

The Credibility of the Al - Sunnah as a Source of Reference and Guidance for Muslims

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Abstract

The previous religious generations had not witnessed such emergence of confusion towards the authority of the al-Sunnah and the al-Quran as the main sources for the Muslims. Hence, when time had passed, the era changed and the distance between Muslims and the time of the Prophet's s.a.w generation of confidants or salaf al-soleh is too far apart, hence, these could be the reasons for the emergence of confusion among the latest generation of Muslims, especially regarding the al-Sunnah as a credible source of reference and guidance. This article will try to explain the confusion and elaborate on the complications that have emerged or purposely made to emerge by adducing arguments and authoritative opinions (dalil) that would prove that the al-Sunnah always compliments the al-Qur'an and is a ready source of reference and guide to Muslims forever. The actual understanding needs to be portrayed to the Muslims about the meaning and definitions of the al-Sunnah that has become the subject of confusion and attacks, based on proof from the al-Qur'an, al-Hadith and practices of past generations. The al-Sunnah is clearly a source that has been misunderstood by groups that are unwilling to accept it as a basic source of reference to Islam. This misunderstanding of this matter has its roots in the misunderstanding of the al-Qur'an itself. The misunderstanding of the clear and apparent fact that the al-Qur'an itself has relegated the power of explaining and elucidating the contents and syllabus of the al-Qur'an to the al-Sunnah.

Keywords: Source of reference, source of explanation, credibility of the al-sunnah, arguments in the al-sunnah

1. Introduction

Indeed the al-Sunnah was created by Allah swt as a compliment to the al-Qur'an. This is clear in His exhortation:

But for the Grace of Allah to thee and his Mercy, a party of them would certainly have plotted to lead thee astray. But (in fact) they will only Lead their own souls astray, and to thee they can do no harm in the least. For Allah hath sent down to thee the Book and wisdom and taught thee what thou Knewest not (before): And great is the Grace of Allah unto thee. (al-Nisa' 4: 113)

The word wisdom according to a majority of ulamaks in the field of interpretation is the al-Sunnah (Abu Nashr al-Mirwazi (1408H: 112).

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The Prophet S.A.W. said :

“Let it be known that I have been given the al-Qur’an and together with it its equivalent” (Abu Dawud, al-Tirmizi: Hadith Hasan)

Even though we have been ordered to pay allegiance and practice the al-Qur’an, hence we are also to pay allegiance to the Prophet s.a.w. and what He brings along. Allah s.w.t. has exhorted:

“And what Allah restored to His Messenger from the people of the towns - it is for Allah and for the Messenger and for [his] near relatives and orphans and the [stranded] traveler - so that it will not be a perpetual distribution among the rich from among you. And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty” (al-Hasyr 59: 7)

This was the principle and stance of the Prophet’s companions and the soleh generation of the past and the Prophet s.a.w. had frequently reminded us to be apprehensive about disunity

“The Jews would break into 71@72 factions, the Christians to about the same number too and my people would break into 73 factions”. (Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi: Hasan Sahih)

The Prophet added:

“Indeed, whoever lives after this would witness many conflicts hence at that time you have to hold on to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of one who replaces among the khulafa’ al-Rashidin, hold-on firmly and be carefull of new matters in the religion” (A. Dawud, Ahmad, al-Darimi)

Allah s.w.t. had exhorted in the al-Quran:

“And do not be like the ones who became divided and differed after the clear proofs had come to them. And those will have a great punishment” (Al ‘Imran 3: 105)

The people before (salaf al-ummah) had lived under the light of the al-Qur’an and Sunnah. They obeyed every command and abstained from all prohibitions mentioned in these two sources. This had never raised any suspicion. Whatever problem or confusion that emerged was referred to the al-Qur’an and Sunnah.

Allah S.W.T had exhorted:

“O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result” (al-Nisa’4: 59)

Civilizations had gone by and time had passed, lately much problems and confusion had emerged in the religious lives of the Muslims. Sometimes the wise would feel confused due to the numerous issues and confusion that exist in society and among the ummah. Are these planned by certain parties? Is this a normal phenomenon when people have deviated far away from the religion of Allah? Or is this the result of the ummah’s ignorance in discarding the guidance of nabawi? Or is this a usual consequence of reaching a certain level in human development or luxuries in life?

The Aim of this Paper

This paper intends to answer several questions that frequently emerge in the Muslim society regarding the position of the al-Sunnah or al-Hadith as to its credibility as an analytical (tasyrih) source or a legislative source compared to the al-Qur’an. Hence, to explain this and to answer the confusion that frequently arises, the definition and explanation as to what is actually meant by the al-Sunnah has to be initially clarified in detail. Only then can the authenticated opinions and proof related to the arguments on the al-Sunnah found in the syariat Islam itself be explained.

2. Definition of the Al-Sunnah

Various definitions of the Sunnah have been given by the ulamak. Ulamak in the field of fiqh had given a different interpretation than that by the ulamak of the hadith or the ulamak of the fiqh. This khilaf (conflict in interpretations) is due to the differences in views and intentions expected from each field.

i. Ulamak of language interpret Sunnah as a pathway, either a pathway leading to good or otherwise or the biography of a journey, either good or otherwise (Ibn Manzur, 2008).

ii. Ulamak of hadith debate that the Prophet s.a.w. is an imam who carried the word of God and His Highness is an examplanary. Hence, they would try their the best to cite any and everything that is associated with His Highness and his way of life, character and personality, stories, language and actions on whether all these could compliment the syarak or otherwise. Thus, from this aspect, the interpretation of the al-Sunnah given by the experts on hadith is:

“Whatever that is associated with the Prophet S.A.W., from his words, actions, opinions, natural characteristics, personality and way of life, whether after or before He became a Prophet”

iii. Ulamak of Fiqh argue that the Prophet S.A.W. set the source of the syariat (مشروع) and He provides explanations about the system and procedures in life, hence, what they focus on the words, actions and the attestation of the Prophet s.a.w., which can be related to establishing the laws in the syariat (الأدلة الشرعية). Thus, the interpretation of the al-Sunnah as given by them is: “Whatever that is transferred from the Prophet, his words, actions and attestations”. Sunnah according to them is contrary to bid’ah.

iv. The ulamak of Fiqh, in their debates, tried to find whatever practice attributed to the Prophet s.a.w. that could be referred to the laws of the syariah by fellow humans on whether the practices are compulsory (wajib), forbidden (haram), preferred (harus) and so forth. Hence, the interpretation given by them is:

“Whatever that emanates from the Prophet s.a.w. in the form that is not blessed or not compulsory and contrary to what is compulsory among the five laws”. (Matters that are voluntary !!!)

The Word Sunnah in the Prophet’s Hadith

Lets us look into a few of the Prophet’s hadith that contains the word al-Sunnah and see what it means. Thus, among them are:

1. Ata’ bin Yassar received from Abi Said R.A. that the Prophet S.A.W. exhorted:

“You will surely follow the ways (sanan) of the people before you, span by span, sleeve by sleeve” (al-Bukhari: hadith 3456) (According to Ibn Hajar, “sanan” here means the way, Ibn Hajar, 6:498).

2. Humaid al-Tawil said that Anas bin Malik reported that three friends who had enquired about the Prophets’ practices of solemn worship (ibadah), hence, the Prophet came to explain and exhorted:

“Are you the same people who said so-and-so? By Allah, I am more submissive to Allah and more afraid of Him than you; yet I fast and break my fast, I do sleep and I also marry women. So he who does not follow my tradition in religion, is not from me (not one of my followers)”.

(al-Bukhari (5063), Muslim (1401) (According to Ibn Hajar: Sunnah here means the way and not a word contrary to fardu, Ibn Hajar, 9:105)

3. Ibn Buraidah from Abdullah al-Muzani r.a. reported that the Prophet S.A.W. exhorted:

"Pray before the Maghrib (compulsory) prayer." He (said it thrice) and in the third time, he said, "Whoever wants to offer it can do so." He said so because he did not like the people to take it as a tradition". (al-Bukhari (1183) According to Ibn Hajar: The Sunnah here means syariah dan a confirmed pathway (Ibn Hajar, 3:60)

4. From Jarir bin Abdillah R.A. had reported that the Prophet S.A.W. exhorted.

“He who sets a good precedent in Islam, there is a reward for him for this (act of goodness) and reward of that also who acted according to it subsequently, without any deduction from their rewards; and he who sets in Islam an evil precedent, there is upon him the burden of that, and the burden of him also who acted upon it subsequently, without any deduction from their burden”. (Muslim, (1017))

5. Ibn Abbas reported that the Prophet S.A.W. exhorted:

“The most hated persons to Allah are three: (1) A person who deviates from the right conduct, i.e., an evil doer, in the Haram (sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina); (2) a person who seeks that the traditions of the Pre-Islamic Period of Ignorance, should remain in Islam (3) and a person who seeks to shed somebody's blood without any right". (al-Bukhari (6882))

There are lot more texts on hadith that contain the word ‘sunnah’, which means the way or the way of following.

Ibn al-Athir said in al-Nihayah (2:409): “Sunnah has been repeatedly mentioned in the hadith, which basically means ‘pathway’ or ‘way of following’. When mentioned in a general manner in the syariat, it carries a meaning of something that is commanded or prohibited by the Prophet S.A.W. Hence, it is said that the authenticated attestations of the syara’ are the Scripture and the al-Sunnah, which is the al-Qur’an and the al-Hadith”.

The Sunnah According to the Al-Qur’an

The Sunnah is one of two devine deliverences of God brought by Gabriel to the Prophet s.a.w. Hence, this is what was understood by the exhortation of Allah s.w.t.:

“Nor does he (Muhammad S.A.W.) speak from [his own] inclination” (al-Najm 53:3)

“It is not but a revelation revealed” (al-Najm 53:4)

Therefore, whatever that is said or proclaimed by the Prophet S.A.W., whether it is from the Al-Qur’an or the al-Sunnah, it is a devine revelation from God. Thus, the exhortation by Allah s.w.t.:

“Indeed, it is we who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its guardian” (al-Hijr 15:9)

Allah S.W.T. had delivered the Al-Qur’an to be read until the last days, free from any sort or form of change and subsequently becoming complete proof of the truth of Muhammad’s s.a.w. Prophethood. Only Allah s.w.t. could safeguard the syariat of Muhammad s.a.w. from being altered or changed.

Had not Allah S.W.T. commanded that The Prophet s.a.w. be paid allegiance? Allegiance to the Prophet s.a.w. means allegiance to Allah S.W.T. Thus, to obey all the commands of Him would be the reason for receiving His love.

Allah had exhorted:

“And obey Allah and obey the Messenger and beware. And if you turn away - then know that upon Our Messenger is only [the responsibility for] clear notification” (al-Ma’idah 5:92)

“Why do you not bring us the angels, if you should be among the truthful?” (al-Hasyr: 7)

“But no, by your Lord, they will not [truly] believe until they make you, [O Muhammad], judge concerning that over which they dispute among themselves and then find within themselves no discomfort from what you have judged and submit in [full, willing] submission.” (al-Nisa’: 4: 65)

“It is not for a believing man or a believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter, that they should [thereafter] have any choice about their affair. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly strayed into clear error”. (al-Ahzab, 33:36)

“Do not make [your] calling of the Messenger among yourselves as the call of one of you to another. Already Allah knows those of you who slip away, concealed by others. So let those beware who dissent from the Prophet's order, lest fitnah strike them or a painful punishment”. (al-Nur, 24:63)

3. The Al-Qur'an, Al-Sunnah and Devine Revelation

When we receive the kind of revelation found in the Sunnah, as explained in the al-Qur'an, it means that have received the special status of the al-Sunnah and its role in the syariat of Islam. Hence, it cannot be denied that there is a clear difference among the revelations in the al-Qur'an compared to the al-Sunnah. The ulamaks have underlined these differences as:

The al-Qur'an in the kalamullah, the acclamation and the meaning from Allah s.w.t.. The reading of the al-Qur'an is worship and prayer is not complete without citing the verses of the al-Qur'an. Experts in the Arabic language cannot overcome the Prophet's s.a.w. eternal miracle. Whereas, the al-Sunnah had come from Allah s.w.t. in meaning only or from the acclamations of the Prophet himself. Unlike the al-Qur'an, the reading of the al-Sunnah is not considered a practice of worship, neither is it a miracle as the al-Qur'an as it can be reported with meaning.

Hence, for the purpose of religious transgressions and argumentations that involve policy and matters that compliment the syariat, it is similar and equal with the al-Qur'an as long as the Sunnah is confirmed of its authenticity.

In one hatidh, the Prophet S.A.W. had exhorted:

“I was given the al-Qur'an and one similar to that, as a satiated man on his soft bed would say: It is enough that what you want is in the al-Qur'an and what is halal take it as halal and what is haram take it as haram, don't you know that what is declared haram by the Prophet is also declared haram by Allah” (Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi dan Ibn Majah. al-Tirmidhi assessed this hadith as a Hasan hadith).

From Hassan Ibn Atiyyah who said:

“Has Gabriel delivered the al-Sunnah to the Prophet as how the al-Qur'an was taught to him”

Makhul had narrated from the Prophet:

“Allah brought me the al-Qur'an and its equivalent from the al-Hikmah” (Marasil Abi Dawud, the narratoo was thiqah, except the Abi Dawud's syeikh)

Arguments on the Al-Sunnah

It has been unanimously agreed (ijma') that the al-Sunnah is a policy on religion and the important tenets that are compulsory to be adhered to and absolutely cannot be transgressed. There are many verses that attest to this policy, among them are:

“And what Allah restored to His Messenger from the people of the towns - it is for Allah and for the Messenger and for [his] near relatives and orphans and the [stranded] traveler - so that it will not be a perpetual distribution among the rich from among you. And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty” (al-Hasyr 59: 7)

“He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah; but those who turn away - We have not sent you over them as a guardian” (al-Nisa' 4: 80)

“There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often” (al-Ahzab 33: 21)

“Say, [O Muhammad], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful” (Al 'Imran 3: 31)

“O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result” (al-Nisa’ 4: 59)

“Do not make [your] calling of the Messenger among yourselves as the call of one of you to another. Already Allah knows those of you who slip away, concealed by others. So let those beware who dissent from the Prophet's order, lest fitnah strike them or a painful punishment.” (al-Nur 24: 63)

“It is not for a believing man or a believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter, that they should [thereafter] have any choice about their affair. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly strayed into clear error” (al-Ahzab 33: 36)

Thus, transgressions of these arguments on the al-Sunnah could bring about accusations of apostasy. According to al-Hafiz Ibn Abd al-Barr: (Jami’ Bayan al-Ilm, 2:33) “The basis of knowledge is the al-Qur’an and the al-Sunnah. Ibn Hazm commented based on the verse, “O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result (al-Nisa’ 4:59). He said, it is clearly proven that what is meant by returning to Allah s.w.t. and the Prophet s.a.w. is to return to the al-Qur’an and the ways of the Prophet s.a.w. The ulamaks have come to a consensus (ijma’) that the al-Qur’an was actually referred to us humans. Allah S.W.T. had called upon us to return to the pathway according to the Prophet’s words. Hence, it is not proper and unwise for a Muslim to return to other than the al-Qur’an and the al-Sunnah when a confusion occurs.

Allah s.w.t had exhorted:

“But no, by your Lord, they will not [truly] believe until they make you, [O Muhammad], judge concerning that over which they dispute among themselves and then find within themselves no discomfort from what you have judged and submit in [full, willing] submission” (al-Nisa 4: 65)

This verse is enough and fitting for those who are wise and conscious of its meanings. Therefore, it is proper that one introspects if what has been said by the Prophet S.A.W. is inconsistent with one’s self or if one cannot accept the Prophet’s decision, which is from an authenticated source, but rather accept what other people have said. Hence, one should be aware that Allah S.W.T. had strongly voiced that the person is not one of impiety (iman). Thus, Allah S.W.T. had consolidated the earlier verse with this:

“And when it is said to them, "Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger," you see the hypocrites turning away from you in aversion” (al-Nisa 4:61)

The Al-Sunnah Is Divided Into Mutawatir (Consecutive and Many) and Ahad (A Few)

There arises the question of accepting the Sunnah that is mutawatir but not ahad. The mutawatir news is news that is confidently reliable because many narrators had disseminated it. Meanwhile, a single or very few narrators disseminate news that is received by ahad. Thus, the acceptance and authenticity of news via ahad is not as high as news obtained through mutawatir.

Actually, the Prophet’s S.A.W. companions and the salaf al-ummah who followed them had never differentiated the al-Sunnah according to mutawatir or ahad as they believed that the Prophet’s s.a.w. hadith had only one level. They showed impiety (iman) and practiced according to the al-Sunnah that they had received without differentiating the number of narrators.

Arguments on News via Ahad

A majority of the Ulama Salaf among the Prophet’s friends, tabi’in and scholars in the field of hadith, fiqh and usul are of the opinion that news via ahad can become arguments and source of reference on matters of law and beliefs. Hence, it is compulsory that whoever receives this hadith needs to practice it if it qualifies to be a hadith that is maqbul and agreed upon by the ulamaks. The five pre-conditions for a hadith maqbul

are the sanad is continuous, the narrators are fair, the narrators are dhabit, there are no contradictions among the hadith and there is no illah. According to imam Syafie: "I cannot remember the fiqh Muslim scholars ever disagreeing when confirming the acceptance of news via ahad that had satisfied all the conditions" (al-Syafie, 457). According to Ibn Bathal, "the ijma' is steadfast in practicing according to the news via ahad" (Ibn Hajar, 12:231).

According to Imam Ibn Hazmin: It has been reported by Abu Sulaiman, Husain ibn Ali al-Karabisi, al-Harith al-Muhasibi and others that news via ahad by an unbiased narrator was made compulsaory in knowledge and practice by the Prophet, which is the view we hold". He added that "the authenticated al-Qur'an and al-Sunnah is based on one another, both is considered equivalent as both is from Allah s.w.t. Hence, if anyone receives news from the Prophet it would be certified that it is authentically from the Prophet and arguments could then commence. However, if this kind of news is authenticated in another location but it is left there because of another person's opinion then this is against Allah s.w.t. and the commands of the Prophet s.a.w. (Ibn Hazmin 1:98, 102 & 108).

According to al-Khatib al-Baghdadiy: "To practice the news via ahad is the stand of all the tabi'in and those after them from among the fiqh scholars in the Islamic cities until today. Nothing that has been rejected or opposed by any of them has reached us today. If there were among them who had differing opinions, surely the news would have reached us" (al-Khatib, 72).

Ibn Taimiyah said that "this is the view of most of the ulama kalam from among the al-Asy'ariyyah and others such as Abu Ishak al-Isfirayni, Ibn Furak and it is all of the ulama hadith sect and also the salaf al-ummah sect" (al-Fatawa 18:40)

According to Ibn al-Qayyim, "It has become famous among the members of the al-Sunnah to rely on the hadith and refer to it. This is a sign of ijma' from them on the acceptance and arguments on news via ahad. Hence, this is the consensus of all the Islamic ulamas from the beginning until the latest one on the reporting of hadith concerning the characteristics of Allah s.w.t. and the problems regarding issues on al-qadr, al-ru'yah, usul a;-iman, syafaat ..." (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1:332)

4. The Authentication and Arguments from the Al-Qur'an

When referred to the al-Qur'an, we will find many verses, either explicit or implicit, that indicates the arguments and acceptance of the Prophet's s.a.w. hadith from the mutawatir or ahad aspect. Hence, after we had clarified that the salaf al-ummah had never differentiated the hadith that they had received from the Prophet s.a.w. This is based on the exhortation of Allah s.w.t.:

"And what Allah restored to His Messenger from the people of the towns - it is for Allah and for the Messenger and for [his] near relatives and orphans and the [stranded] traveler - so that it will not be a perpetual distribution among the rich from among you. And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty" (al-Hasyr 59:7)

We have included here several verses on that we had mentioned on the firmness of the al-Qur'an on the arguments about the al-Sunnah, including that from the ahad.

Exhorted Allah S.W.T.

"And it is not for the believers to go forth [to battle] all at once. For there should separate from every division of them a group [remaining] to obtain understanding in the religion and warn their people when they return to them that they might be cautious" (al-Taubah 9:122)

The Argument that can be taken from this Verse is:

From the language aspect, Allah s.w.t. had ordered that one ta'ifah goes to pursue knowledge and to bring back memories. Ta'ifah means a piece of something; hence, it includes one, two or three people.

The Imam al-Bukhari had allocated one chapter in his Sahih scripture: “This chapter explains the acceptance of news via ahad that is true and Allah s.w.t. had exhorted: *فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ*. Next, he had introduced 22 hadith that became the authoritative citations (dalil) for arguments on hadith ahad.

According to al-Sarkhasi: “If there is no argument on the news via ahad that makes the practice compulsory hence certainly it would be not compulsory to give inzar (reminders) on what is heard... and polite reminders to be cautious will not arise except after the arguments have been proven, only then will it be confirmed that the news via ahad has the capability to make a practice compulsory” (al-Sarkhasiy 1:324)

Allah S.W.T. exhorted:

“O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful” (al-Hujurat 49: 6) According to Ibn Hajar: “Taken from the understanding of the condition and characteristics, both lead towards the acceptance and arguments of news via ahad.

Allah S.W.T. exhorted

“And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned” (al-Isra’ 17: 36)

The Muslims among the friends of the Prophet s.a.w. had always kept track of the news via ahad and practiced it as a confirmation of Allah’s s.w.t. characteristics. Hence, for example, if the news is not worthy of information surely they would have acted accordingly (Ibn al-Qayyim, 2:397)

Allah exhorted

“And We sent not before you, [O Muhammad], except men to whom We revealed [the message], so ask the people of the message if you do not know” (al-Anbiya’ 21: 7)

According to Ibn al-Qayyim: “He ordered that people who were ignorant to seek people who knew. Allah s.w.t. did not mean that one should ask many people but just someone who had the knowledge, a single person would be sufficient” (Ibn al-Qayyim, 2:396)

Allah S.W.T. exhorted

“Indeed, those who conceal what We sent down of clear proofs and guidance after We made it clear for the people in the Scripture - those are cursed by Allah and cursed by those who curse” (al-Baqarah 2: 159)

Allah S.W.T. exhorted

“And [mention, O Muhammad], when Allah took a covenant from those who were given the Scripture, [saying], "You must make it clear to the people and not conceal it." But they threw it away behind their backs and exchanged it for a small price. And wretched is that which they purchased.” (Al ‘Imran 3: 187)

Though both these verses were delivered specially for the members of the scripture, hence the lessons contained in the message are taken from the general proclamation (lafaz). It clearly makes it compulsory to propagate knowledge and forbids hiding knowledge. The knowledge referred to here included knowledge regarding the al-Qur’an and al-Sunnah and covers the individual and the congregation (jamaah).

Referring to the first verse, Ibn Jarir al-Tabari commented: “Although this verse was delivered for a particular group, hence it includes everyone who conceals knowledge that is supposed to be propagated to all humans. This is similar to a hadith from the Prophet s.a.w.: “Whoever is asked about the knowledge he possesses but he then conceals it, his mouth would be filled with fire” (Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi. See: Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, 2:52)

5. The Authenticated Arguments from the Hadith

The number of hadith reported as mutawatir is limited compared to the hadith via ahad. Hence, if only the hadith mutawatir were to be accepted then the majority of the hadith would be neglected. Below are some of the hadith that reflects the absolute necessity of considering the hadith ahad.

1. The Prophet s.a.w. had said to Muaz when the latter was sent to Yemen:

“You would go to the people that have received the scriptures; hence the main thing you must teach them is to worship Allah; after they have known Allah then tell them that Allah has commandeered them to pray five times a day” (al-Bukhari, (1365), Muslim, (28))

The hadith adduces that the Prophet s.a.w. had sent Muaz, by himself, to Yemen to profess to the people of Yemen about the syariat Islam. This includes the theories such as the kalimah syahadah and the practical aspect of solat, zakat and so forth. Surely, the question of aqidah that is related to monotheism (tauhid), impiety (iman), characteristics of Allah s.w.t. and all the laws and prohibitions of the syariat would be the duty and responsibility of Muaz. Thus, it is clear that news via ahad would become the argument in regards to questions related to the aqidah.

2. Reported by Ibn Mas’ud that the Prophet exhorted:

“The Bilal’s azan (call to prayer) would not stop you from taking the sahur (the meal at dawn during fasting) because the Bilal announces the azan in order to give a chance for those who carried out the qiyamullail (late night prayers) to return and awaken those who are sleeping” (al-Bukhari, (4887), Muslim, (1830))

This hadith adduces that azan is included in the propagating of news by one person that contains the laws and prohibitions of the syariat, hence, news propagated by one person who is trusted and authoritative on matters pertaining to the syariat and its laws should be accepted.

3. Reported by Ibn Mas’ud that the prophet s.a.w. exhorted:

“It is a blessing for one to listen to my words and appreciate it and propagate it to other people because may be the carrier of knowledge himself does not understand and maybe the carrier of knowledge might propagate to someone who understands it better than him” (Abu Dawud, al-Tirmizi)

The argument from this hadith is the propagation of what the Prophet s.a.w. had exhorted to other people, which includes anyone, does not have to be in a mutawatir situation and not limited to people who understand the exhortation in detail.

According to Imam Syafie: “.. the word امرءا in the hadith means one person, hence, when that person is encouraged to deliver knowledge it could become an argument for the person receiving that knowledge. Thus if he delivers something that is haram, it would be avoided and if it were halal, then it would be accepted (al-Syafei: 402)

4. Ibn Umar had said:

“When all were in Qaba’ during morning prayers, suddenly came someone and passed the news that the Prophet s.a.w. had received a revelation that ordered those in prayer to face the new kiblata towards the Kaabah, since before this they had faced towards Syam (Jerusalem), hence, they all shifted their position towards the Kaabah” (al-Bukhari, (388), Muslim, (820))

The argument from this hadith is that the Prophet’s s.a.w. companions had received the news via ahad brought by one person and they had shifted their position from which they were confident in and towards the new direction based on the news by the carrier who was not authorised. The Prophet s.a.w. knew what had happened and he substantiated it.

According to Imam Syafie: “The people of Qaba’ were among those who had accepted Islam and they understood. They had for a long time faced the kiblata that has been forsaken to them. They would not hastily change the kiblata if they were not confident with the news via ahad. Although they had not received the news

directly from the Prophet s.a.w. and they had not listen to Allah s.w.t. delivering the revelation to change the kiblat. However, they had accepted with ease the news brought by someone who could be trusted and they would not have made the change if they did not assume it as an argument (al-Syafei: 406).

As a conclusion, al-Imam Ibn al-Qayyim had adduced 21 authoritative arguments (dalil) that substantiates the argument for news via ahad in relation to matters pertaining to practice and theory, laws and aqidah. He then summarised that: "If some news is authentic from the Prophet s.a.w. himself and narrated by a trusted thiqah who has referred to narrators before him who were also thiqah until the Prophet s.a.w. himself and the ulamak have accepted the hadith, hence, the hadith gives us information that is true if it is news that brings information". This is the opinion of a vast majority of ulamak and those experts in the field of Sunnah. There is a view that news via ahad does not carry true information (that cannot be trusted), conversely it should pass through the mutawatir stage, such as the stand of the qadariyah and mu'tazilah, who actually meant to reject the hadith but unfortunately a small number of fuqaha' were influenced with this view, especially those who were not strong-footed and did not understand the intentions and nawaitu of the group with these views (Ibn al-Qayyim, 2:394)

6. Conclusion

I would like to close this discussion by touching briefly on the role of the al-sunnah and its position in tasyri' Islami. Therefore, parties that only wish to accept the al-Qur'an as a source and refuse to accept the al-Sunnah as one of the sources of tasyri' is similar to going against logic and wisdom. The question is how one can understand the al-Qur'an without the al-Sunnah.

The Prophet s.a.w. had spent his days and life in translating Islam into a practicle mode. The Prophet's s.a.w. life is a detailed version of Islam. The method used by the Prophet s.a.w. was comprehensive (syumul), complete and balanced. However, some quarters have misunderstood al-Sunnah. When Sunnah is mentioned hence, they imagine about wearing turbans, keeping a beard, using the sugi and wearing the jubah at calf's length.

Whereas the al-Sunnah is the manhaj (methodology), it is a way of life; it is a method of dakwah (preaching), a way of educating and a life according to the syariah. It is a method that is perfect and encompassing. Life is not meant to be forever in mihrab, or to starve oneself or qiyam (night prayer) the whole night, to shy away from the joys of life or not getting married.

Hence, when the Prophet s.a.w. exhorted: "I am the most afraid of them all towards Allah, the highest level of taqwa, hence I qiyam and I also sleep, I fast and I also break my fast, I marry women. Remember! Those who run away from my Sunnah are not one of mine! Thus, what is the meaning of the Sunnah as mentioned by the Prophet s.a.w. here? The al-Sunnah is the manhaj (methodology), a guide to a comprehensive, complete and balanced life.

In addition, how can those who reject Sunnah implement the basic required practices of worship (ibadah) in Islam that has detailed explanations only found in the Sunnah? In fact, they not only reject the Sunnah but reject Islam as well because they have rejected the al-Qur'an, which they claim to adhere. Although the al-Qur'an has clearly assigned the duty of detailing and explaining to the Prophet s.a.w.: "So that you explain to all humans what has been revealed to them". Therefore, was not the al-Qur'an revealed to the Prophet s.a.w. and through the Prophet s.a.w. that the al-Qur'an was revealed? Was it not the Prophet s.a.w. who explained why the verses were revealed, when it would be revealed, for whom it was revealed and so forth? This is all the al-Sunnah! Hence, it is surely the main reference for the Muslims.

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