

Identifying Ahlul Sunnah

These are members of the largest Muslim community; they represent three-quarters of the total population of the Muslims of the world, and they are the ones who refer for religious verdicts (*fatawa*) and for religious following of the Imams of the four sects, namely Abu Hanifah, Malik, al-Shafi'i, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal.

Later in time, those called Salafis branched out of them; the characteristics of their beliefs were later revived by Ibn Taymiyyah whom they call “the one who revived the Sunnah,” then by the Wahhabis whose ideology was invented by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab; theirs is the sect of the present rulers of Saudi Arabia.^{[1](#)}

All these call themselves “Ahlul Sunnah,” sometimes adding the word “Jama`ah” so they may be identified as “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah.”

Were one to research history, it will become evident to him that anyone who belonged to what they term as “al-khilafa al-rashida,” the righteous caliphate, or “al-khulafa al-rashidoon,” the righteous caliphs, namely Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali^{[2](#)}, and who recognized their Imamate during their life-time, or in our contemporary time, such person belongs to “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah.” Anyone who rejects the said caliphate or considers it illegitimate, advocating the texts which prove that only Ali ibn Abu Talib was worthy of it, is a Shi`a.

It will also become clear to us that the rulers, starting from Abu Bakr and ending with the last Abbaside ruler, were pleased with the “followers of the Sunnah” and in total agreement with them, and that they were angry with, and were seeking revenge against, all those who opted to follow the leadership of Ali ibn Abu Talib as well as those who swore the oath of allegiance to him and to his offspring thereafter.

Based on these premises, Ali ibn Abu Talib and his followers, according to them, were not counted among “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah,” as if this term, i.e. “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah,” was coined to confront and juxtapose Ali and his followers. This is the major reason for the division which afflicted the Islamic Ummah following the demise of the Messenger of Allah into Sunnis and Shi`as.

If we go back to analyze the underlying factors and remove the curtains, relying on the authentic historical references, we will then find out that such a distinction surfaced immediately after the death of the Messenger of Allah. Abu Bakr soon took control, having ascended to the seat of government with the help of the vast majority of the *sahaba*. Ali ibn Abu Talib and Banu Hashim in addition to a very small number of the *sahaba* who were politically weak did not accept him.

It goes without saying that the ruling authority expelled the latter and banished them, regarding them as dissenting from the Islamic mainstream. It did its best to paralyze their opposition by all economic, social, and political means.

It is also a well known fact that our contemporary followers of “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah” do not realize the political dimensions of the roles played during those periods and the extent of enmity and hatred those vicious periods brought forth to isolate and expel the greatest personality in the history of humanity after the Messenger of Allah Muhammad.

Our contemporary “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah” believe that everything went in the very best possible way, and that everything still revolves in full agreement with the Book of Allah (the Holy Qur'an) and the Sunnah since the time of the “righteous caliphs,” and that the latter were like angels; therefore, they respected one another, and there were no ill feelings among them nor ambition nor bad intentions. For this reason, you find them refusing all what the Shi`as say about the *sahaba* in general and the “righteous caliphs” in particular.

It is as if “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah” never read the history books written by their own scholars, feeling satisfied with only the praise, compliments, and admiration their ancestors lavished on the *sahaba* in general and on the “righteous caliphs” in particular. Had they opened their minds and vision and turned the pages of their history books, as well as the books of *hadith* (traditions of the Prophet [P]) available with them, seeking the truth and getting to know who is right and who is wrong, they would have changed their mind not only about the *sahaba*, but also about many injunctions which they regard as correct while they are not.

Through this humble effort, I am trying to clarify for my brethren among “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah” some facts which fill the books of history, and to briefly highlight for them the clear texts which refute falsehood and show the truth, hoping that doing so may heal the Muslims' disunity and division and bring about their unity.

Contemporary “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah,” as I know them, are not fanatics, nor are they against Imam Ali or Ahlul Bayt; rather, they love and respect them, but they, at the same time, also love and respect the enemies of Ahlul Bayt and follow in their footsteps, thinking that “they all sought nearness to the Messenger of Allah.”

“Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah” do not act upon the principle of befriending the friends of Allah and dissociating themselves from the enemies of Allah; rather, they love everyone and seek nearness to

Mu`awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan just as they seek nearness to Ali ibn Abu Talib.

The shiny term “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah” has dazzled them, and they are not familiar with the implications and insinuations which the most shrewd Arabs had embedded therein. If they one day come to know that Ali ibn Abu Talib is the personification of Muhammad's Sunnah, and that he is the gate leading to such Sunnah, and that they have contradicted him and he has contradicted them..., they will surely renounce their stand and research this issue very seriously, and there will be no Ahlul Sunnah except those who followed Muhammad's and Ali's Sunnah.

In order to come to such a conclusion, we have to unravel for them the greatest plot which played the most serious role in setting Muhammad's Sunnah aside, and in substituting it with Jahili innovations which caused the Muslims' setback and their deviation from al-Sirat al-Mustaqeem (the Straight Path), and their disunity and dissension. It also caused them at a later time to call each other apostate, and even fight one another. It thus caused their scientific and technological backwardness which led to their being invaded and occupied then subjugated, humiliated, and assimilated.

Having concluded this brief survey identifying the Shi`as and the Sunnis, we have to take note of the fact that the proper noun “Shi`a” (or Shi`ites) does not imply that its adherents oppose the Sunnah, as most people are misled into thinking when they brag and say: “We are the followers of the Sunnah,” implying that others are opponents of the Sunnah.

This is something which the Shi`as do not accept at all; rather, the Shi`as are convinced that they, and only they, are the ones who uphold the authentic Sunnah of the Prophet especially since they have approached such Sunnah through its gate, namely Ali ibn Abu Talib; there is no gate to it other than his and, according to them, nobody can reach the Prophet except through him.

We, as usual, seek neutrality in order to reach the truth while taking the dear reader from one stage to another so that we may together review some historical events. We will thus provide him with the proof and argument showing the Shi`as to be the true followers of the Sunnah as this book's title suggests, leaving to him after that the freedom to make up his mind and to comment as he pleases.

¹. According to informed Saudi citizens, the population of Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia does not exceed 8%, whereas the majority are Maliki Sunnis. ___ Tr.

². It will become evident to us from forthcoming researches that “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah” did not add the name of Ali ibn Abu Talib to the three “righteous caliphs” except at a very late period in history.

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