



باسمہ تعالیٰ

Following the Sunnah - The Dictate of True Love

Two Way Street:

Imagine a marriage situation where the husband expresses his love for his wife, showers her with his affection, does 'the last thing' for her and at the end of the day, she 'turns a cold shoulder' towards him whilst professing that she loves him. What will we term such a wife?

Likewise, Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) literally did 'the last thing' for us. Such was the extent of his concern for us that Allah Ta'ala says,

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٢٨﴾

"Surely, there has come to you, from your midst, a Messenger who feels it very hard on him if you face a hardship, who is very anxious for your welfare, and for the believers he is very kind, very merciful." (Surah Taubah v. 128)

الَّذِي أَوْلَى بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ ﴿٦﴾

"The Messenger is closer to the believers than their own selves. (Surah Ahzaab v. 6)

This should naturally propel us to have the highest level of love for him and to follow him in every aspect of his perfect life.

Gauge of Love:

While every believer has some degree of love for Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) within his heart, the true lover is in actual fact one who follows Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) and emulates him in every facet of his life. The reason for this is that true love emanates from the heart and is thereafter reflected in ones actions.

Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) himself explained this gauge of true love, to his special attendant, Sayyiduna Anas bin Maalik (radhiyallahu 'anhu) in the following hadeeth:

« مَنْ أَحَبَّ سُنَّتِي فَقَدْ أَحَبَّنِي ، وَمَنْ أَحَبَّنِي كَانَ مَعِيَ فِي الْجَنَّةِ »

"The one who loves my sunnah has loved me, and the one who loves me will be with me in Jannah." (Sunan Tirmizi - Mishkaat pg. 30 - #173)

This profound hadeeth explains three very pertinent points:

1. One should not only be following the sunnah, rather he should be loving the sunnah.
2. Loving the sunnah is the gauge of true love for Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam).
3. Love for Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) is a means of enjoying the esteemed company of Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) in Jannah.

Love of Allah Ta'ala:

In fact, in the Quraan Majeed, Allah Ta'ala has even made following the sunnah the criterion of true love for Him. Allah Ta'ala says,

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣١﴾

"Say (to the believers) O Muhammad (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam)! If you love Allah Ta'ala, then follow me (Rasulallah [sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam]), Allah Ta'ala will love you and He will forgive your sins. Allah Ta'ala is Most-Forgiving, Very- Merciful." (Surah Aal 'Imraan v. 31)

Together with following the sunnah being the sign of the love of Allah Ta'ala, two other great benefits are mentioned in this aayah:

1. Allah Ta'ala will begin to love us.
2. Allah Ta'ala will forgive our sins.

Role Model:

When one is attracted towards some person, this attraction automatically propels one towards emulating that person. This is witnessed daily in people who are attracted to so-called celebrities; film actors, sport stars, etc. They make them their role models, emulating and following them to the last detail – including the ridiculous

hairstyles and outrageous clothing. They go to this extent of emulation, despite the fact that the lives of many of them are absolutely filthy and bereft of any type of good, let alone imaan.

On the other hand, we have been blessed with the greatest of all creation, the one whose life was totally pure, perfect and impeccable from every angle, i.e. Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam). Hence, a true lover will emulate him in his manner of eating, drinking, sleeping, in his attire and appearance and in every other aspect. In other words, his inner and outer condition will reflect the ways and teachings of Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam). This is the dictates of true love for Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam).

All-Inclusive Product:

Imagine a product comes onto the market. Terms such as 'one size fits all', 'multipurpose', 'universal', 'comprehensive', 'versatile', 'all-rounded', etc. are used to market this product.

The first question that would likely be asked by everyone: 'Can such an all-inclusive product exist?'

And assuming that there was such a product, what would the price be?

The reality is that the blessed sunnah of Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) is such a product that holds true to all the above. And it has been on the market for over a thousand years.

The only apparent issue which may be the reason for this product not 'taking off' as it ought to, is the price, since the price is only 'a little change'. Not 'change' in monetary terms, but 'a little change' to one's lifestyle.

Perfect Blueprint:

No matter who we are, what background we may have and what field of work we are involved in, the blessed life of Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) serves as the perfect blueprint on how we should lead our lives. Allah Ta'ala mentions in the Quraan Majeed,

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا ۖ

"There is indeed a good model for you in the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) – for the one who has hope in Allah Ta'ala and the Last Day, and remembers Allah Ta'ala abundantly." (Surah Ahzaab v. 21)

Taught Everything:

From the time our eyes open in the morning, until we close them at night, every aspect of our life has been chalked out and practically shown to us by Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam). Whether it be how we should walk, talk, conduct ourselves inside and outside the home, deal in our businesses, and even how we should relieve ourselves, all of these and even more have been shown to us by Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam).

On one occasion, a disbeliever tried to mock Sayyiduna Salmaan Farsi (radhiyallahu 'anhu) by saying, "Your Messenger has taught you everything, including how to relieve yourself?" Sayyiduna Salmaan (radhiyallahu 'anhu) did not feel shy or inferior that something of this nature was even taught, rather with a sense of honour he exclaimed: "Yes", and then he (radhiyallahu 'anhu) continued to expound to what extent Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) had taught them regarding the manner of relieving themselves.¹

This response can only come from someone who is confident in the teachings and ways of Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) without considering it inferior to any other way. Otherwise, when confronted in this manner, he will become apologetic for the teachings and ways of Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam).

Beauty and Superiority:

Together with the sunnah being comprehensive, Allah Ta'ala has placed abundant beauty and wisdom in the sunnah. There is no aspect of the sunnah that is uncouth, rather it is the THE best and superior way of doing anything.

Shaikh Muhammad Rasheed Ridhaa (a famous Egyptian scholar) once visited Deoband and had breakfast with Moulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri (rahimahullah) where some sweetmeats were served. Shaikh Muhammad Rasheed Ridhaa was eating with a spoon whilst Moulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri (rahimahullah) was eating with his fingers. He offered a spoon to Moulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri (rahimahullah) who refused saying that the natural spoon was better than this spoon for several reasons.

¹ عن عبد الرحمن بن يزيد قال : قيل لسلمان : قد علمكم نبيكم ﷺ كل شيء ، حتى الخراءة ، فقال سلمان : أجل « نحن أن نستقبل القبلة بغائط أو ببول ، وأن نستنجي باليمين ، أو أن يستنجي أحدنا بأقل من ثلاثة أحجار ، أو أن نستنجي برجيع أو بعظم » . (« سنن الترمذي » ١٠ / ١ رقم : ١٦)

Firstly, it has the ability to contract and expand which the spoon cannot do. Secondly, it has sensory perception. It can perceive how hot the food is and whether the mouth can tolerate it or not. Thirdly, it is compatible with the mouth. It cannot hurt the mouth as compared to the spoon. Fourthly, man is comfortable with it. One attains pleasure by licking it, as compared to the spoon. One is not comfortable with it neither is there any enjoyment in licking it. (*Malfoozaat of Mufti Mahmood Hasan Gangohi [rahimahullah] vol. 2, pg. 451*)

At times, we may replace the sunnah way with some other way, not realising that it is purely man-made and is thus prone to deficiencies and failure. On the contrary, the sunnah way is Divinely endorsed, hence, it will never be deficient, nor fail. All that is needed is to recognise its beauty and superiority and to practice on it confidently.

Path to Success:

The mubaarak way of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) is the real path to success. Imaam Maalik (rahimahullah) described the sunnah of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) in the following way,

السُّنَّةُ سَفِينَةُ نُوحٍ ، مَنْ رَكِبَهَا نَجَّى ، وَمَنْ تَخَلَّفَ عَنْهَا غَرِقَ

“The sunnah is like the ark of Noah (‘alaihi salaam), the one who boards it will be safe and the one who desists from it will drown.” (Taareekh Ibni ‘Asaakir vol. 14, pg. 9)

Moulana Shah Hakeem Muhammad Akhtar (rahimahullah) used to say,

نقش قدم نبی کے ہیں جنت کے راستے

اللہ سے ملاتے ہیں سنت کے راستے

*The footsteps of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) is the path leading to Jannah,
A person will reach Allah Ta‘ala by following the path of the sunnah.*

Embodiments of Love:

As explained earlier, following the way of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) in every aspect of our lives is the dictates of true love. In order to appreciate correctly understand this and truly appreciate it, we need to look at those who were drowning in the love of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) – the Sahaabah (radhiyallahu ‘anhum) and the pious predecessors. Below are some amazing incidents regarding the extent to which some true lovers went in following Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam), even in things that we may consider as ‘small’.

Sayyiduna ‘Uthmaan (radhiyallahu ‘anhu):

In the sixth year after hijrah, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) and the Sahaabah (radhiyallahu ‘anhum) went to perform ‘Umrah in Makkah Mukarramah. When they neared Makkah Mukarramah, the Quraish prevented them from entering and performing ‘Umrah. Hence, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) deputed Sayyiduna ‘Uthmaan (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) to the Quraish as the ‘ambassador’ of the Muslims.

When Sayyiduna ‘Uthmaan (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) entered Makkah Mukarramah, he was hosted by his cousin, Abaan bin Sa‘eed bin ‘Aas. On seeing him, his cousin noticed that the pants of Sayyiduna ‘Uthmaan (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) was halfway between his knee and ankle. He thus asked, “O my cousin! What is the matter? Why are you appearing in an undignified manner? Lower your bottom garment (below the ankles).”

The Quraish and disbelieving Arabs would keep their lower garment below the ankles and regarded this to be the dignified and respectable manner of dressing. The situation was a delicate one, as the manner in which Sayyiduna ‘Uthmaan (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) presented himself could influence the decision of the Quraish to allow Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) and the Muslims to perform ‘Umrah.

In this situation, many people will say ‘When in Rome, do as the Romans do’, and justify abandoning their Islamic identity and the sunnah of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) by saying that it is a ‘minor’ sacrifice that is necessary to achieve ‘the greater objective’.

However, acting in accordance to true love, Sayyiduna ‘Uthmaan (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) neither lowered his garment, nor was he apologetic. Instead, he simply replied, “This is how Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam)

wears his lower garment.”² Thus impressing upon us that ‘Wherever you may be, do as Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) did.’

Sayyiduna Ma’qil bin Yasaar (radhiyallahu ‘anhu):

Sayyiduna Ma’qil bin Yasaar (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) was once eating when a morsel of food fell onto the floor. Without thinking twice, he picked up the morsel, cleaned it and ate it. What happened next is what we dread will happen to us. Noticing his behaviour, the leaders of the disbelievers who were present began to glare at him in disgust. Seeing this, someone remarked, “May Allah Ta’ala keep you, our leader, in a good condition. These leaders are staring at you because you ate a morsel from the floor whereas there was sufficient food before you.” Sayyiduna Ma’qil bin Yasaar (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) replied, “I will not abandon the teaching that I heard from Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) on account of these non-Muslims.”³

Respectable and Dignified:

The non-Muslim leaders regarded it as demeaning to eat something that fell on the floor, whereas Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) taught the Ummah that even this morsel should be appreciated by cleaning it and eating it. Hence, Sayyiduna Ma’qil (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) upheld the sunnah of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) and was not in the least concerned of what the disbelievers thought of him.

Today, we have become so concerned over our image and appearing respectable and dignified in the eyes of the disbelievers that we have abandoned the sunnah to appease them and make them feel comfortable. This is as if to say (*Allah Ta’ala protect us*) that the noble ways of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) are undignified and the ways and mannerisms of the disbelievers are the benchmark of what is acceptable and dignified.

Imaam Abu Dawood (rahimahullah):

Once, Imaam Abu Dawood (rahimahullah), who’s ‘Sunan’ is one of the six classical books of hadeeth, was on board a ship. He heard a person on the shore sneezing and saying “Alhamdulillah” (all praise is due to Allah Ta’ala). So he hired a rowing boat for one dirham (silver coin) and went to the shore to reply to this person by saying “Yarhamukallah” (may Allah Ta’ala have mercy on you), as is the sunnah of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam). When he was asked about this action of his, he replied: “It is possible that this person who sneezed is a person whose supplication is accepted by Allah Ta’ala.” When the people on board the ship fell asleep, they heard someone calling out: “O people of the ship! Surely Abu Dawood purchased paradise from Allah Ta’ala for one dirham.”⁴

‘Small’ Sunnah?

Despite the great services which he rendered to Islam, a ‘small’ sunnah like this became the means of his entry into Jannah. In the past, the mere fact that something was sunnah was enough to motivate a person to practice upon it. There was no such thing as a ‘small sunnah’. This is the reality, since every sunnah of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) is worth more than the seven heavens and the seven earths.

Mufti Mahmood Hasan Gangohi (rahimahullah):

Mufti Mahmood Hasan Gangohi (rahimahullah) was one of our recent elders, who was a teacher and spiritual mentor of many senior ‘Ulama of South Africa.

² عن إياس بن سلمة عن أبيه قال : ... فاشتد البلاء على من كان في يد المشركين من المسلمين ، قال : فدعا رسول الله ﷺ عمر فقال : « يا عمر ، هل أنت مبلغ عني إخوانك من أسارى المسلمين » ؟ فقال : بلى يا نبي الله ، والله ما لي بمكة من عشيرة ، غيري أكثر عشيرة مني ، فدعا عثمان فأرسله إليهم ، فخرج عثمان على راحلته حتى جاء عسكر المشركين ، فعتبوا به وأساءوا له القول ، ثم أجاره أبا بن سعيد بن العاص ، ابن عمه ، وحمله على السرج وردفه ، فلما قدم قال : يا ابن عم ، ما لي أراك متخشعا ؟ أسبل ، قال : وكان إزاره إلى نصف ساقيه ، فقال له عثمان : هكذا إزاره صاحبا ، فلم يدع أحدا بمكة من أسارى المسلمين إلا أبلغهم ما قال رسول الله ﷺ ... فقال الناس : هنيئا لأبي عبد الله ، يطوف بالبيت ونحن هاهنا ، فقال رسول الله ﷺ : « لو مكث كذا وكذا سنة ، ما طاف حتى أطوف » . (المصنف لابن أبي شيبة « رقم : ٣٦٨٥٢)

³ عن معقل بن يسار رضي الله عنه قال : بينما يتغذى إذا سقطت منه لقمة ، فتناولها ، فأماط ما كان فيها من أذى ، فأكلها ، فتغامز به الدهاقين ، فقيل : أصلح الله الأمير . إن هؤلاء الدهاقين يتغامزون من أخذك اللقمة وبين يديك هذا الطعام ، قال : إني لم أكن لأدع ما سمعت من رسول الله ﷺ لهذه الأعاجم ، إنا كنا نأمر أحدا إذا سقطت لقمته ، أن يأخذها ، فيميط ما كان فيها من أذى ، ويأكلها ، ولا يدعها للشيطان . (سنن ابن ماجه « ص ٢٣٦ رقم : ٣٢٧٨)

⁴ أخرجه ابن عبد البر بسند جيد عن أبي داود صاحب السنن ، أنه كان في سفينة فسمع عاطسا على الشط حمد ، فاكترى قارئا بدرهم حتى جاء إلى العاطس ، فشتمه ثم رجع ، فسئل عن ذلك ، فقال : لعله يكون محاب الدعوة ، فلما رقدوا سمعوا قارئاً يقول : يا أهل السفينة ! إن أبا داود اشترى الجنة من الله بدرهم . (« إرشاد الساري » ٢٢٦/١٣)

He would become very upset if he saw any of his associates contradicting a sunnah. Once, on the dastarkhaan, an ‘aalim, who was a student of Mufti Saheb (rahimahullah) needed to drink water. He took the glass in his left hand and placing his right hand under the glass started drinking the water. Mufti Saheb (rahimahullah) was very upset with him and addressed him firmly, saying, “Don’t you have a right hand?” He replied, “Hazrat, my right hand was messed with food, and I did not wish to dirty the glass.” Mufti Saheb (rahimahullah) angrily said to him, “Is this glass more valuable than the sunnah?” Thereafter he demonstrated the method of holding the glass by saying, “Lick your fingers after eating and hold the bottom of the glass by making a circle with your shahaadah finger and the thumb.” (*Hazrat Mufti Mahmood Hasan Gangohi (rahimahullah) – His Life and Works, pg. 119*)

Internal Sunnah:

The examples mentioned above are of those sunnats that pertain to the apparent actions of a person. The sunnats of eating, drinking, sleeping, purification, appearance, etc., all fall under this category. Every effort should be made to adhere to these sunnats, as each one of them is worth more than the entire universe.

However, there are certain teachings of Rasulullah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) pertaining to our inner selves which, although they embody the very spirit of the sunnah, are rarely even considered as something to learn or to inculcate in oneself. Many people don’t even regard them as having any connection to the sunnah. Yet we find Rasulullah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) laying great stress on these internal aspects which contain the spirit of the sunnah. Therefore, in the hadeeth of Sayyiduna Anas (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) mentioned earlier, wherein Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) explained the great virtue of loving the sunnah, he first mentioned to Sayyiduna Anas (radhiyallahu ‘anhu),

« يَا بُنَيَّ ! إِنْ قَدَرْتَ أَنْ تُصْبِحَ وَتُمْسِيَ لَيْسَ فِي قَلْبِكَ غِشٌّ لِأَحَدٍ فَأَفْعَلْ »

“O my beloved son! If you are able to spend the morning and evening in such a condition that you do not have ill-feelings in your heart for any person, then do so.”

Thereafter, Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said to Sayyiduna Anas (radhiyallahu ‘anhu),

« يَا بُنَيَّ ! وَذَلِكَ مِنْ سُنَّتِي »

“O my beloved son! And this is my sunnah.” (Sunan Tirmizi vol. 2, pg. 96 - #2678)

Sunnats that pertain to the inner-self are aspects that are linked to the heart, such as, humility, contentment, good character, tolerance and forbearance, forgiveness, sabr (patience), shukr (gratitude), etc. Likewise, to refrain from pride, riya (ostentation), anger for personal reasons, greed, love for the world, etc., are also aspects of the internal sunnats.

Great Returns:

Although, following the sunnah may sometimes seem a difficult task in today’s modern world, the rewards and returns are very great as well. Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) said,

« مَنْ تَمَسَّكَ بِسُنَّتِي عِنْدَ فَسَادِ أُمَّتِي فَلَهُ أَجْرُ مِائَةِ شَهِيدٍ »

“The one who holds firmly to my sunnah when (the condition of) my Ummah is degenerating will receive the reward of one hundred martyrs.” (Baihaqi – At Targheeb wat Tarheeb vol. 1, pg. 80)

Generally, when something becomes exclusive and rare, it fetches an exorbitant price. Here, Allah Ta’ala is paying a person the reward of one hundred martyrs for holding firmly on the sunnah! Of what value is the noble way of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) in the court of Allah Ta’ala?