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Prophet's Infallibility and its Impact on Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a

The belief that the Prophet was infallible is a topic about which Muslims differ with one another. It is, however, the only factor that makes it compulsory on the Muslims to accept the Prophet's injunctions without any discussion or argument, especially since they believe that he does not speak out of his own desire but conveys the revelation from His Lord. They, otherwise, would not believe that the Prophet's statements and injunctions, beyond the text of the Holy Qur'an, are binding; instead, they are matters relevant to his own *ijtihad*.

But if they do uphold such a belief, feeling convinced that all affairs are referred to Allah, and that the Prophet is only a means to convey and to explain such affairs, they would then be Shi`as. Many *sahaba* came to be widely recognized as having adopted such a conviction.

These are headed by Imam Ali, peace be upon him, who would not alter the Sunnah of the Prophet in the least, who regarded it as Allah's revelation; so, nobody can resort to his own personal view and *ijtihad* in the presence of the injunctions of Allah, Glory and Exaltation are His.

But if they believe that the Prophet is not infallible in his statements and actions, that infallibility is relevant only to the Holy Qur'an, and that besides all of that the Prophet is not different from any other human being: once he is right and once he is wrong.

If they uphold such a belief, they would be belonging to "Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a" who say that it was alright for the *sahaba* and scholars to employ *ijtihad*, even in the presence of the Prophet's statements and injunctions, and according to the dictates of the public interest, in the light of the circumstances, and according to the views of the ruler.

It needs no explanation that the righteous caliphs (with the exception of Imam Ali) did, indeed, follow their own personal views despite the presence of the Prophet's Sunnah. Then they went beyond that to apply the principle of *ijtihad* even in the presence of relevant Qur'anic texts. Their views, hence, came to

be identified by “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a” as binding injunctions (*ahkam*) which they require all Muslims to abide by them.

We have already discussed the *ijtihad* of Abu Bakr and Umar in our book *With The Truthful* and also in *Ask Those Who Know*, and we may write a book dedicated in its entirety to this subject, if Allah pleases.

We have also come to know that “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a” add other types of *ijtihad* to the two major sources of Islamic legislation, namely the Qur'an and the Sunnah, including the “sunnah” of both shaykhs (Abu Bakr and Umar), and the *sahabi's ijtihad*. All of this is the result of their belief that the Prophet was not infallible, that he used to use his own judgment, and that some *sahaba* used to correct his views and make amends for his mistakes [*Astaghfirullah!*].

This clearly shows that “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a” allege that the Prophet was a faulty person... Whether they know it or not, they, therefore, permit anyone to contradict or disobey him. Neither the Shari`a nor reason obligates anyone to obey a faulty person. In other words, as long as we think that such an individual is liable to err, we do not have to obey him. How can we obey what is wrong?

It also becomes clear to us, in contrast, that the Shi`as believe in the absolute infallibility of the Prophet, enforcing obedience to him because he is, from their viewpoint, is infallible. It is not permissible, the Shi`as advocate, to disobey him under any circumstance. Whoever contradicts and disobeys him does, in fact, contradict and disobey his Lord. It is to this principle that the Holy Qur'an refers in many verses such as these:

“And whatever the Prophet gives you, accept it, and from whatever he forbids you, stay away.”
(Holy Qur'an, 59:7)

“And obey Allah and the Prophet so that you may be shown mercy.” ***(Holy Qur'an, 3:132)***

“Say: If you love Allah, follow me: Allah will (then) love you and forgive your faults, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.” ***(Holy Qur'an, 3:31)***

There are many other such verses which obligate the Muslims to obey the Prophet and not to contradict him because he is infallible and does not convey except what he is required by Allah, Glory to Him, to convey.

This by necessity proves the fact that Shi`as are the ones who uphold the Prophet's Sunnah because of their belief that the Prophet is infallible and that following him is incumbent upon each and every Muslim. It also proves that “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a” are distant from the Prophet's Sunnah due to their belief that the Prophet is fallible and that disobeying him is permissible.

“(All) people were a single nation, then Allah raised prophets as bearers of glad tidings and as warners, and He revealed with them the Book with the truth so that it might judge between people in whatever they disputed, yet none except the very people who were given it differed about it

even after clear arguments had (already) come to them, disputing among themselves; so Allah guided by His will those who believed to the truth about which they disputed, and Allah guides whomsoever He pleases to the Right Path.” (Holy Qur'an, 2:213)

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