snuff.

I was snuffing from the snuff-case. I could not hold it in my hand. I had wrapped the pads around my legs. The pads were frozen. When I swallowed the piece of bread I swallowed it like a piece of ice. I was afraid and did not eat any more bread.

My body was freezing because of the cold. I thought that if I ate this frozen bread then maybe my heart would freeze, and then I would freeze to death. I was determined to stay alive here. From which way I came from that way I tried to go, but I could not.

Where my hand reached, where I got a grip, I tried to descend the rock by the force of my wrists. My legs did not reach down to a place where I could descend. I tried a lot but I could not go anywhere. I sat down and then I opened the snuff-case and snuffed it.

I was sitting there and then my heart said that I should go and follow the footprints of the deer. There was a ravine where I had come from. I descended there. Each time I started to fall, I caught a branch of a tree, or a rock, or I put my foot on a stone and stopped myself.

I was covered with snow and rolled down. In this line down there was a cave. There also was rock. I slipped from there and I put my feet on that rock. I slipped down and when my feet hit the rock I came to a halt.

When I stood up the deer came out of that cave. I saw it from the rock. I shot it and it fell down. Then I reached a flood way. I descended through that channel. When I crossed the Chikar trees and reached the stones, the deer was lying there.

I slaughtered the deer. I did not skin her, because it was quite late. I tied the deer in my shawl. I put a knot in it. I started walking from there. I started walking and I wanted to go to Shain to spend the night there. The sun went down and disappeared behind the mountain after becoming red.

When I took two steps forward I thought if I am going now I will spend the night at Shain. Then when I will start tomorrow from Shain then I will have to spend another night at the pasture of GheR. Then my father will get a heart attack.

One night I spent under the rock of Lik LiiS. I thought, tonight is the second night, and if I cannot reach home tomorrow it will be my third night. The low road is farther. When I started to go that way, my heart was not satisfied. My father had told me not to go to Mazoom Shah's pasture.

When I took two steps to one side my heart was not accepting. I took two steps to the other side but then I could not satisfy my heart, either. In the end I shouted, "Oh God

you can see my condition. I am not disobeying my father. This path is short. My father's condition should not become bad. If I go on this way I will reach home tonight. Then my father will not worry.” So I went on the way of Mazoom Shah's pasture.

There was something like a path. There I took one step and another one. When I took the second step I felt something soft. I could not control my second foot. Down from there was a slippery rock. The snow had become ice and was hanging there. There was a stick in my hand when I hit with it, it bounced back.

Downwards it was all ice I could not walk through it. I thought that I should turn back. I thought to go back and then I looked back, I saw that if I slip I will fall and go down to the pasture of Chamin which is at the bottom of this ravine. I could not return. So I ran straight.

God helped me to cross that side. When I crossed it my body was sweating, my clothes got wet and they stuck to my body, because of my hurry. From there I came and reached to the boundary of Bishai. It was evening time and dark. It was midnight and my father and the rest of the family members were sleeping when I reached my house. This happened to me in the time of my hunting.

Note: This story was recorded by Muhammad Zaman Sagar from Saad Gul of Buyun, Kalam, Swat.