

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

The Distinction Between *Sunnan Al-'Aadah*) (Customs Or Habitual Practices) & The *Sunnan Al-'Ibaadah* (Acts Of Worship)

By Imaam, the Muhaddith, as-Shaykh Rabee' Bin Haadee
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Question: What is the difference between *Sunnan* (the Prophetic practices) that are considered *al-'Aadah* (habits and customs) and *Sunnan* (the Prophetic practices) that are considered acts of worship (*al-'Ibaadah*)? And is a person rewarded for performing *Sunnan al-'Aadah* (Prophetic practices that are habits and customs)?

Answer: The difference is that **the Sunnah of worship** is that which is prescribed and legislated by Allaah and through which the people may seek a means of nearness to Allaah, the Blessed and Most High. Hence, they (i.e. the worshippers) draw close to Allaah by performing these legislated practices; such as the *Salaah* (the daily prayers), *as-Sawm* (fasting), Zakat, Hajj, *Sadaqah* (voluntary charity), *Birr al-Waalidayn* (being dutiful and showing kindness to parents) and keeping ties of kinship. All of these practices are acts of worship prescribed by Allaah, the Blessed and Most High, in order (for the people) to draw closer to Him.

As for the Prophetic Practices that are considered habits and customs then that is not *Wahy* (revelation) from Allaah, the Blessed and Most High, and it is not prescribed/legislated. And the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) did it due to the fact that it is a customary habit; such as (wearing particular type of) clothing, (eating certain) foods and drinks, and even sleep.

And when the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) entered into the subject matter of food and drink, he (ﷺ) said (to ‘Umar b. Abee Salamah): **“[Young man], mention the name of Allaah (i.e. say *Bismillaah*), eat with the right hand and eat that which is in front of you.”** So when you are about to eat, you should be mindful of this prophetic guidance and seek to gain nearness to Allaah; so you should mention Allaah’s name (before eating), eat with your right hand, and eat what is nearest to you, and in doing so, you are drawing closer to Allaah, the Most Perfect and Most High, with an act (of worship) which was legislated and prescribed by the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ).

If you were to sleep and (before you do so) you make Wudhu and recite the remembrances that the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) has taught you, then this is an act of worship that brings you closer to Allaah, the One free from all imperfections and the Most High.

With respect to clothing, such as wearing the *Ihraam* (during Hajj or ‘Umrah), you wear it is *Qurbah* (a means of nearness to Allaah) and ‘*Ibaadah* (an act of worship). Leaving the head uncovered (whilst in the state of *Ihraam*) during Hajj is *Qurbah* (a means of nearness to Allaah) and ‘*Ibaadah* (an act of worship) but in instances outside of that then leaving the head uncovered is but a habitual practice and a custom. So if, for instance, you were to leave your head uncovered, then it is up to you to do so and likewise it is up to you to cover it; but do not say that: ‘*If you were to cover or uncover your head that you will be rewarded for it and that it is an act of worship.*’ Wearing a *Thawb*, a *Qamees* (a long shirt), *Izaar* (waist cloth), and a *Bisht* (long cloak), then you are wearing something that is normal and customary (to wear). And anything from any one of these things (mentioned) is only a habitual practice and customary to wear and it is not *Qurbah* (a means of nearness to Allaah) which you wear as an act of worship (‘*Ibaadah*) – it is just normal attire.

So (the Prophetic Practice that is) worship is *Tashree’* (Divine Legislation) that is prescribed and legislated by Allaah as a means of attaining nearness to Allaah. The (Prophetic Practice that is) a habitual custom is something that

they were accustomed to doing and became well known among them. The attire and clothing of each and every country differs from that of another country and the cooking of this country differs from those other countries. Obviously, the habitual practices, whether they are great or small, the fundamental principle regarding it is *al-Ibaahah* (allowance and permissibility). Allaah, the One free from all imperfections and Most High, created whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth and He made it allowable for you to sleep, eat and drink.

A person may intend to use these affairs (i.e. normal practices and habits) to help in obeying Allaah. He eats in order to gain strength for (performing acts in) obedience to Allaah. He engages in exercise - that does not oppose the Divine Legislation - to strengthen himself for Jihaad (fighting) in the Path of Allaah. So these affairs could turn into acts of worship – depending on their intention.

As is mentioned by Mu'aadh (*radiiallahu 'anhu*) when the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) sent him to Yemen. So Mu'aadh went to visit Aboo Moosa al-'Ash'aree and he found that a man had been manacled and tied to a bed, so he said: Who is this? They said: "He was a Jew who had embraced Islaam and then turned back to his religion – (i.e. turned) apostate." So he said: "*By Allaah, I will not dismount (from my mule) until he is executed. This the judgement of Allaah and His Messenger (ﷺ).*" So they executed him. Then they (i.e. Mu'aadh and Aboo Moosa al-'Ash'aree) began to talk, each one informing the other what he had to say. Mu'aadh said: "***I hope for (gaining Allaah's) reward for my sleep, just as I hope for (gaining Allaah's) reward for my standing in the prayer (at night).***"¹

¹ Reported by al-Bukhaaree in Kitaab al-Maghaazee, (no.4342 and no.4344), also in Istitaabah al-Murtaddeen (no.6923), Muslim in Kitaab al-Imaarah (no.1733), Ahmad (4/409), Aboo Dawood in Kitaab al-Hudood (no.4354). The full wording of the Hadeeth is as follows: Narrated Aboo Burdah from the authority of Aboo Moosa (*radiiallahu 'anhu*), who said: "I came to the Prophet (ﷺ) along with two men from the Ash'aree tribe, one on my right and the other on my left, while the Prophet (ﷺ) was using a *Siwaak* (tooth stick to brush his teeth), and both of them asked for employment (i.e. positions of authority). The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "**O Aboo Moosa' (or O 'Abdullaah bin Qais)?**" I said: "*By the One Who has sent you with the Truth, they did not inform me of what was on their minds, and I did not know that they were going to ask for employment.*" It is as if I can see his *Siwaak* being held between his pursed lips. And he (ﷺ) said: "**We never (or we do not) appoint over our affairs those who seek after it (i.e. positions of authority). Rather you, O Aboo Moosa (or O 'Abdullaah bin Qais), go to Yemen.**" [And he (ﷺ) sent him to be in charge over Yemen], then he sent Mu'aadh bin Jabal after him. When (Mu'aadh) reached him he laid out a cushion for him and he said: "*Dismount.*" There

So I give my body its due right and I sleep in order to strengthen myself through it to perform acts of obedience to Allaah, and I anticipate a reward from Allaah, the Blessed and Most High, for this sleep. So a habitual practice (*al-'Aadah*), if you were to intend it as an act of worship to Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, you will be rewarded for that *Niyyah* (intention). If you do not intend it as an act of worship, then it is a *Mubaah* (permissible and allowable) act but it is not an act of worship.

Reference: Tape: *As-Sunnah Bayn al-Ghuloo wat-Taqseer* [As-Sunnah Between al-Ghuloo (Exaggeration) & Negligence], *Majmoo' Kutub Wa Rasaa'il* of Shaykh Rabee', p.90-92, Daar al-Imaam Ahmad.

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was a man with him who was fettered. He said: "*What is this?*" He said: "*He was a Jew who became Muslim, then he went back to becoming a Jew.*" He said: "*I will not sit down until he has been executed. This is Judgement of Allaah and His Messenger (ﷺ),*" (and he said that) three times. So he (Aboo Moosa) ordered that he be executed and he was executed. Then they talked about *Qiyaamul-Layl* (the night prayers), and one of them (Mu'aadh) said: "***As for me, I perform the night prayer and I sleep, I hope for reward (from Allaah) for my sleep, just as I hope for reward for my standing in the prayer (at night).***"