

CHAPTER TWO

DEFINITION OF SUNNAH

Allah's (The Exalted) blessings and peace be upon our Lord and master Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and on his family and Companions.

Acting upon what the Prophet of Islam Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) has shown mankind, is called '*following the Sunnah*'. Following the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) is obligatory upon every Muslim, as the Sunnah of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) is in reality following the Qur'an.

Three types of Sunnah

According to the dictionary, the following words explain the Sunnah; *the features, life, and the way shown*. In the language of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and the Companions it denotes the whole of lawful practices followed in the Religion, particularly the perfect path of Prophets (upon them all be peace), whether pertaining to belief, religious and social practice, or ethics.

In its technical sense Sunnah has three meanings:

1. *Sayings* of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) meaning the *Hadith*.
2. *Actions* the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) did, meaning his practises.
3. *Approval*, the actions of the companions in the presence of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) that were not sanctioned by him. Also, something *attributed* whether physical or moral ascribed to the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), whether before or after he proclaimed his Prophethood.¹

To follow the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) means using him as an example. For instance, the way to pray, as well as the manner and etiquettes of eating and drinking, this means acting upon the way shown by the Prophet of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) throughout our daily lives.

Important to follow

Muslims are the best of creation¹ and have been given the Islamic Sacred Law (Shariah). This is why all actions are to be done according to the Sunnah. In the same way as it is necessary (Wajib) to believe in the Prophets² (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), to follow the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) is also vital. Some acts are "obligatory" (*Fardh*) to follow; some are "necessary" (*Wajib*) and some teachings of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) are to teach us (his followers) etiquette and manners and are known as "Sunnah", and some fall into the category of "desirable" (*Mustahab*) or "supererogatory" (*Nafil*).

By following the blessed Sunnahs, we will find benefit not only in this world throughout day-to-day life, but also in the hereafter. One can gain satisfaction of the heart, internal peace, and peace of mind. Faith (Iman) will become firm and steadfastness on Islam will increase. Many benefits can be gained by following the blessed Sunnahs in terms of status, i.e. by acting upon the blessed Sunnahs you can gain closeness to Allah (The Exalted) and His Beloved Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace).

¹ "You are the best among all those nations appeared unto mankind." (Surah Ale-Imran. Surah No: 3. Verse: 110)

² Just as it is necessary to know Allah's self, characteristics, and attributes, it is also as vital to know what aspects should be present in a Prophet and what should not be, so that a person can be protected from infidelity. (Qanoon-e-Shariat, Vol: one. Prophets and Messengers. P. 16)

Three reasons for following anyone

There are three reasons why people will follow someone; 1) due to fear, 2) greed, 3) or love. This means the reason for following may be because of a person, a ruler, or due to fear of losing something such as wealth. Following for these reasons holds no meaning and is useless. If the following is done because of wealth or worldly pleasure, then this type of following is meaningless too.

Following in reality means to follow with love and sincerity, anything done with love is accepted by Allah (The Exalted). The only purpose of following is due to love and gaining the pleasure of Allah (The Exalted). This is the reason why it holds such a high status.

i Al-Siba'i, Al-Sunna wa Makanatuha fi al-Tashri' al-Islami (p.47)