

## Taqlid and Islamic Authorities According to Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah

If we research the topic of *taqlid* (religious following) and *marji`iyya* (high religious authority) according to “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a,” we will be quite confused while trying to find any link between them and the Messenger of Allah. We all know that “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a” refer in their religious following to the four Imams, namely Abu Hanifah, Malik, al-Shafi`i, and Ibn Hanbal, and all these men never knew the Messenger of Allah, nor were they among his companions.

After the demise of the Prophet, Shi`as made *taqlid* to Ali ibn Abu Talib, peace be upon him, who never parted with the Prophet as long as he lived. Then, after Ali's martyrdom, they followed the Two Masters of the Youths of Paradise: Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn, grandsons of the Prophet. Then they followed Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn Zaynul-Abidin then his son Imam al-Baqir then his grandson Imam al-Sadiq, peace be upon all of them.

During that time, “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a” did not have any cohesive ideological existence. History does not tell us which Imam they followed, if any, and to whom they referred with regard to the injunctions of the *Shari`a* from the time of the Prophet's death and till the appearance of their four sects.

It was only after that time did the four sects start appearing on the stage one after another separated by variable periods of time depending on the desires of the Abbaside rulers as we have already indicated.

Then a bloc appeared combining all four sects under a shiny banner which stole people's minds called “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a.” All those who were antagonistic to Ali and the pure Progeny of the Prophet, and who supported the first three caliphs and all Umayyad and Abbaside rulers, rallied around that banner. People embraced those sects willingly or unwillingly because the rulers went to lengths in promoting them through either enticing or terrorizing others to follow them, and people usually follow the creed of their rulers.

Then we find “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a,” after the death of all their four Imams, closing the door of

*ijtihad* in the face of their own scholars, prohibiting them from doing anything other than following those Imams who had already died...

Those rulers and sovereigns who closed the doors of *ijtihad* and did not permit their scholars to critique or examine religious matters may have done so fearing the surge of an intellectual freedom which could have caused them problems and dissension threatening their interests and very existence.

“Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a,” hence, became restricted to following a dead man whom they never saw nor knew so that they might have felt comfortable with his justice, piety and the extent of his knowledge. Rather, they simply had to think well of their predecessors as each party went to lengths listing the imaginary merits of their particular Imam. Most of those “merits” proved to be visions which were no more than dreams, notions, or scruples; each party was happy with what it had.

Had educated contemporary followers of “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a” looked into the merits narrated by their predecessors, and the contradictions recorded in their regard, which went as far as causing some of them to fight the others, or to call them apostates..., they would have entertained different thoughts about those Imams, and they would have been guided.

How can any wise Muslim, in this time and age, follow a man who did not know anything about modern issues, nor can he provide him with the solutions to some of his problems? Surely Malik and Abu Hanifah and others will dissociate themselves from “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a” on the Day of Judgment and say, “Lord! Do not punish us on account of these folks whom we never knew and who never knew us, and to whom we never, not even for one day, told that they had to follow us.”

I do not know what the answer of “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a” will be when the Lord of the Worlds asks them about the Two Weighty Things. He will then bring the Messenger of Allah to testify against them, and they will most surely be unable to disprove his testimony even if they argue that they just obeyed their masters and dignitaries.

If He asks them, “Did you find in My Book, or in the Sunnah of My Messenger, any covenant, or agreement, or argument mandating you to follow these four sects?” What will their answer be? The answer to this question is too well known, and it does not require much knowledge: Neither the Book of Allah nor the Sunnah of His Messenger contains anything like that; rather, the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger contain a clear order to uphold the pure Progeny and not to lag behind them.

And they may say,

***“Lord! We have seen and heard, so send us back so we may do good; surely we (now) are certain” (Holy Qur’an, 32: 12),***

and the answer will surely be, “No! It is only a statement which you say.”

And the Prophet will say: “Lord! My nation deserted this Qur’an, for I enjoined them to follow my Progeny

after me and conveyed to them what You ordered me to convey, that is, to be kind to my kin, but they violated my covenant and severed their ties with my offspring; they even slaughtered my children and permitted my sanctity to be violated; so, O Lord! Do not grant them my intercession.”

***“And the day when the unjust one shall bite his hands saying: O Would that I had taken a way with the Messenger! O woe unto me! Would that I had not taken so-and-so for a friend! Certainly he led me astray from the Reminder after it had come to me, and Satan ever fails to aid man. And the Messenger cried out: Lord! Surely my people have treated this Qur'an as a forsaken thing. And thus have We made for every prophet an enemy from the sinners, and sufficient is your Lord to guide and help.” (Holy Qur'an, 25:27-31)***

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