

## Hadith and Sunnah as Pillars of the Islamic Way of Life: A Thematic Research Review

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### Abstract

The Hadith and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ occupy a central position in Islamic theology, jurisprudence, and daily life. While the Qur'an serves as the foundational source of divine guidance, the Sunnah complements and contextualizes it, offering practical implementation and detailed exposition. This research review explores the multifaceted importance of Hadith and Sunnah in shaping the Islamic way of life legally, ethically, socially, and spiritually. It highlights the legislative authority granted to the Prophet ﷺ, the Sunnah's role in explaining the Qur'anic text, and its contribution to the formation of Islamic values and civil institutions. Supported by Qur'anic verses and authentic Hadith references, the review further emphasizes how the classical and contemporary Islamic scholarship upholds the interdependence of the Qur'an and Sunnah. This paper reaffirms that the neglect of Prophetic tradition leads to a fragmented understanding of Islam, whereas adherence ensures a holistic and authentic Islamic identity.

**Keywords:** *Sunnah, Islamic Teachings, Qur'an, Hadith, theology, jurisprudence*

## Introduction

Every human being desire success. In fact, the ultimate aim of all human effort is to attain success. Allah Almighty, the Creator of the universe, knows the true needs of man. Therefore, true success is that which Allah, the Lord of Glory, has defined for mankind. As the Divine Word states:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّقُونَ أَجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَمَنْ زُحِرَ عَنْ النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ  
الْعُزُورِ<sup>1</sup>

Every soul shall taste death, and you will only be given your full rewards on the Day of Resurrection. So, whoever is saved from the Fire and admitted into Paradise has truly succeeded. And the life of this world is nothing but the enjoyment of delusion.

Allah Almighty has clearly defined that true success is to be saved from the Fire on the Day of Judgment. After death, every individual shall face this ultimate test, and it is there that true success or failure will be determined. This success will be both real and eternal. He has also clarified the path to attain this success:

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا<sup>2</sup>

(Whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has indeed attained a great success.) [2]

Allah has set the standard of success in obedience to Himself and His Messenger (peace be upon him). This standard is the Divine Commandments (i.e., the Qur'an) and the way of the Holy Prophet (i.e., the Sunnah). The foundation of faith is the declaration: "There is no deity but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah." Legally and doctrinally, faith in Allah precedes faith in the Messenger. However, in practice, belief in the Messenger comes first. For it is through the Messenger (ﷺ) that we come to know Allah and His unity.

<sup>1</sup> The Qur'an, Surah Aal-e-Imran (3:185)

<sup>2</sup> The Qur'an, Surah Al-Ahzab (33:71)

If someone claims to believe in Allah and His Book, the Holy Qur'an but refuses to accept the words and teachings of the Prophet (peace be upon him), then such a person must be dealt with accordingly. As Dr. Hamidullah explains:

Suppose the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) were alive today, and a man came to him to accept Islam. After proclaiming his faith, he addresses the Prophet, saying: "This Qur'an is the Word of God, I accept it; but your words the Hadith are not binding upon me." The consequence of such a claim would be immediate. The Prophet (ﷺ) would declare such a person to be outside the fold of Islam. And if Sayyiduna Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) were present, he might ask the Prophet (peace be upon him) for permission to behead the apostate and disbeliever on the spot.<sup>3</sup>

Before delving deeper into the importance of Hadith and Sunnah, it is essential to understand their meanings.

### ***The Meaning of Hadith and Sunnah***

Regarding the term Hadith, Allama Zubaidi writes in Taj al-'Arus:

Al-Hadīthah means 'goodness', thus the words Hadith and Sunnah are considered synonymous. The term can refer to something little or vast, such as in the phrase Jama' tu Hadithi Hasanah, meaning 'I compiled my good sayings'. Just as one says Khutbāy, similarly Hadith has a plural form Ahādīth. Some also regard Ahādīth as the plural of Uhdūthah, as noted by al-Qurā' and others.<sup>4</sup>

Maulana Khaleel ur Rahman Chishti, defining Hadith, states that its literal meaning is "something new" or "a newly occurring matter".

### **Technical Definition of Hadith:**

In technical terms, Hadith refers to any report attributed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), whether it be a saying, an action, or his tacit approval. The plural of Hadith is Ahādīth.

Based on nature, Hadith is classified into three types:

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<sup>3</sup> Muhammad Hamidullah, Khutbat-e-Bahawalpur, Lahore: Beacon Books, 2005, p. 47

<sup>4</sup> Sayyid Muhammad Murtaza al-Zubaidi al-Husayni, Taj al-'Arus, Kuwait: Government Press, 1422H, Vol. 5, pp. 208–209

1. Verbal Hadith (Qauli)
2. Action-based Hadith (Fi'li)
3. Approval-based Hadith (Taqrīrī) <sup>5</sup>

In al-Qāmūs al-Wahīd, Waheed uz-Zamān Kairānwi writes:

Al-Hadīth: Explanation, speech, conversation, narration, story, or discourse. In Islamic terminology, it is every saying, action, or tacit approval attributed to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Taqrīr refers to an act or saying done in the Prophet's presence which he did not object to, thus implying his approval. <sup>6</sup>

As for the usage of the word Hadith in the Qur'an, Husain bin Muhammad al-Amghāni notes in Qāmūs al-Qur'ān:

Hadith is used in various senses in the Qur'an:

1. Good Word e.g., Surah Al-Baqarah: Qālū a tuhaddithūnahum bimā fatah Allāhu ‘alaykum...
2. Speech or Statement – Surah An-Nisā': Wa man asdaq min Allāhi Hadīthā
3. The Qur'an itself – Surah At-Tūr: Falya'tū bi Hadīthin mithlih...
4. Narrative or Story – Surah Az-Zumar: Allāhu nazzala ahsanal Hadīthi kitābā
5. A Lesson or Moral – Surah Al-Qasas: Wa ja'alnāhum Ahādīth... <sup>7</sup>

On the Research of Sunnah, Dr. Khalid Alawi writes:

In its literal sense, Sunnah refers to a path that has been made clear and smooth due to frequent use. It is also referred to as Tariq Ma'abbad (a paved road). It denotes a way or practice, whether good or bad. <sup>8</sup> (8)

Waheed uz-Zamān Kairānwi writes in al-Qāmūs al-Wahīd:

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Khalil-ur-Rahman Chishti, Qawaid Zaban-e-Qur'an, Islamabad: Al-Fawz Academy, 2002, Vol. 2, p. 7

<sup>6</sup> Waheed uz-Zaman Kiranwi Qasmi, Al-Qamoos al-Waheed, Karachi: Idara Islamiyat, 2001, p. 317

<sup>7</sup> Al-Damghānī, al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad. Qāmūs al-Qur'ān lil-Faqīh al-Mufasssir al-Jāmi' al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Dāmghānī. Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1983, pp. 119–130.

<sup>8</sup> Khalid Alawi. Ḥifāẓat-e-Ḥadīth. Lahore: Faisal Nashiran, 2013, p. 36.

As-Sunnah: A specific method, regulation, a way of life whether good or bad. It may also refer to nature, habit, appearance, or form. In Islamic law, it refers to a preferred act which is neither obligatory nor compulsory.

Sunnat Allah: God's decree or consistent way regarding His creation.

Sunnat an-Nabi (ﷺ): Any saying, act, or tacit approval attributed to the Prophet. Tacit approval implies that if something was done or said in the Prophet's presence and he remained silent, it was considered acceptable<sup>9</sup>. (9)

Al-Rāghib al-Asfahānī writes in Mufradāt al-Qur'ān:

"Sunan is the plural of Sunnah. Sunnat al-Wajh means the outline of the face, while Sunnat an-Nabi refers to the way the Prophet (peace be upon him) adopted. Sunnat Allah refers to Divine wisdom and the path of obedience to Him." As mentioned in the Qur'an:

سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا<sup>10</sup>

This is the established way of Allah that has passed before, and you will not find any change in the way of Allah."<sup>11</sup>

### ***The Difference between Hadith and Sunnah:***

Dr. Khalid Mahmood Numani discusses the distinction between Hadith and Sunnah:

Hadith and Sunnah are two well-known terms. Both words appear in the Holy Qur'an—Sunnah and Hadith. Likewise, both are found in the narration of the Prophet as well. According to a group of scholars, these two terms are synonymous. That is, whatever is Hadith is also Sunnah, and whatever is Sunnah is also Hadith. There is no difference between the two, according to this opinion, which is held by a significant number of scholars.

However, some scholars believe that Hadith is a broader term, while Sunnah is a specific part of it. Hadith includes everything attributed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), even weak (da'īf) narrations, fabricated (mawdū') reports, and even rejected or rare (munkar and shādh) traditions. Whereas Sunnah refers only to the

<sup>9</sup> Waḥīd al-Zamān Kīrānvī. Al-Qāmūs al-Waḥīd, p. 812

<sup>10</sup> Surah Al Fath-(48:23)

<sup>11</sup> Imām Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī. Mufradāt al-Qur'ān, trans. Shaykh al-Ḥadīth Muḥammad 'Abd and Fīrūzpūrī. Lahore: Shaykh Shams al-Ḥaqq, (n.d.), pp. 531–532.

way or method that is established on the basis of authentic (ṣaḥīḥ) ahadith. It is the method and system taught by the Prophet (peace be upon him) to his ummah, which explains the meanings and intentions of the Qur'an and serves as the practical implementation of the divine system introduced in the Qur'an. This specific, divinely guided method is known as Sunnah.<sup>12</sup>

In short, one can say that Hadith and Sunnah collectively represent the noble example (uswah ḥasanah) of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). This very path is the key to success. To understand the significance of Hadith and Sunnah in the Islamic way of life, it is necessary to first understand the esteemed rank and position of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ).

### ***The Status and Rank of the Prophet (ﷺ):***

Action is always linked to the person performing it. Until one chooses to follow a person, one cannot act according to that person's ways. That is why it is said that true success lies in fulfilling the commands of Allah in accordance with the ways of His Messenger (ﷺ). The foundation of Hadith and Sunnah is the noble personality of the Prophet (ﷺ). Let us now look at some glimpses of the status Allah has granted to the Prophet in the Qur'an. These will help in understanding the authority of Hadith.

At various places, Allah has honored the Prophet (ﷺ) with titles such as Sirāj Munīr (a radiant lamp), and Dā'iyān ilā Allāh (a caller towards Allah). The Prophet called people to Allah and taught His religion. If the Book of Allah alone were sufficient, then there would be no need for the Prophet's presence. In Sūrat al-Tawbah and Sūrat al-Ṣaff, Allah declares that He sent the Prophet (ﷺ) to make His religion prevail over all others—even if the polytheists dislike it.

Elsewhere in the Qur'an, the Prophet (peace be upon him) is introduced as a teacher (mu'allim), a commentator of the Qur'an (mufassir), a judge (qāḍī) to establish justice, a lawgiver (shārī'), and a ruler to implement the divine system. The objectives of his mission, as mentioned in various parts of the Qur'an, include the following:

<sup>12</sup> Maḥmūd Aḥmad Ghāzī. Muḥāḍarāt-e-Qur'ānī. Lahore: Al-Faisal Nashiran, 2010, pp. 23–24.

1. As a teacher (mu'allim)
2. As an interpreter of the Qur'an (mufasssir)
3. As a judge (qāḍī)
4. As a legislator (shāri')
5. As a ruler (ḥākīm)

In the following lines, we will explore these roles in detail using the words of the Qur'an itself.

### ***The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) as a Teacher:***

One of the fundamental purposes of the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) divine appointment was that Allah sent him as a teacher. This noble status was once prayed for by Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) at the time of constructing the Ka'bah. In Surah Al-Baqarah, Allah says:

وَإِذْ يَفْعُ إِبرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا.....وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ<sup>13</sup>

"O our Lord, and raise among them a Messenger from among themselves who will recite to them Your verses, teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them."

In Surah Al-Jumu'ah, Allah further says:

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ<sup>14</sup>

"He it is Who has sent among the unlettered people a Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom."

These verses clearly lay out the responsibilities Allah assigned to the Prophet: the recitation of the verses, teaching the Book, teaching wisdom, and purification of the soul. If we consider the objections raised by the deniers of Hadith who claim that the Qur'an alone is sufficient then, according to their argument, it would have been enough for the Prophet to simply recite the Qur'an. People could have just learned Arabic later and followed the Qur'an based on their own

<sup>13</sup> Surah Al-Baqarah (2:127-129)

<sup>14</sup> Surah Al-Jumu'ah (62:2)

understanding. However, Allah did not stop there. Alongside recitation, He also emphasized teaching the Book, teaching wisdom, and purification.

This indicates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was endowed with a special knowledge and wisdom beyond mere recitation—knowledge which he was instructed to teach. The "teaching of the Book" means explaining the hidden meanings of the Qur'an, and presenting its practical application before the people. For instance, the Qur'an mentions commandments like prayer (ṣalāh), almsgiving (zakāh), fasting (ṣawm), and pilgrimage (ḥajj), but does not elaborate on their detailed methods. The explanation and practical guidance are found in the Prophet's sayings and actions.

Similarly, ḥikmah (wisdom) is a divine gift bestowed upon the Prophet (peace be upon him), just as the Qur'an itself was. It is a high level of insight, intellect, and practical wisdom granted to the Prophet. Allah conferred this gift as a special honour upon His Prophets. As stated in the Qur'an:

وَإِذَا أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ لَمَاءَ آبَائِكُمْ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِمَا مَعَكُمْ لَقُومُنِي يَوْمَ تُنصَرُونَ<sup>15</sup>

"And when Allah took the covenant of the Prophets, (saying), 'Whatever I give you of the Book and wisdom, then there comes to you a Messenger confirming what you have, you must believe in him and support him.'"

Wisdom (ḥikmah) here refers to intellect, deep understanding, and foresight. Allah granted this special capability to His prophets so they could guide people wisely. It is a trait of the divine messengers that they call people to the truth with insight and nurtures their followers through this wisdom, which they share and teach as part of their prophetic mission.

### ***The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) as Interpreter of the Qur'an:***

Allah also bestowed upon the Prophet (peace be upon him) the honourable role of interpreter of the Qur'an. In this context, Mufti Taqi Usmani defines the Prophet's role as Mufassir al-Qur'an.<sup>16</sup> The word tafsīr comes from the root fassara, which means to explain or clarify. Allah commanded the Prophet to clearly convey what had been revealed. As the Qur'an states:

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Surah Aal-e-Imran (3:81)

<sup>16</sup> Mufti Muḥammad Taqī 'Uthmānī. Ḥujjiyyat al-Ḥadīth. Lahore: Idārah Islamiyyāt, 1991, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Surah An-Nahl(16:44)



"And We have revealed to you the Reminder, so that you may make clear to the people what has been sent down to them."

Thus, the purpose of the Prophet's mission was not only to deliver the message but to explain its meanings in detail. Through Hadith, the Prophet clarified the broad directives of the Qur'an. In this regard, Dr. Khalid Mahmood Ghazi writes:

"If there were no Sunnah, then the meanings of many Qur'anic verses could not be determined—neither through language nor any other means. There are hundreds of commands in the Qur'an that no one can properly understand or apply unless they are interpreted through the Sunnah."

Furthermore, certain terms in the Qur'an are classified as *mubhamāt* terms whose intended meaning is not immediately clear. These require elaboration, which was done by the Prophet (peace be upon him) through his sayings, actions, and teachings.<sup>18</sup>

### ***The Role of Sunnah in Explaining the Qur'an:***

Many verses of the Qur'an are explained through the Sunnah. Some verses are concise (*mujmal*), and their elaboration comes through the Sunnah. Some verses are general or unrestricted in nature, and the Sunnah places necessary limitations or clarifications upon them. Certain words in the Qur'an are used in a general context, but the Sunnah specifies them, narrowing their scope. There are also legal rulings that require practical explanation—such as how they are to be implemented—and the Sunnah provides this essential elaboration.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encouraged his companions to learn divine rulings directly from him. For instance, he said, "Pray as you see me praying." Without his practical example, it would be impossible for us to act upon these commands. Where else would the details of Hajj rituals be learned? How would one know where to enter the state of *iḥrām*? How should *ṭawāf* be performed? What are the rates of *zakāh*? How is it calculated on cash, produce, and fruits?

When it comes to fasting, Allah has given a general command in the Qur'an. However, the companions were confused about the meaning of the "white thread" and the "black thread" mentioned in the verse. Several hadith narrations shed light on this. Consider the following two:

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<sup>18</sup> Khalid Maḥmūd Ghāzī. *Muḥāḍarāt-e-Qur'ānī*, as cited above, p. 121.

حدثنا موسى بن إسماعيل، حدثنا أبو عوادة، عن حصين، عن الشعبي، عن عدي قال: أخذت عقلا أبيض وعقلا أسود، فجعلتهما تحت وسادتي، فجعلت أنظر في الليل، فلا يستبين لي، فغدوت على رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فذكرت له، فقال: إن وسادك إذا العريض، إنما هو سواد الليل وبياض النهار<sup>19</sup>.

Adiyy bin Hatim reported: “I took a white string and a black string and placed them under my pillow. I looked at them during the night but couldn’t distinguish between them. In the morning, I went to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and told him. He said (humorously), ‘Your pillow must be very wide if the white and black threads are beneath it! What is meant is the whiteness of dawn and the darkness of night.’”

عن عدي بن حاتم قال: قلت يا رسول الله ما الخيط الأبيض من الخيط الأسود؟ أهما الخيطان؟ قال: إنك لعريض القفا، إن أبصرت الخيطين، ثم قال: لا، بل هو سواد الليل وبياض النهار<sup>20</sup>.

Adiyy bin Hatim said: “I asked, ‘O Messenger of Allah, what is the white thread from the black thread? Are they two literal threads?’ He replied, ‘Your neck must be wide if you could see both threads!’ Then he clarified, ‘No, it refers to the darkness of night and the whiteness of day.’”

These narrations clearly show that understanding the Qur’an without the guidance of the Sunnah is not possible. The practical interpretation of the Qur’an is embodied in the Hadith. Allah revealed His commands, and the Prophet (ﷺ) would explain and exemplify them through his words and actions. He was the Interpreter of the Qur’an (Tarjumān al-Qur’ān), and his companions molded their lives accordingly. To seek to follow Islam without accepting the Hadith as authoritative is nothing but a path to misguidance.

### ***The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) as a Judge (Qāḍī):***

Justice and fairness are the foundations of any healthy society. Allah has always placed great emphasis on them. One of the missions of the prophets was not only to call people to Allah but also to establish justice among them. In Surah Al-Hadīd, Allah declares:

<sup>19</sup> Al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Tafsīr, Ḥadīth no. 1624.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Ḥadīth no. 1625.

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ<sup>21</sup>

“We certainly sent Our messengers with clear signs, and sent down with them the Book and the balance so that people may uphold justice.”

Allah not only provided prophets with clear evidence (bayyināt) but also the balance (mīzān) to ensure that justice was upheld in society. The system of justice that Islam presents is unmatched by any other religion or ideology. Allah gave special instructions to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to establish this justice. For those who turn away from his rulings, a severe punishment has been warned, and believers are commanded to accept his decisions without objection.

Allah describes the Prophet’s judicial authority in the Qur’an:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَاكَ اللَّهُ<sup>22</sup>

“Indeed, We have revealed the Book to you in truth so that you may judge between people by what Allah has shown you.”

وَقُلْ آمَنْتُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمْ<sup>23</sup>

“And say, ‘I believe in whatever Book Allah has revealed, and I have been commanded to do justice among you.

These verses affirm that the Prophet (ﷺ) was appointed as a judge by divine command, and justice was not just part of his personal virtue but an essential duty of his prophetic mission.

“The only statement of the believers when they are called to Allah and His Messenger so that he may judge between them is that they say: We hear and we obey.”

إِنَّمَا كَانَ قَوْلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا دُعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَنْ يَقُولُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Surah Al-Hadid (57:25)

<sup>22</sup> Qur'an, Surah An-Nisa (4: 105)

<sup>23</sup> Qur'an, Surah al-Shūrā (42:15)

<sup>24</sup> Qur'an, Surah al-Nūr (24:51)

This verse clearly indicates that one of the fundamental purposes of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) mission was to establish a just system. In Sūrat al-Ḥadīd, Allah Almighty mentions that He sent the Prophets to establish justice on earth. Similarly, in Sūrat al-Nisā', the Prophet (peace be upon him) is commanded to judge among the people according to the truth revealed by Allah. Not only is the Prophet (peace be upon him) instructed to rule with justice, but the believers are praised for their character —whenever they are summoned by Allah and His Messenger for judgment, they appear willingly and submit wholeheartedly to his decisions.

### ***The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a Legislator***

Allah, the Exalted, granted the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) the authority to legislate. Therefore, every command he gave or prohibition he declared was a part of divine law. In this regard, Dr. Khalid Alawi writes:

“A fundamental aspect of the Prophet's (ﷺ) personality and mission was legislation. Allah Almighty granted him legislative power (taqnīnī iḥtiyār). Divine command and prohibition are not limited to what has been stated explicitly in the Qur'an; rather, they also include what the Prophet (ﷺ) himself declared as lawful (ḥalāl) or unlawful (ḥarām). Every ruling he gave and every restriction he imposed falls under the authority delegated to him by Allah, and thus, it is an integral part of the divine law.”<sup>25</sup>

The Qur'an states:

يَأْمُرُهُم بِالْعُرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ<sup>26</sup>

"He enjoins upon them what is right, forbids them from what is wrong, permits for them the good things, and forbids for them the impure; and he relieves them of their burdens and the shackles that were upon them."

Just as the Qur'an gives partial or general commands concerning acts of worship and other religious duties, their full explanation is provided in the Hadith. The same applies to the detailed guidance on lawful and unlawful matters, commands, and prohibitions — the Qur'an sets the principles, and the Prophet's Sunnah elaborates them.

<sup>25</sup> Khalid Alawi. Ḥifāẓat-e-Ḥadīth, p. 76

<sup>26</sup> . Qur'an, Surah al-A'raf (7:157)

Elsewhere in the Qur'an, it is said:

وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ<sup>27</sup>

“Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it; and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it. And fear Allah; surely, Allah is severe in punishment.”

The Qur'an is undoubtedly a divine revelation, but its understanding and implementation are intertwined with the teachings and life of the Prophet (ﷺ). A person who follows both the Qur'anic injunctions and the Prophetic Sunnah will find success in this world and the Hereafter. Allah Himself affirms that the Prophet (ﷺ) does not speak of his own desire but only conveys what is revealed to him — highlighting the divine nature of the Hadith alongside the Qur'an.

The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) as a Sovereign

After migrating to Madinah, the Prophet (ﷺ) laid the foundations of an Islamic society and established a state. He was its supreme leader and governed the people according to divine guidance. His leadership was not merely spiritual but administrative, political, and judicial — encompassing all dimensions of a just and divinely guided society.

### ***The Prophet (ﷺ) as a Ruler***

Upon his arrival in Madinah al-Munawwarah, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) laid the foundation of an Islamic society and established a government, of which he himself was the sovereign. This governance was based entirely upon the commands of Allah, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) implemented a just and divinely inspired system for the people. In essence, Allah granted the Prophet sovereign authority, and obedience to his commands was made obligatory for the believers.

This is clearly affirmed in the Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَلَا تُبْطِلُوا أَعْمَالَكُمْ<sup>28</sup>

"O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and do not render your deeds void

<sup>27</sup> Qur'an, Surah al-Hashr (59:7)

<sup>28</sup> Qur'an, Surah Muhammad (47:33)

In another place, the Qur'an declares:

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا لِمُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا مُبِينًا<sup>29</sup>

"It is not for a believing man or woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter, to have any option about their decision. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has indeed gone far astray."

In the first verse, obedience to the Prophet (ﷺ) is linked directly with obedience to Allah, and those who defy him are warned that their deeds may become void. In the second verse, believers are reminded that once a decision is made by Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ), they no longer hold the right to contradict or oppose it. To do so is to fall into manifest error and misguidance.

This obedience was not merely ceremonial—it was essential to faith. The Companions, fully aware of this, meticulously preserved every aspect of the Prophet's life. They understood that salvation lay in following his commands and that one who disobeyed him could not truly claim to belong to Islam.

Allah further emphasizes this in the following verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ<sup>30</sup>

"O you who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day."

Here again, obedience to the Prophet (ﷺ) is commanded in conjunction with obedience to Allah. In case of disputes, believers are directed to refer matters back to Allah and His Messenger, affirming the Prophet's final authority in governance and guidance.

The Prophet (ﷺ) fulfilled this role of leadership purely for the sake of Allah. He established a model society in which divine commands were not merely

<sup>29</sup> Surah al-Aḥzāb, (33:36)

<sup>30</sup> Qur'an, Surah al-Nisā' (4:59)

preached but fully implemented. Living among the people, he demonstrated how the laws of Allah could be practically applied to every aspect of life.

By reflecting upon these dimensions of the Prophet's mission, it becomes clear that the Qur'an cannot be fully understood without the Sunnah. To establish a complete Islamic system and ideal society, it is essential not only to comprehend the Prophetic Hadith but also to regard it as binding evidence (ḥujjah) and to mold one's life according to it.

### **How Can Life Be Lived Without the Sunnah?**

An Islamic way of life is inconceivable without adherence to the Sunnah. Those who deny the Hadith and claim the Qur'an as the sole source of religious authority ignore the very essence of divine guidance. Regarding such Hadith deniers, Professor Ghulam Ahmad Hariri writes in the preface to *Uloom al-Hadith*:

In this era, where immorality and indecency are widespread, many of these evils cannot be explicitly condemned by the Qur'an alone without reference to the Hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). If Hadith is dismissed, Zakat can be rebranded as a tax, and mechanical slaughter may be deemed permissible. These 'modernists' who live indulgent and extravagant lifestyles find their practices in clear contradiction with Prophetic guidance. Therefore, they attempt to undermine Hadith to justify their actions. However, no matter how hard they try, they cannot erase the value of Hadith from the hearts of true believers."<sup>31</sup>

This attack on Hadith is not new. During the Caliphate of Sayyiduna Ali (may Allah be pleased with him), when the formal collection of Hadith was permitted, enemies of the Companions and Hadith fabricated numerous false traditions to mislead the masses. To combat this, Sayyiduna Ali took a firm stand and ordered severe measures against the fabricators. The originator of the fabricated Hadith, Abdullah ibn Saba, along with his supporters, was executed. During this time, a new movement emerged as a counter-reaction to fabricated Hadith: some began denying Hadith altogether, claiming it was best to abandon Hadith and rely solely on the Qur'an. In response to this dangerous ideology, Sayyiduna Imran ibn Husain (may Allah be pleased with him) is reported to have said:

"How can a religious life be lived without Hadith? If one tries to rely solely on the Qur'an for matters like the number of prayers, their timings, the number of

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<sup>31</sup> . Ghulam Ahmad Hariri. Mutarjam 'Ulum al-Hadith. Faisalabad: Malik Sons, 2009, p. 16.

rak'ahs, rukus, and sujood – one will find no direct answer. This does not only apply to prayer, but to all pillars of Islam like fasting, zakat, and more."

He warned those who resolved not to listen to or accept Hadith anymore, saying with a thunderous voice: "Take your religion from us, the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). By Allah! If you do not, you will surely go astray."<sup>32</sup>

Those who seek to follow the Qur'an alone while dismissing the Sunnah are not, in fact, seeking purity or enlightenment; rather, they are attempting to escape the commitment required by Islamic practice. Their desire is to reshape Islam to suit personal whims and make sinful behaviors permissible under the guise of "modern understanding."

Professor Hariri writes again in his introduction:

"In order to understand and adopt Islam as a complete way of life, it is absolutely necessary to turn to both the Qur'an and Sunnah. The Qur'an provides a broad legal framework, and the Hadith details, clarifies, and demonstrates these laws in practice. The Prophet (peace be upon him) is the explainer and interpreter of the Qur'an. Therefore, any interpretation of the Qur'an that is disconnected from the Prophetic Sunnah lacks authenticity and reliability."

If the Hadith is separated from the Qur'an, then the Qur'an alone cannot serve as a complete system of life. Without the explanatory guidance of the Prophet (peace be upon him), it becomes subject to personal interpretation, opening the door to endless misguidance. Sadly, some individuals persist in rejecting Hadith to render the Qur'an a mere reflection of their desires. Their aim is to bypass obligatory Islamic rulings that are only found in Hadith and to live freely in a world where nothing remains forbidden.<sup>33</sup>

### ***The Noble Prophet (ﷺ) as a Model worthy of Emulation***

The Qur'an itself has established the exalted status and authority of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). From the arguments and evidence presented by scholars, it is clear that the Prophet (ﷺ) was divinely appointed as a ruler,

<sup>32</sup> Sayyid Manāẓir Aḥsan Gīlānī. Tadwīn-e-Ḥadīth. Lahore: Maktabah al-'Ilm, (n.d.), p. 584. Islamic Sciences, Vol. 3 (2020).

<sup>33</sup> - Ghulām Aḥmad Ḥarīrī, 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth, p. 16.



endowed with legislative and interpretative authority, and given the right to establish laws. If this is the case, then there remains no valid excuse for failing to obey him. His commands are not subject to individual preference or interpretation; rather, they are divine obligations that must be fulfilled. In essence, following him is equivalent to obeying Allah.

Allah Almighty declares in the Qur'an:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ<sup>34</sup>

“Say: If you love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you...”

This verse makes it clear that true love for Allah is not possible without obeying His Messenger (peace be upon him). Anyone who claims love for Allah must necessarily emulate the Prophet (ﷺ). His life is the living example — the Uswah Hasanah (the best model) — for all those who seek Allah's pleasure and hope for success in the Hereafter.

Allah states:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah, you have an excellent example for the one who hopes in Allah and the Last Day.

If one truly desires nearness to Allah, yearns for His love, and seeks triumph in the Hereafter, then there is no alternate path other than adopting the noble pattern of life set by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This is not a matter of choice but of obligation — prescribed by Allah Himself.

Thus, for every believer, the Prophet's example serves not only as a source of inspiration but also as a divine criterion for success. His Sunnah is not simply a recommendation, but a road map for anyone who longs for the mercy of Allah and the victory of the eternal abode.

<sup>34</sup> Qur'an, Surah Āl 'Imrān (3:31)

<sup>35</sup> Qur'an, Surah al-Aḥzāb (33:21)