

Preservation of Sunnah (part 3 of 4)

Article taken and slightly adapted from: newmuslims.com

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

Second stage in collection of Hadeeth

With the death of the Prophet, (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*), the work of the preservation of Sunnah and of the collection of Hadeeth entered the second stage.

The Companions imparted knowledge because they felt that people needed it, and were very well aware of the sin of hiding knowledge. Hence, they dedicated much of their time to teaching regularly. To the companions of the Prophet, the religion which he had brought was a priceless jewel; it was a thing which they valued above everything else in the world. For its sake they had given up their relations, their business and their very homes; to defend it they had laid down their very lives; to carry this divine blessing, this greatest gift of God, to other people was the very object of their lives. Hence a dissemination of its knowledge was their first and foremost concern. In addition to this, the Prophet had laid the duty, on those who saw him and listened to his words, of carrying what they saw and heard to those who came after him. Indeed they were faithful to the great charge which was laid on them.

After the death of the Prophet, his Companions took the mission of carrying the message of Islaam to the farthest corners of the world. Whichever direction they went, and to whichever country they went, they carried the Qur'aan and the Sunnah. As a result, within a quarter of a century after the noble Prophet's death, the Companions carried the light of Islaam to Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and Libya. Consequently, those Companions carried the knowledge of the Sunnah with them. Hence, not all the knowledge of Sunnah remained in Madinah. Some Companions who went to Iraq (like Abdullah ibn Mas'ood) or Egypt (like 'Amr Ibn al-Aas) took the knowledge of the Sunnah with them. The Companions entrusted the knowledge of Sunnah to their students before their death.

Everyone of them, even if he had the knowledge of one incident relating to the Prophet's life, deemed it his duty to deliver it to others. Individuals such as Aboo Hurairah, Aisha, 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr, Anas ibn Maalik and many others who had made the preservation of Sunnah the purpose of their lives, had become focal agents to whom people resorted from different quarters of the Islaamic world as a source for their knowledge of the Prophet and his religion.

Preservation of Sunnah (part 3 of 4)

Aboo Hurairah alone had eight hundred disciples. Aisha's house as well was resorted to by hundreds of ardent pupils. The reputation of 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas was equally great, and, despite his young age, he had a foremost place among the counsellors of 'Umar on account of his knowledge of the Qur'aan and the Sunnah. Thus a large number of the companions of the Prophet became the mediums of the dissemination for religious learning.

The zeal of the new generation for the possession of religious knowledge was such that students would travel from one place to another to complete their knowledge of the Sunnah and verify the Hadeeth of the Prophet, (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*). Some of them would travel long distances to obtain first-hand information about a single Hadeeth. For instance, Jabir ibn 'Abdullah travelled from Madinah to Syria for the sake of one Hadeeth. It was a month's journey, as Jabir himself states.¹ Another Companion, Aboo Ayoob, travelled all the way to Egypt to ask Uqba bin Amr about a certain Hadeeth. He told Uqba that only he and Uqba were left who had heard that particular Hadeeth from the Prophet, (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*). After hearing the Hadeeth, his business was completed in Egypt and he returned to Madinah. Saeed ibn Musayyab is reported to have said that he used to travel for days and nights in search of a single Hadeeth. Another companion of the Prophet is said to have undertaken a journey to Egypt for the sake of one Hadeeth. The zeal of the next generation was equally great. Abul 'Aliyah is reported to have said: "We heard of a Hadeeth about the Prophet, but we were not satisfied until we went to the companion concerned in person and heard it from him directly."

Writing of Hadeeth: Sahifah of Hammam ibn Munabbih

It is one of the earliest collections of Hadeeth. The written collection of Hadeeth of the Companion Aboo Hurairah was dictated to his student Hammam. Aboo Hurairah himself used to divide the night into 3 parts: one third for sleep, one third for prayer, and one third for recollection of the Hadeeth of the Prophet. Since Aboo Hurairah died some 48 years after the Prophet (58 A.H.) this Sahifah must have been dictated to Hammam sometime before that. Hammam died in 101 A.H. Hammam read these Hadeeth to his student Ma'mar (d. 113 A.H.). Ma'mar read it to Abdur-Razzaq ibn Hammam, who transmitted it to two of his students: Imaam Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Yoosuf al-Sulamee.

Imaam Ahmad incorporated this entire work, except two Hadeeth in his Musnad in almost exactly the same order as they were recorded in Sahifah, whereas Yoosuf al-Sulamee continued to pass on the entire work without amalgamating it into a larger one. It was continually passed on until the 9th century, which is the date of the Berlin manuscript, one of the 4 manuscripts of this work that still exist today.

¹ Saheeh al-Bukhaaree

Preservation of Sunnah (part 3 of 4)

Imaam Ahmad's Musnad is arranged according to the Companion who narrated the Hadeeth, it is very easy to find all the Hadeeth from Hammam on the authority of Aboo Hurairah. Other books, where the Hadeeth are arranged according to fiqh topics, also incorporate a great deal of the Sahifa. Out of the 137 Hadeeth in the Sahifa of Hammam:

- 29 are recorded by both Bukhaaree and Muslim,
- 22 others are recorded by Bukhaaree only,
- 48 others are recorded by Muslim only.

So 99 out of 137 Hadeeth can be found in Bukhaaree and Muslim alone. When one studies the different collections of Hadeeth that have been published one sees that the meanings - actually the wordings - of the Hadeeth have not been changed from the time of Aboo Hurairah to the time of Al-Bukhaaree (194-256 A.H.). Hamidullah comments:

“Supposing Al-Bukhaaree cites a Hadeeth on the authority of the above chain of sources (Ahmad - Abdur-Razzak - Mamar - Hammam - Aboo Hurairah). So long as these older sources were not available, a sceptic was certainly entitled to harbour doubts and say that perhaps Al-Bukhaaree had not told the truth, but simply forged either the chain or the contents of both. But now that all the earlier works are at our disposal, there is no possibility of imagining that Al-Bukhaaree has mentioned anything by way of forging it, or narrating anything heard from forgers... with the discovery in recent times of these earlier works, it is possible for us to verify the truthfulness of each. One is forced to recognise them all as solidly genuine since these traditions have been transmitted not only by Aboo Hurairah, but also, independently of him, by other companions of the Prophet, and in each case the chain or isnaad has been different. Even after the lapse of more than 13 centuries, there has not crept in a single alteration in the text of the collection. If not for the risk of boring the reader, it would have been easy to show in proper detail, how, in addition to Aboo Hurairah, each of the traditions contained in the Sahifah of Hammam, has been related by various other Companions. These traditions could never have been forged in the 3rd or 4th century.”²

² Sahifah Hammam ibn Munabbih, by Muhammad Hamidullah, pp. 79-81.