

An Investigation of the "Prohibition of Questions" During the Prophet's life –A Doctrinal Hadithi Study-

Dr. Ata Alla al-Ma'aytah*

Dr. Alladein M. Adawi**

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ملخص

يتناول هذا البحث دراسة مسألة النهي عن السؤال الوارد ذكرها في القرآن والحديث، وهذا بدراسة سياق الأحاديث الواردة في المسألة والظروف التي ورد فيها النهي؛ وذلك لبيان أسباب المنع من السؤال، زمنه، مكانه والحادثة التي كان فيها ومناقشتها، وبذلك نصل إلى أنواع الأسئلة محل المنع ومدة هذا الحظر وهل كان في الفترة الأولى من البعثة أم إنه جاء في آخرها، ومن النقاط التي تم التركيز عليها بيان مشروعية السؤال عن مسائل العقيدة حيث وردت الكثير من الأحاديث التي تبين ذلك، وفي هذا البحث دراسة لمعنى الآية ١٠١ من سورة المائدة ومجالاتها حيث إن فيها نهياً عن السؤال، مع مقارنتها في أثناء البحث بالآيات التي تحت المسلمين على سؤال أهل الذكر.

Abstract

This study investigates the context, circumstances and reasons behind the prohibition of questions which took place at the Prophet's (p.b.u.h) time. In this regard, reasons of prohibition of questions are presented and discussed. This is in order for us to reach a sound view about the generality or otherwise of the prohibition in question. The time, place, circumstances, conditions, duration and themes of the prohibition are also discussed throughout the present study. Kinds of prohibited questions are also examined. It is of the important questions of this research is whether the prohibition was at an early or late period of the Prophet's time. The study also focuses on the questions concerning doctrinal issues and whether the Companions asked such questions or not. This research also includes a study of verse 101 of Surat al-Ma'idah which talks about the same issue, and what opinions scholars held about its meaning and applications.

Introduction:

This study investigates the context and circumstances of the issue of prohibition of questions which took place at the Prophet's (p.b.u.h) time. The researchers investigate a group of the Qur'anic verses and some of the aḥādīth of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) which deal with the issue in question. In the Qur'anic verses under investigation, we find the Qur'ān telling us about questions presented before the prophet (p.b.u.h). On another occasion, we find the Qur'ān tells us that questions are disliked or even prohibited. On a third occasion we find the Qur'ān urging and encouraging Muslim to ask

and inquire about any of the matters which they need to know about. The aḥādīth in question are divided into two categories. In the first, it is reported that prophet was asked questions by his people about various subjects whether these subjects are related to legislation or faith and doctrine. This happened with the prophet's approval on them doing so. In the second group of aḥādīth, the Prophet (p.b.u.h) is reported to have prohibited his Companions from asking him.

In this regard, reasons of prohibition of questions need to be presented and discussed in order for us to reach a sound view about this prohibition. The time, place, circumstances, conditions, duration and themes of the prohibition are also discussed. Kinds of the prohibited

* Assistant prof., Jordan University.

** Assistant prof., Jordan University.

questions are discussed throughout this study. It is of the important questions of this research that whether the prohibition was at an early or late period of the Prophet's time. The study also focuses on the questions regarding doctrinal issues and whether the Companions ask such questions or not.

This research also includes a study of the narrations about the reason of revelation of verse 101 of S-rat al-M«'idah, and what opinions scholars held about its meaning and applications.

It is of the common knowledge for all of us that asking questions is considered as one of ways to knowledge. Seeking knowledge by asking ourselves and others has been one of the characteristics which distinguish humans from other creatures. This process has always yielded knowledge throughout history. Therefore, let us imagine a person who is looking for the truth, or is about to convert from one religion to another or just received a message of a faith, or even just interested to know more about a certain religion he or she should have questions in mind which seek answers. Elements or pillars of the new faith, its rituals and practices should be made clear for him.

The process of asking Questions can be seen by all of us as the process of seeking knowledge or more knowledge about something. Therefore, question is the inquiry, tool and instrument of knowledge or what leads to knowledge¹. When we say that someone asked a question, or that they asked each other a question, this means they searched for news or information². Questions appear in the Book of Allah and the ʿadith of the Prophet in two forms. The first comes for learning or explaining about what is needed and essential. This kind of questions is permissible, recommended or even obligatory to be asked. The second form of questions comes to impose hardship and difficulty on the asked party, this kind is disliked or prohibited.

Asking questions is of the means of gaining the knowledge which humans are endowed with. If this knowledge is related to embracing a new faith or acquiring more knowledge about it, then, every one of us may say that asking questions is obligatory in such cases. This is because asking questions is considered as the only way for obtaining knowledge and making individuals familiar with knowledge of the elements of the new faith. However, in the literature of Sharʿah and its two main sources we find evidence on the prohibition of questions. For example, the verse 101 of S-rat al-M«'idah which is being translated as³:

"O you who believe! Ask not of things, if they were made known to you, would trouble you; but if ye ask of them when the Qur'an is being revealed, they will be made known to you, Allah pardons this: for Allah is Forgiving, Clement."

The verse apparently indicates the prohibition of questions. People refer to this verse and use it on various occasions. On the other hand there is another verse that urges Muslims to ask scholars or people of remembrance whenever they need any information. This issue is studied in this present research in order to reach a sound view and conclusion about the harmonization of the two texts. It is also aimed that we will present aspects and impacts of the prohibition on Muslims.

This study sheds lights on one of the most important parts and aspects of the mission of the prophet and its educational and scientific effect on Arabs, it is of the aspects of the change brought by the prophet (p.b.u.h)

This educational dimension of Islam appears in the effect which this religion left on the life, intellect and minds of its followers. It is a matter that is closely related to the prohibition of questions as it seems useful to investigate the reasons, contexts and circumstances of the prohibition in question. This appears to be more important when we discuss the doctrinal side of

the problem. The prophet was sent as a mercy and guidance to the entire humanity. This theme is shared by all messengers and prophets. The Qur'an tells us about the stories of the previous prophets and their people; it also gives us what should be learnt of lessons and wisdom from such stories.

Chapter One

The Command of Asking Questions

When there is a Need for that

Allah sent messengers with guidance of the man-kind. Messengers teach people who really need them for this purpose. The mission of prophets and messengers is to inform people and explain to them the revealed message and legislations of Allah. The Qur'an tells us about the nature of prophets and messengers, their mission, the need for them. They were sent to people and they are expected to be asked about various issues and matters. This duty is automatically transferred by the death of prophets to the people who inherited their knowledge.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

"And We sent not (as messengers) before you other than men whom We inspired – Ask the followers of the Remembrance if you know not!" (43: S-rat al-Naml)

The verse number 7 of S-rat al-Anbiy' asserts the same meaning.

Al-Makward says that there are three views of what people of the dhikr (knowledge of the divine message) are. The first view is that they are scholars who possess knowledge about previous nations and know that Allah sent not angels but men to all previous nations. The second view sees that they are the people of the Book, while the third view sees that they are the people of the Qur'an⁴. The verse 44 of S-rat al-Na'l states that the mission of the prophet is the explanation of revelation.

This verse is being translated as

"With clear proofs and writings; and We

have revealed to you the Remembrance that you may explain to mankind that which has been revealed for them, and that perhaps they may reflect" (44: S-rat al-Na'l)

This could be by answering people's questions and giving them an explanation of the faith issue, doctrine and legislation.

In fact this is a clear encouragement for asking questions. It encourages and makes it an obligation on prophets to clarify the message to their people. This is clearly mentioned as one of the duties of the prophet. Therefore, it should be permitted for his followers and all people to ask questions that lead to the clarification. This permission should include questions about Islam whether these questions concern doctrine or jurisprudence. Talking about doctrinal issues, we find that they may be more important than any other issues for people to ask about them than other subjects. This is because they are the foundations of Islam and on doctrinal issues they built their faith and following of the message of prophet. Doctrinal issues are then the entrance of Islam and belief. Here, we reach the conclusion that such questions can not be of the innovations in any way. It also indicates that the verse mentioned above appears to order Muslims to ask questions about all issues of the religion, whether these questions are about creed or legislation. The practice of the Companions also indicates this and points to this fact. However, as we shall see, the prophet taught his followers that questions have etiquettes.

One of the best examples on the permissibility of questions, and how the prophet dealt with it may be the hadith narrated by Muslim in his Sahih:

It is narrated on the authority of Abu Huraira that the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: Ask me (about matters pertaining to religion), but they (the Companions of the Holy Prophet) were too much overawed out of profound respect for

him to ask him (anything). In the meanwhile a man came there, and sat near his knees and said: Messenger of Allah, what al-Islam is?-to which he (the Holy Prophet)replied: You must not associate anything with Allah, and establish prayer, pay the poor-rate (Zakat) and observe (the fasts) of Ramadan. He said : You (have) told the truth. He (again) said: Messenger of Allah, what al-Iman (the faith) is? He (the Holy Prophet) said: That you affirm your faith in Allah, His angels, His Books, His meeting, His Apostles, and that you believe in Resurrection and that you believe in Qadr (Divine Decree) in all its entirety, He (the inquirer) said: You (have) told the truth. He (again) said: Messenger of Allah, what al-Ihsan is? Upon this he (the Holy Prophet) said: (Al-Ihsan implies) that you fear Allah as if you are seeing Him, and though you see Him not, verily He is seeing you. He (the inquirer) said: You (have) told the truth. He (the inquirer) said: When there would be the hour (of Doom)? (Upon this) he (the Holy Prophet said: The one who is being asked about it is no better informed than the inquirer himself. I, however, narrate some of its signs (and these are):when you see a slave(woman)giving birth to her master - that is one of the signs of (Doom); when you see barefooted, naked, deaf and dumb (ignorant and foolish persons) as the rulers of the earth - that is one of the signs of the Doom. And when you see the shepherds of black camels exult in buildings - that is one of the signs of Doom. The (Doom) is one of the five things (wrapped) in the unseen. No one knows them except Allah. Then(the Holy Prophet) recited (the following verse): "Verily Allah ! with Him alone is the knowledge of the hour and He it is Who sends down the rain and knows that which

is in the wombs and no person knows whatsoever he shall earn on morrow and a person knows not in whatsoever land he shall die. Verily Allah is Knowing,Aware. He (the narrator, Abu Huraira) said: Then the person stood up an (made his way). The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: Bring him back to me. He was searched for, but they (the Companions of the Holy Prophet) could not find him. The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) thereupon said: He was Gabriel and he wanted to teach you (things pertaining to religion) when you did not ask (them yourselves)⁵.

Hence, this noble and great fundamental ^{ʿadith} clearly indicates that the Companions were hesitant in asking the Prophet such question, therefore, Allah sent the angel Gabriel to teach them and ask on their behalf. The angel asked about pillars of faith, Islam, iʿsān and signs of the Hour or Last Day. This is clearly stated in the two statements of the Prophet "he wanted you to learn, as you have not asked" and in the other narration "came to teach the people their religion".

This education or teaching took the shape of question and answer in a comprehensive but brief way.

On another occasion the Prophet blamed his Companions for not asking about one of the rulings asking about which could have had led to the death of one of them.

Abdullah Ibn Abbas says:

A man was injured during the lifetime of the Apostle of Allah (peace_be_upon_him); he then had a sexual dream, and he was advised to wash and he washed himself. Consequently he died. When this was reported to the Apostle of Allah (peace_be_upon_him) he said: They killed him; may Allah kill them! Is not inquiry the cure of ignorance? ⁶

These pieces of evidence indicate the permissibility, if not the necessity or even the

injunction of asking and inquiring about issues of faith and worship which are the religion of Islam. This makes us investigate the nature of the prohibition of asking questions, and ask about that when was it? and in which kind of questions is it mainly concerned.

Chapter Two: Reasons, conditions, circumstances and evidence of Prohibition of questions

With the advent of Islam the intellect, thought and knowledge of people have moved to a higher place and status, it gave them a higher level and faculty of understating issues and asking about even the minute details of issues of Islam and its legislations. On the other hand the Prophet did not want them to ask about the details which could bring a hardship to them; this could be in the shape of serial questions which may come from the high status of understanding in general and of the of Arabic language the Companions possessed.

It is reported on the authority of Abu Huraira that when it was revealed to the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him): To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth and whether you disclose that which is in your mind or conceal it, Allah will call you to account according to it. Then He forgives whom He pleases and chastises whom He Pleases; and Allah is over everything Potent"(ii. 284). the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) felt it hard and severe and they came to the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) and sat down on their knees and said: Messenger of Allah, we were assigned some duties which were within our power to perform, such as prayer, fasting, struggling (in the cause of Allah), charity. Then this (the above-mentioned) verse was revealed unto

you and it is beyond our power to live up to it. The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: Do you intend to say what the people of two books (Jews and Christians) said before you: "We hear and disobey"? You should rather say: "We hear and we obey, (we seek) Thy forgiveness, our Lord! and unto Thee is the return." And they said: "We hear and we obey, (we seek) Thy forgiveness, Our Lord! and unto Thee is the return." When the people recited it and it smoothly flowed on their tongues, then Allah revealed immediately afterwards: "The Apostle believes in that which is sent down unto him from his Lord, and so do the believers. Each one believes in Allah and His Angels and His Books and His Apostles, saying: We differentiate not between any of His Apostles and they say: We hearken and we obey: (we seek) Thy forgiveness, our Lord! and unto Thee is the return" (ii. 285). When they did that, Allah abrogated this (verse) and the Great, Majestic Allah revealed: "Allah burdens not a soul beyond its capacity. It gets every good that it earns and it suffers every ill that it earns. Our Lord, punish us not if we forget or make a mistake." (The Prophet said:) Yes, our Lord! do not lay on us a burden as Thou didst lay on those before us. (The Prophet said:) Yes, our Lord, impose not on us (burdens) which we have not the strength to bear (The Prophet said:) Yes, and pardon us and grant us protection! and have mercy on us. Thou art our Patron, so grant us victory over the disbelieving people" (ii. 286). He (the Lord) said: Yes.⁷

This deep understanding of the Companions and the questions emerged from that understanding led to the abrogation of the verse.

The prohibition of questions was preserved

in the books of ḥadīth, the following reason for prohibition can be observed from the texts talking about this issue:

1- To avoid prohibition of some matters:

The state of permissibility and lawfulness is the original state in Islam. This is unless a text comes to forbid a matter. Permissibility does not bring any reward or punishment unless abandoning the permissible deed leads to a danger on souls. In this case, permissible thing becomes necessity for preservation of souls or abandoning a prohibited deed.⁸ Therefore, the Prophet warned Muslims against asking any questions which may lead to prohibition of a lawful or permissible deed. The Prophet says: "The most sinful person among the Muslims is the one who asked about something which had not been prohibited, but was prohibited because of his asking."⁹

And he (p.b.u.h) is reported to say: "Leave me as I leave you, for the people who were before you were ruined because of their questions and their differences over their prophets. So, if I forbid you to do something, then keep away from it. And if I order you to do something, then do of it as much as you can."¹⁰

Ibn ʿAjar says: in al-Shafiʿi's words, there is an indication that asking such questions was abominable in the time of Prophet. This is because legislations were open for revelation; this was for avoiding prohibition of lawful as a result of questions.¹¹

al-Aynī says that asking about a matter until it becomes of the forbidden issues in Islam is of the major sins because this brings hardship on all Muslims, killing a person will affect only the killed person, while question affects all Muslims in a general way.¹²

The reason behind the warning about this kind of questions is narrated in Musnad al-Bazzar on the authority of Saʿd ibn abī Waqqas that people used to ask one another or ask the

prophet about permissible matters of the prophet's (religion), they used to keep asking until the matter in question becomes forbidden.¹³

However, the subjects or contents of such questions are not clearly mentioned in the ḥadīth. Ibn Rajab says that they asked about matters that had not really occurred before, as it is in the ḥadīth when they asked the Prophet: "We may meet the enemies in the future and have no knives; can we slaughter the animals with reeds?"¹⁴ They also asked him about obedience or fighting rulers who will appear after him. Hudhayfah asked him about strifes and how they should face them.¹⁵

The Companions committed themselves to this injunction, therefore, Ibn ʿAbbas while praising them said: "I have never seen any people better than the Companions of the Prophet. Throughout his life, they only asked him about twelve matters, all of which are mentioned in the Qurʾān..."¹⁶

In the Qurʾān, the following questions are mentioned, for example verses 186, 216, 219, 222 of Surat al-Baqarah, verses 127, 176 of Surat al-Nisaʿ, verse 214 of Surat al-Maʿidah, verse 187 of Surat al-Aʿraf, verse 1 of Surat al-Anfal, verse 85 of Surat al-Isarʿ, verse 83 of Surat al-Kahf, verse 85 of Surat Taha, verse 59 of Suratal-Furqan, verse 63 of Surat al-Ahzab, and verse 42 of Surat al-Naziʿat. In these verses we find examples on questions about doctrinal and legislations issues.

2- Prohibition which is meant to avoid bringing any hardship, or making more difficulties in legislation:

The Prophet brought us the legislation of Islam which is tolerant and easy. This is because it is the last message of Allah to Mankind, it is comprehensive, universal. The Prophet says: "Religion is very easy and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way. So you should not be extremists, but

try to be near to perfection and receive the good tidings that you will be rewarded; and gain strength by worshipping in the mornings, the nights."¹⁷

For this reason and for the sake of easiness the prophet has clearly stated the reason for which he abandoned gathering his followers for performing the night prayer in the mosque in Ramadan. He (p.b.u.h) feared that this prayer will become obligatory on all Muslims if he continued performing it in the mosque.

Narrated Aisha:

Once in the middle of the night Allah's Apostle (p.b.u.h) went out and prayed in the mosque and some men prayed with him. The next morning the people spoke about it and so more people gathered and prayed with him (in the second night). They circulated the news in the morning, and so, on the third night the number of people increased greatly. Allah's Apostle (p.b.u.h) came out and they prayed behind him. On the fourth night the mosque was overwhelmed by the people till it could not accommodate them. Allah's Apostle came out only for the Fajr prayer and when he finished the prayer, he faced the people and recited "Tashah-hud" (I testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that Muhammad is His Apostle), and then said, "Amma ba'du. Verily your presence (in the mosque at night) was not hidden from me, but I was afraid that this prayer (Prayer of Tahajjud) might be made compulsory and you might not be able to carry it out."¹⁸

This is similar to what is mentioned in another hadith in which a question about hajj is mentioned. Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) reported: Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) addressed us and said: O people, Allah has made Hajj obligatory for you; so perform Hajj. Thereupon a person said: Messenger of Allah, (is it to be performed) every year? He (the Holy Prophet) kept quiet, and he repeated (these words) thrice,

whereupon Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said: If I were to say "Yes," it would become obligatory (for you to perform it every year) and you would not be able to do it. Then he said: Leave me with what I have left to you, for those who were before you were destroyed because of excessive questioning, and their opposition to their apostles. So when I command you to do anything, do it as much as it lies in your power and when I forbid you to do anything, then abandon it."¹⁹

Al-Jassas sees that this question was either in the ninth year of the Hijra or one year later when the prophet performed Hajj.²⁰

Al-Mubarak-furi says that what the prophet means here is to forbid his Companions from asking too many questions about unrevealed matters or details, this is similar to what is mentioned in the Qur'an of the story of the cow. The people who were ordered to slaughter a cow brought hardship to themselves, they could have obeyed Allah by slaughtering any cow.²¹

3- Prevention of questions which were for mockery:

Some questions came out of the mockery of hypocrites who for example asked about the Prophet's lost camel in the battle of Banu al-Mustalaq. A hypocrite said: why not Muhammad has asked his Allah about the place of the camel, however, the Prophet told them about the place of the lost camel, and said that it is Allah who had told him about its place²².

The hypocrite stated clearly that he was before this incident in doubt about the Prophet, and he confessed that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah after the Prophet answered his question. This incident regardless of the initial intention of the person asked the question caused him to embrace Islam at the end.

Narrated Ibn Abbas:

Some people were asking Allah's Apostle

questions mockingly. A man would say, "Who is my father?" Another man whose she-camel had gone astray would say, "Where is my she-camel?" So Allah revealed this Verse in this connection: "O you who believe! Ask not about things which, if made plain to you, may cause you trouble." (5.101) ²³

Curiosity for such question were behind their prohibition, it could be that some hypocrites or Jews who were behind them. This was not the case in Abdullah's question about his father in blood because the reason behind it was the offense he had from people because his lineage was unanimous therefore, the prophet's answer was kind for defending him and stopping people's offensive words. On the other hand, the hypocrites and Jews questions of the prophet were just for mockery, doubt and bringing hardship on him.

4- The prevention of questions that may bring hardship and reveal sophistications.

Narrated Anas:

We were with 'Umar and he said, "We have been forbidden to undertake a difficult task beyond our capability (i.e. to exceed the religious limits e.g., to clean the inside of the eyes while doing ablution)." ²⁴

The author of al-Nihayah says: he means asking too many questions and investigating ambiguous matters which should not be investigated. ²⁵

The prevention of the people of al-Madinah and its permissibility for Bedouins:

This seems to have occurred in the last two years of the life of the prophet. Muslim narrates in his Sahih that

It is reported on the authority of Anas b. Malik that he said: We were forbidden that we should ask anything (without the genuine need) from the Holy Prophet. It, therefore, pleased us that an intelligent person from the dwellers of the desert should come and asked him (the Holy Prophet)

and we should listen to it. A man from the dwellers of the desert came (to the Holy Prophet) and said: Muhammad, your messenger came to us and told us your assertion that verily Allah had sent you (as a prophet). He (the Holy Prophet) remarked: He told the truth. He (the bedouin) said: Who created the heaven? He (the Holy Prophet) replied: Allah. He (the bedouin again) said: Who created the earth? He (the Holy Prophet) replied: Allah. He (the bedouin again) said: Who raised these mountains and who created in them whatever is created there? He (the Holy Prophet) replied: Allah. Upon this he (the bedouin) remarked: By Him Who created the heaven and created the earth and raised mountains thereupon, has Allah (in fact) sent you? He (the Holy Prophet) said: Yes. He (the bedouin) said: Your messenger also told us that five prayers (had been made) obligatory for us during the day and the night. He (the Holy Prophet) remarked: He told you the truth. He (the bedouin) said: By Him Who sent you, is it Allah Who ordered you about this (i.e. prayers)? He (the Holy Prophet) said: Yes. He (the bedouin) said: Your messenger told us that Zakat had been made obligatory in our riches. He (the Holy Prophet) said: He has told the truth. He (the bedouin) said: By Him Who sent you (as a prophet), is it Allah Who ordered you about it (Zakat)? He (the Holy Prophet) said: Yes. He (the bedouin) said: Your messenger told us that it had been made obligatory for us to fast every year during the month of Ramadan. He (the Holy Prophet) said: He has told the truth. He (the bedouin) said: By Him Who sent you (as a prophet), is it Allah Who ordered you about it (the fasts of Ramadan)? He (the Holy Prophet) said: Yes. He (the bedouin) said: Your messenger also told us that pilgrimage (Hajj) to the House (of Ka'bah) had been made obligatory for him who is able to undertake the journey to it. He (the Holy Prophet) said: Yes. The narrator said that he (the bedouin) set off (at the conclusion of this answer, but at the time of

his departure) remarked: 'By Him Who sent you with the Truth, I would neither make any addition to them nor would I diminish anything out of them. Upon this the Holy Prophet remarked: If he were true (to what he said) he must enter Paradise.²⁶

This text reveals clear and definite facts, it indicates the following:

- 1- It gives us the deep understanding of the Companions of the prophet, their desire to acquire knowledge by hearing information more than once, and their method of dealing with questions.
- 2- The question of the Bedouin was of some kind of common knowledge for the people of al-Madina. It was not about something new for them.
- 3- The deep developed question of the Companions about the repletion of pilgrimage indicates their wide sense of knowledge in comparison with the simplicity of the question of the Bedouin. This kind of searching for details and complexity of rulings at the time of revelation whether in doctrinal or legislation matters is the secret of the prohibition.
- 4- What was narrated about people who stayed in al-Madina for the sake of seeking knowledge from such questions and the exception from the prevention confirms the previous point that the Companions embraced Islam after a strong conviction and knowledge of the religion. In Sahih Muslim

In another hadith, Nawwas b. Sam'ain reported: I stayed with Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) for one year. What obstructed me to migrate was (nothing) but (persistent) inquiries from him (about Islam). (It was a common observation) that when anyone of us migrated (to Medina) he ceased to ask (too many questions) from Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him). So I asked him about virtue and vice. Thereupon Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said: Virtue is a kind disposition and

vice is what rankles in your mind and that you disapprove of its being known to the people.²⁷

The questions of al-Nawwas were about the Qur'an and doctrines²⁸ He came with his father after they had become Muslims to the Prophet in the year of delegations, 8 A. H, as he died in the year 50 after the Hijra.²⁹

In another narration we find evidence on the deep understanding of the Companions, it is narrated on the authority of Abu Umamah.

This narration of Abu Umamah indicates that the Bedouins' questions were made permissible at the time of the farewell pilgrimage of the prophet as all narrations show that the prohibition was made on that occasion. Therefore, the prohibition lasted for no more than two years or it was even less than a year according to the view that it was announced in the ninth year of Hijra. From the timing of the prohibition we can say that the revelation was in its final stages, therefore, it is a call for companions to concentrate on studying and following what was revealed and making ijtihad as the prophet and revelation will not stay with for long time. Therefore, it establishes a new method of seeking knowledge by investigating the texts available, the verse "they will be made plain to you" means that if you depend on the prophet in everything and in asking for details you will not be able to make ijtihad or dependent extraction of rulings after his death and the completion of the revelation. They needed to learn analysis and investigations by themselves.

- 6- The prohibition of questions because of the fear of being similar to Jews:

This reason can be concluded from the verse 108 of Surat al-Baqarah, Allah says: "Or would you question your Messenger as Moses was questioned before? He who chooses disbelief instead of faith, surely he has gone astray from a straight road". Here Muslims are addressed as

the verse mentions "your messenger". The word "would you" indicates that there was no question but it could have been in their souls or minds, it could be something passed from the Jews as well. The Jews asked, as it is mentioned in the verse 55 of same Surat al-Baqarah " And you said: "O Moses! We will not believe in you till we see Allah plainly, and even while you gazed the lightning seized you" and they also asked, as mentioned in the verse 138 of Surat al-A'raf "And We brought the Children of Israel across the sea, and they came to a people who were given up to idols which they had. They said: "O Moses! Make for us god just like they have gods. He said: You are a people who know not" Then, the prohibition here was for blocking means of serial questions which may lead to what was asked about the time of the prophet Moses.³⁰

Abu Waqid Laythi reported that when the Prophet went to the Battle of Hunayn, there was on his way a tree of the disbelievers' known as Dhat Anwat. They used to put their weapons on it... The companions asked the prophet to make them a Dhat Anwat. He said, "I swear by Allah! this is similar to what the people of Moses said, 'Make for us a god as there is for them gods.' I swear by Him who has my soul in His hand, you will follow the practices of the people gone before you."³¹

Al-Fakhr al-Razi says that there were questions which searching for it bring no good on Muslims³² He points to the hadith mentioned above.

Another hadith supporting this subject is what Anas reported that after the death of Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) Abu Bakr said to 'Umar: Let us visit Umm Aiman as Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) used to visit her. As we came to her, she wept. They (Abu Bakr and Umar) said to her: What makes you weep? What is in store (in the next world) for Allah's-Messenger (may peace be upon him) is better than (this worldly life). She said : I weep

not because I am ignorant of the fact that what is in store for Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) (in the next world) is better than (this world), but I weep because the revelation which came from the Heaven has ceased to come. This moved both of them to tears and they began to weep along with her.³³

7- The Abominableness of Asking about Private or Personal Issues:

In this regard, we see that the Prophet disliked some questions of the Companions because they were about personal or private issues. Such questions can be seen as issues which are not of the public concerns and they should not take the first priority in a religious, teaching and educational gathering led by the Prophet.

On one of the occasions, the Prophet is said to give an address about the End of this Life and other great issues, it was a touching and pathetic address to the extent that the Companions cried. The Prophet wanted the Companions to ask about the subject of his address. However, two of his Companions asked him about their fathers.

Al-Bukhari narrated on the authority of Anas bin Malik:

The Prophet came out after the sun had declined and offered the Zuhur prayer (in congregation). After finishing it with Taslim, he stood on the pulpit and mentioned the Hour and mentioned there would happen great events before it. Then he said, "Whoever wants to ask me any question, may do so, for by Allah, you will not ask me about anything but I will inform you of its answer as long as I am at this place of mine." On this, the Ansar wept violently, and Allah's Apostle kept on saying, "Ask Me! " Then a man got up and asked, "Where will my entrance be, O Allah's Apostle?" The Prophet said, "(You will go to) the Fire." Then 'Abdullah bin Hudhaifa got up and asked, "Who is my father, O Allah's Apostle?"

The Prophet replied, "Your father is Hudhaifa." The Prophet then kept on saying (angrily), "Ask me! Ask me!" 'Umar then knelt on his knees and said, "We have accepted Allah as our Lord and Islam as our religion and Muhammad as an Apostle." Allah's Apostle became quiet when 'Umar said that. Then Allah's Apostle said, "By Him in Whose Hand my life is, Paradise and Hell were displayed before me across this wall while I was praying, and I never saw such good and evil as I have seen today." ³⁴

On the narration of Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari:

Allah's Apostle was asked about things which he disliked, and when the people asked too many questions, he became angry and said, "Ask me (any question)." A man got up and said, "O Allah's Apostle! Who is my father?" The Prophet replied, "Your father is Hudhaifa." Then another man got up and said, "O Allah's Apostle! Who is my father?" The Prophet said, "Your father is Salim, Maula Shaiba." When 'Umar saw the signs of anger on the face of Allah's Apostle, he said, "We repent to Allah." ³⁵

Another narration in Sahih Muslim reads as:

Ibn Shihab reported: Ubaidullah b. 'Abdullah b. 'Utba told me that the mother of 'Abdullah b. Hudhafa told 'Abdullah b. Hudhafa: I have never heard of a son more disobedient than you. Do you feel yourself immune from the fact that your mother committed a sin which the women in the pre-Islamic period committed and then you disgrace her in the eyes of the people? 'Abdullah b. Hudhafa said: If my fatherhood were to be attributed to a black slave I would have connected myself with him. ³⁶

And it is also narrated with the addition,

"...Thereupon Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said: Never did I see the good and evil as today. Paradise and Hell were given a visible shape before me (in this worldly life) and I saw both of them near this well." ³⁷

Here, from the various narrations of this hadith, we can safely observe the following facts:

In this ahadith about this issue, we find that the Prophet stood on the Minbar and gave his speech, the situation was of remembrance of the Hereafter, the Companions' reaction was great to the extent that they cried of fear of the horror of the Day of Judgment. They were listening carefully to what the Prophet was saying.

These narrations show that the issue addressed and discussed by the Prophet was of a great significant, it was a doctrinal issue. The speech was about the Hereafter, Paradise and Hell. This is of the public knowledge in Islam. The situation was serious; therefore it required serious and relevant questions to be asked. This is of the basic etiquettes to be observed in such sacred gathering in the presence of the Prophet. Let us imagine an easier situation in a class room where the lecturer is talking about doctrine in Islam while a student is asking about the grade he got in an exam or about his absence in the previous lesson. This is considered as improper question. The issues he asked about by Abdallah ibn Hudhafah are not priorities at that time. The thought and mind should not be thinking about such issues on such occasions. We also can say that the student was asking about a personal issue in public class. Here, the anger was very clear on the Prophet's face. Umar feared that and commented "We repent to Allah." , and in the other narration he said: , "We have accepted Allah as our Lord and Islam as our religion and Muhammad as an Apostle.".

In the Prophet's insistence on his Companions to ask him, he repeated the sentence "ask me", we can see that he wanted them to ask about particular issues. This can be confirmed from his dislike of the question about the Companion's ancestors. He wanted them to ask about the grave matter in question at that time, about religion or about something of a public interest

and benefit of all Muslims till the Day of Judgment.

1. Here we also observe that there was on that occasion any prohibition of questions but a dislike of the questions asked because they were irrelevant to the occasion and not a priority. It is a great lesson to all Muslims and an educational approach which is to be followed until the Last Day.
2. Abdullah hasten and asked about something which is considered private or not of the public concerns and was not worried about any disgrace that could have affected him if the Prophet answer was contrary to was deemed. It seems also that the Companions saw the question improper and does not suit the situation of great sermon and its news.

Al-'Ayni says that 'Ummar's comment "Allah is our Lord" and repentance to Allah, and his reaction to the questions of the Companions indicates his great knowledge of the situation and his fear that such questions were kinds of intransigence or even doubt. This hadith indicates 'Umar deep understands and virtue as knowledgeable person does ask about unneeded issues or detestable questions, The hadith is also of the miracles of the Prophet.³⁸

Therefore, the prohibition mentioned here came for a reason. It was specially for asking about the pilgrimage. The timing of the incident indicates that it was in the last two or three years of the prophet's mission. Therefore, the narration in question does not imply any general prohibition of questions, but a particular kind of questions.

The Prophet's reactions are legislation to Muslims. Therefore, if he allowed that kind of questions or that way of dealing with him, then it would not have been guaranteed that some sick souls would not abuse it.

Chapter Three: An Investigation of the Meaning of the Verse of Prohibition of Questions:

After justifying the prohibition of questions at the time of the prophet, putting it in its context,

one more issue still needs to be inspected. This is the meaning of the verse 101 of Surat al-M'edah mentioned above. The reason of revelation of this verse is always linked with the incidents mentioned in the previous chapter about the question of Abd Allah ibn Hudhafah³⁹. Scholars have various views about the prohibition mentioned in this verse; however, it still gives rules and etiquettes for asking questions.

Al-Razi says that Questions are of two kinds, the first is about something that does not have a precedent in the Book or the Sunnah, and this is what is prohibited. The second kind of questions is the question about something mentioned in the Book or in the Sunnah and needs elaboration, asking about such issues is obligatory. This kind is what is meant here in this verse, this is also to make the verse of the prohibition.⁴⁰

Abu al-Su'ud in his commentary says that the prohibition here was for whatever seems to be hard on them or brings hardship in duties or hidden matters that bring no good to them when they are revealed. He adds that asking about witnessed matters requires their appearance, asking about duties will make them obligated pointedly.⁴¹ Here the prohibition should be confined to whatever unneeded matters. This is because Muslims are ordered and recommended to ask about whatever they need to know. This is very clear in the verse 7 of Surat al-Anbiya' "ask the followers of the Reminder, if you know not". Al-Qushayri says that if al-'Ajlani had not asked about adultery, then "cursing" could have not been known. Ibn al-Jawzi confines the prohibition mentioned here to intransigence and shallowness which bring the punishment in the shape of appearance of that matter in the shape of hardship.⁴²

Of the evidence on the nature of the prohibition and that it was specific not general what al-Qasimi mentions that the ahadith of the prohibition preceded the verse mentioned above, or it could be a prohibition of asking about what was already

known to them at that time of slaughtering animals by sharp tools or about matters of resurrection and other questions which are mentioned in the Qur'an. Those who said that asking questions is disliked (makruh) saw questions as the way for bringing hardship therefore they said this kind of questions should be avoided.⁴³ Ibn al-'Arabi says that the scholars who hold the view of prohibition of asking about matters until they appear and become real because what is feared will not occur when matters become reality and need rulings.⁴⁴ Therefore, it is clear now that the prohibition was for a short period of time. This was in that last stage of the mission and life of the prophet. It was specific and not general. Issues of doctrine were of the subjects of questions of the Companions as we shall see in the following examples.

Conclusion:

In this paper, the issue of prohibition of questions has been discussed by referring to the main sources of Islam al-Qur'an and the hadith of the prophet. The investigation of the verses which seem to give two different rulings about this issue revealed that the prohibition was not the rule but the exception which come in the context of teaching and educating Muslims about how to ask questions and about what they should ask. The prohibition of questions mentioned in the hadith was not general as well as it comes in the context of avoiding bringing hardship to Muslims, avoiding asking about sophistications of matters at the time of revelation, avoiding mockery, avoiding asking improper questions or questions regarding private and personal issues which were not of the priorities of the Prophet, or even not of the public concerns, and for avoiding being similar to the Jews. The study also shows that the prohibition came in a very late stage of the Prophet's missions as it was in the last two years of his life, therefore asking questions was permissible during the longest part of the life of the Prophet. These conclusions

give indications of the educational goal of the prohibition. This can be seen either by saying that it was for training the Companions on understanding the texts and extracting rules from them, or by highlighting the etiquettes of asking questions.

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