

## Chapter Five

### Placing the feet

The hadith I have used is by no means to go against the great Imams i.e. Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i and Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal. Their method of Salaah is also correct as it is according to the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace).

The hadith quoted are to show that the Fatwas of Imam Abu Hanifa are according to the Sunnah as the Ghair Muqalids object to this.

According to Allamah ibn Abideen's commentary of Durre-Mukhtar, which is written by Allamah Haskafi, it states, "The space to be left between the feet should be equal to four fingers of the hand, because it is very effective in attaining submission and humility."

It is established from several *ahadith* that the *saff* (row) should be absolutely straight and no gaps should be left between the *musallis* (worshippers). However, some people insist on spreading their feet and standing in such a manner that their ankles touch the ankles of their neighbour. What is the reality of standing in this fashion?

Those who stand in this way base their practice upon a *hadith* narrated by Nu'maan bin Basheer (*may Allah be pleased with him*). He says: "Once the Messenger of Allah (*may Allah bless him and grant him peace*) faced us and said: "Straighten your rows." He repeated this thrice. He then said: "By Allah, you must most certainly straighten your rows or else Allah will disunite your hearts." Nu'maan bin Basheer (*may Allah be pleased with him*) says: "I then saw the people joining together their shoulders and ankles."<sup>1</sup>

The concluding statement of Nu'maan (*may Allah be pleased with him*) is also reported in *Sahih Bukhari*.

---

<sup>1</sup> Abu Dawood, *Sahih ibn Khuzaima*

However, upon analysing this *hadith*, several points come to light:

**Firstly**, The Messenger of Allah (*may Allah bless him and grant him peace*) never commanded the joining of the ankles. No *hadith* has yet been found wherein The Messenger of Allah (*may Allah bless him and grant him peace*) himself instructed the *Sahaaba* (*may Allah be pleased with him*) to join their ankles. The *Sahaaba* (*may Allah be pleased with him*) had themselves adopted this manner in order to fulfil the command of straightening the *saff*.

**Secondly**, this *hadith* clearly mentions that Nu'maan bin Basheer (*may Allah be pleased with him*) saw the *Sahaaba* (*may Allah be pleased with him*) doing this *prior* to the commencement of the *Salaah*. There is no mention of this position being maintained even after the *Salaah* had commenced. Therefore, we find that great *Muhaditheen* such as Hafiz ibn Hajar and Allama Shawkani have regarded this as an extreme measure which was occasionally adopted by the *Sahaba* (*may Allah be pleased with him*) to ensure that the *saff* is straight.

In fact, a *hadith* of Anas (*may Allah be pleased with him*) makes it absolutely clear that this practice was merely a measure adopted *before* the *Salaah* to ensure the straightening of the *saff*. He says: "If I had to do that (join the ankles) with anyone of them (the *taabi'een*) today, they would run like wild mules."<sup>2</sup>

This simply means that the *taabi'een* severely disliked that anybody should join their ankles with them. Several points are understood from this:

**Firstly**, Anas (*may Allah be pleased with him*) had stopped doing this completely. Had this been a *Sunnah* and not just a manner of ensuring that the *saff* was straight, it is impossible that Hazrat Anas (*may Allah be pleased with him*) would have left it out merely upon somebody disliking it.

---

<sup>2</sup> *Fath al-Bari*, vol.2, pg.176

Secondly, the *taabi'een* would never have disliked it if they had observed many of the Sahaaba (*may Allah be pleased with him*) continuously practicing upon this. It was only due to the fact that they had not generally observed the Sahaaba (*may Allah be pleased with him*) adopting this procedure that they disliked it. Hence this makes it crystal clear that the Sahaaba (*may Allah be pleased with him*) had only occasionally adopted this practice to ensure the straightening of the *saff*. It was not a *Sunnah* in itself, otherwise they would never have left it out.

It has already been made clear that The Messenger of Allah (*may Allah bless him and grant him peace*) never himself instructed the joining of the ankles, nor is there any mention of the Sahaaba (*may Allah be pleased with him*) having maintained this position even *in Salaah*.

However, if for a moment we do accept that this position must be adopted during the course of the *Salaah* as well, the question is: In which posture of *salaah* must this position be maintained? Must it be maintained during *qiyaam*, *ruku*, *sajdah* and *qa'dah* or in only some of these postures? If one says that the ankles should be joined only in the *qiyaam* posture, on what basis were the other postures excluded? If it is argued that it is difficult to do so in *ruku* and *sajdah*, the same could be said for *qiyaam*, since to stand with one's feet spread apart is naturally awkward and hence it presents a certain amount of difficulty and uneasiness for many people. In short, this practice is not established as a *Sunnah* of *Salaah*. It was merely adopted initially by the Sahaaba (*may Allah be pleased with them all*). *before* the commencement of *Salaah* to ensure that the rows are straight.

It is for this reason that Hafiz ibn Hajar has termed the title of a chapter in Bukhari as 'Joining of the shoulders and the feet together' to be based on exaggeration. He says, "Imam Bukhari's aim by choosing this specific title is to portray the emphasis upon straightening the rows and filling the gaps in between."<sup>3</sup>

Shawkani one of the “Salafi” Imam’s has not taken it for its literal interpretation either. He writes in Naylul-Awthar, “It (the companion’s statement) means, place the parts of the body (shoulders) in line with each other so that the shoulder of each worshipper is level with the shoulders of the rest. In this way everyone’s shoulder, knees and feet will be in a single straight line. In clear words, this indicates that the real motive for joining the shoulders etc. was to straighten the rows. Therefore, the joining itself will not be treated as an obligatory act.”<sup>4</sup>

The mens’ Salaah differs from the women’s, the woman would stand with both feet joint together due to the different physical structure of a woman and modesty etc. hence proving that the Great Imam Aazam Abu Hanifa (may Allah be pleased with him) has used the ahadith that are mentioned of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) as well as those ahadith where the hands are raised to the shoulder.

Imam Aazam Abu Hanifa took all ahadith into consideration and also the practices of the companions to decide that raising the hands to the ears is a Sunnah.

### Questions!

**Question:** If they believe the joining of the shoulders and feet, etc. to be necessary, then the feet should not be widened more than a shoulder width. The reason for this is that when everyone’s shoulders are joint together, then the feet will without doubt also have to be opened to the same width only. It would be quite impossible to spread them any more. If this is the case then why do these people stretch their legs beyond the width of the shoulders and make it seem as though one is in the east and the other in the west?

**Question:** If it is taken for a moment to imply that the joining of the feet was maintained throughout the Salaah, then a number of questions arise. The first is, should the feet and shoulders be joined in all postures of the Salaah or only in Qiyaam? If the answer is ‘only in Qiyaam’ then what is

---

<sup>4</sup> Naylul Awthaar.

the proof of that? How have you confined this in Qiyaam only and not to any other posture? On the other hand, if the answer is the opposite and they reply that it is an obligation in all parts of Salaah then how will one go about joining his feet, shoulders, etc. to the people next to him, whilst in Sajdah or Qaidah? It is quite impossible to do so.

**Question:** This was the practice of the companions to straighten the rows as mentioned above. You don't need to spread your legs whilst praying on your own because you don't need to straighten your row. So why do it when praying on your own?

**Question:** If you join the shoulders and the feet together then why don't they join the knees as well as mentioned in the hadith, is this not a Sunnah?

My question is split into two parts:

“Did the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) stand like you say all the time?”

“Did the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) do this until he passed away?”

Hope you can prove these two questions and when doing so I do not want to hear the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) stand as you say etc. but I want Sahih hadith that clearly (no meanings or interpretations) states the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) he stood like so all the time and that he did this action until he passed away. Good luck!