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Ghazali's Understanding Of Sunnah

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1. The tradition that Ghazali respected in his understanding of Sunnah and Hadith

The Holy Prophet's Sunnah had been transferred to following generations with two different traditions: factual and narrative. So when they were being transferred under the form of daily practices by one side, they were being verbally communicated by the other, thanks to the ancient tradition of narration.¹ The second Hijri century witnessed the disagreement between these two traditions on the application of Sunnah. Some scholars based on the factual tradition and interpreted these narrative records as conformable to this factual tradition, whereas other ones tried to check the factual tradition with narrative records arguing that some Bid'ah has been interfered with it. Imam Malik's Muwatta, the discussions between Imam Abû Hanîfah and Ibn Ebî Leylâ and discussions between Abû Yûsuf and Evzâî are the historical witnesses of this disagreement. Jurisprudents such as Imam Mâlik and Abû Hanîfah give priority to the factual tradition, whereas Imam Shâfiî and People of Hadith based on the narrative tradition. Since the end of the second century, the power of words won and the narrative tradition overtook the factual one.

So when we look on the Ghazali's Sunnah and Hadith understanding from the perspective of these two traditions, we can see that he adheres to the narrative tradition even if he sometimes declares some different views. That

¹ Ahmed Imtiyaz, *Delailu al-Tavthiq al-Mubakker li al-Sunnah wa al-Hadith*, p.52-68.

is certainly the reason why he began to directly examine the oral expressions of the Holy Prophet when he dealt with the Sunnah, in *el-Mustasfâ*, as the second principle proof² and he separately commentated on the Holy Prophet's actions and declarations at the end of the second tome.³ Such an attitude had even brought the orientalist Laoust to think that he only intended the oral Sunnah when he talked about Sunnah and that he considered the factual or the approval Sunnah as secondary.⁴

In *el-Menhûl*, Ghazali used a lot of expressions which justify Laoust. For instance, as a response to Abû Hanîfa's sentence "prophet is the model (usve), the guide (kudve) and he should be obeyed (mutâ)", he said "Considering the Prophet as a model and a guide means to submit to his ordinances".⁵ According to him, they are not oral expressions transferring the Holy Prophet's actions which make him a model, for actions does not have a paradigm.⁶ Consequently all the verses such as: "Take whatever the Prophet gives you..."⁷ "Flee from opposing him..."⁸ "...Tell that, if you love Allah, obey me and so Allah will love you too..."⁹ are narrated to the Holy Prophet's words and not actions. These contain the orders that came to us without the presence of actions.¹⁰

According to Ghazali, *Hujjat* (the real proof) are the words of the Holy Prophet. His words are even revelations that had not been recited (*gayr-i metlûv*). The fact that Allah points him out as a model, orders us to obey him and that his honesty has been justified with miracles proves us his words are *Hujjat*. But the value of his words will not be the same for people who heard them via voice and for us, who indirectly heard them. For we did not hear these words via voice from the Holy Prophet but from the Hadith narrators. Even when the Sahabah say "The Holy Prophet said that", "The Holy Prophet informed about that", "The Holy Prophet told that", it does not mean that they heard these words directly from the Prophet, because the Sahabah also transferred sometimes what they heard from other people as they had heard it from the Holy Prophet himself. For instance, Abû Hurayrah transferred the sentence "He who passes all the night unclean (*cunub*) cannot fast"¹¹ as if it was a Hadith he had directly heard it from the Holy Prophet.

² Ghazali, *el-Mustasfa*, I, 129.

³ A.g.e., II, 212.

⁴ Henri Laoust, *Annuaire du Collage de France*, p. from 357-358, Ibrahim Kafi Dönmez, *DIA*, XIII, 513.

⁵ Ghazali, *al-Mankhul*, 226-227.

⁶ A.g.e., 225.

⁷ Hashr, 7.

⁸ Nur, 63.

⁹ Al Imran, 31.

¹⁰ Ghazali, a.g.e., 227.

¹¹ As conveyed by Malik b. Anas, this incident was depicted by Abu Bakr b. Abdurrahman

When people asked him where, how and when he did exactly hear it, he said that he was told it by Fadl b. Abbâs. Likewise, Ibn Abbâs pronounced the sentence “Interest is nothing but *nesîe*”¹² as a Hadith he directly received, and then he said that he had been told by Usâma b. Zeyd.

That is the reason why, even if Ghazali, as a member of the narrative tradition, gives priority to oral records, he thought, like all Methodists, that records are Hujjat if they are transferred faraway from all probable deficiencies and he dealt, in *el-Menhûl* as well as in *el-Mustasfâ* about the types of narration and their problems, all conditions of the cerh and tadil for narrators. Therefore, in his other writings Ghazali does not really respect in his methodical writings the rules that he insists on and the advises that he gives to traditionalists in his other writings. The reasons for this will be explicated later. But in our opinion, its main reason should be asked in the tradition he personally followed, because it may be risky to base on one of the traditions in order to state the being model and guidance of the Holy Prophet instead of considering both together. Especially when we base on this second one that Ghazali follows, when the Hadith was a material containing the Sunnah, every Hadith becomes Sunnah itself or includes Sunnah. The most important is that the people of this thought began to look for everything in the Holy Prophet’s words, and to act following weak and fake Hadith when they did not find what they were looking for. That is certainly the reason why Ghazali has been criticised because of Hadith he included in his writings. We will explicit this subject a little later.

like this: “My father and I was together with Marwan b. Hakam, the governor of Medina. During conversation Abu Hurayra said: “Whoever awakes in the state of janaabah will not be able to fast”. At this Marwan: “For Allah’s sake Abdurrahman go to the mother of believers (Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her) and Umm Salamah and inquire the truth”. We both went to Aisha, we greeted her, then my father said: “Oh the mother of believers, we were Marwan’s guests and Abu Hurayra told us that whoever awakes in the state of janaabah will not be able to fast. Aisha however said: “Oh Abdurrahman the case is not as Abu Hurayra told you, do you want to turn your back on what the Prophet (PBUH) had done?” Abdurrahman said: “No, I swear to Allah”. Then Aisha said: “I witnessed that the Prophet got up in the morning in the state of janaabah without seeing wet dreams and perpetuated his fast that day”. Then my father went to Umm Salamah and asked her the same question. She answered the same thing as Aisha. Then my father went to Marwan and conveyed to him what the two spouses of the Prophet had said. Hereupon Marwan said: “ for Allah’s sake, mount the coach waiting in front of the door and go to Aqiq terrain to Abu Hurayra and explain to him what have you heard” . We both went to Abu Hurayra. My father talked to him nearly one hour and conveyed what he heard. At this point Abu Hurayra said: “I haven’t got any knowledge concerning this subject, somebody told me”. (For more information refer to Muhammad b. Idris al-Shafii, *al-Sunan al-Mathura*, inquiry, Emin Qalaci, Dar al-Maaref, Beirut. P.303.

¹² Bukhari, Buyu’, 79; Muslem, Musakat, 101.

2. Ghazali's System of Sunnah and Morality

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the most important and most effective results of Ghazali's outstanding versatile personality is the fact that he has seen very well the moral problems and the moral dilemmas of Muslim societies in general and the fact that he has put forward a rich idea of morality producing solutions for these problems. Ghazali who has brought the traditional *nass*-based morality closer to the philosophical and mystical morality even combined them has succeeded the most successful of the attempts fulfilled until now in this field.¹³

When the books dealing with this moral system, particularly *Ihya*, are been reviewed it is clearly seen that Ghazali has used the Sunnah and the Hadith as a source of morality in a widest sense. There is no doubt that the Holy Prophet (pbuh) sent as an excellent role model for whole the humanity is the guide of the perfect morality. When we take into consideration some verses of Quran such as "And most surely you conform (yourself) to sublime morality"¹⁴ and some hadith of the Holy Prophet such as "I have been sent in order to complete and fulfil the sublime morality"¹⁵ it will be seen that his main and major guidance should be field of the morality. However it is clear that determining his guidance of morality fulfilling it has a tight relationship with understanding the Sunnah and interpreting it. At this point it is necessary to ask this question, which was mentioned earlier, and to reply it: As the Sunnah forms the attitudes and the behaviours of the Prophet in every subject, are they the great moral principles that conduct his attitudes and behaviours? Or is it his attitudes and behaviors the one that determine the great morality? In other words, is it the morality that determines the behaviours of the Prophet? Or is it the behaviours of the Prophet that determines the morality? The difficulty of distinguishing these two is evident. But giving priority to one of them will be the main factor widely effecting conception of Sunnah and Sunnah-Morality relationship.

When his books narrated with the methodology such as *el-Menhûl* and *el-Mustasfâ* are been reviewed it is understood that Ghazali, first of all, has replied the question mentioned above as follows: "It is the morality that has determined the attitudes and behaviours of the Prophet." According to Ghazali, also expressed in both of his books, the attitudes and behaviours of the Prophet are considered, in terms of methodology, as a matter. And acquiring the nature of Sunnah of these attitudes and behaviours is considered

¹³ Mustafa Çağrı, DIA, XIII, 500.

¹⁴ Kalem, 4.

¹⁵ Malik, *Muvatta*, Husnu al-Khuloq, 8, Heythemi, *Mejmau al-Zevaid*, IX, 15.

as another matter. And degrees of its binding are considered as completely different matter.¹⁶ Ghazali asks in “*el-Menhûl*” the following question: “when a deed is narrated from the Prophet does that mean any authority for us?” And he replies it as follows: “If there is evidence in that deed to bind us it certainly means necessity for us.”

But if this kind of evidence does not exist then the attributes of the deed are taken into consideration. If the deed is an ordinary one such as eating, drinking, taking a seat and sitting back, then that does not mean any authority. When there is hesitation that the deed is obligatory (*vacib*) or recommended (*mendub*) then also the attributes of the deed are taken into consideration. If the deed has an aspect bringing the human being closer to Allah like worshipping then it is considered as recommended action (*mandûb*). That is the least authority obtained from any behaviours of the Prophet. It cannot be concluded that the deed is obligatory (*vacib*). If there is hesitation then it is, according to the Islamic principle of eliminating the hardship (*refu'l-harac*), preferred as recommendation.¹⁷ In another page of the same book, he has replied this expression of al-Imam Abû Hanîfah, which is “The Prophet is a role-model (*usve*), a guide (*kudve*) and the one who is obeyed so it is necessary to obey him”, as follows: “Taking the Prophet as an example and as a guide and obeying himself means obeying his orders. Actually, when it is said that the ruler is the one whose people obey him and follow that does not mean that when the ruler sits cross-legged then his people follow him doing the same action and when he sleeps they sleep.”¹⁸

At this point, the most important matter that Ghazali stresses is to distinguish the concepts of *teşebbuh* and *teessi* in understanding Sunnah and practicing it. That is to say, it must be clearly distinguished taking the Prophet as an example and imitating it. So according to point of view, it is to take the Prophet as an example that we are ought to do, not to imitate him. As a matter of fact, he continues his expressions in *el-Menhûl* as follows: “Some scholars of hadith have considered imitating (*teşebbuh*) every actions of the Prophet as Sunnah but that is definitely mistake.”¹⁹ In *al-Mustasfâ*, he describes *teessi* (*taking as example*) as follows: “It is impossible to take the Prophet as example (*teessi*) without knowing his intention. And his intention can be known only his saying or by evidence.”²⁰ In addition, according to Ghazali, “Neither those who consider all the actions of the Prophet as obligatory (*vucûb*) nor those who accept all of them as recommendation (*mendûb*) cannot be considered as ones taking him as example. Because it is probable

¹⁶ For more information refer to Ghazali, *al-Mustasfa*, II, 216.

¹⁷ Ghazali, *el-Menhul*, 225.

¹⁸ Ghazali, *el-Menhul*, 226-227.

¹⁹ Ghazali, *el-Menhul*, 225.

²⁰ Ghazali, *al-Mustasfa*, II, 216.

that the Prophet has made something he does not know. (*bel kâne'n-nebiyyu yef'alu mâlâ yedri*). So attempting to make any action of the Prophet without knowing the purpose of it does not mean taking him as an example (*teessi*).²¹

Those who say “He is the Prophet. It is obligatory to respect him and taking him as an example (*teessi*) does mean, in one sense, respecting him” are also replied by Ghazali, in *el-Mustasfâ*, as follows: “Respecting a king can be realized by fulfilling his orders and abstaining from his restrictions. Otherwise, it cannot be fulfilled by doing his every actions when he sit cross-legged they sit cross-legged, when he sit down on the throne they sit down on it. It cannot be considered as respecting the Prophet if we vow the same thing that he vows to do. If he divorces his wife or if he sells or buys something that does not necessitates that we should divorce our wives or we sell and buy the same thing. Shortly, having resemblance to his every action does not mean respecting him.”²² Ghazali, who sees as delirium that opposing to resemblance to him should be considered as underestimating (*tasğîr*), wraps up his expressions as follows: “If resemblance (*teşebbuh*) to him had meant underestimating we would have been considered as having underestimated by leaving fasting of *visal* (fasting fulfilled by combining two days without interrupting the night) or by leaving to marry to nine women or else by leaving to declare his prophethood.”²³

In later stages of Ghazali’s working, especially his dealing with the system of mystical morality, we can see that he has completely given up these ideas of him. Ghazali has talked, in his books namely *Ihya*, *Kimya* and *el-Erba’in*, about the system of Sunnah-centred morality. However but he has preferred to consider every action of the Prophet as morality itself. No longer has he seen any difference between taking him as role model (*teessi*) and resemblance to him (*teşebbuh*) and between imitation (*taklid*) and conforming (*ittib’a*). According to Ghazali, distinguishing custom (*adet*) and worship (*ibadet*) while practicing Sunnah means not understanding it.

According to Ghazali’s expressions made in *Kitâbu'l-erba'in fî usûli'd-dîn*, the tenth principal of Islam is to conform to the Sunnah. And to conform to the Sunnah is to take every action of the Prophet as model without distinguishing custom (*adet*) and worship (*ibadet*). Ghazali, who considers every kind of action even eating, drinking, sitting, sleeping and speaking as conforming to the Sunnah, says: “When I talk

²¹ Ghazali, *al-Mustasfa*, II, 217.

²² Ghazali, *al-Mustasfa*, II, 218.

²³ Ghazali, a.g.e., p.55.

about conforming to the Prophet I do not mean the subjects narrated with worshipping. Anyway it is not possible to neglect the Sunnah in the subjects narrated with worshipping. In order to fully conform (*el-itti-ba'u't-tâm*) the Prophet it is necessary to conform in all customs.”²⁴

In *el-Menhûl* and *el-Mustasfâ*, Ghazali seeing to accept sitting cross-legged in order to resemblance to the Prophet as ridiculing not sunnah in one sense, considers in *el-Erba'in*, even these things as sunnah: “Wearing *sirva*, which Araps have become acquainted with after the Prophet, wearing *sirva* while sitting down, wearing turban and doing it while standing, trimming nails, starting with the index finger and finishing with the small finger of the left foot while trimming.”²⁵ In addition, Ghazali praises Muhammad b. Aslam²⁶ pointing out that he has not eaten any water-melon because he does not know that the Prophet had eaten it. Ghazali, also, praises those who have given away, as expiation, forty scale of wheat because they had started wearing *huff* (*light thin-soled boot*) with the left foot. When asked “At which actions is it necessary to conform the Sunnah?” Ghazali replies it saying “in every subject that any example of Sunnah (hadith) exists about”. According to Ghazali, for example in medicine, it cannot be accepted as right action to neglect the recommendations of the Holy Prophet, who is aware of all the secrets of the divine universe while following the ones of Muhammad b. Zekeriyya er-Râzi.²⁷ Not only the medical recommendations but also suggested times in these recommendations should exactly be followed. For example, giving blood is Sunnah. But according to Ghazali giving blood on Tuesday is another Sunnah. Because the Prophet says as follows: “If those who become 17 years old give blood Tuesdays, this becomes one year therapy for them.”²⁸ The Prophet also says in another hadith as follows: “Whoever give blood Saturdays or Wednesdays and then become ill for variegated disease, they blame for themselves not the others.”²⁹ Besides, according to Ghazali’s expressions, some scholars of Hadith gave blood Saturdays seeing this hadith as weak and afterwards they become ill for variegated disease. One night, one of them saw the Prophet in his dream and com-

²⁴ Ghazali, *Kitab al-Usul al-Din*, p. 550

²⁵ Ghazali, a.g.e., p.55.

²⁶ In our *Rijal* and *Tabakat* books there are four persons who have the names of Mohammad b. Aslem from the Ansar and Khazraj tribe. The other is whom Ibn Ishak narrated from and whose identity is unknown. The third person is Rabi’ b. Haytham and Houseyin el-Ju’fi who narreted from Ibn Aslam. This person is different from the first one. The fourth is a reliable (*thiqa*) Hadith expert from Tus a city in Nisabur. It is likely that Mohammad b. Aslam whom Ghazali mentioned is his fellow citizen. (Ibn Abi Hatem, *Kitabu al-Jarh wa al-Tadil*, VII, 201.)

²⁷ Ghazali, a.g.e., p.58.

²⁸ Abu Davud, *Tib*, 3.

²⁹ Ibn Majah, *Tib*, 22.

plaint about his illness. When the Prophet asked the reason why he gave blood on Saturday he replied him saying “The one transferring this hadith from you was a weak narrator.” Then the Prophet said that it did not matter whoever he was. In any case, he narrated that hadith from me, didn’t he? Whereupon that scholar of hadith repented for his sin and then the Prophet prayed for his health. When he got up in the morning he recovered.³⁰

Actually, this second conviction of Ghazali in conforming to the Sunnah has become a widely accepted and generally practiced idea in all Muslim worlds. At this point, first it will be appropriate to analyze this conviction of Ghazali in a comprehensive manner postponing the critiques about systemizing the Sunnah in a moral system with this kind of understanding.

1. The main purpose in the mystical moral system of Ghazali is to rescue every kind of actions of mankind from being meaningful and repeated habits making each of them conscious manner. While some realize this by investigating reasons, wisdom and profits and by rationalizing it, this, in mystical moral system, is tried to realize through the most sublime example (*el-meselu'l-ulyâ*). And the most sublime example cannot be the one other than Muhammad (pbuh), the final of the prophets.

In *Ihya*, Ghazali says in this subject as follows: “O traveller of truth! Do not suppose that affairs and behaviours of the Prophet are out of divine laws and divine destiny. Because acting in a random manner is an animal-like behaviour. Acting well-balanced in any circumstance is the moral quality and the characteristic nature for those who love Allah. The more the will and the behaviours of the human beings are convenient to the divine will and far from being neglected the more they ascend to the degree of the saints and the prophets and become closer to Allah. Therefore those who are close to nearby are closer than those who are far away. We refuge in Allah from being passed of our actions’ direction to the devil through our self desires.”³¹

2. Imam Ghazali does not explain this matter with the modality of the Prophet alone unlike the Sufis do. In addition, he explains the matter in a philosophical manner in his own way. According to his point of view, conforming to Sunnah, namely conforming to his every action and silence of the Prophet without distinguishing custom (*adet*) and worship (*ibadet*) or resemblance (*teşebbuh*) and taking the Prophet as model (*teessi*), provides natural balance (*mîzânu'l-'amel*) among his soul, heart and behaviours. Because there is a close relationship between the phenomenon and the divine. The similar close relationship exists between human’s heart and other organs. Every state of the heart can be deeply affected by the effects of the physical

³⁰ Ghazali, *al-Arbain*, p.60-61

³¹ Ghazali, *Ihya*, I, 381.

existence, in other words, by the all actions of the organs. The heart is like a mirror reflecting the natural image of the things. But naturally, this mirror should have some characteristics mentioned as follows in order to reflect properly:

- a) It should be polished. A non-polished mirror cannot reflect the image.
- b) It should be illuminated. In an environment without light the mirror cannot reflect.
- c) It should be positioned in accordance with the image to be reflected.

According to Ghazali, the polish of the heart is to protect it from all evils of self desires. This mirror can obtain its brightness and light only by remembrance (*zikr*) and ingenuity (*marifet*). And *zikr* and *marifet* can actualize only by worship which is appropriate to the Sunnah. In addition, the heart mirror should be well balanced. Ghazali's understanding of Sunnah is built on this balance theory. All organs of human being are subordinated to this balance theory. The more the movements of organs resemble to the behaviours of the Prophet, who is *meselu'l-ulyâ'ya* namely the sublime example the more the heart can be well balanced. According to Ghazali, conforming to the Sunnah in this sense has got a secret meaning protecting human being from evils but some of its wisdom cannot be understood. Then many things in the world can be known only by knowledge of its own reality. Therefore the wisdom behind every action accepted as Sunnah cannot be easily understood by human intellectual. There is no doubt that every behaviour of the Prophet is conducted by the light of the prophethood. If the Prophet prefers one of the two behaviours to the other, it means that he has done this owing to the light of the prophethood and the knowledge of the reality revealed to him from the divine universe.

Muhammad Esed (Leopold Weiss), who is Jewish origin and converted to Islam in 1926, has denominated Ghazali's understanding of Sunnah as the spirit of the Sunnah. According to Esed, a meaningful and spiritual life convenient to Islam can be obtained only by concept of Sunnah.³²

According to Esed, those who consider imitating all life of the Prophet in very detailed way as despotism human personality and their individual independence and those who consider resemblance to every action and silence of the Prophet as attack on human action independence and social evaluation are the criticizing individuals who are not so friendly to Islam. It is obvious

³² Muhammad Asad, *The Turning Points of Islam*, translation. Hayrettin Karaman, Iz Publication, Istanbul 1997, p.107.

that Islam conducting the human being to combining all aspects of his life is a logical religion.³³

Esed, as well as Ghazali, is convinced that an individual and social system of morality can be established only by this concept of Sunnah. According to the point of view, we are intellectually and morally obliged to follow the path of the Prophet when we believe that the Quran is the word of Allah Almighty and that Muhammad (pbuh) is the Messenger of Allah. Out duty, whether we comprehend it or not, conduct us to obeying the orders of the Prophet in every circumstance. It is also from our rights as well as our duties to endeavour in order to comprehend the spirit and the wisdom within these orders. Esed, as well as Ghazali, accepts that we cannot understand all time this spirit and the wisdom. He continues to express the subject giving this military example: "If a good soldier can understand the deep strategic meaning and the purpose of the war conducted by his commanders it would be a great chance both for this soldier and the army. But even if he understand its purpose it is not fair to neglect or delay it."³⁴

According to Muhammad Esed, if someone directs himself truly to Islam he ought to conform to the Sunnah of the Prophet spiritually and physically. While doing this he cannot classify the Sunnah of the Prophet as more important and less important ones. Naturally, he can give priority to some of them but we haven't got any right to abandon anyone of his sunnah that hasn't got of primary importance. Less important affairs and behaviours are, in respect to intellectual spiritual education, much more important than our biggest activities of our life. Then great affairs, owing to their greatness, are clear and generally within our attention and conscious. However tiny affair usually can be out of our attention and our control. Therefore tiny affairs are more useful and more affective in respect to improving our self-control strength.³⁵

Muhammad Esed also insists on the benefits of transforming such a Sunnah understanding into a moral behaviour, as if he had translated Ghazali's writings. According to him, this will have two main profits, namely individual and social:

1. Such a Sunnah understanding, first of all, provides self-control, attention, consciousness and vigilance. Forasmuch, haphazard matters prevent people from progressing. The best means to give sense to our acts is taking example of the greatest person, that is to say the Holy Prophet and to include him in our daily lives. That way, each time we want to accomplish a task, we will be obliged to think if the Messenger of Allah did of any such kind. Thereby,

³³ Asad, a.g.e., p.108.

³⁴ Asad, a.g.e., p.111.

³⁵ Asad, a.g.e.,p.114-115

his influence and impact will be the real director of all our customs and manners lifelong. This will conduct us to examine consciously or unconsciously his situation and attitude each time we will be confronted to a task. Therefore, we can consider him not only the owner of an eternal revelation but also the guide of a perfect life.

2. According to Esed, the second important benefit of such a Sunnah concept and the moral system based on this concept is building up a common conscious, behaviours and life style among Muslim communities. Forasmuch the most important reason of social disagreements is the great difference of individuals in their characteristics and tendencies. Different characteristics build up different customs and different customs build up different cultures. Thus, the Sunnah provides building up a harmonious society combining the characteristics and the customs of the individuals and the societies whose social and economic natures are different.³⁶

3. Conclusion

As for determining if such an understanding of Sunnah is appropriate or not, we need to take into consideration, thanks to social and cultural anthropology data, the understanding of faith and worship of Muslims in the past and nowadays as well as their degree of piety and morality conception, and then to ask the following question to confirm it: “Do Muslim individuals and communities appeal the Holy Prophet’s model and guidance in subjects they do not require mentally and canonically any model and guide, or do they appeal indeed when they need a model and a guide?”

According to the famous Tatar scholar Şihabuddin Mercâni, in the past as well as today, Muslims preferred the first method rather than the second, in the application of the Sunnah; that is to say they had been attached more firmly to the Sunnah that had not been pronounced by the Holy Prophet than those ones which the Prophet had himself insisted on. The latter gives the example “Beating a man to kiss Hacer-i Esved” to describe this kind of mentality of Muslims consisting on preferring resemblance (*teşebbuh*) rather than taking example (*teessi*). According to him, “Beating a man to kiss Hacer-i Esved” is not only the type of behaviour that ignorant pilgrims have during the Hadj or the Umrah, but a typical behaviour which reflects at each moment of the daily life our degree of piety, conception of morality and understanding of the Sunnah.³⁷ It is certain that it is very important to reach the integrity between the form and the soul. But when people prefer to re-

³⁶ Asad, a.g.e., p.115-121.

³⁷ Seher Sharaf, Shehabuddin al-Marjani, 216.

semble rather than taking example, they began to pay more importance to formal elements. Consequently, including to our morality understanding, all the beautiful characteristics of the Holy Prophet such as his clemency, mercy, forgiveness, tolerance, ability to facilitate, charity, modesty, honesty, loyalty, wisdom, courage, generosity, thriftiness, disinterestedness from the world's ephemeral benefits, piety, thankfulness, patience, perseverance, constancy, reliance, submission, amiability, suavity, politeness, elegance, bashfulness, cleanliness/chastity, dignity, honour, prudence, bravery, reliability and much more we cannot enumerate here, is certainly more difficult than eating like him, drinking like him, getting dressed like him, sitting like him and sleeping like him.³⁸

If we consider as morality itself, all the physical behaviour issued by the holy Prophet, it will give birth to a completely formal morality. And yet, a specific behaviour which is morally correct at a specific time and place can also be morally improper at some different time and place. Besides, such an attitude would equalize the behaviour which is morally correct and the one which is not (I do not intend the immoral). People who, in order to act morally, exhibit lots of behaviours which are not indeed morally correct might be in a serious moral delusion.

In the application of the Sunnah, we have already tackled the importance of the unity of form and soul, but there is also a controversy concerning the definition of form and soul. Some people call "form" what other people call "soul". For instance, when Imam Ghazali explains the Hadith: "Purity is the half of faith", he seems to be inclined to interpret as modesty the fact of being pure inside and not to pay too much importance to external hygiene. In *Ihya*, he says on this subject: "First Muslims even wiped down their hands under their feet after meals and they did not use soapwort for cleaning. They used to pray on the soil and walk barefooted. These modest people were considered as decent elders. For their personal hygiene, they used to be content with stones and they were not used to get tired to find water." Abû Hurayrah and some companions of Suffe said: "We used to eat kebab and when the qamet began to be recited we put our fingers in gravels, rub the soil with them and began the prayer saying Takbir."³⁹ Great companion Omar said: "At the time of the Prophet, the soapwort (*eşnân*) used in cleaning did not exist. Our towels were under our feet."⁴⁰ So they used to be unembarrassed in the appear-

³⁸ Salahattin Polat, "Hz. Peygamber'in Sünnetini Anlama ve Sünnete Uyuma", the paper presented during the Blessed Birth Week in 1993, *A Model of Human In Islam and the Prophet's Example*, TDV publications, Ankara, 1995, p.33.

³⁹ According to Iraki's statement this incident was not narrated from Abu Hureyra (refer to Ghazali, *Ihya*, I, 224; for Turkish version see I,336)

⁴⁰ According to Iraki it was't narrated from Omar, May Allah be pleased with him. See *Ihya*,

ance; they used to walk barefooted on muddy streets and sit and pray on the soil at the same time... They used to eat, without hesitation, wheat and barley that has been soiled by animals and they did not flee away from horses' and camels' sweat when they came by dirty places. Any of them had never asked about the details of the filth and never insisted on it." After saying that, Ghazali criticizes those who, in his century, do not pay any importance to their internal purification but insists on their external cleaning: "There is such a kind of people today who call 'hygiene' all what they do to satisfy their desires. They did not try to correct their arrogance, ignorance, hypocrisy and discord inside but spent all their time titivating like bridegrooms. If someone cleans himself up with stones, walks barefooted or prays on the soil without a prayer rug, walks on the carpet without slippers or drink water from an oldie's glass, they immediately ramp and rage and reject this man calling him 'filthy guy'. They do not even accept him at table. They call 'dirty' these clothes and behaviours which are proofs of modesty according to our religion whereas they call 'hygiene' all their carnal ornaments."⁴¹

The biggest vice of the mentality considering each movement of the Holy Prophet as Sunnah and wanting to make religious each act of humans had appeared in relations to the Hadith. As people tried to find all the elements of individual and social morality in the Holy Prophet's life, they required the necessity to act according to verses and Hadith. People even need to invent narrations when they did not find what they wanted. We can say that this is the main matter which is the reason of inventing Hadith. For instance, let us deal with Ghazali's expressions about the sequence of the fingers while trimming the nails: There is no doubt that trimming nails is natural hygienic necessity and for this reason it is the tradition of all the prophets.⁴² But Ghazali sees following the sequence as Sunnah. For him, "hand comes before foot because of its dignity. It is started with right hand because of its superiority and left hand follows it. It is more convenient to start with the index finger, the most precious of the fingers, as it points out Tawhîd. And the one which is at the right of the index finger follow it. So it is preferred, in Shariah, to clean beginning from the right-hand side. The index finger comes to right-hand side when we put outer sides of our hands on the surface. When we put inner sides of our hands on the surface then the middle finger comes at the right of it. When hands are left haphazard then inner sides come towards the surface as the right one moves towards the left directions. It is preferable to fulfil natural necessities. At the same time, when we put the palms together, fingers form a circle. When we start with the right index

I, 224; for Turkish version, I, 337.

⁴¹ Ghazali, *Ihya*, I, 225; Turkish version, I, 337.

⁴² Refer to Ibn Habban, XII, 293.

finger we ought to finish with the left index one. So those who start with left little finger should finish with the left thumb and then right thumb. For feet, it is necessary to start with the right little toe and finish with the left little one.⁴³

Ghazali said that we had not seen any data concerning this matter in precedent books but that he heard the Holy Prophet was doing so.⁴⁴ Iraqi, the researcher of hadith sources in *Ihyâ* said he had never read the original of such a Hadith. According to Subqî, the data narrated from the great companion Ali had not been verified.⁴⁵ Here, we would like to underline that Ghazali sees no harm in using such data, suitable to the morality conception he wants to set. Now, let's handle this matter in the light of Hadith knowledge of Ghazali.

⁴³ Ghazali, *Ihya*, I, 380.

⁴⁴ Ghazali, *Ihya*, I, 379.

⁴⁵ Subki, *Tabakat*, VI, 250.