



Should a Muslim Follow a Particular Madhhab



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Publishers Note

An analysis of Islamic history reveals that Taqleed (following certain Madhhab or Imam) is one of the causes of the decline and backwardness of the Muslim Ummah.

Although the great Imams of Madhahib or other Mujtahid neither stuck to their own opinions nor did they demand of their students to act upon their words at the expense of the Qur'an and Sunnah, a good number latter scholars as well as the vast majority of laymen of the later periods chose Taqleed as a method of resolving problems of jurisprudence. Subsequently, the door of Ijtihad (independent reasoning on the basis of the Qur'an and Sunnah) was declared closed.

Many great Ulama throughout the ages have upheld the necessity of relying on the Qur'an and Sunnah, and fought Taqleed and the sectarian thing it encourages which divides the Ummah. Shaikh Muhammad Sultan Al-Ma'soomi (1297-1380H) is one such scholar.

Shaikh Al-Ma'soomi's work, Hadiyyatus-Sultan ila Muslimi Biladil-Yaban, is a message sent to some people in Japan in reply to their question about the assertion that every believer must choose a Madhhab. It is also one of the most beneficial book written on the subject. We are publishing an English version of the book due to its added significance in our times.

May Allah reward its author and translator, and accept this as a good deed!

Abdul Malik Mujahid

General Manager Darussalam

About the Author

Abu Abdur-Rahman Muhammad Sultan Al-Ma'soomi was born in 1297H, into a noble and wealthy family, in Khajnadah, a town of Azerbaijan.

He began his studies by reading the books and treatises written in the Turkish language — the language of the people of his land. Then he began to study the works in Arabic such as those of Al- Uza'i, Az-Zanjani, the Awamil of Al-Jarmani, the Kafiyah of Ibn- ul-Hajib. He then started studying books of logic and philosophy such as Musallam-ul- 'Uloom, Hikmat-ul- 'Ayn and Isharat of Ibn Sina. After that, he advanced to study the books of Aqeedah (creed) such as An-Nasafiyyah, Al-Adudiyyah, At-Tahawiyyah, Jawharat-ut-Tauhd, As-Sanusiyyah, etc.

By the age of twenty-three Shaikh Al-Ma'soomi openly denounced the blind following of Madhahib (schools of religious laws or sects), and exposed the contradictions and disobedience of the blind-followers to their Imams. This won for him the displeasure and fury of many. Consequently, he left his native land in 1323H with the intention of traveling to Hijaz.

Al-Ma'soomi travelled by train and ship. In Turkey he met Sultan Abdul-Hameed, and what he happened to see in the capital of the Ottoman Caliphate deeply disturbed him. Finally, he arrived at Makkah on the 8th of Dhul-Hijjah 1323H.

He performed Hajj and visited some of the scholars of the Hijaz including Shaikh Shu'ayb bin Abdur-Rahman Al-Maghribi Al- Maliki, with whom he studied Sahih Al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Muwatta and Mishkat-ul-Masahli. The Shaikh gave him permission to narrate from him.

Al-Ma'soomi also met Shaikh Salih Kamal Al-Hanafī, Shaikh Muhammad Murad Ar-Ramzi Al-Qazani, Shaikh Muhammad Saeed Babseel Ash-Shafi'i, Shaikh Ahmad Al-Hadraw and others. Most of them were Sufi Shaikh, and he was impressed by them and gave his pledge of allegiance to Shaikh Muhammad Ma'soom bin Abdur-Rasheed Al-Mujaddidi An-Naqshbandi. He taught him the Sufi practices and ordered him to visualize the Shaikh whilst making Dhikr.

He then gave him permission to train followers, but the heart of Al- Ma'soomi was not content. He therefore began to study the sources of Tafseer and the Sunnah and their explanations. To his dismay, Al-Ma'soomi observed the four separate places of prayer around the Ka'bah — and he would see the followers of a particular Madhhab refusing to perform prayer behind the followers of other Madhahib, instead of they would sit among the rows of people waiting for the Jamd 'ah of their own Madhhab.

After living there for three years, he visited the Prophet's Mosque and met the scholars of Al-Madinah. Among them were Shaikh Abdullah Al-Qadumi Al-Hanbali and Shaikh Ahmad Al- Barzanji. All of them gave him permission to narrate from them and wrote their chains of narration for him.

Then Al-Ma'soomi travelled to Syria, and in Damascus he met great scholars including Shaikh Badruddin Yoosuf Al-Ma'mar the Muhaddith, Shaikh Abdul Hakim Al-Qandahaari, Shaikh Abdul Khair Ibn Aabidin and others. All of them gave him permission to narrate from them.

In Damascus, Al-Ma'soomi criticized the Sufi Shaikh for their involvement in music, dancing, and the use of flute and tambourine. He also criticized the Rifa'iyyah Al-Biat'hiyyah for their Dhikr and movements.

Then he departed for Beirut and met Shaikh Abdur-Rahman bin Darwesh Al-Hft and Shaikh Yusuf An-Nabahani. Then he visited Al-Aqsa Mosque, and then travelled to Egypt. At Al- Azhar University he met

Shaikh Muhammad Bakheet Al- Mutee'ee and Shaikh Muhammad Rasheed Rida. He helped with Al-Manaar magazine, and bought all of its back issues and the works of Shaikh Muhammad Abduhu and likewise what had been printed from the works of Ibn Tamiyyah and his student Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah. He eventually bought a thousand books in total, excluding smaller treatises and magazines!

Al-Ma'soomi then returned home and joined his family. When he settled, he began teaching in the school founded by his father and became engrossed in the works of Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim and Ibn Abdul-Barr — and the truth became clear to him. He was made a Mufti of Shari'ah courts in 1328H.

This stage in the life of Al-Ma'soomi was a time of research and seeking the proof for every matter. He would compare books and weigh them according to the Qur'an and Sunnah. Gradually the correctness of the Salafi methodology became clear to him. So he clung to it and began to write in refutation of Taqleed. Consequently, the Din was revived in the lands beyond the Tigris and Salafi thought spread: the shrines, tombs and centers of pilgrimage which were worshipped besides Allah were demolished.

After the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia in 1917, many scholars were killed and many thousands were transported to north where most of them died. Some, by the grace of Allah, were saved. As for Al-Ma'soomi, he was arrested several times and finally ordered to be shot. But by the grace of Allah, he was able to escape, and in 1928, fled to China where he remained for a number of years. Then he left for Makkah, and in 1354H he settled there and became a teacher in Dar-ul-Hadith in Makkah.

In the months of Hajj he would teach in Masjid-ul-Haraam in the Turkish language and Turkish pilgrims would attend these lessons.

Through them he would send letters to his family, news of whom had ceased to reach him towards the end of his life. He died in the year 1380H — Rahimahullah — and may Allah grant him a home in Paradise!

Al-Ma'soomi wrote a large number of books both in Arabic and Turkish. Hadiyyatus-Sultan Ilaa Mulslimee Bilaadil-Yaabaan (Sultan's Gift to the Muslims of Japan) was printed for the first time in the year 1368H in Egypt. In this year, 1949, Shaikh Muhammad Nasirud-Deen Al-Albaanee visited Shaikh Al-Ma'soomi in his house, near Masjid-ul-Haraam, and received a copy of Hadiyyatus-Sultan in printed form as a gift from its author.

A Letter from Japan

I received a letter from Mr. Muhammad Abdul Hai Qurban Ali on behalf of Muslims of Tokyo, Japan, asking some basic questions about Islam. What is Islam? After acceptance of Islam, is it necessary for a Muslim to follow any one of the four prevalent Imams and their sects? Is it required that a Muslim be a Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki or Hanbali along with being a Muslim or is just being a Muslim is enough?

The problem of faith and sects came up when a group of enlightened Japanese wished to accept Islam as their religion. They conveyed their intention of becoming Muslim to Jamiyat- ul-Muslimin of Tokyo. Members of Jamiyat from India advised them to become Muslim and follow Imam Abu Hanifah. According to them the Madhhab of Abu Hanifah is the only way which guides the Muslims to lead a pious and God-fearing life. On the other hand members of Jamiyat from Indonesia guided them to follow Imam Shafi'i because the Madhhab of Shafi'i will lead them to Paradise. On hearing these different viewpoints, they were confused. This puzzling problem stood in their way of accepting Islam. Questions raised in their letter moved me, and I, seeking help from Allah, wrote the answer according to my knowledge.

Reality of Islam and Iman (Faith)

Not only ignorant and illiterate people but also many scholars, who imagine themselves very well informed, are of the opinion that every Muslim must follow an Imam. A Muslim must follow either Imam Abu Hanifah or Imam Shafe'i or Imam Malik or Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal. This is not only a mistaken idea but it is also an attestation of people's ignorance and unawareness of the basic knowledge of Islam.

In Sahih ul-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim there is a Hadith in which Jibrael appears before Allah's Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), and asked about Islam saying: "What is Islam"? Allah's Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

إِنَّ جِبْرَائِيلَ - عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ - سَأَلَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ عَنِ الْإِسْلَامِ : قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ فِي جَوَابِهِ : « أَنْ تَشْهَدَ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَتُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةَ وَتُؤْتِيَ الزَّكَاةَ وَتَصُومَ رَمَضَانَ وَتَحُجَّ الْبَيْتَ إِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا . قَالَ : مَا الْإِيمَانُ ؟ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ : « أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ، وَتُؤْمِنَ بِالْقَدْرِ خَيْرِهِ وَشَرِّهِ . قَالَ السَّائِلُ : مَا الْإِحْسَانُ ؟ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ : « الْإِحْسَانُ أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ » .

"Islam is to testify that there is no God to be worshipped but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, to perform the prayers, to pay the Zakat, to fast in Ramadan, and to make the pilgrimage to the House (the Ka'bah in Makkah) if you are able to do so." He [Jibrael (Peace be upon him)] said: "What is

Iman (belief)?" He (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Last Day, and to believe in destiny— both the good and the evil thereof." He [Jibrael (Peace be upon him)] said: "What is Ihsan?" He (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "It is to worship Allah as though you are seeing Him, and while you see Him not yet truly, He sees you." (Muslim)

Imam Bukhari and Muslim also related on the authority of 'Abdullah bin 'Umar (May Allah be pleased with him) Allah's Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

إِنَّ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ قَالَ: بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ شَهَادَةِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ وَصَوْمِ رَمَضَانَ وَحَجِّ الْبَيْتِ لِمَنْ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا.

“Islam is built on five pillars: Testifying that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, performing prayers, paying the Zakat, fasting in the month of Ramadan and making pilgrimage (Hajj) to the House (the Ka’bah in Makkah), if you are able to do so.”

Imam Muslim on the authority of Abu Huraira reported; A Bedouin came to Allah’s Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) and said:

يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ! دُلَّنِي عَلَى عَمَلٍ إِذَا عَمَلْتُهُ دَخَلْتُ الْجَنَّةَ؟ قَالَ: «تَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ لَا تُشْرِكُ بِهِ شَيْئًا. وَتُقِيمُ الصَّلَاةَ الْمَكْتُوبَةَ. وَتُؤَدِّي الزَّكَاةَ الْمَفْرُوضَةَ. وَتَصُومُ رَمَضَانَ» قَالَ: وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ! لَا أَزِيدُ عَلَى هَذَا شَيْئًا أَبَدًا، وَلَا أَنْقُصُ مِنْهُ. فَلَمَّا وَلَّى، قَالَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ: «مَنْ سَرَّهُ أَنْ يَنْظُرَ إِلَى رَجُلٍ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ، فَلْيَنْظُرْ إِلَى هَذَا».

“O Allah’s Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), direct me to a deed by which I may be entitled to enter Paradise.’ Upon this he (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said: ‘You testify that there is no god to be worshipped but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, perform the obligatory prayers, and pay the Zakat and observe the fast of Ramadan. ‘He (the Bedouin) said: ‘By Him in whose hand is my life, I will never add anything to it, neither will I neglect anything of it.’ He (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “If what the Bedouin is saying true, he is successful.”

Imam Bukhari has also quoted this Hadith.

Commentators of the Qur’an tell that Hajj was not made obligatory at that time that is why Hajj has not been mentioned in this Hadith.

In Sahih ul-Bukhari and other books of Hadith, on the authority of Anas recorded:

“We were sitting in the mosque in the presence of the Allah’s Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). There came a camel rider. He tied his camel in the courtyard of the mosque and asked, ‘Who is Muhammad?’ Allah’s Messenger was sitting there in the mosque propped against the wall. He was told that the man sitting and having fair complexion and fine features is called Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). He asked him, ‘Are you the son of ‘Abdul Muttalib?’ Allah’s Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) replied, your question has already been answered. After this short conversation, the stranger said to Allah’s Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), ‘I wish to ask you some questions, the mode of my questions may be harsh, but kindly do not

take it offense.’ Allah’s Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) granted him permission to ask any question he wanted. He said, ‘I ask you in the name of your Sustainer and in the name of your Ancestors’ Sustainer, is it true that Allah has sent you to guide mankind?’ Allah’s Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) replied, ‘Yes, Allah is witness.’ He asked again, ‘I ask you in the name of Allah, is it true that Allah ordered you to pray five times a day and night?’ Allah’s Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) answered, ‘Yes, Allah is witness.’ Once again he said, ‘I ask you in the name of Allah, is it true that Allah ordered you to fast in a certain month (month of Ramadan) of year.’ Allah’s Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) again answered, ‘Yes, Allah is witness’. He asked afresh, ‘Kindly tell me, in the name of Allah, whether He commanded you to collect Zakat from our rich and to distribute it among the poor.’ Allah’s Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said, ‘Yes, Allah is witness.’ Then the stranger declared, ‘I accept Islam, enter the fold of Islam and I shall take this message to my people. I belong to the tribe of Banu Sa’d bin Baar and my name is Damam bin Tha’labah.”

This is the Islam which Allah has commanded His salves to follow. For the propagation and explanation of Islam He sent Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him).