

The Views Of Ahlus-Sunnah Towards The Sahaba

One of the fundamental beliefs of Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama`ah that at times distinguishes them from heretics is their belief in the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) and all that has been mentioned about their virtues, merits and characteristics in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Companions are all those who met the Prophet (ﷺ) and died as Muslims. Scholars have said that they were 114,000 in number [as stated by Abu Zur'ah, the teacher of Imam Muslim, and recorded by as-Suyootee]. They are praised in many Qur'anic verses:

"You are the best of peoples ever raised for mankind, you enjoin good and forbid evil, and you believe in Allah." [3:110]

"And the first to embrace Islam of the Muhajiroon (the Emigrants from Makkah) and the Ansar (the citizens of Al-Madeenah who helped the Muhajiroon) and also those who followed them exactly (in Faith). Allah is well-pleased with them as they are well pleased with Him. He has prepared for them Gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever. That is the supreme success." [9:100]

"Indeed, Allah was pleased with the believers when they gave their pledge to you (O Muhammad) under the tree. He knew what was in their hearts and He sent down calmness and tranquility upon them..." [48:18]

Our Attitude Towards Them

Our attitude towards the Sahaba should be that of love, respect, peace and purity of our hearts and tongues. Allah has described this in His saying:

"And those who come after them say: 'Our Lord! Forgive us and our brethren who have preceded us in Faith, and put not in our hearts any hatred against those who have believed.'" [59:10]

And the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "**The sign of faith is love of the Ansar and the sign of hypocrisy is the hatred of Ansar**" [al-Bukharee, Muslim].

Why should we not be thankful to those who believed in the Prophet, assisted him, strove with their lives and wealth to make the Word of Allah supreme, preserved and transmitted to us our Religion? Who is more deserving that we pray for them and speak of them in the best manner and think of them with the best thoughts?

We should therefore mention their virtues and remain silent about any mistakes they made and about anything that occurred between them, as the Prophet (ﷺ) advised us:

"When my Companions are mentioned then withhold" [Saheeh, at-Tabaraneeh].

And he also said, "**Do not abuse my Companions, for if any of you were to spend gold equal to (mountain of) Uhud in charity, it would not equal a handful of one of them or even half of that**" [al-Bukharee, Muslim].

And he said, **"Whoever abuses my Companions, upon them is the curse of Allah, the angels and all the people"** [Saheeh, At-Tabaraneh].

Muslim scholars have also been very strict in regard to the issue of speaking and thinking mistrustfully of the Sahaba. Imam Malik said that someone who finds in himself an ill-feeling or anger "ghaiDH" about the Companions is a kafir because Allah (s.w.t.) says **"li-yagheedHa bihim ul kuffar"** - that He may enrage the disbelievers with them, i.e. the Sahaba [48:29]. And the `Ulama' also say if the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) were disbelievers, dishonest or betrayed the Prophet, then the whole religion would be undermined. Because how do we know what the Prophet (ﷺ) said, if the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) were not honest and truthful? We cannot be sure. And this also applies to the Qur'an, as we received the Qur'an through the Sahaba as well. Indeed, they were truthful and sincere, as Allah described them:

"Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allah and showed not their backs to the disbelievers, of them some have fulfilled their obligations and some of them are still waiting, but they never changed (i.e. they never proved treacherous to their covenant which they concluded with Allah) in the least." [33:23]

Hujjat ul Islam, Sufyan ibn `Uyainah said: "He who speaks a single word against the Companions of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) then he is an innovator." And Imam Ahmad said: "If you see anyone speaking ill of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, doubt his Islam." And Adh-Dhahabee said, "Anyone who criticizes them or insults them has gone out of this religion and has segregated himself from the Muslim Ummah. He has disbelieved in what Allah the Most High says concerning them in His Book, and what Allah's Messenger has said concerning their noble qualities and their merits... It is incumbent upon the Muslims to love Allah; to love His Messenger, to love what the Prophet brought as guidance and as his practise; to love his descendants, his Companions, his wives, his children, his servants, and to love those who love them and hate those who hate them, as this is the meaning of loving for Allah's sake and hating for Allah's sake, and that is the most excellent kind of faith." In al-Kaba'ir (The Greatest Sins), we find that adh-Dhahabee also said, "The one who loves the Prophet loves and respects each and all of his Companions. To hate any of them is to hate the Prophet." Al-Fudayl ibn `Iyyad spoke similarly when he said, "Indeed, I love those whom Allah loves. They are those from whom the Companions of Muhammad (ﷺ) are safe. I hate those whom Allah hates. They are the people of the deviant sects and innovation."

These statements of the great Imams of the Ummah should not surprise us, because a slight doubt about the Companions will in fact be accusing the Prophet himself of hiding the truth about them which he knew (that they were hypocrites, as heretics claim), but he did not tell us!! Or one is accusing him (ﷺ) of being something like an imbecile, as Shaikh Ja'far Idris once spoke, because the Prophet, supposedly did not know although he lived with these people all the time. He thought that they were the best Muslims, but they were hypocrites, (the heretics say). That is why al-Barbaharee said, "Know that anyone who tries to attack the Companions of Muhammad (ﷺ) really seeks to attack Muhammad (ﷺ)."

The Best Of The Companions

We should note that the best of the Ummah, after the Prophet (ﷺ) were Abu Bakr, then 'Umar, then 'Uthman, then 'Ali. As far as the Caliphate is concerned, Ibn Taymeeyah has said that anyone who "objects against anyone of these regarding this order of caliphate, he will be regarded more misguided than the domestic donkey."

And `Abdul-`Azeez al-Qari said that Abu Haneefa "declared anyone who doubts the caliphate of Abu Bakr and 'Umar is a disbeliever. He also declared anyone who slanders the Mother of the Believers 'A'isha to be a disbeliever. And he stated that the prayer behind a Rafidhee [extreme Shee'ah who curse and abuse the Companions] is invalid."

Ahlu Sunnah also, "accept all the superiorities and grades that have been described about them in the Qur'an, the Hadith and by consensus. They give superiority to those who spent and fought for the sake of Allah before the victory, that is, truce of Hudaibiyah over those who spent and fought after that. They consider al-Muhajireen (those who migrated from Makkah to al-Madeenah for Islam) to be superior to al-Ansar (the helpers of al-Madeenah who supported the Muhajireen). They have faith in what Allah has said about the 313 persons on the occasion of the battle of Badr that, **'they are free to do what they like, their sins are pardoned'** [al- Bukharee]. And none of those who gave their pledge to the Prophet (ﷺ) under the tree will get into Fire as the Prophet (ﷺ) has stated, **'Allah is doubtlessly pleased with them and they are pleased with Allah.'** And they were more than 1400 about whom the Prophet (ﷺ) bore witness that they will be admitted to Paradise [Muslim]. The Ahlu Sunnah also bear witness the admission to Paradise for them such as the ten Companions who have been given glad tidings of Paradise in this world by the Prophet." [Al-aqeedatul Wasitiyyah of Shaikh ul-Islam Ibn Taymeeyah]

The Companions' Noble Deeds

We believe that the Sahaba were not innocent of the minor or major sins, but their qualities and deeds were so virtuous and superior that they cause the pardon of the errors committed by them. We believe that if any of the Sahaba committed a mistake, he either repented or performed such virtuous deeds that they are either pardoned or will be interceded for by the Prophet (ﷺ) as they are most deserving of his intercession. Their Jihad, Hijra, knowledge, deeds and support for the Prophet (ﷺ) will be a cause of pardon of their few mistakes. As for their Ijtihad, they are rewarded twice when they were correct, and once when their exertion to find the truth resulted in a wrong conclusion. And, as ash-Shafi'ee said, "I have allegiance for them and I seek Allah's forgiveness for them, and for the people of Camel and Siffeen, those who killed and those who were killed, and all the companions of the Prophet in entirety."

The deeds and virtues of the Sahaba, may Allah be pleased with them all, should be what every Muslim should strive to emulate to the best of one's ability. Their behaviour and sincerity were praised by Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) and that suffices as proof.

As Ibn Mas'ood said, **"Indeed Allah looked into the hearts of the servants and found the heart of Muhammad (ﷺ) to be the best of the hearts of His servants and so He chose him for Himself and sent him as a Messenger. Then He looked into the hearts of His servants after Muhammad (ﷺ) and found the hearts of the Companions to be the best of the hearts of the servants. So He made them ministers of His Messenger (ﷺ) fighting for His Deen. So whatever the Muslims hold to be good then it is good with Allah and whatever the Muslims hold to be evil it is evil with Allah."** [Ahmad, at-Tayalasee]

The Sahaba were undoubtedly the best in terms of understanding the religious obligations, the Sunnah of the Prophet and the way of establishing the Islamic teachings. Their belief is an example for us, as Allah says in the Qur'an: **"So if they believe in the like of that which you believe, they are rightly guided, but if they turn away, then they are only in opposition. So Allah will suffice you against them. And He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower."** [2:137]

The Best Of People

And they are the best people, to which the Prophet (ﷺ) referred to in the Hadith: "**The best of my people are my generation then those who come after them, then those who come after them, then there will come a people in whom there will be no good.**" [At-Tabarane, authenticated by al-Albanee]

Also, in al-Bukharee, "**The best of the people are my generation, then those after them, then those after them...**" This is also reported by Muslim, Abu Dawood, at-Tirmidhee, An-Nasa'ee and others.

The Prophet (ﷺ) also said, "**...and my Ummah will divide into seventy-three sects.**" [Abu Dawood, at-Tirmidhee, Ibn Majah, al-Hakim, Ahmad, authenticated by at-Tirmidhee, al-Hakim, ibn Taymeeyah, as-Suyootee, al-Manawee, ash-Shatibee, adh-Dhahabee and al-Albanee].

In another Hadith that is hasan, the Prophet (ﷺ) explained which one is the saved sect: "**Al-Jama'ah**" [Ibn Majah]. In another Hasan Hadith the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "**The tribes of Israel broke into seventy- two sects. My Ummah shall break up into seventy-three sects. All of them will be in the Fire, except one: the one on which I am upon, and my Companions.**" [At-Tirmidhee]

Following Their Footsteps

All this should suffice as evidence that the correct understanding of Islam is that of the first three generations and all those that follow their path, in truth. There is no disagreement among Muslim scholars that the best generations of Islam are to be followed, that the interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunnah they agreed upon is regarded as the correct one, and that we are to approach the Deen in the manner they approached it. We are obliged to follow them, and that means, first and foremost, to have the same creed as they did, no deviations, no additions and no deletions.

We also have to approach `ibadah ([worship in obedience to Allah](#)) in the same way, no innovations, no additions and no deletions. We take all of the Sunnah and refer all disagreements to Allah and His Messenger, as Allah (s.w.t.) commanded us in the Qur'an [4:59].

To follow the Sahaba does not only mean to have the same understanding of the precepts of belief as they did. That belief must be manifested in our actions and to follow the Sahaba also means to possess their other characteristics, some of which have been identified by our scholars as:

- | The full acceptance of the Revelation
- | The deep influence of the faith and the revelation on one's life
- | The application of this knowledge to the individual and collective life
- | Inviting others to do good deeds
- | Enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong
- | Giving advice to every Muslim
- | Practicing Jihad for the Sake of Allah

Also, the Sahaba presented every action according to the scales of the Sharee`ah, they used to remember and think a lot about death, they were forgiving to those who wronged them in any way, they had a great respect for the honour of other Muslims, for whom they desired only good, they were mindful of their prayers, they used to put the Hereafter before this Dunya, they realized that they could not thank Allah enough and they stayed away from the sinful and their gatherings. Allah, The Exalted, most appropriately describes them:

["Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those who are with him \(the Companions\) are](#)

severe against disbelievers, and merciful among themselves. You see them bowing and falling down prostrate **(in prayer)**, seeking Bounty from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure. The mark of them **(i.e. of their faith)** is on their faces **(foreheads)** from the traces of **(their) prostration (during prayers)**." [48:29]

We ask Allah to enable us to learn about the lives of the Sahaba and to make our lives resemble theirs. For, as Ibn Taymeeyah said, "Whoever will read their biographies with understanding and insight, and will come to know the rewards bestowed by Allah upon them, he will certainly realise that these are the best among humans after the Prophets. Neither there has been anyone like them nor will there be."