

The Parameters of Sunni Islam

All praise belongs to Allah Who has honoured His Messengers and Slaves. May infinite salutations and prayers shower upon the best of creation, he who carries the greatest of miracles, the one we turn to, the final Prophet, our master the messenger of Allah, and upon his family and companions.

During the last few weeks, a series of questions were sent to me enquiring about a number of opinions espoused by the late scholar, Dr. Ramadan al-Bouti (Allah have Mercy upon him) and their place within traditional Sunni Islam.

Despite other commitments, I thoroughly read a range of works authored by Shaykh Ramadan and listened to some of his recorded lectures. Contrary to what I expected, I was shocked by some of his remarks that clearly contravened key parameters of Ahl al-Sunnah. These views were unequivocally rooted in and akin to the Salafist-Deobandi methodology. So, in an attempt to dispel those notions, I decided to write this short epistle.

From the very onset, I am categorically making it clear that this is not a critique of the person of Shaykh Ramadan (Allah have Mercy upon him) - I have never met him, spoken to him, or attended his lectures. The aim is to demonstrate the accepted and attested positions of Ahl al-Sunnah whose creed and practices are grounded in a sound understanding of the Qur'an and Sunnah, as explicated by 1400 years of scholarship. These positions and their respective evidences are incredibly well-established and as such, provide a guiding compass when analysing works or claims made by any individual, group, author, or anyone else.

May Allah grant me the ability to write the truth and for all readers to realise it. *Ameen.*

Marvels of the Saints

Islam is a religion where not seeing is a part of believing in so much so that a Muslim's basic faith is based upon the unseen. This credence, however, has come under scrutiny in recent times due to misguidance that has transpired from the rise of Salafism during the turn of the 20th century.

Prior to a hundred years ago, accounts of saintly miracles were told and widely accepted by the Muslims - who did not rush to dismiss them as fables or legends. They acknowledged the rational and scriptural possibility of such occurrences. Shaykh Muhy al-Din ibn Arabi (Allah sanctify his secrets) alluded to the importance of such

unwavering commitment and conviction in the Saints when he remarked, that if you meet anyone who believes in everything conferred by the Saints (friends of Allah), then ask for their prayers because they are accepted.

However, an unfortunate trend, seeded by Salafism, has birthed factions of doubt and misguidance in our time, with many people now questioning the validity of such miracles, which inevitability leads to doubt and indecisiveness, and ultimately, the denial and rejection of such miracles.

Allah Almighty, through His Divine Power, ennobles His friends with various types of miracles and there is great wisdom behind this. Not only do the wonders of the saints demonstrate the Power of Allah and the power of His bestowal, they also function as mechanisms to revive a believer's heart; establishing a firm faith and certitude in their Lord. Most importantly, these miracles show the truthfulness of our Prophet ﷺ and are proofs of his ﷺ Prophethood:

“It is not permissible for a miracle to be an honour for a saint, except that this saint has performed this miracle in order to show the certainty of the Prophet ﷺ”¹

One such miracle is related from Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (Allah sanctify his secrets), who is one of the most celebrated saints of all time and accepted by all Muslims. The miracle is as follows:

“A woman, impressed by the reputation of Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (Allah sanctify his secrets), decided to leave her son in his care and said: ‘Take this child as your own, I renounce all rights to him. Raise him to become like you.’ The Shaykh accepted the child and started to guide him. After some time, the mother returned to see her son and found him thin and pale as he ate a crust of bread. She was angry and asked to see the Shaykh. When she was taken to the Shaykh, she found him well dressed, seated in a pleasant room, and eating a chicken. She exclaimed: ‘While you eat your chicken, my poor son - whom I left in your care - has nothing but a piece of dry bread!’ The Shaykh placed his hand over the bones of the chicken and said: ‘In the name of Allah - Who revives bones from dust - rise!’ The chicken immediately came to life and it ran about the table saying: ‘There is no god but Allah, Muhammad ﷺ is His Messenger, and Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (Allah sanctify his secrets) is the friend of Allah and His Messenger ﷺ!’ Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (Allah sanctify his secrets) then turned to the woman and said: ‘When your son is able to do as I did, he can also eat whatever he wishes.’²

¹ Jami' Karamat al-Awliya, volume 1, p34/35

² Fatawa-e-Razvia, volume 28, p375/376

Regarding this miracle, Shaykh Ramadan al-Bouti writes, after mentioning why he didn't mention his father's miracle in his book 'Hadha Walidi':

“I say to these brothers: ‘What benefits me in my religion and in rectifying my state that I incline towards a story that states Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani was served a cooked chicken. When he ate it, he gathered its scattered bones on the table and said to it ‘stand by the permission of Allah!’ it stood immediately as a living chicken. It went flapping its wings.’ How much does this benefit me in rectifying my state and to awake me from the ignorance of the whims towards the fate that I face and in softening the heart after the hardness that veils it? I would rather incline towards his preaching and advice with sincerity, burning the heart with love of Allah in a gathering filled with faith, a gathering on his book al-Fath al-Rabbani... Thus why should I waste time in pastime listening to a story which I do not know if it's correct or fabricated...”

The above-mentioned miracle of Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (Allah sanctify his secrets) is just one of a plethora of his miracles that are mass transmitted (mutawatir) by a huge array of Ulema. The great reviver - Ala Hazrat, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (Allah sanctify his secrets) - mentions many miracles of the great Shaykh in his books and also makes mention of him and his miracles in his poetry. Furthermore, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (Allah sanctify his secrets) attests to the mass-transmitted nature of Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani's miracles (Allah sanctify his secrets) in Fatawa Rizviyah³:

*“Imam Abd Allah b. Asad Yafi'i states in Mirat al-Janan that, his [Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani] miracles are innumerable. I mentioned some of them in the book Nashr al-Mahāsin. It has also been related to me from great notable Imams, whom I met, that many of his miracles are **mass narrated** or are close to being mass narrated. It is proven, by consensus that such miracles in the world did not transpire for anyone else. I suffice in this book to mention one of them that is narrated by the Shaykh, Imam, Jurist, Scholar and Master of Quran Recitation, Abu al-Hasan Ali b. Yūsuf b. Jarīr b. Mi'dād al-Shafī'i al-Lakhmi in his book, along with his chain of transmission for it from five different routes and groups of senior Saints, the Flags of Guidance, the Great Gnostics [referring to Shaykh Imran Kamimani, Shaykh Umar Bazzar, Shaykh Abul Masud, Shaykh Abul Abbas Ahmad Sarsari, Shaykh Abu Bakr Abdur Razzaq, and Shaykh Abu Abd Allah Muhammad b. Abil Ma'āli; may Allah be pleased with them all]. They all described [the miracle]: a lady came with her child ...al-hadith! [emphasis added].*

Imam Ahmad Raza continues:

³ Fatawa-e-Razvia, volume 28, p375/376

“These very Gnostics stated that once in the gathering of his eminence [Shaykh Abd al-Qadir Jilani] a bird passed by making a sound which disturbed the attendees. His eminence ordered the air: ‘Take the bird’s head.’ Immediately, the bird’s body fell to one side and its head to another. Then, his eminence descended from the chair and carried the bird while rubbing his blessed hands over it saying, ‘In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, Most Merciful: Immediately, the bird was revived and in front of everyone, it flew away.’ O Omnipotent Allah! You hold the strength; You do as you please; You grant life to the dead; and you give death to the living.”⁴

He concludes:

“All praise is to Allah. From the texts of the great Imams, it is clear that Imam Abu al-Hasan Ali Nur al-Din, the author of *Bahjat al-Asrar*, is a great Imam, researcher, jurist, and Shaykh of Recitation. All in all, he is from the most famous scholars. This book of his is trusted and reliable because the great Imams utilised it as evidence. Just as in the books of hadith, the scholars confer a licence of transmission (Ijazah) they also gave licences for this book. Among the books about the virtues of Shaykh Abd al-Qadir Jilani, it bears a high transmission equivalent to that which the *Muwatta*⁵ bears among the compendiums of hadith. In terms of authentic chains, it holds a rank among the books dealing with virtues of the Saints, comparable to the rank which *Sahih al-Bukhari* has among hadith books. Further, in the Six Canonical Works, there are some irregular narrations, yet in *Bahjat al-Asrar* there are no irregular narrations. Imam al-Bukhari made authenticity his only criterion⁶ yet, this great Imam made both authenticity and non-irregularity criteria for his narrations. As Allamah Umar al-Halabi evidenced, this is a most complete criteria because every report [in *Bahjat al-Asrar*] has numerous corroborative chains.”⁷

The sheer care and diligence taken by these erudite scholars in preserving and transmitting saintly miracles demonstrates their saliency and the importance of recounting them – a far cry from being useless or without benefit. The wonders of the saints showcase the strength of Allah, the power he gives to his Friends due to their closeness with Him. These miracles allow a person to revive their heart by turning to Allah in amazement and invoking His glory, whilst also paving a way for a seeker to follow in the footsteps of the saints. More importantly, they showcase the truthfulness of our Messenger ﷺ and are proofs for the truth of his message:

⁴ Fatawa-e-Razvia, volume 28, p375/376

⁵ Muwatta of Imam Malik.

⁶ For accepting narrations.

⁷ Fatawa-e-Razvia, volume 28, p380

“The doctrine of Sunni Islam is that any miracle performed by a Prophet, its occurrence for a saint is possible.”^{8 9}

Much more can be written, but we hope this succinct section suffices in highlighting the blessings and purpose of the miracles of the saints.

“Never lose hope, my heart, miracles dwell in the invisible...”

The Beatific Vision of Allah’s Messenger Whilst Awake

One of the greatest bounties from Allah in this world is the wakeful vision of His Prophet, where the veils of separation are lifted. Such occurrences may transpire moments before death or throughout one’s lives, depending on the person’s piety and devotion. Throughout Islamic history, there are hundreds of narrations from the great men of Allah who have authentically documented that they were blessed to see the Prophet ﷺ whilst awake.

On this topic, Shaykh Ramadan al-Bouti writes in his commentary of the Hikam¹⁰:

“...They tell me about their Shaykh seeing the Messenger of Allah in a wakeful state and not whilst asleep; telling me of the discussions which took place between their Shaykh and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his stance on several issues and contemporary problems. What does the Shari’ah say about these people? The Shari’ah says that it is binding to punish anyone who claims to see the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in wakefulness. That is because no-one from the companions of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ, the followers [Tabi’in], or the followers of the followers [Tabi’ al-Tabi’in] claimed to see Allah’s Messenger ﷺ in wakefulness after his ﷺ demise; as per Islamic History, in general or biographical accounts.”

The aforementioned statement was a devastating read, primarily because it echoes the fabricated methodology adopted by modern Salafis who use the same tactic to deliberately confuse the masses; the same fallacious argument which has been refuted and dismantled by our Ulema.

Seeing the Prophet ﷺ whilst awake is not a mere rational possibility but a scriptural reality, promulgated by authentic hadith. Many reports have been documented about the Prophet’s companions who were not only bestowed with such visions, but

⁸ Imam bin Mughayzil, al-Kawakib al-Zahirah, al-Kawakib Al-Zahirah, p150

⁹ He then elaborates that the condition for such a saintly miracle is that it does not infringe on the original Prophetic miracle.

¹⁰ Sharh Hikam, volume 1, p296

themselves related it to others – their piety did not disallow them from publically disclosing their experiences to others.

“*I passed by Musa on the occasion of the night journey near the red mount, offering his prayer in his grave.*”¹¹

This hadith explicitly demonstrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saw the Prophet Musa (عليه السلام) after the latter’s demise, and then himself ﷺ informed Sayyiduna Anas (رضي الله عنه), who then related it to the Muslims at large.

Further, it is narrated by Sayyiduna Damrah b. Thalabah (رضي الله عنه):

“*He came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: ‘Pray to Allah for my martyrdom’. The Prophet ﷺ prayed: ‘O Allah! Safeguard the blood of ibn Tha’labah against the polytheists and disbelievers.’ I used to hide behind the people and the Prophet ﷺ would appear for me behind them. They said: ‘O thalabah! You are in danger hiding behind people’. Thalabah replied, “the Prophet ﷺ appears for me behind them, so I hide behind them until I stand with him ﷺ, then my companions appear for me until I am with my companions...”*”¹²

Not only did this companion see the Prophet ﷺ after his demise in wakefulness, but he informed others about his vision – without any criticism from those around him.

Abd Allah b. Salam (رضي الله عنه) narrates:

“*I came to Uthman to greet him while he was besieged. Uthman said: ‘Welcome my brother, I saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ at this window.’ [Sayyiduna Uthman (رضي الله عنه) then says to him]: The Prophet ﷺ said to me: ‘O Uthman! They have besieged you?’ I replied: ‘Yes’. He ﷺ asked: ‘Have they made you thirsty?’ I replied: ‘Yes’. He ﷺ passed me a pail with water in it and I drank it until I was quenched to such an extent that I felt its coolness in my chest and between my shoulders. He ﷺ said: ‘If you want, you can be aided against them, and if you want, you can eat with us’. I choose to eat with him ﷺ [Abdullah bin Salaam (رضي الله عنه) then narrates] He was martyred that same day.*”¹³

Imam al-Suyuti (Allah sanctify his secrets) comments on this hadith:

¹¹ Muslim, Hadith 2375

¹² Related by al-Tabarani in al-Mu’jam al-Kabir (8/369, #8156). Al-Haythami commented on it in Majma’ al-Zawa’id (9/379, #16022): “Its chain is good (*Hasan*).”

¹³ Related by Ibn ‘Asakir in Tarikh Madina Dimashq (39/387) with a chain containing **Faraj b. Fadala** who is listed as weak by al-Mizzi in Tahdhib al-Kamal. However, Ibn ‘Asakir also relates variations of this report with different chains and Imam al-Suyuti confirms its reliability in the above comment.

“This is well known regarding Uthman. A hadith recorded in the books of hadith with chains. It was recorded by al-Harith bin Abi Usamah in his Musnad and various others. The author understood that it was a wakeful vision.¹⁴

Imam ibn Abi Jamrah (Allah sanctify his secrets) offers the following insight in his commentary on Sahih al-Bukhari:

“The One Who has the power to make Sayyiduna Ibrahim’s ﷺ supplication a cause for dead birds becoming alive...He has the power to make visions of him (peace be upon him) during sleep a cause for seeing him during wakefulness. One of the companions – I think it was Ibn ‘Abbas – said that He saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ whilst asleep. He remembered this hadith,¹⁵ and continued to reflect upon it. He then visited one of the Prophet’s wives – I think it was Maymuna – and related the dream to her. She stood up and brought out a robe and a mirror, saying that this is the Prophets ﷺ robe and this is his mirror. I looked in the mirror and saw the image of the Prophet ﷺ and could not see an image of myself. **It is also related from a group of early Muslims (Salaf), later Muslims (Khalaf), and those after them who saw him (peace be upon him) whilst asleep and they understood this hadith¹⁶ literally, so they then saw him while awake. They asked him about problems which were disturbing and he informed them of the solutions,¹⁷ [emphasis added]**

Shaykh Ramadan continues¹⁸:

“If anyone from the pious people was worthy of seeing Allah’s Messenger ﷺ in wakefulness, then certainly that would be the pious Salaf; those whose goodness and superiority had been attested to by Allah’s Messenger ﷺ; they are the most worthy pious people for that.

We do not utilise what we know from the history of the Salaf as proof that seeing Allah’s Messenger ﷺ in wakefulness is impossible – refuge be with Allah: Allah’s Messenger ﷺ is alive and possesses an ithmoid (Barzakhhiyya) life, unlike the ithmoid life of others such as the saints. Seeing people from the Isthmus World is rationally possible.

¹⁴ Al-Hawi lil Fatawi, volume 2, p262. Also quoted Allamah Abdul Hakeem Sharaf Qadri

¹⁵ The hadith: “Whoever sees my while asleep, will see me while awake,” narrated by al-Bukhari in his Sahih, Kitab al-Ta’bir, #6592.

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibn Abi Jamrah in Bahja al-Nufus, 4/238.

¹⁸ Sharh Hikam, volume 1, p296

However, rational possibility is one thing, and claiming its actual occurrence is another."

Shaykh Ramadan has accepted the rational possibility of seeing the Messenger ﷺ in wakefulness, but then swiftly states that its occurrence is a different matter; this reasoning has two possible outcomes:

- 1) The actual occurrence of such visions does not transpire in the extramental world; either because they have not been ordained by Allah, but remain rationally possible, or because they are contingently impossible, i.e. made impossible by Allah.
- 2) They are possible, but no one may speak of them lest they be branded as liars.

However, both of these conclusions are invalid when we consider the hadith of the Prophet ﷺ, "Whoever sees me while asleep, he will see me while awake," and the aforementioned reports of the companions. These reports suggest that along with the rational and scriptural possibility of seeing the Prophets after their demise in wakefulness, it is also lawful to narrate such incidents to others.

Shaykh Ramadan adds:

"History does not know of anyone who claimed such visions in the three superior generations, rather in the four. So, either it did not occur or it might have occurred for some of them but they did not claim it about themselves and did not speak of it – not in private gatherings, in crowds, nor in front of the public, as some now days do."

Statements like this are mere conjectural and the Ulema are well aware that proofs cannot be deduced from such suppositions. Besides, we have already shown that seeing the Prophet ﷺ whilst awake did occur during the time of the noble companions.

Shaykh Ramadan then goes on to say:

"Thus, for the one who claims that he saw, or sees, Allah's Messenger ﷺ in wakefulness in our times it is necessary that he be punished because he is a liar."

Some may defend these words by alleging that it is time-specific and relates only to claimants in our time. However, his follow up explanatory comment leaves no doubt about the general, unrestricted application of his words:

"If he did actually see him ﷺ, based on its hypothetical possibility, then he will surely be from the most righteous of people and his distinguished state of

*piety, virtue, god-consciousness, and nearness to Allah should drive him be silent and not parade this matter in front of people. In fact, his state should not allow him to open his mouth about this matter in front of anyone. It should increase him in awe of Allah, humility and fear.*¹⁹

Yet, we have read authentic accounts of companions who did speak of their wakeful visions, as did countless, literally hundreds, of saints and righteous people throughout 1400 years. Neither were they branded as liars and nor did any scholar decide that they should be punished for their public claim. Many works have been authored by the great Ulema which document seeing the Prophet ﷺ both whilst awake and in dreams and the lawfulness of relating such a gift to others. Imam Yusuf al-Nabhani (Allah sanctify his secrets) compiled his dreams in his book 'Sa'adah al-Darayn and Imam ibn Abi Jamrah has many accounts of the beatific vision in his book 'Maril al-Hisan'.

Imam 'Abd al-Qadir b. Al-Husayn (Allah sanctify his secrets) dedicated a lengthy book to the topic of seeing Allah's Messenger ﷺ whilst awake and called it, *al-Kawakib Al-Zahirah fi Ijtima al-Awliya Yaqazatan bi Sayyid al-Dunya wa al-Akhira* – 'The Bright Stars about the Saints Meeting the Master of The World and the Hereafter While Awake.' He narrates a multitude of visions given to the Saints, all with connected chains of transmission. One such narration is as follows – the chain of transmission has been laid out to make it easier to follow:

1. Imam 'Abd al-Qadir b. Al-Husayn relates from;
2. Shaykh Ali b. Ahmad al-Tandatawi who narrates, with a connected chain of transmission that;
3. The Imam of the Shafi'i School, Zayn al-Din b. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Boutiji said;
4. That the Saint Shaykh Abu Bakr al-Shadhili said that when he was in prayer and uttered 'peace be upon you O Prophet and Allah's mercy and blessings,' the Prophet's Chamber was made visible for him and he saw the Prophet ﷺ who replied: 'And may peace and Allah's mercy and blessings be upon you O Abu Bakr.'²⁰

It is noteworthy that Shaykh Abu Bakr al-Shadhili (Allah sanctify his secrets) related his wakeful vision to others, without it lessening his piety in any way and no-one labelled him a liar. This is one of countless such reports.

'Abd al-Qadir b. Al-Husayn (Allah sanctify his secrets) also relates the following famous incident of Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (Allah sanctify his secrets). It has also been documented by hadith specialists such as Ibn al-Mulaqqin²¹ (Allah sanctify his secrets):

¹⁹ Sharh Hikam, volume 1, p297

²⁰ In *al-Kawakib Al-Zahirah*, pg. 50

²¹ In *Tabaqat al-Awliya*, as cited by al-Shanqiti in *Zad al-Muslim*, 4/310

“*Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani said: ‘I saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ before Zuhr prayer on Tuesday the 16th of Shawwal 521 Hijri. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to me: ‘O my son! Why don’t you speak?’ [In public] I replied: ‘O father! I am a non-Arab, how can I speak to the fuqaha of Baghdad?’ He ﷺ replied: ‘Open your mouth?’ Shaykh Abd al-Qadir said: ‘I opened my mouth and he placed his ﷺ saliva into my mouth seven times. Then the Prophet ﷺ said to me: ‘Speak over people, call towards your Lord’s way with wisdom and good counsel.’ I prayed Zuhr and sat. A great number of people were present. I started to tremble. Then I saw Ali bin Abi Talib in front of me in the gathering. He said: ‘O my son! Why don’t you speak?’ I replied: ‘O Father! I am trembling.’ Ali b. Abi Talib said to me: ‘Open your mouth’. I then opened my mouth and he placed his saliva in my mouth six times.’ I asked: ‘Why did you not complete seven?’ He replied: ‘Out of respect for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.’*

We will conclude this section with a chronicle from the last century:

We relate first hand from numerous trustworthy scholars who narrate from Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (Allah sanctify his secrets) that he was blessed to see the Prophet ﷺ whilst awake. Along with being widespread in the scholarly circles of South Asia, this incident is recorded in several works, including his biography authored by his student²² and by the Mufti of Hizb al-Ahnaf, Lahore, Hafiz Ghulam Hasan Qadri in his commentary of the Imam’s poetry collection, Hada’iq-i-Bakshish. The latter writes:

“*... Ala Hazrat went to Madinah for the second time; yearning to have a vision, he presented himself at the gates reciting salutations. Whilst there, signs manifested that the Messenger ﷺ is about to bless him, but then the first night lapsed [without a vision]. Before the second night passed, he cast a poem while drowned in yearning for the Prophetic vision...He then presented this poem at the gates and with the highest level of etiquette, he sat. Then, his fate unfolded; with his own eyes, whilst awake, he had witnessed the chosen one ﷺ²³*

To conclude, seeing the Prophet ﷺ in a wakeful state was known among the companions of the Prophet ﷺ, the righteous predecessors, and those who followed them. Its occurrence is widely accepted by the Ulema and reported first hand by countless the saints and scholars. To immediately belie people who claim such visions is unfounded in the Islamic tradition and historical corpora.

Supplicating (Du’a) Whilst Facing The Noble Prophet ﷺ

Visiting the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in Madinah is from the most virtuous acts – in fact, many Ulema sanctioned it as a near obligation. Throughout Islamic history, Muslims

²² Cf. Hayat-i-Ala Hazrat by Zafar al-Din al-Bihari

²³ Originally published in the periodical, ‘Mahanama Salik Rawalpindi,’ August 1923.

have visited the blessed and enlightened sacred chamber of the Prophet ﷺ, beseeching him ﷺ for his ﷺ intercession, while imploring Allah for forgiveness through the ﷺ exalted medium of the Prophet of Allah ﷺ.

Our Ulema have authored many books and epistles, outlining guidelines, parameters, and etiquettes for this auspicious visit. One of these etiquettes or customs was especially emphasised, so much in fact, that it has become a hallmark of traditional Islam in the face modern salafist trends: Facing the noble Prophet ﷺ when supplicating (making du'a) at the Prophetic Shrine. Qadi Iyad (Allah sanctify his secrets) in his magnus opus, al-Shifa, relates the following from ibn Humayd:

“...Abu Ja'far said: 'O Abu Abdillah [Imam Malik]! Should I face the Qiblah and supplicate after visiting, or should I face the Messenger of Allah ﷺ?' Malik replied: 'Why would you turn away? He ﷺ is your intermediary and the intermediary of your father Adam ؑ – in front of Allah - on the day of Judgement. Face towards the Messenger ﷺ and seek intercession by him ﷺ. Allah will accept his ﷺ intercession in your right. Allah states: 'And if when they do injustice unto their souls, then O beloved! They should come to you and then beg forgiveness of Allah and the Messenger should intercede for them, then surely, they would find Allah most relenting, merciful.'”

Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i , and Imam Ahmad all agree that it is desirable to face the blessed grave of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Ibn Humam, narrating the correct position of Imam Abu Hanifah, may Allah be well pleased with all of them, writes:

“The narration by Abu al-Layth about him [Abu Hanifah] facing qiblah [while supplicating] is rejected, because of what Imam Abu Hanifah narrates from ibn Umar in his musnad.²⁴

Thus, establishing that all four madhabs give preference to facing the blessed grave of the Messenger ﷺ during the visit and supplication.

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (Allah sanctify his secrets) writes in Fatawa-e-Razvia (quoting Mulla Ali Qari) how one should supplicate at the Prophetic Shrine:

“...placing his right hand on the left whilst directed towards the blessed face, with his back to the qiblah...²⁵

He adds:

²⁴ Fath ul Qadeer, Ibn Humam, volume 3, p168

²⁵ Fatawa-e-Razvia, volume 7, p601

“He should stand [facing the Prophet ﷺ] in front, as though he is standing in prayer.²⁶

If this epistle allowed, we could narrate from hundreds of Sunni scholars from across 1400 years to affirm this practice. They not only affirm its validity but encourage this noble act – a far cry from being a reprehensible innovation, an act of shirk, or a practice of ignorant people.

Yet, despite all this, Shaykh Ramadan writes in *Fiqh al-Sirah*:

“Then turn to the Qibla and move to the right slightly until you are between the grave and the first pillar. Raise your hands sincerely with prayer. Do not assume there is bad etiquette in this with the messenger of Allah ﷺ or that du’a must be made facing the grave, because du’a is addressed to Allah and so it is not permissible to associate (shirk) others in this. The best direction [to face] for making du’a to Allah is the Qiblah. **Do not pay any attention towards the many ignorant and innovating people that you see going against this...**” [Emphasis added].

The aforementioned comments of the Ulema clearly and concisely prove the inaccuracy of this hasty generalisation and unfounded criticism by Shaykh Ramadan. A scholarly difference, however is acceptable in most cases, but it is not tolerable to malign and rebuke others for a practice which has been endorsed by the Ulema.

The Blessed Parents of the Prophet ﷺ

The faith and rank of the noble parents of the Prophet are well documented in the books of Ahl al-Sunna, with the majority of Ulema all in agreement that the honourable parents of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ were Muslim and part of this Ummah.

The formidable Imam, Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (Allah sanctify his secrets), authored no less than seven books on this subject - and this should be sufficient enough evidence for anyone. Nevertheless, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (Allah sanctify his secrets), in *Fatawa-e-Razvia* explains:

“The honoured parents - Allah be pleased with both of them - passed away before the time of Islam. During this period, they were from the Unitarians²⁷ and the believers in ‘There is no god but Allah.’ They were part of the negation of ‘they are not for you’ but after the Lord. For the sake of his Prophet ﷺ - [in order] to fulfil His bounty - Allah revived the honoured the parents like he revived the people of the cave [Ashab al-Kahf], [thus] after they had accepted

²⁶ *Fatawa-e-Razvia*, volume 10, p765

²⁷ Muwahhidin – those who affirm Allah’s Oneness and Divine Unity.

faith upon the Prophet ﷺ and were honoured with the rank of companionship, they were made to rest. The divine wisdom is that this revival was at the farewell Hajj when the Qur'an had fully been revealed and by revealing 'today we have completed for you your religion and completed upon you our bounty' Allah completed the divine religion so that their [the blessed parents] testified their faith on a complete religion and a perfected shari'ah.'

With this said, Shaykh Ramadan not only objected to the prophetic prayer (salawat): "O Allah! Send blessing upon Muhammad and his parents", he stated it was a reprehensible innovation (Bid'a) - as published in his book 'Hadha Walidi'. He added that his father also objected to the same salawat and wrote an article in the Nahjul Islam magazine expressing his criticism of it.

Shaykh Ramadan writes:

“*The first of the two is the necessity to fulfil the Command of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. It is narrated by al-Bukhari in his Sahih that following the revelation of the verse {O those who believe send prayers on him and send salutations abundantly}, the companions asked, how should we send prayers upon you O Messenger of Allah ﷺ? He ﷺ replied: 'Say: O Allah! Send prayers upon Muhammad and his family ﷺ, offspring, and his ﷺ wives just has you sent prayers upon Ibrahim'...till the end of the hadith.*

The second of the two is the need to follow the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in him ﷺ being prohibited to pray for his ﷺ mother when Allah prohibited him ﷺ from this. I do not find any of the prayers of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that he sought forgiveness for his ﷺ parents or anyone of them, yet there are many compositions for seeking forgiveness [related] from him ﷺ. For example, his saying before sleeping 'O my lord! Forgive me my sins...'”

Proof cannot be taken of their disbelief by this prohibition because the prohibition from his Lord was for wisdom hidden from us just as we mentioned earlier.

Thirdly, prayers upon the messenger of Allah ﷺ is worship from amongst the greatest of worships and worship is not correct except by following what came from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ either by action or word, narrated authentically. It is proven definitively that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not order the companions with prayers upon his ﷺ parents nor did they do this, and nor did the followers and those after them.¹²⁸

This is the same application of the fallacious principle that it is not lawful for us to practice something which not been practiced by the Prophet ﷺ – it is the same reasoning used by Salafists to denounce and delegitimise Mawlid celebrations.

²⁸ Hadha Walidi, p180

Shaykh Ramadan continues:

“*...Indeed I see - in the insertion of the word 'and his parents' in sending prayers upon the Prophet ﷺ - flaws in this claim to love.'*

It pains us to say it, but the words and message that Shaykh Ramadan portrays are indicative of a Salafi methodology, and such a stance on this kind of salawat has been refuted by the Ulema of Ahl al-Sunnah.

We conclude and re-affirm that the parents of our beloved Prophet ﷺ are Muslims, are part of the beloved's ﷺ ummah, and are the beloved's ﷺ honourable companions ﷺ; may Allah be well pleased with them both – and that is entirely lawful to supplicate for them and include them in salawat.

Not only do I have a claim to his mercy; upon that kings whole nation be countless salaam.

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