

Wahhabis and The Renovation of Graves of Awliya Allah

Amongst the matters about which the Wahhabis are most sensitive is the matter of renovation of graves and construction over the graves of Prophets, Imams and the pious ones.

This matter was at first initiated by Ibn Taymiyya and his famous student Ibn al-Qayyim and they gave their verdicts (*fatawa*) in prohibiting the construction of a structure and the necessity of its destruction.

Ibn al-Qayyim in his book *Zad al-ma'ad fi huda khayr al-'ibad*¹ says as such:

يَجِبُ هَدْمُ الْمَشَاهِدِ الَّتِي بُنِيَتْ عَلَى الْقُبُورِ، وَلَا يَجُوزُ إِبْقَاءُهَا بَعْدَ الْقُدْرَةِ عَلَى
هَدْمِهَا وَإِبْطَالِهَا يَوْمًا وَاحِدٍ

It is obligatory to destroy the structure constructed over the grave and after gaining power for their destruction it is not permissible to reinstate them even for one day.

In the year 1344 AH when the Sa'uds had gained control over Mecca, Medina and its surroundings, they planned a pretext for destroying the graves of Baqi' and the traces of household and companions of the Holy Prophet (s). By getting verdict (*fatwa*) from the scholars of Medina they wanted to pave the way for demolition and preparing the minds of the people of Hijaz who were never in favour of such action.

For this reason they sent the Chief Judge of Najd, Sulayman bin Bulayhid towards Medina for the purpose of deriving benefit from the scholars of that place regarding this matter. Thus he planned the questions in such a manner that its answers (as per the viewpoint of the Wahhabis) were hidden in the questions itself. And in this way he declared to the *muftis* that their replies should match the answers which had come in the questions; otherwise they would be called as polytheists and be killed if they would not repent.

The questions and answers were published in the newspaper *Umm al-Qura* in Mecca in the month of Shawwal 1344 AH.2 As a result of this publication, a severe reaction took place among the Muslims mainly Sunnis and Shi'as because they were aware that after taking the verdict (*fatwa*) even if it was by way of force, the destruction of graves of the leaders of Islam would commence.

Incidentally, after taking the verdict from fifteen scholars of Medina and publishing it in Hijaz, the destruction of the traces of the household of the Prophet (s) began on the 8th of Shawwal of the same year. The entire traces of Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and the companions of the Holy Prophet (s) disappeared and the valuable properties of the shrine of the Holy Imams ('a) at Baqi' were plundered and the graveyard of Baqi' was turned into a heap of dung which would fill one with horror while looking at it.

Now we will mention some of the questions so that it becomes clear as to how the answers had been placed in the question itself. That is to say, the aim was not to ask any questions but gain a pretext for destroying the traces of Messengership. If the aim was truly conception and realism it was meaningless for the inquirer to place the answers in the questions itself.

Instead we can deduce from it that the questions and answers were written on a piece of paper which they took to the scholars (ulama) of Medina only for getting their signature since it is un-imaginable that the famous scholars of Medina who for years were propagators and protectors of the traces of the Holy Prophet (s) and the visitors to his grave would, all of a sudden, accept the views of others and give their verdict for the prohibition of construction and the necessity of its destruction.

Sulayman bin Bulayhid says in his questions:

ما ول علماء المدينة المنورة زادهم الله فهماً وعِلماً في البناء على القبور
واتخاذها مساجد هل هو جائز أولاً وإذا

كان غير جائز بل ممنوع منهي عنه نهياً شديداً فهل يجب هدمها ومنع الصلاة
عندها أم لا؟ وإذا كان البناء في

مسبلة كالبقيع وهو مانع من الإنتفاع بالمقدار المبني عليه فهل هو غصبٌ يجب
رفعه لما فيه من ظلم المستحقين

ومنعمهم استحقاقهم أم لا؟

What are the views of the scholars of Medina who, may God increase their knowledge and insight, about construction over the graves and setting them as mosques? Is it permissible or not? And if it is not permissible, and is strictly prohibited in Islam, then is it necessary and compulsory to destroy them and prevent the people from reciting prayers near it or not?

If in one endowed (waqf) land like Baqi' construction over the grave becomes an obstacle from making use of those sections which are over that, then is this act not usurpation of a portion of the waqf?

The scholars of Medina under threat and compulsion gave replies to the questions of Shaykh as follows:

أما البناء على القبور فهو ممنوع إجماعاً لصحة الأحاديث الواردة في منعه
ولهذا أفتى كثير من العلماء بوجوب

هدمه مستندين بحديث علي رضي الله عنه أنه قال: لأبي الهيثم ألا أبعثك على ما
بعثتني عليه رسول الله (صلى الله

عليه وأله) أن لا تدع تمثالاً إلا طمسته ولا قبراً إلا سوّيته

Construction over the graves is forbidden. Based on some traditions proving its prohibition, a group have given verdict (fatwa) for the destruction of the same. In this matter they have made use of the tradition which Abu al-Hayyaj has narrated from 'Ali (r). The latter told him – I am entrusting you with a work which the Messenger of God (s) had entrusted me with the same. Don't see any picture but that you erase it and don't see any grave but that you level it.

Shaykh Najdi in an article, which was published in the newspaper *Umm al-Qura* No. Jamadi al-thani 1345 AH, says:

Construction of dome and structure was in vogue from 5th century AH.

These are a few examples of the sayings of Wahhabis about renovation of graves and mostly they put forth two reasons in support of their sayings:

1. Consensus of the scholars of Islam about its being prohibited.
2. Tradition of Abu al-Hayyaj from Ali ('a) and some other similar ones.

It should be known that our discussion at present is about renovation of graves and construction of bower or ceiling over them. However the matter of *ziyara* – visitation to graves – will be discussed separately.

For making the matter clear, we will discuss this issue from three perspectives:

1. What is the view of the Qur'an regarding this matter? Can we derive the judgement from the Qur'an?
2. Does the Islamic *umma* in reality have consensus in its being prohibited or is it that in all the Islamic ages the matter was something else and renovation of graves and construction of house was in vogue during the period of the Holy Prophet (s) himself and his companions?
3. What is the derivation of the tradition of Abu al-Hayyaj, Jabir, Umm Salama and Na'im which the Wahhabis utilise?

A. Qur'anic View-Point Regarding Renovation Of Graves

The Qur'an has not directly passed a judgement about this matter but it is possible to derive its ruling from some of the relevant verses. The details follow.

1- Renovating and protecting the graves of the Prophets is nothing but paying respect to the Divine Rites.

The Holy Qur'an reckons the respect of Divine rites to be a sign of piety and purity of heart. It says:

ذٰلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعِزَّهُمْ شَعَائِرَ اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوٰى الْقُلُوْبِ

“And whoever respects the signs of Allah, this surely is (the outcome) of the piety of hearts. (Hajj 22:32).”

What is meant by respect of Divine rites? *شعائر* is the plural of *شعيرة* and gives the meaning of sign and symbol. This verse does not show the sign of existence of God since the whole Universe is the sign of His existence. And nobody has said that respecting whatever things that exist in this Universe is the sign of piety. Instead, it shows the signs of His religion and thus the exegetes interpret this verse as “the Signs of religion of Allah”.³

If in the Qur'an, Safa and Marwa⁴ and the camel which is to be sacrificed in Mina⁵ are reckoned to be the rites of God it is for the reason that these are the signs of straight religion (*Din-e-Hanif*) and beliefs of Ibrahim. If Muzdalifa is considered to be *al-mash'ar*, it is because it is the sign of religion of God and

stopping at this sign (during Hajj) is practically acting on the religion and obedience to God.

If the entire Hajj rites are named as *al-sha'air* it is because these actions are the signs of divine and true religion.

In short, whatever are the signs and symbols of divine religion, respecting them is the source of nearness towards God. Indisputably, the Prophets and Awliya Allah who was the channel for propagating religion among the people are the greatest and the most evident signs of the divine religion. No just person can deny this fact that the existence of the Holy Prophet (s) and Imams ('a) are from the proofs of Islam and are the signs of this holy religion and one of the ways of respecting them is protecting their graves and their remains and safeguarding them from any kind of destruction.

Anyhow, the matter of respect for the graves of awliya Allah (friends of God) becomes clear when we consider two things:

(a) The Prophets and awliya Allah, in particular those who have sacrificed their lives in the path of religion are from the divine *sha'air* (rites) and signs of religion.

(b) One of the ways of respecting this group after their demise is to safeguard and renovate their graves as well as protecting their school of thought. For this reason throughout the world, great religious and political leaders whose graves are a symbol of their school of thought are buried in such selected places which remain permanently safe. Safeguarding their grave from destruction is the sign of protection of their existence and eventually the sign of protection of their school of thought.

For understanding this fact it is necessary to examine and analyse accurately verse number 36 of Sura Hajj. Some of the pilgrims to the House of God take a camel along with themselves right from their houses to be sacrificed near the House of God. They earmark on this camel for sacrifice in the way of God and distinguish it from the other camels by putting a collar round its neck.

As this camel is somehow related to God then according to the same verse it is considered to be the *sha'air* (rites) of God and according to the contents of verse 32 of Sura Hajj (Surah 22) **وَمَنْ يُعْظَمِ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ** should be respected. For example, no one should ride on that camel and water and grass should be given to her at the appropriate time till the time she is slaughtered.

When one camel which is earmarked for being sacrificed near the House of God is considered to be a part of *sha'air* (rites) and its honour and respect is found to be necessary, then why the Prophets, Imams, Scholars, Martyrs and those who right from the beginning of their life have put the collar of obedience and submission to God around their neck and have become a channel between God and His creatures are not to be considered a part of *sha'air* (rites) of God and their respect and honour not necessary?

If really Ka'ba, Safa, Marwa, Mina and Arafat, which are all inanimate objects and no more than stone

and mud, are part of the *sha'air* (rites) because of being related to the divine religion and each one requires obligatory honour and respect, then why the Divine Leaders, who are the preachers and protectors of the divine religion, and those things which are related to them not part of the *sha'air* (rites)!?6

We put the conscience of Wahhabis to justice in this matter. Do they doubt the Prophets and Messengers to be amongst the *sha'air* (rites) of Allah and do not they consider the protection of their traces and things related to them as honourable!? Does respect and honour mean renovating their graves and keeping them clean or rather destroying and turning them into a heap of ruins?

2- The Holy Qur'an very clearly instructs us to love the near ones of the Holy Prophet.

The Qur'an says:

قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ

“Say; I do not ask of you any reward for it but love for my near relatives. (Shura 42:23)”

From the view point of the general people who are referred to by this verse, is not the matter of the grave and its renovation as one of the ways of expressing love towards the household of the Holy Prophet (s)? We see that this custom was and is still prevailing amongst all the nations and they think this to be one way of expressing their love to the people in grave. Thus great political and religious personalities have been buried in the church or in famous shrines surrounded by flowers and trees.

3. Renovation of grave and the past generation

From the Qur'anic verses we come to know that respect towards the grave of a believer was one kind of practise which was in vogue amongst the nations prior to Islam.

About the companions of Kahf (the Cave), Qur'an narrates that when their condition became known to the people of that time and they came near the entrance of the cave, they expressed two views about their graves

ابْنُوا عَلَيْهِمْ بُيُوتًا

“.....Erect an edifice over them....., (Kahf 18:21)”

قَالَ الَّذِينَ غَلَبُوا عَلَىٰ أَمْرِهِمْ لَنَتَّخِذَنَّ عَلَيْهِم مَّسْجِدًا

“...Those who prevailed in their affair said: We will certainly raise a mosque over them..... (Kahf 18:21)”

The Qur’an narrates these two views without any criticism. Of course it can be said that if either of these two views were wrong then surely Qur’an would have criticised them or would have narrated their action with condemnation. Anyhow these two views show that one of the ways of respect of the awliya Allah and virtuous people has been the protection of their shrines.

By paying attention to these three verses we can never declare the matter of renovation of graves of the awliya Allah, Prophets and the virtuous ones as prohibited and or an abominable affair. Instead we can interpret it to be one kind of respect to the *sha’air* (rites) of God and manifestation of *mawadda fi al-qurba* (love towards kinsfolk).

4. Elevation of Special Houses

The Qur’an sets forth one novel parable wherein the Light (*nur*) of Allah is compared to a lamp which is having a light within it, and this elegant and profound parable begins with the sentence **الله نور السموات والأرض** and ends with the sentence. **والله بكل شيء عليم**.

After setting forth this parable which itself is having a lengthy discussion, Qur’an says:

فِي بُيُوتٍ أُذِنَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ

رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

“In houses which Allah has permitted to be exalted and that His name may be remembered in them; there, glorify Him therein in the mornings and the evenings, Men whom neither trade nor selling diverts from the remembrance of Allah. (Nur 24:36 & 37)”

Argumentation of this verse requires, before anything else, two points to be clarified:

- (a) What is meant by **بيوت** (houses)?
- (b) What is meant by **يرفع** which has come in the meaning of raising and elevation?

Regarding the first word, we have to remind you that its objective is not limited to mosques. Instead it refers to mosques and houses such as the houses of Prophets and awliya Allah which possesses the

aforesaid specialities mentioned in the verse and there is no reason to confine the meaning of the word to mosque.

The whole of this بيوت most common being the mosques and houses of the Prophets and the pious ones who have never been forgetful of the Hereafter, is the centre of Light (*nur*) of Allah and the flames of *tawhid*, purification and glorification. Instead it can be said that بيوت here excludes the mosques because a house consists of four walls and surely a ceiling and if Ka'ba is called as بيت الله (house of Allah) it is because it possesses a ceiling.

But we see that it is recommended (*mustahab*) that a mosque should be devoid of a ceiling and at present even *Masjid al-Haram* is without a ceiling. The verses of the Qur'an too show that by *house* is meant a place possessing a ceiling. It says:

وَلَوْلَا أَنَّ يَكُونُ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً لَجَعَلْنَا لِمَنْ يَكْفُرُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ لِبُيُوتِهِمْ سُقْفًا مِّنْ
فِضَّةٍ

“And were it not that all people had been a single nation, We would certainly have assigned to those who disbelieve in the Beneficent God (to make) of silver the roofs of their houses. (Zukhruf 43:33)”

Anyhow بيوت either refers to a place other than mosque or it consists of both mosque and house.

Now it is time to explain the meaning of the second word i.e. يرفع

The word يرفع in the Arabic language means 'to raise' or 'to elevate' and the verse explicitly says that God has permitted these houses to be elevated. This elevation either refers to physical elevation i.e. raising the base and the walls and protecting them from tumbling down as Qur'an has used the same meaning in the following verse,

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ

“And when Ibrahim and Ismail raised the foundations of the House (Baqarah 2: 127)”

or it refers to spiritual elevation i.e. God has given a special privilege to such houses and has raised their rank and position.

If we take the meaning of physical elevation, then it clearly shows that the houses of the Prophets and awliya Allah who are the true proofs of these houses, are worthy of renovation – whether during their lifetime or after their demise, whether they are buried there itself (like the house of the Holy Prophet (s),

Imam al-Hadi and Imam al-‘Askari where their houses are their graves because they were buried in their own houses) or in some other place. Under any condition such houses are to be renovated and protected from ruin and destruction.

And if we take the meaning of spiritual elevation, then we conclude that God has permitted such houses to be honoured and respected and one of the ways of manifesting our respect to such houses is safeguarding them from destruction and renovating them and keeping them clean.

All these physical and spiritual elevation is because these houses belong to the divine men who were God's obedient servants and were submissive to His commands.

Despite these and such other verses it is a matter of shock as to how the Wahhabis have destroyed the traces of Messengership and ruined their houses and have turned into a heap of rubble, these lustrous places where men and women used to glorify and praise God, day and night, and gather in these places and recite supplications because of the spiritual connection the owners of these houses had with God! This shows as to how they have openly and apparently disclosed their old enmity with the Holy Prophet (s) and his household (‘a) and his sincere companions!

In this connection we draw the attention of our readers to one tradition.

Anas bin Malik says: The Holy Prophet (s) recited this verse. At that time a person stood up and said:

“ **بيت** refers to which house?”

The Holy Prophet (s) said – “The house of the Prophets.”

Abu Bakr stood and said –“Is this house (referring to the house of ‘Ali and Fatima) included amongst them?”

The Holy Prophet (s) replied7

نعم من أفضلها

“Yes, it is the most important of all of them.”

B. The Islamic Ummah And Renovation Of Graves

The day when Islam spread out in the Arabian peninsula and its light gradually spread to the vital parts of the Middle East, the graves of the Prophets whose place of burial were known to the people were not only having ceiling and bower at that time but also a dome and place of gathering. Now too a part of their graves stand intact in the same form.

In Mecca itself, the graves of Isma'il ('a) and his mother Hagar lie on a rock. The grave of Danial ('a) is at Shush and of Hud ('a), Salih ('a), Yunus ('a) and Dhu'l Kifl ('a) at Iraq. The graves of the Prophets like Ibrahim ('a) and his sons Ishaq ('a), Ya'qub ('a) and Yusuf ('a) who were brought from Egypt to Bayt al-Maqdas by Musa ('a) are in the occupied Quds and all of them possess structure, signs and symbols.

The grave of Hawwa is in Jeddah where the traces of it were destroyed after the conquest of tribe of Sa'uds and the reason this land is called as Jeddah is because of her grave in that place although this relationship may not be correct.

When the Muslims gained control over this place they never got disturbed and never issued any orders for its demolition.

If truly the renovation of graves and burial of the dead in a covered shrine is forbidden in Islam, then the first and foremost task of the Muslims of that time was to destroy all the graves existing in Jordan and Iraq and secondly prevent the restoration of any structure at all times. Not only have they not destroyed these shrines but also during the entire 14 centuries they have strived in protecting and renovating any traces left from the previous Prophets.

By their God-gifted wisdom they took the protection of the remains of the Prophets to be one way of expressing their respect towards them and by this action reckoned themselves to be pious and virtuous.

Ibn Taymiyya in his book *al-Sirat al-mustaqim* says:

“At the time of victory of al-Quds the graves of Prophets consisted of a constructed structure but its doors were closed till the fourth century *hijri*” 8

If truly construction over the graves was a prohibited affair, then its demolition was naturally necessary and its continuity not justified. In short, the existence of these structures during this period and before the very sight of Islamic scholars is itself an evident sign of its being permissible in the religion of Islam.

Islamic Remnants are the Sign of Originality of Religion

Islamic Remnants are the Sign of Originality of Religion 9

Fundamentally, protecting the remnants of Prophethood especially the traces of Holy Prophet (s) such as his shrine, the graves of his wives, children and companions, the houses in which he lived and the mosques wherein he recited prayers, all have great significance which we shall now discuss.

Today, after the lapse of twenty centuries following the birth of ('Isa) Jesus Christ ('a) and his mother (Maryam) Mary ('a), his book Bible and his companions and disciples, all have been looked upon as a fairy tale in the West. A group of Orientalists have doubted the existence of this heavenly man by the name of Christ whose mother was Mary and his book Bible and described them as a fairy tale like the fairy tale of Layla and Majnun. Why!?

Because not even one genuine trace of Jesus Christ is at hand. For example, his true place of birth, his house where he lived in and the place of his burial according to Christian belief are not known. His heavenly book fell victim to distortion and these four gospels where in the last chapter of each of them there is the description of death and burial of Jesus Christ is certainly not related to him and it clearly shows that they have been compiled after his demise. Thus most of the researchers recognise them to be the literary works of the second century A.D. However, if all the specifications related to him had been protected, then there would have been a clear proof and confirmation to his originality and there would have been no excuse for these fictional and sceptical persons.

Muslims openly announce to the world that: "O people! 1400 years ago a man was appointed in the land of Hijaz for the guidance of the human society and he was fully successful in his mission. All the specifications of his life have been protected as seen in his life without the slightest ambiguity and even the house where he was born is known to us. The mount of Hira is a place where revelation (*wahy*) used to descend upon him and it is in this mosque where he used to pray and this is the house where he was buried in and these are the houses of his wives, children and relatives and these are the graves of his children, wives, Caliphs, and....

Now, if we remove all these traces or signs, then obviously we have erased all the traces of his existence and the signs of his originality and prepared the ground for the enemies of Islam. Therefore destroying the traces of Messengership and household of the Prophet is not only one kind of disrespect but also a war against the original manifestations of Islam and authenticity of Messengership of the Prophet (s).

The constitution of religion of Islam is a permanent and everlasting programme and till the day of Judgement it will remain as the religion of mankind. The generations that will follow after thousands of years have to believe in its authenticity. Therefore, for ensuring this objective, we have to always protect all the traces and signs of the Holy Prophet (s) and in this way take a step in safeguarding the religion for the coming years. We should not do anything that will make the fate of Prophethood of the Holy Prophet (s) meet the same end as that of Prophet ('Isa) Jesus ('a).

The Muslims have strived for the protection of the traces of the Holy Prophet (s) to such extent that they have accurately recorded all the specifications of his life during Prophethood, such as the details of his ring, shoes, brush and the signs of his sword, spear, shield, horse, camel and slave. Even the wells from where he used to draw water and drink and the territory which he has bequeathed and still more the style of his walking and eating and the kinds of food which he liked and the appearance of his beard and his way of applying dye, etc, have been recorded and to a certain extent these signs have still remained till today.

By referring to the history of Muslims and touring the expansive Islamic countries, it becomes clear that renovation of graves and their protection and preservation was one of the customs of the Muslims. At present, throughout the Islamic countries, the graves of Divine Prophets, awliya Allah and the pious

people exist in the form of shrines and for their protection endowments are available where their revenues are used for their preservation, etc.

Before the birth of faction of Wahhabism at Najd and before their domination over the two holy shrines and the outskirts of Hijaz, the graves of awliya Allah had been erected, thriving and worthy of attention of everyone. None of the Islamic scholars had any objection towards them.

It is not only in Iran where the graves of awliya and virtuous people have been sanctified in the form of shrines but throughout the Islamic countries, especially Egypt, Syria, Iraq, the western countries and Tunisia the shrines of scholars and great personalities of Islam are flourishing and Muslims depart in groups towards these shrines to visit their graves and recite Fatiha and Holy Quran for the souls of these great personalities. All these holy places are having servants and protectors responsible for maintenance and keeping them clean.

With such propagation and dissemination throughout the Islamic countries, is it possible to regard the renovation of graves as a forbidden act when this long-drawn custom was existing and still exists from the beginning of Islam till today and this custom is known in the language of the scholars as 'the ways or conduct of Muslims'? The existence of such behaviour without any objection from any corner shows that it is permissible, desirable and popular.

This matter is so fundamental that one of the Wahhabi writers too confesses to it as such:

هذا امر عم البلاد وطبق الأرض شرقاً وغرباً بحيث لا بلدة من بلاد الإسلام إلا
فيها قبور ومشاهد بل مساجد

المسلمين غالباً لا تخلو عن قبر ومشهد ولا يسع عقل عاقل أن هذا منكر يبلغ
إلى ما ذكرت من شناعة ويسكت

علماء الإسلام.

“This matter has reached the common places, East and the West to such an extent that there is no Islamic country where there is no holy grave or shrine. Even the mosques of the Muslims are not devoid of it and reason does not accept that such an affair remains forbidden and the scholars of Islam have kept silent towards this matter.”¹⁰

However, in spite of such confession they have not left their obstinacy and say that the prevalence of such matter and the silence of scholars are no reason for it to be permissible. And if a group remains silent due to some reason or the other, another group under different situation will reveal the fact.

But the answer to such talks is obvious since for seven centuries, the scholars of Islam had remained silent and did not utter a word regarding this matter. Were all of them conservative during this period!? Why at the time of the victory over Baitul-Muqqadas the second Caliph did not destroy the traces of graves of the Prophets? Did he too compromise with the polytheists of his time!?

Surprising is the reply of scholars of Medina who say;

اما البناء على القُبور فهو ممنوعٌ غجماعاً لصحة الأحاديث الواردة في منعها
ولهذا افتى كثير من العلماء بوجوب

هدمه.

“Construction over the graves is forbidden according to the consensus of scholars because of the correct traditions which have come in this regard. Thus a great many of scholars have given their verdict (fatwa) for their destruction.”

How can the claim of consensus be made over prohibition of construction over graves when we see that the Muslims buried the Holy Prophet (s) in the house where his wife – Ayesha – was living. Later Abu Bakr and ‘Umar were buried near the Holy Prophet (s) in the same chamber. Thereafter, the chamber of Ayesha was divided from the middle and a wall was put up there. A portion of it was earmarked for Ayesha and the other portion was related to the grave of the Holy Prophet (s) and the two Caliphs. During the time of Abdulla bin Zubayr, the wall was raised to a higher level due to its low height.

From then on, in every period, the house in which the Holy Prophet (s) was buried was either renovated or reconstructed based on the special architecture of that time. Even during the period of the caliphate of the Umayyads and Abbasids the matter of construction of grave was in vogue and graves were constructed in every period with the special architecture of that time.

And the last of the construction over the grave which still exists was the construction of Sultan Abdul Hamid which started in the year 1270 and lasted for four years. You can read the detailed history of renovation and reconstruction of the house of the Holy Prophet (s) throughout the Islamic history till the time of Samhudi in the book Wafa –ul– Wafa of Samhudi¹¹ and some other related books about the history of Medina.

C. Hadith of Abu Al-Hayyaj

Now it is the time to closely examine the hadith which the Wahhabi scholars narrate. Here we produce a tradition from Sahih Muslim:

حدثنا يحيى بن يحيى وأبو بكر بن أبي شيبة وزهير بن حرب قال: يحيى أخبرنا
والأخيران ، حدثنا: وكيع عن

سفيان عن حبيب بن أبي ثابت عن أبي وائل عن أبي الهياج الأسجي قال لي عليُّ
بن أبي طالب ألا ابعتك على ما

بعثني عليه رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله) أن لا تدع تمثالاً إلا طمسه ولا قبراً
مُشرفاً إلا سويته.

*Narrated to us Yahya bin Yahya, Abu Bakr bin Abi Shayba and Zuhayr bin Harb (on the authority of) Waki' who narrates from Sufyan who narrates from Habib bin Abi Thabit who narrates from Abu Wa'il who narrates from Abu al-Hayyaj that 'Ali told him: "I assign you for a task which the Holy Prophet (s) assigned me for the same. Do not leave any picture but that which you erase nor any high grave but that you level it."*¹²

The Wahhabis have utilised this tradition as a pretext without paying attention to the authenticity and logic of the tradition.

Our Views about this Tradition

Whenever we wish to derive an Islamic ruling from a hadith, it should possess two conditions:

1. The authenticity of tradition should be correct; that is to say, the narrators of tradition should be such people that one could rely on their sayings.
2. The instruction of tradition should be clear upon the purpose.

That is to say the words and the sentences of the tradition should clearly prove our purpose such that if we give the same tradition to a person well versed in language and aware of its specifications, he would

be able to derive the same meaning as we derive.

Unfortunately, this tradition is worthy of criticism from both these points especially the second, where one can find no relation with its purpose.

From the viewpoint of authenticity (*isnad*), the traditionalists (those expert in the science of hadith) do not accept the reliability of the persons narrating this tradition because we see that its narrators are people like (1) Waki' (2) Sufyan al-Thawri (3) Habib bin Abi Thabit and (4) Abu Wa'il al-'Asadi.

A traditionalist such as Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani has criticised them in his book *Tahdhib al-tahdhib* to such an extent that it throws doubt and uncertainty on the authenticity of the aforementioned tradition and other traditions narrated by them.

1. For example he narrates from Ahmad bin Hanbal about Waki' that:

إِنَّهُ أَخْطَأَ فِي خَمْسِ مِائَةِ حَدِيثٍ

*"He has committed mistakes in 500 traditions."*¹³

He also narrates from Muhammad ibn Nasr al-Marwazi about Waki' that:

كَانَ يَحْدُثُ بِالْمَعْنَى وَلَمْ يَكُنْ مِنْ أَهْلِ اللِّسَانِ

*"He used to narrate the tradition according to its meaning (rather than narrating the precise text) while his mother-tongue was not Arabic."*¹⁴

2. About Sufyan al-Thawri, he narrates from Ibn al-Mubarak that:

حَدَّثَ سُفْيَانَ بِحَدِيثٍ فَجَسْتَهُ وَهُوَ يُدَلِّسُهُ فَلَمَّا رَأَى إِسْتَحْيَى

*"Sufyan was narrating a tradition when I suddenly arrived and noticed that he was deceiving in tradition. When he saw me, he felt ashamed."*¹⁵

Deception in any tradition in whatever meaning it may be interpreted shows that there had been no equity, truthfulness and realism in such a man that he has presented the untrue things to be true.

In the translation of Yahya al-Qattan, he narrates from him that Sufyan tried to present to me an

unreliable person to be reliable but eventually he was unsuccessful. 16

3. About Habib ibn Abi Thabit, he narrates from Ibn Hibban that:

كانمُدَّلسًا

“He was deceiving in tradition.”

He also narrates from al-Qattan that:

لا يُتَابَعُ عَلَيْهِ وَليست محفوظةً

“His traditions cannot be followed because they are not firm.”¹⁷

4. About Abi Wa’il he says:

“He is from the *nawasib* and from the deviators from (the path) of ‘Ali (‘a).”¹⁸

It is worthy of attention that in the entire *sihah sitta* only one tradition is narrated from Abu al-Hayyaj and that is the same which we have discussed already. It shows that a person, whose share from the Prophetic knowledge was only one tradition, was not a man of tradition at all. Therefore, it becomes difficult to rely on him. When the reference of tradition possesses such shortcomings, then no jurisprudent (*faqih*) can pass a verdict (*fatwa*) based on such a weak reference.

The ‘instruction’ of tradition is no less important than its reference as the following words in this tradition testify:

ولا قَبْرًا مُشْرِفًا إِلَّا سَوِيَّتَهُ

Now we will discuss the meaning of these two words i.e. (a). مُشْرِفًا and (b). سَوِيَّتَهُ

(a). The word مشرف in dictionary means high and elevated and it has been said that

المُشْرِف من الأماكن: العالی والمُطَلُّ على غيره

مشرف is a high place overlooking the other place.”¹⁹

The author of *al-Qamus* who is having greater validity in the arrangement of meaning of words says:

الشرف مُحركه : العلو ومن البعير سنامه

شرف with vowel of (راء) is named as something ‘high’ and ‘the hump of a camel’.

Therefore the word (مشرف) in absolute term is called as ‘height’ and in particular that height which is in the shape of a hump of a camel. By referring to the past, we have to see the objective pertains to which kind of height.

(b). The word سَوَّيْتَهُ in dictionary means ‘to restore equilibrium’, ‘to make equal’ and ‘to set right the crooked’.

سَوَّى الشئ: جعله سوياً يُقال: سَوَّيْتُ المَعْوَجَ فما استوى ، صنعه مُستوياً

سَوَّى الشئ. He made it straight; Arab says – I wanted to set right the crooked which was not smoothened. It also comes in the meaning of ‘a faultless product’.

The Holy Qur’an says:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى

“Who creates, then makes complete. (A’la 87:2)”

After knowing the meanings of phrases and words, we have to see what this tradition means!

Two possibilities exist in this tradition. We have to select one of the two by paying attention to the individual meanings and other logical possibilities, the first one of it is:

1. One possibility is that Prophet (s) ordered Abul-Haiyyaj to destroy the elevated graves and level them to the ground.

This possibility which the Wahhabis rely upon is rejected due to the following reasons:

Firstly, the word سَوَّيْتَهُ does not mean ‘to destroy’ or ‘to demolish’ and if it meant so then they should

have said:

وَلَا قَبْرًا مُشْرِفًا إِلَّا سَوَّيْتَهُ بِالْأَرْضِ

Level them to the ground while we do not find such words in the tradition.

Secondly, if it is meant what they say then why the scholars of Islam have not given such a verdict (*fatwa*)? It is because levelling of grave to the ground is against the Islamic Sunnah which says that a grave should be slightly higher than the ground level and all the jurists (*fuqaha*) of Islam have given verdict (*fatwa*) over this matter that a grave should be higher than the level of ground by one span.

In the book *al-Fiqh 'ala al-madhahib al-'arba'a*, as per the verdicts (*fatawa*) of the four well-known Imams (Hanifa, Malek, Shafe'i and Hanbal), we read as such:

وَيُنْدَبُ ارْتِفَاعُ التُّرَابِ فَوْقَ الْقَبْرِ بِقَدْرِ شِبْرٍ

“It is recommended (mustahab) that the soil of grave be higher than the ground by one span.”²⁰

By paying attention to this matter we are bound to interpret the tradition in some other way to which we shall now refer.

2. Second possibility is that he was ordered to make the top of the grave uniform, even or flat and not like the graves which are made in the shape of the hind of a fish or the hump of a camel.

Therefore, the tradition is a witness to this fact that the top of a grave should be even and flat and not in the shape of the hind of a fish or a hump which is common among some of the Ahl al-Sunnah. All the four well-known Imams of Ahl al-Sunnah, except al-Shafi'i, have given *fatwa* that the grave is recommended to be so. Thus this tradition conforms to the Shi'a scholars who say that a grave apart from being above the ground should be even and flat.²¹

Incidentally, Muslim, the author of *Sahih* has himself brought this tradition and another tradition which we shall soon discuss under the title

بَابُ الْأَمْرِ بِتَوْسِيَةِ الْقَبْرِ

and similarly al-Tirmidhi and al-Nasa'i have brought this tradition in their *Sunan* under the

aforementioned title. This title gives the meaning that the surface of grave should be even and flat and if it meant that the graves should be made level to the ground then it was necessary to change the title and name it as **الأمر بتخريب القبور وهدمها**

Incidentally, in Arabic language if **سَوِيَّتَهُ** is ascribed to any thing (like grave) it means that the thing itself should be flat and even and not that it should be made equal with any thing (like ground).

Here we produce another tradition which Muslim has narrated in his *Sahih* and this tradition too contains the same contents which we have approved.

كُنَّا مَعَ فَضَالَةَ بْنِ عُبَيْدٍ بِأَرْضِ الرُّومِ بِرُودَسٍ فَتَوَفَّى صَاحِبٌ لَنَا فَامَرَ فَضَالَةَ بْنَ
عُبَيْدٍ بِقَبْرِهِ فَسَوَّى ثُمَّ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ يَأْمُرُ بِتَسْوِيتِهَا.

*The narrator says: "We were with Fudala bin 'Ubayd in Rome when one of our companions died. Fudala ordered that his grave be made uniform and said that he had heard the Holy Prophet (s) giving instructions for the levelling of graves."*²²

The key to understanding this tradition lies in acquiring the meaning of the word **سَوِيَّتَهُ** which possesses three possible meanings. By paying attention to the legal presumptions one of them should be selected. Here are the three possibilities:

1. One meaning is 'to destroy the structure over the graves!' This possibility is false because the graves which were in Medina were not possessing structure or dome.
2. Another meaning is 'to level the surface of the grave to the ground'. This is against the *Sunnah* (practice) of the Prophet (s) which is conclusive that the grave should be above the ground by one span.
3. Lastly it could mean 'to surface the grave and make even the uneven portions and hence bring it out from the shape of hind of a fish or hump of a camel'. This meaning is exact and precise and needs no reason for proving this interpretation.

Now let us see how the famous commentator of *Sahih Muslim*, al-Nawawi, interprets the tradition. He says:

إِنَّ السُّنَّةَ أَنَّ الْقَبْرَ لَا يُرْفَعُ عَنِ الْأَرْضِ رَفْعًا كَثِيرًا وَلَا يُسَنَّمُ بَلْ يُرْفَعُ نَحْوَ شَبْرٍ
وَيُسَطَّحُ

"It is Sunnah (tradition) that the grave should not possess excessive height above the ground and should not have a shape of a hump of a camel. However it should be one span above the ground and should be

even.”²³

This sentence shows that the commentator of *Sahih Muslim* has derived the same meaning as we have derived from the word **سَوَّيْتَهُ**. That is to say, Imam al-Nawawi recommended and advised that the surface of the graves should not possess the shape of the hind of a fish and they should be made uniform, flat and even, not that they should be levelled with the ground or that the grave and the structure on it should be destroyed.

It is not only we who have interpreted the tradition as such but al-Hafiz al-Qastallani too in his book *Irshad al-sari fi sharh Sahih al-Bukhari* has interpreted the tradition as we have. He says:

“It is the *sunnah* that a grave should be surfaced and we should never abandon this *Sunnah* just because surfacing of the grave is the motto of the *rawafid*. When we say that the *Sunnah* is surfacing of grave (having no difference with the tradition of Abu al-Hayyaj) it is because

لأنه لم يُرد تسويته بالإرض وإنما أراد تسطيحه جمعاً بين الأخبار...

*The objective is not to make the grave on par with the ground but the objective is to make the surface of the grave flat and even although being above the ground level.*²⁴

Moreover, if the objective of recommendation was to destroy the structures and domes over the graves then why didn't 'Ali ('a) himself destroy the domes over the graves of the Prophets existing during his own time!?! Besides, he was the ruler over the Islamic lands and places like Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Iran and Yemen, which were full of such structures over the graves of the Prophets and were within his sight.

Forgoing all that we have said even if we assume that Imam ('a) ordered Abu al-Hayyaj to level all the elevated graves on par with the ground, still the tradition never bears testimony over the necessity of destroying the structures over the graves since Imam ('a) has said:

ولا قبراً إلا سويته

i.e. **'destroy the graves'**, but has not said:

ولا بناءً ولا قبة إلا سويتهما

'There is no building and no dome (dome of grave) unless I made them separate'.

Moreover our discussion is not about grave itself but about construction and structures over the graves where people occupy themselves under the shade of these structures and recite the Qur'an, invocation and prayers. Which part of this sentence bears testimony for the destruction of the structures surrounding the graves which in fact facilitates the visitors to worship and recite Qur'an and protects them from extreme heat or cold!

Two More Possibilities In Tradition

In the end we are bound to present two more possibilities in the tradition:

(1) It is possible that this and some other similar traditions are pointing to a series of graves of the past people where people took the graves of the pious and virtuous people as their *qibla* instead of performing prayers towards the true *qibla*. They used to perform prayers over the grave and the picture which was near the grave and were refraining from facing the true *qibla* which God has selected.

Thus the tradition has no connection to the graves which have never been prostrated upon by the Muslims but have recited prayers near them facing the divine *qibla* (Ka'ba).

And if they expedite in visiting the graves of the pious people and worship God near their pure bodies and the holy graves, it is because of the high esteem these dignified places have acquired due to the burial of their bodies. We shall discuss about them later on.

(2) By **تمثالاً** is meant the portrait of idols and by **قبر** is meant the graves of polytheists which were still respected by their near and far ones.

Over here we shall narrate the verdicts of the four scholars of Sunni school of thought:

يُكْرَهُ أَنْ يُبْنَى عَلَى الْقَبْرِ بَيْتٌ أَوْ قُبَّةٌ أَوْ مَدْرَسَةٌ أَوْ مَسْجِدٌ

“It is makruh (abominable) to build a house, dome, school or mosque over the grave.”²⁵

With such consensus existing amongst the four Imams how can the judge of Najd insist that construction over the grave is *haram* (prohibited)!?

Moreover, its being *makruh* is itself not having a decisive and correct reference especially when construction over the grave provides a means of worship for the visitor to the grave of Prophets and pious people.

D. Analysis of Hadith of Jabir

The tradition of Jabir is one of the references which the Wahhabis rely on to prove the matter of prohibition of construction of the grave. This tradition has been narrated in different ways in the books of *Sihah* and *Sunan* of the Ahl al-Sunnah and in all the references we see the names of Ibn Jurayh and Abu al-Zubayr.

We shall investigate them by narrating all the phases of tradition with their references and then mention our own views regarding the scale of its competency based on logical reasoning.

Muslim narrates in his *Sihah* in the chapter:

النهي عن تجصيص القبر والبناء عليه

'Prohibition to plaster-mould or make construction on a grave'

The tradition of Jabir is reported with three chains of narration, and with two texts. The first one is:

1.

حدثنا أبو بكر بن أبي شيبة ، حدثنا حفص بن غياث ، عن ابن جريج ، عن أبي الزبير ، عن جابر قال نهى رسول

الله أن يُجصص القبر وأن يُقعد عليه وأن يُبنى عليه

“It is narrated from Abu Bakr bin Shaybah, (who said) Hafs bin Ghiyath narrated to us, from Ibn Jurayh, and from Abu al Zubayr from Jabir who said that The Prophet of God (s) prohibited the plastering of graves and prohibited anyone from sitting or constructing over them”

2.

حدثني هارون بن عبد الله ، حدثنا حجاج بن محمد وحدثني محمد بن رافع
حدثنا عبد الرازق جميعاً عن ابن جريج

قال اخبرني أبو الزبير ، أنه سمع جابر بن عبد الله يقول سمعت النبي بمثله

Here the text of the tradition is indicated to be the same but its chain of narration differs slightly from the first.

3.

حدثنا يحيى بن يحيى ، اخبرنا اسماعيل بن عُلَيَّة عن أيوب عن أبي الزبير عن جابر قال نهى عن تجصيص القبور.

“The Holy Prophet (s) prohibited the plastering of graves.”²⁶

Sahih al-Tirmidhi narrates one tradition with one chain of narration in the chapter:

كراهية تجصيص القبور والكتابة عليها

‘Abominability of plaster moulding and writing on graves’

4.

حدثنا عبد الرحمن بن الأسود ، اخبرنا محمد بن ربيعة عن ابن جريح ، عن أبي الزبير عن جابر قال: نهى رسول

الله (صلى الله عليه وآله) عن تجصيص القبور وان يُكتب عليها وأن يُبنى عليها وأن توطأ

“The Holy Prophet (s) prohibited us from plastering the graves and writing on them, and from making and constructing over them.”

Thereafter *al-Tirmidhi* narrates from *al-Hasan al-Basri* and *al-Shafi’i* that they have permitted growing of flowers over the grave.²⁷

Ibn Maja narrates a tradition with two texts and two chains of narration in his *Sahih* in the chapter entitled:

ما جاء في النهي عن البناء على القبور وتجصيصها والكتابة عليها

'What it is been said, is about prohibition of building, plaster-moulding and writing on graves (engraving)'

5. & 6.

حدثنا ازهر بن مروان ، ومحمد بن زياد قال حدثنا عبد الوارث ، عن أيوب عن أبي الزبير عن جابر قال نهى رسول

الله عن تجصيص القبور. حدثنا عبد الله بن سعيد ، حدثنا حفص عن ابن جريح عن سليمان بن موسى عن جابر

قال: نهى رسول الله ان يُكتب على القبر شئ

It is narrated from Azhar ibn Marwan, Muhammad-ibn-Ziad said Abdul Wareth has narrated to us from Ayub from Abi-Zubair from Jaber that Prophet (s) of God has prohibited from plaster-moulding on graves.

Abdullah-ibn-Saeed narrated us, Hafs from Ibn Jarir from Sulaiman Ibn Musa from Jaber that Prophet (s) of God has prohibited to engrave anything on graves.²⁸

After narrating this tradition, the commentator al-Sindi, quotes al-Hakim al-Naysaburi and says:

“The tradition is *Sahih* but not practical because the Islamic leaders from East to West have been writing over the graves. This is a practice which the people have adopted from the past generations.”

al-Nasa'i narrates in his *Sahih* in the chapter of **البناء على القبور** with two chains of narration and two texts:

7. & 8.

أخبرنا يوسف بن سعيد قال حدثنا حجاج عن ابن جريح قال أخبرني أبو الزبير
أنه سمع جابر يقول نهى رسول الله

عن تجصيص القبور أو يُبنى عليها أو يجلس عليها أحد. أخبرنا عمران بن
موسى قال حدثنا عبد الوارث قال

حدثنا أيوب عن أبي الزبير عن جابر قال نهى رسول الله عن تجصص القبور.

Yousuf bin Saeed reported to us that Hajjaj narrated from ibn Jarir who said I heard from Abu Zubair who heard Jabir he said that Prophet (s) of God prohibited to plaster-mould or build on a grave or someone sitting on it.

Imran ibn Musa reported to us who said, narrated to us Abdul Warith, who said narrated to us Ayub, from Abi Zubair, from Jabir who said that Prophet (s) of God prohibited plastering mould graves.29

In the *Sunan* of Abu Dawud (vol. 3, p. 216) chapter of **البناء على القبر** tradition of Jabir is narrated with two chains of narrations and two texts:

9. & 10.

حدثنا أحمد بن حنبل ، حدثنا عبد الرزاق حدثنا ابن جريح ، أخبرني أبو الزبير
أنه سمع جابراً يقول سمعت النبي

نهى أن يُقعد على القبر وأن يُجصص ويُبنى عليه.

حدثنا مسدد وعثمان بن أبي شيبة قال حدثنا حفص بن غياث عن ابن جريح
عن سليمان بن موسى وعن أبي الزبير

عن جابر بهذا الحديث قال ابو داود قال: عثمان أو يُزاد عليه وزاد سُليمان بن موسى أو أن يُكتب عليه.

“....Abu Dawud says: “The Holy Prophet (s) has prohibited us from writing over the grave or from raising it.”

Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal in his *al-Musnad* has narrated the tradition of Jabir as follows:

11.

عن عبد الرزاق عن ابن جُرَيْح أَخْبَرَنِي أَبُو الزُّبَيْرِ أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ جَابِرَ بْنَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ يَنْهَى أَنْ يَقْعُدَ الرَّجُلُ

عَلَى الْقَبْرِ وَأَنْ يُجَصِّصَ وَأَنْ يُبْنَى عَلَيْهَا.

From Abd al-Razzaq from Ibn Joraih who reported from Abu Zubair that Jabir Ibn Abdullah said that I heard from Prophet (s), he prohibited people from sitting on grave or plaster- moulding or building on it.³⁰

These were the various forms of the tradition that have been narrated with different chains of narration and texts. Now let us see whether the tradition can be rationalized or not.

Points of Weakness in this Tradition

The tradition of Jabir is faced with a series of problems that no logical reasoning can be based on it.

Firstly: In all the chains of transmission of this tradition, Ibn Jurayh³¹ and Abu al-Zubayr³² He is Muhammad bin Muslim al-‘Asadi. have either both come together or at least one of them has been mentioned. Now if the position of these two persons is clarified, then it would be needless to discuss about other people who have come in the chains of transmission of this tradition. Although a section of the narrators are from the unknown and weak still by clarifying the position of these two people it is not required to discuss and talk about the others.

Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani narrates in *Tahdhib al-tahdhib* about Ibn Jurayh quoting from the distinguished scholars as follows:

Yahya bin Sa'id was asked about the *hadith* of Ibn Jurayh to which he said: 'If Ibn Jurayh does narrate a tradition from the book, he cannot be relied upon'. It was said to him that he uses *akhbarani* (technical term used in *isnad* followed by identification of the transmitter from whom the report was obtained), to which he said, "It's nothing... all of it is weak."

He narrates from Ahmad bin Hanbal that if Ibn Jurayh says:

قال فلان قال فلان واخبرتُ جاء بمناكيرٍ

"..that so and so said such and such then he has narrated a false tradition."

Malik bin Anas says: In the matter of traditions Ibn Jurayh is like one who collects twigs in the darkness of night. (where his hand will be bitten by snake and scorpion).

From al-Darqutni, who says:

تجنب تدليس ابن جريح فإنه قبيح التدليس لا يُدلس إلا فيما سمعه من مجروح

Keep away from the craftiness (presenting the false to be true) of Ibn Jurayh for he plays a dirty hypocrisy. Whenever he hears a tradition from a weak person, he presents it in such a manner that as if it was from a reliable person.

From Ibn Hibban who says that: Ibn Jurayh plays trickery in tradition.³³

With such judgements from the scholars of *'ilm al-rijal* can one rely on the tradition of such a person and in contrast to the decisive path of the Muslims who were always renovating the graves of awliya Allah and respecting them, is it possible to have confidence in such a narrator?

About Abu al-Zubayr's position, Ibn Hajar narrates the following sentences from the scholars of *rijal*:

The son of Ahmad bin Hanbal narrates from his father who narrates from Ayyub that he (i.e. Abu al-Zubayr) was weak in *hadith*.

Ibn Hajar narrates from Shu'ba that Abu al-Zubayr did not know how to recite his prayers properly. Again he narrates from him as such: "I was in Mecca when a person came to Abu al-Zubayr and asked him some questions to which the latter started to defame him. I told him that he was accusing a Muslim. He replied: He has made me angry. I informed him that since he was defaming everyone who made him angry I would no longer narrate any tradition from him."

Again Ibn Hajar asked Shu'ba as to why he stopped narrating tradition from Abu al-Zubayr. He replied: "I saw him openly performing bad deeds."

Ibn Hajar narrates from Ibn Abi Hatim that he asked his father about the character of Abu al-Zubayr to which he replied: "His traditions are written but they cannot be relied upon."

Ibn Hajar further narrates from him that the latter informed Abu Zur'a that people were narrating traditions from Abu al-Zubayr and asked him whether he could be relied or not.

He replied: 'The tradition of only a trustworthy person can be used as an argument (a sarcastic remark to indicate that he was not a trustworthy person)'.

This is the position of these two persons who have come in all the chains of narration of the tradition. Is it possible to rely on a hadith that is reported by these two persons?

Even if we assume that others mentioned in the references are reliable (while in fact some of them like 'Abd al-Rahman bin 'Aswad were accused of being liars), can such a tradition be used as argument when its narrators are these two people.

Is it really fair that with such a tradition that is having such a weak authenticity, one can destroy the traces of household of the prophet and his companions and find fault with the actions of the Muslims in these fourteen centuries?

Secondly: The tradition is a matter of concern from the viewpoint of text. This is because of the fact that the narrators have not heeded sufficient attention to memorising its text. And this concern is such that a person loses confidence in them. Now we shall describe the kind of concern:

The tradition of Jabir has been narrated in seven forms whereas the Holy Prophet (s) has mentioned that in one form. Here are the descriptions of the seven forms:

1. The Holy Prophet (s) has prohibited plastering of the graves and resting or constructing a structure over them. (Traditions no 1, 2 and 9).
2. The Holy Prophet (s) has prohibited plastering of graves. (Traditions no.5 and 8).
3. The Holy Prophet (s) has prohibited plastering, writing, constructing and walking over the graves. (Tradition no.4).
4. The Holy Prophet (s) has prohibited writing over the graves. (Tradition no.6).
5. The Holy Prophet (s) has prohibited sitting over the grave or plastering and constructing and sitting over it. (Tradition no.10)

6. The Holy Prophet (s) has prevented from sitting, plastering or constructing over the grave. (Tradition no. 11) This one differs from the first where in the first form resting is prohibited while here sitting is prohibited).

7. The Holy Prophet (s) has prohibited from sitting, plastering, constructing and writing over the grave or raising the grave. Here, the prohibition of writing over the grave and raising the grave is added.

Apart from this, there are some differences and contradictions among the interpretations. In the first case, resting is mentioned; in the third case walking is mentioned and in the fifth and sixth case we find sitting.

With such problems, no jurisprudent (*faqih*) can rely upon this tradition.

Thirdly: Assuming that the chains of narration of this tradition are reliable, it does not indicate more than that the Holy Prophet (s) prevented construction over graves. However, preventing one thing is no proof of its being prohibited because prohibition sometimes is of *haram* type and sometimes of *makruh* type and prohibition has been mostly used in the *makruh* sense in the discourse of the Holy Prophet (s) and other religious leaders.

It is true that the first meaning of prohibition that is to say in real term is '*nahi*' which is same as *haram* and till a proper terminology for another meaning is not found, we can never take it to be *makruh*, yet the scholars and the *fuqaha* have not taken this tradition to be anything but in the *makruh* sense. For example, al-Tirmidhi in his *Sahih* narrates the tradition under the chapter:

كراهية تجصيم القبور

A clear proof that it is *makruh* is the same which al-Sindi, commentator of *Sahih Ibn Maja* narrates from al-Hakim al-Naysaburi who says that none of the Muslims have acted upon this prohibition. That is to say he has not presented it to be a prohibition in the *haram* sense calling to witness the fact that all Muslims have been writing on the graves.

Another proof that this prohibition is in the *makruh* sense is the consensus of the Islamic scholars upon the permissibility of construction over the grave except that if the land is endowed.

The commentator of *Sahih Muslim* in his commentary of this tradition writes:

أما البناء فإن كان في ملك الباني فمكروه وإن كان في مقبرة مسجلة فحراماً نصاً
عليه الشافعي والأصحاب.

“Construction over the grave in the land belonging to the owner of the grave is *makruh* and in the endowed land is *haram*. Al-Shafi’i has emphasised upon this matter and even brought the tradition under the title of chapter.”³⁴

كراهة تجصيص القبر والبناء عليه

However, it is obvious that a thing being *makruh* does not become an obstacle. The fact being that sometimes due to a series of affairs that *makruh* gets eliminated. Whenever renovation of grave becomes the source of protection of the originality of Islam or the source of manifestation of love for the owner of grave which God has made their love obligatory or the source of protection of Islamic signs or becomes the cause for the visitors to recite Qur’an and invocation under the shade of the structure over the grave than surely not only such benefits (which arise from the construction over the grave) eliminate the *makruh* element but make them *mustahab* (recommended).

The decree of *mustahab* or *makruh* changes under various pretexts. It is likely that a *makruh* becomes good due to some pretext or a series of *mustahabi* (recommended) affairs become abominable due to some other events because *makruh* and *mustahab* of one thing is nothing but expedient for being hated or loved respectively. But these expedients are effective under the condition that no obstacle nullifies their expediences and effects and this matter is clear for those people who are acquainted with Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*).

Logical Analysis of Two More Traditions

Now that our discussion has reached this stage, it is worthy that we examine some more traditions which are referred to by the Wahhabis.

1. Ibn Maja narrates in his *Sahih* as such:

حدثنا محمد بن يحيى ، حدثنا محمد بن عبد الله الرقاشى ، حدثنا وهب ، حدثنا
عبد الرحمن بن يزيد بن جابرة ، عن

القاسم بن مخيمرة عن ابي سعيد: إن النبي نهى أن يُبنى على القبر

Mohammad Ibn Yahya, Muhammad Ibn Abdullah, Al-Riqashi, Wahab, Abdur Rahman Ibn Yazid Ibn

Jaber, have narrated to us from Qasim ibn Mokhaimara from Abi Saeed: “Verily Prophet Muhammad (s) prohibited make construction on graves.”³⁵

Ahmad bin Hanbal in his *al-Musnad* narrates one tradition with two chains of narration. Here we narrate both of them:

حدثنا ، حسن ، حدثنا ابن لهيعة ، حدثنا بُريد ابن أبي حبيب عن ناعم مولى أم سلمة عن أم سلمة قالت: نهى رسول

الله ان يُبنى على القبر أو يُجصص

2. Narrated Hassan, Ibn Lahiaah narrated, Baraid Ibn Abi Habib narrated from Naim servant of Umme Salamah. She said: ‘Prophet of God prohibited to build (construction) on grave or plaster-moulding.’³⁶

عليّ بن اسحاق حدثنا عبد الله ، ابن لهيعة ، حدثني بُريد بن أبي حبيب عن ناعم مولى أم سلمة ، أن النبي نهى أن

يُجصص قبر أو يُبنى عليه أو يُجلس

3. Ali Ibn Ishaq narrated, Abdullah ibn Lahiaah, narrated Boraid ibn Abi Habib from Naeem, servant of Umme Salama: ‘Prophet prohibited to plaster-mould a grave or build (make construction) on it or sit on it.’³⁷

To prove the weakness of the first tradition suffice it is to say that one of the narrators is Wahab who is completely مجهول (unknown) and it is not known which ‘Wahab’ is the narrator of this tradition. In *Mizan al-‘itidal* seventeen Wahabs are mentioned and it is not known that this Wahab is which one of them where most of them are regarded to be fabricators of traditions and known liars.³⁸

The major problem of the second and third traditions is the presence of ‘Abdulla ibn Lahi’a. Al-Dhahabi writes about him as such:

قال ابن معين ضعيف لا يحتج به قال الحميدى عن يحيى ابن سعيد انه كان لا يراه شيئاً

*Ibn Ma'in has said that he is weak and his tradition cannot be argued upon*³⁹.

Al-Humaydi narrated from Yahya bin Sa'id that he does not count him to be of any significance.

We shall now pass from the controversies in the *sanad* and turn over to the following matter. All the historians and Islamic *muhaddithun* (traditionists) have narrated that the holy body of the Holy Prophet (s) was buried by the approval of his companions in the house and chamber of his wife Ayesha. In selecting the place of his burial, the companions have relied on the tradition narrated by Abu Bakr from the Holy Prophet (s) that any Prophet who dies in any place should be buried in that very place.⁴⁰

The question arises here that if the Holy Prophet (s) had really prohibited construction over the grave then how was it that he was buried under the ceiling and his grave became such that it possessed a structure. It is a matter of laughter when some of the dry and rigid Wahhabis say that what is forbidden is making the structure over the grave and not the burial of body under the structure and the Holy Prophet (s) was buried under the structure and not that a structure was made over his grave.⁴¹

Such an interpretation of the tradition shows no motive other than explaining one external fact (burial of the body of the Holy Prophet (s) under a structure) and if one Wahhabi was not faced with such a fact he would have ordered both these acts to be *haram* (forbidden).

Basically at this juncture we ask the Wahhabis some questions:

Is it that only the original construction over the grave of the dead person forbidden and if someone has already made such a construction then is its continuity not forbidden although its original construction was forbidden?

Or is it that the original construction and its continuity both are forbidden?

If only the original construction is forbidden and their continuity was not forbidden, then the question arises that why the Government of Sa'ud destroyed by force the traces of Messengership and the houses of the household of the Holy Prophet (s) and the domes of his children and companions who were already buried under the structures.

Moreover, this supposition is against the verdicts (*fatawa*) of founders of Wahhabism such as Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Taymiyya.

The former says:

يجب هدم المشاهد التي بُنيت على القبور ولا يجوز إبقائها بعد القُدرة على هدمها وإبطالها يوماً واحداً.

“It is obligatory to destroy the structures made over the graves and after gaining power for its destruction it is not permissible to let it remain and to preserve it even for one day.”

With this explanation it is not correct for a Wahhabi to select the first alternative of our question. Thus he is bound to select the second and say that the construction over the grave is haram in both the cases.

At this moment, a question will arise as to why the Muslims buried the holy body of the Prophet (s) under a roofed place. Although it is true that they did not originally construct over his grave yet they acted in such a way that the grave of the Holy Prophet (s) was already having a structure.

Here a Wahhabi has only one route of escape and that is for explaining the physical action of the Muslims he will say: Preservation and continuation of grave is forbidden when original construction takes place over the grave and if at the time of the original construction, there was no grave then its continuation (no matter if it is in the form of construction over grave) is not *haram*.

Such dissociation has no reason other than justifying one external fact (action of Muslims).

Wahhabism entangled in the contradiction between the school of thought and the practice of Muslims

This point is not the only instance where the Wahhabism has been caught in the scuffle of contradiction between its school of thought and the deeds of Muslims.

It has been aimlessly struggling in other instances too. It strictly prohibits *tabarruk* of the remains of the Holy Prophet (s) and say: “Stone, soil etc are of no use.” On the other hand we see the Muslims constantly kissing and touching the stone (*hajr al-‘aswad*) or kissing the curtain of the Ka’ba or seeking *tabarruk* from its door and walls which according to Wahhabis bears no result.

They have prohibited construction of mosque near the grave of the awliya Allah whereas in the entire Islamic lands, mosques exist near the graves. Even besides the grave of Hamza there was a mosque which the transgressive Sa’udis have destroyed. At present the grave of the Holy Prophet (s) is in the mosque and the Muslims perform prayers around there.

Preparing an argument instead of adopting a realistic approach

In order to destroy the tombs of the graves of Imams (‘a) buried in Baqi’ the Wahhabis embarked on resorting to arguments and so to speak have found an excuse. They say that the land of Baqi’ is an endowed (*waqfi*) land and maximum use should be made from this land and every kind of obstruction

from reaping the benefits should be removed.

Construction of a structure over the graves of the household of the Prophet (s) is an obstacle from utilising a part of the land of Baqi', because, although burial is possible in the sanctuary and the shrine, the same cannot be done under the foundations and surrounding walls. Therefore, such constructions should be destroyed till the entire land of Baqi' is exploited for useful purposes.

The Response and Refutation

Undoubtedly such reasoning is nothing but a kind of biased judgment. The Wahhabi judge (*qadi*) wishes to destroy, by any means, the traces of the household of the Holy Prophet (s) and even if he was unable to find any reason he would still think of destroying them under the cover of force. On account of such a mentality he started to conjure up a pretext and hence brought up the matter of endowment of the land of Baqi'.

Moreover the idea that Baqi' is an endowed land is nothing more than an imagination since:

Firstly, no book that we could rely on, whether of history or tradition (*hadith*), mentions that Baqi' is endowed (*waqfi*). Instead it is possible to say that Baqi' was a waste land where the people of Medina used to bury their dead. In this case, such a land will be considered to be amongst the 'properties belonging to no particular person' (*al-mubahat al-'awwaliyya*) and any kind of appropriation over it is permissible.

In previous times, greed and avarice of the people in possessing the dead and barren land was insignificant and there was no money and power in developing and flourishing them. Moreover, the people living in villages had not yet started to migrate to cities and no issues related to land and no people such as land profiteers existed and no institute by the name of land exchange had come into existence. Thus most of the lands were not having owners and they remained as they were and were counted to be part of wastelands.

During these periods the people of every city, village and hamlet allocated a part of the land for the burial of their dead or if someone would become the first in burying his dead once on a piece of land, others would follow suit. As such, they would convert the land into a graveyard without anyone seeking possession of it and making it a *waqf* for burying the dead.

The land of Baqi' was no exception to this rule. The lands in Hijaz and Medina were not of much value and with the presence of waste lands around Medina, no wise person would have created an endowment over cultivable land. In a place where waste land is plentiful and cultivable land very scanty, surely the waste land (which is counted to be the property belonging to no particular person) will be used.

Incidentally, history too confirms this reality. Al-Samhudi in *Wafa' al-wafa' fi akhbar dar al-Mustafa*

writes:

“The first person who was buried by the Holy Prophet (s) in Baqi’ was ‘Uthman ibn Maz’un (the companion of the Holy Prophet). When Ibrahim, son of the Holy Prophet, died, the Prophet (s) ordered him to be buried near ‘Uthman. From then on, people were inclined to bury their dead in Baqi’ and they cut off the trees (to make space). Each tribe appropriated one piece of the land for themselves”.

Thereafter he says:

“The land of Baqi’ was having a tree by the name of *gharqad*. When the people buried ‘Uthman ibn Maz’un over there the tree was cut off.” 42

The tree of *gharqad* is the same wild tree found in the deserts of Medina.

From these words of al-Samhudi we draw a clear conclusion that the land of Baqi’ was a dead land where, after the burial of one companion everyone took a part of it for their respective tribes and the name of *waqf* has never been seen in history. Instead, history shows that the part or section of Baqi’ where the Imams (‘a) have been buried was the house of ‘Aqil bin Abi Talib and the holy bodies of these four Imams (‘a) were buried in the house which was related to Bani Hashim.

Al-Samhudi writes:

“Abbas bin ‘Abd al-Muttalib was buried near the grave of Fatima bint Asad in the cemetery of Bani Hashim which was in the house of ‘Aqil.” 43

He also narrates from Sa’id bin Muhammad bin Jubayr that he has seen the grave of Ibrahim, son of the Holy Prophet (s), in the house which was the property of Muhammad bin Zayd bin ‘Ali.

He further narrates that the Holy Prophet (s) buried the body of Sa’d bin Mu’adh in the house of Ibn Aflah which was around Baqi’ and possessed a structure and dome.

All these show that the land of Baqi’ was not endowed (*waqfi*) and the pure bodies of our Imams (‘a) have been buried in the houses owned by themselves.

Under these circumstances, is it correct to destroy, under the pretext of *waqf*, the traces and signs of the household of the Holy Prophet (s)?

Let us suppose, just for argument’s sake, that the land of Baqi’ was a *waqf*. But is there any hint about the circumstances in which the *waqf* was made? Perhaps the one making the *waqf* has given permission for construction over the grave of noble personalities. So, because we do not know, we should interpret a believer's deeds as right, and not accuse him of offence.

Under these situations, destroying these domes and houses will be considered forbidden (*haram*) and going against the divine laws.

The *qadi* Ibn Bulayhid and his supporters knew well that the idea of *waqf* was one kind of preparing a reason and carving an argument. Even if they were not having such reason, they would have still destroyed the signs of the Holy Prophet (s) because this is not the first time they have destroyed the traces of Messengership. In the year 1221 AH when they gained control over Medina for the first time, they destroyed the traces of Messengership. Later, when they were expelled from the land of Hijaz by the 'Uthmani forces, all the structures were re-built.

-
1. Ibn al-Qayyim, *Zad al-ma'ad fi huda khayr al-'ibad*, page 661.
 2. The late Agha Buzurg al-Tihrani in his book *al-Dhari'a ila tasanif al-shi'a*, vol. 8 p. 261, writes as such: "The Wahhabis gained control over Hijaz on 15th Rabi' al-'awwal 1343 AH and on 8th of Shawwal 1343 AH they destroyed the graves of the Imams ('a) and companions in Baqi'."
 - On the other hand, the newspaper *Umm al-Qura* published the form of questions and answers in publication No. 17 Shawwal from the year 1344 AH and fixed the date of reply of the scholars of Medina as 25th Ramadan. It should be said that dominance and destruction of the graves both occurred in the year 1344 AH and Sayyid Muhsin Amin thinks the year 1344 AH to be the date of complete dominance and destruction. Please refer to the book *Kashf al-'iriyab* pages 56 to 60.
 3. al-Tabarsi, *Majma' al-bayan*, (Sayda edition), vol. 4 p. 83.
 4. Baqarah: 158
 5. Hajj: 36
 6. Protection of graves is expression of love and affection.
 7. al-Suyuti, *al-Durr al-Manthur*, vol. 5 p. 50.
 8. Sayyid Muhsin Amin, *Kashf al-'iriyab*, p. 384.
 9. Refer to the *Tabaqat al-sahaba* in Ibn Sa'd, *al-Tabaqat al-kubra*, vol. 1 pp. 360 to 503. In these pages we find the specialities and characteristics of the life of the Prophet (s)
 10. *Tathir al-'i'tiqad*, (Egyptian edition), p. 17, narrating from *Kashf al-'iriyab*.
 11. al-Samhudi, *Wafa' al-wafa' fi akhbar dar al-Mustafa*, pp. 383 to 390..
 12. *Sahih Muslim*, kitab al-jana'iz, vol. 3 p. 61; *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, bab ma ja'a fi taswiyat al-qabr, vol. 2 p. 256; and *Sunan al-Nasa'i*, bab taswiyat al-qabr, vol. 4, p. 88.
 13. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, *Tahdhib al-tahdhib*, vol. 11, p. 125.
 14. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, *Tahdhib al-tahdhib*, vol. 11 p. 130.
 15. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, *Tahdhib al-tahdhib*, vol. 4 p. 115.
 16. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, *Tahdhib al-tahdhib*, vol. 11 p. 218.
 17. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, *Tahdhib al-tahdhib*, vol. 2 p. 179.
 18. Ibn Abi al-Hadid al-Mu'tazili, *Sharh Nahj al-balagha*, vol. 9 p. 99.
 19. *Al-Munjid*.
 20. *al-Fiqh 'ala al-madhahib al-'arba'a*, vol. 1, p. 420.
 21. *al-Fiqh 'ala al-madhahib al-'arba'a*, vol. 1, p. 420. Therefore, no groups from the Islamic tradition have acted upon this tradition, except the Shafi'i's and the Shi'a.
 22. *Sahih Muslim*, kitab al-jana'iz, vol. 3 p. 61.
 23. al-Nawawi, *Sharh Sahih Muslim*, vol. 7, p. 36.
 24. al-Qastallani, *Irshad al-sari*, vol. 2 p. 468.
 25. *al-Fiqh 'ala al-madhahib al-'arba'a*, vol. 1, p. 421.
 26. *Sahih Muslim*, kitab al-jana'iz, vol. 3 p. 62.
 27. *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, (ed. by 'Abd al-Rahman Muhammad 'Uthman, *al-Maktaba al-salafiyya*), vol. 2 p. 208.
 28. *Sahih Ibn Maja*, kitab al-jana'iz, vol. 1, p. 473.
 29. *Sahih al-Nasa'i* (printed with commentary of Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti), vol. 4 pp. 87-88.

30. Ibn Hanbal, al-Musnad, vol. 3 p. 295 and p. 332, and he narrates from Jabir in the mursal form on p. 399.
31. He is 'Abd al-Malik bin 'Abd al-'Aziz bin Jurayh al-'Umawi.
32. He is Muhammad bin Muslim al-'Asadi.
33. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, Tahdhib al-tahdhib, (Dar al-ma'arif al-nizamiyya), vol. 6 p. 402, 404 and p. 506.
34. Sahih Muslim, (Egypt), vol. 3 p. 62.
35. Sahih Ibn Maja, vol. 1 p. 474.
36. Ibn Hanbal, al-Musnad, vol. 6 p. 299.
37. Ibn Hanbal, al-Musnad, vol. 6 p. 299.
38. al-Dhahabi, Mizan al-'itidal, vol. 3 pp. 350 to 355.
39. al-Dhahabi, Mizan al-'itidal, vol. 2 p. 476 under the title 'Abdulla ibn Lahi'a; Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, Tahdhib al-tahdhib, vol. 1 p. 444.
40. Ibn Hanbal, al-Musnad, vol. 1 p. 7; Sahih al-Tirmidhi, vol. 2 p. 139; Ibn Sa'd, al-Tabaqat, vol. 2 p. 71; and others.
41. Muqbil bin al-Hadi al-Wadi, Riyad al-janna, (Kuwait), p. 269.
42. al-Samhudi, Wafa' al-wafa' fi akhbar dar al-Mustafa, vol. 2 p. 84.
43. al-Samhudi, Wafa' al-wafa' fi akhbar dar al-Mustafa, vol. 2 p. 96.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/wahhabism-ayatullah-jafar-subhani/wahhabis-and-renovation-graves-awliya-allah>