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Prophet's Ahadith Reported by Ahlul Sunnah Contradict One Another

A researcher may come across numerous traditions attributed to the Prophet which are in fact nothing but *bid'as* invented by a number of companions after his demise. These were forced on people till the latter thought that they were, indeed, what the Prophet had indeed said and done. For this reason, most of these *bid'as* contradict one another, and they differ from the Qur'anic text; therefore, Sunni scholars felt obligated to interpret them and to say that the Prophet did this once, and once he did something else, and so on.

For example, they say that he once offered his prayers reciting the *basmala* audibly and prayed another time without reciting the *basmala*, that he once wiped his feet while performing the ablution but washed them at another time, that he once put his right hand over his left one and once he put them both on his side... Some Sunnis went as far as saying that he did so deliberately in order to lighten the burden from his nation so that every Muslim could choose whatever mode of action suited him.

This is nothing but falsehood rejected by Islam which was built on the principle of Tawhid, on unity of worship even in appearance: Islam did not permit anyone who is to wear the *ihram* garb during the pilgrimage to put on whatever he liked, be it in shape or in color. Nor did Islam permit one who follows an Imam (during the prayers) to differ from him in his movements, be they standing, bowing, prostrating, or sitting.

It is also falsehood because the purified Imams from Ahlul Bayt reject such narrations and refuse to accept them when they permit people to differ with one another with regard to the rituals' form or context.

If we go back to discuss the contradictions in the *ahadith* narrated by "Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama'a," we will find them quite numerous, beyond counting, and we will try to compile them in a special book *Insha-Allah*.

As has been our habit, we would like to briefly mention some examples so that it may become clearer for

the researcher the bases upon which “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a” established their sect and creed.

In Muslim's *Sahih*, as in *Sharh al-Muwatta'* by Jalal ad-Din al-Suyuti, Anas ibn Malik is quoted saying, “I prayed once behind the Messenger of Allah, Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman, and I never heard any of them reciting *Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Raheem*.” In another narration, it is said that the Messenger of Allah was not of the habit to audibly recite

Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Raheem; this time this tradition is narrated by Anas ibn Qatadah, Thabit al-Banani and others. Each of these men traces the chain of its narrators back to the Prophet. But all these traditions contain quite a few variations in their wording. Some of them say that they did not recite *Bismilaahir-Rahmanir-Rahim*, while others say they did not audibly recite it, while still others say that they were, indeed, reciting *Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim* audibly.

Still others say that they never left out the recitation of *Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim*. Some of them say that they started their recitation with: *Alhamdu Lillahi Rabbil Alameen*. Then the compiler adds saying, “This is confusion with which no argument can stand on any ground with any *faqih*.”^{[1](#)}

We wish to know the real reason behind such contradictions and confusion as admitted by the narrator himself, namely Anas ibn Malik, who used to be constantly in the company of the Prophet. He was the Prophet's *hajib*. He narrates once saying that the Messenger of Allah and the three caliphs used not to recite the *basmala*, yet he is quoted saying that they never left it out!

This is the painful and regrettable truth with regard to what most *sahaba* did while transmitting and narrating *hadith*: they followed the dictates of the political interests, seeking to please those who were in authority.

There is no doubt that he narrated saying that they never recited the *basmala*; that was during the reign of Banu Umayyah who tried hard to alter the Sunnah of the Prophet. Ali ibn Abu Talib, though, persisted in upholding it. He tried very hard to keep it alive.

Their policy was based on contradicting Ali in everything, doing the opposite what he used to do, so much so that he, peace be upon him, came to be famous for going to extremes in reciting the *basmala* even as he performed the inaudible prayers. This is not what we or other Shi`as claim; we have not relied in anything we have written except on the books and the statements of “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a.”

Imam al-Naisapuri, in his book *Tafsir Ghara'ib al-Qur'an*, after having mentioned Anas ibn Malik's contradictory narrations, says, “... and they contain another charge: that Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) used to go to extremes to audibly recite the *basmala*. When Banu Umayyah came to power, they went to extremes to prohibit such an audible recitation in an attempt to put an end to Ali ibn Abu Talib's influence. It is possible he (Anas ibn Malik) feared them, hence the contradiction in his statements.”^{[2](#)}

Shaykh Abu Zuhra, too, made a statement almost similar to this one; he said, “The Umayyad regime must be responsible for the disappearance of a great deal of the influence of Ali (peace be upon him) on jurisdiction and on the issuing of verdicts simply because it is not rational to find them cursing Ali from the pulpits while leaving the scholars discussing his knowledge and transmitting his verdicts and whatever he told people, especially with regard to anything related to the foundations of the Islamic government.”³ So all Praise is due to Allah Who permitted the truth to be articulated by some of their own scholars who admitted that Ali used to go to extremes to audibly recite the *basmala*.

We can draw the conclusion that what caused him, peace be upon him, to go to extremes in reciting the *basmala* audibly was the fact that the rulers who preceded him had left it out either deliberately or inadvertently, and people followed suit, so it became an established custom, one, no doubt, which rendered the prayers invalid once the Basmala was deliberately left out; otherwise, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) would not have gone to extremes to articulate it even in his inaudible prayers.

We also sense from reviewing Anas ibn Malik's traditions his attempts to be close to and to please Banu Umayyah who, in turn, praised him and showered him with wealth and even built him luxurious mansions simply because he, too, was an opponent of Ali (peace be upon him). He publicly demonstrated his hatred towards the Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) when he narrated the story of the roasted bird in which the Prophet is quoted supplicating thus: “O Allah! Bring me the one whom You love most to share this bird with,” whereupon Ali came asking permission to enter, but thrice Anas refused to let him in. When the Prophet came to know in the fourth attempt, he asked Anas, “What caused you to do what you have done?” Anas said, “I was hoping it would be one of the Ansars instead.”⁴

Suffices this *sahabi* to hear the Prophet invoking his Lord to bring him the one whom He loves most, so Allah responds to his invocation when Ali (peace be upon him) comes to him. But the hatred borne by Anas towards him forces him to lie and to send Ali back claiming the Prophet had no need for him. And he repeated his lie three consecutive times only because he did not accept Ali (peace be upon him) as the one whom Allah loves most next only to His Messenger.

But Ali forced the door open the fourth time and entered, whereupon the Prophet asked him, “O Ali! What kept you away from us?” “I came to see you,” Ali answered, “but Anas sent me back thrice.” The Prophet asked Anas, “What made you do that, O Anas?” He said, “O Messenger of Allah! I heard your supplication, and I wished it would be a man from my own people.”

History tells us beyond this incident that Anas remained hating Imam Ali as long as he lived, and that he was the one whose testimony was sought by Ali on “the Day of the Rahba” to testify to his having heard the Ghadeer *hadith*, but he concealed his testimony.

It was then that the Imam (peace be upon him) invoked Allah to curse him: the man hardly left the place before being afflicted with leprosy. So how could Anas not be an opponent of Ali (peace be upon him) since he hated him so much and sought nearness to his enemies by dissociating himself from him?

It is for all these reasons that his narration with regard to the *basmala* came wreaking with his own loyalty to Mu`awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan; he says, “I prayed behind the Prophet, Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman...,” meaning that he never accepted to pray behind Ali. This is exactly what Mu`awiyah and his Umayyad followers liked to hear; their objective was to elevate the name of these three caliphs and obliterate that of Ali (peace be upon him) and not even mention him in any *hadith*.

Since it has been proven through the avenue of the purified Progeny and their followers that Ali (peace be upon him) used to audibly recite the *basmala* as part of Surat al-Fatiha and as an introduction to any other Sura besides it, and since it has also been proven through the avenue of “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a” that he used to go to extremes in reciting the *basmala* audibly even in his inaudible prayers..., all this proves that it is included in the authentic Sunnah: whoever leaves it out abandons his obligation and invalidates his prayers. Acting contrarily to the Sunnah is nothing but misguidance;

***“Whatever the Messenger gives you, accept it, and from whatever he forbids you, stay away”
(Holy Qur’an, 59:7).***

After all this, we have a great deal of criticism of the traditions related by the *sahaba* which contradict the Sunnah of the Prophet. This criticism is backed by several proofs some of which we have already stated in our previous researchers, and we will mention the others in our forthcoming ones. What is important in all of this is that we should know that “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a” follow the statements and emulate the actions of the *sahaba* due to the following reasons:

- 1) They believe that their statements and actions are a binding Sunnah.
- 2) They erroneously think that whatever the *sahaba* said and did never disagreed with the Prophet's Sunnah. The *sahaba* used to judge according to their own views then attribute the same to the Prophet so that they may be able to influence people and shelter themselves against the opposition of those who opposed them.

Ali ibn Abu Talib (peace be upon him) was their only opponent who tried his best during his caliphate to bring people back to the Sunnah of the Prophet by his statements, actions, and judicial decisions. Yet it was all in vain because they distracted him with crushing wars; he had hardly finished one war before they started another.

He had hardly finished the Battle of the Camel before they started the Battle of Siffeen. And he had hardly finished the Battle of Siffeen before they started the Battle of Nahrawan. Once he finished it, they assassinated him as he stood at the [Kufa] mosque for prayers.

Then Mu`awiyah came to power with the sole purpose of putting out Allah's light; so he tried his best to put an end to the Prophet's Sunnah which had been revived by Imam Ali (peace be upon him). He brought people back to the caliphs' innovations, especially those which he himself had initiated. He

insulted Ali (peace be upon him) and cursed him so that nobody would mention him in anything other than infamy.

Al-Mada'ini states that a *sahabi* came once to Mu`awiyah and said, "O commander of the faithful! Ali died, and there is nothing you should be apprehensive of. Why don't you put an end to the custom of cursing him?" Mu`awiyah said, "No, by Allah, I shall not stop it till youths grow gray hair and till children grow old doing the same."

Al-Mada'ini says, "So they (Banu Umayyah) kept doing so for quite a long time, teaching their children at Qur'anic schools, as well as their women, servants, and slaves, to do likewise." Mu`awiyah succeeded a great deal in his plan to distance the Islamic nation, barring a few, from its *wali* and true leader, dragging them into antagonizing him and dissociating themselves from him.

He made falsehood appear to them as the truth and convinced them that only they were the followers of the Sunnah, and that whoever accepted them as the masters and followed in the footsteps of Ali was a Kharijite, one who introduced a *bid'a*.

If the Commander of the Faithful Ali, the great man that he was, used to be cursed from the pulpits, and if people sought nearness to Allah by cursing and condemning him, how do you think the treatment meted to the Shi`as who followed him was? These were deprived of their share of public money; their houses were burnt; they were crucified on palm tree trunks, and some of them were buried alive. There is no power nor might except in Allah, the most Exalted One, the Great.

Mu`awiyah, in my view, was a ring in the chain of the major plot and one of its chapters, but he more than anyone else succeeded in hiding the truth and turning facts upside down, bringing the nation back to its original *Jahiliyya* under the guise of Islam.

It is noteworthy here to point out that he was more shrewd than any of his predecessors among the caliphs. He was a skilled actor who could play his part extremely well: sometimes he would cry till he influenced the minds of those in his presence into thinking that he was one of the ascetics and sincere servants of Allah. And sometimes he would demonstrate his cruelty and arrogance to the extent that those around him would see him as one of the greatest atheists. A bedouin may mistake him for a messenger from Allah!

In order to complete our research, we can assess the extent of his cunning and shrewdness from a letter sent to Mu`awiyah by Muhammad son of Abu Bakr, and from his answer to it. We will also come to know from both letters facts which are indispensable to those who seek the truth.

[1.](#) This is the commentary of the author of Tanweer al-Hawalik: Sharh ala Muwatta' Malik. We say: All Praise is due to Allah when "a witness from her family testified" with regard to the confusion of and contradiction among their traditions. Just as he has said, the argument of none of their faqihs can be accepted. Rather, the argument stands with the purified Imams of Guidance who never differed from one another with regard to anything.

[2.](#) Al-Naisapuri, Tafsir Ghara'ib al-Qur'an, Vol. 1, p. 77, in a footnote commenting about al-Tabari's Tafsir.

[3.](#) Shaykh Abu Zuhra makes this statement on p. 161 of his book Al-Imam al-Sadiq.

[4.](#) This story is narrated by al-Hakim in his Mustadrak where he comments by saying, “This tradition is authentic according to both shaykhs [al-Bukhari and Muslim].” Al-Tirmidhi cites it on p. 299, Vol. 2, of his Sahih. Al-Tabari quotes it on p. 160, Vol. 2, of his book Al-Riyad al-Nadira. It is also narrated on p. 171, Vol. 3, of Tarikh Baghdad. It is cited on p. 406, Vol. 6, of Kanz al-Ummal. It is quoted by al-Nasa'i on p. 5 of his book Al-Khasa'is, and it is stated on p. 30, Vol. 4, of Ibn al-Atheer's book Usd al-Ghaba.

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