

### **3) The Beard - Sunnah Or Wajib?**

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In the name of Allah, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful,

Growing a beard is an extremely emphasised and encouraged way (Sunnah) of the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace), and held by the Muslim scholars to be necessary (wajib) for a man.

The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) repeatedly instructed the growing of a beard in many narrations, and his own habitual and continuous practice was that of growing a full beard. Thus, the obligation of keeping a beard is clear from the statements of the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace), the statements of the great Imams and the constant practice of the early Muslims (salaf).

1) Sayyiduna Abd Allah ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) said: **“Trim (your) moustaches and lengthen/grow (your) beards.”** (Sahih al-Bukhari & Sahih Muslim)

2) Sayyiduna Abu Hurayra (Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) said: **“Cut off moustaches, leave beards and do otherwise than the fire worshippers.”** (Sahih Muslim, no. 260)

3) Sayyiduna Anas ibn Malik (Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) said: **“Trim moustaches, lengthen/leave beards and do not imitate the Jews.”** (Tahawi, Sharh Ma’ani al-Athar, 4/230)

4) Sayyiduna Abd Allah ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with him) narrates **that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) ordered the trimming/clipping of moustaches and the leaving of the beards.** (Sahih Muslim, no. 1/222)

In the above Hadiths, the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) categorically commanded the keeping of the beard in many different ways, and with using different words. In the English translation of the above narrations (Hadiths), it is not possible to clearly observe the different wordings used. However, those who may look at the original Arabic text of these narrations will see that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) used different phrases and words to emphasise the keeping of the beard.

The great Hadith master, Imam al-Nawawi (Allah have mercy on him) states in his renowned commentary of Sahih Muslim:

The words: A’fu, Awfu. Arkhu, Arju and Waffiru have all been used; **the meaning of all of which is to leave the beard as it is.** (Sharh Sahih Muslim, 3/151)

In the above narrations, the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) explicitly commanded the growing of the beard. According to the scholars of the “science of juristic principles” (usul al-Fiqh), the explicit command (amr) of the Qur’an and Sunnah signifies the obligatory nature of an act (al-Amr li al-Wujub) unless otherwise proven. (See, for example: al-Nasafi, Kashf al-Asrar Sharh al-Manar, 1/37 for the Hanafi school, al-Baji, Ihkam al-Fusul fi Ahkam al-Usul, p.79 for the Maliki school, al-Shirazi, al-Luma’ for the Shafi’i school and Ibn Badran, Nuzhat al-Khatir al-Atir, 2/43 for the Hanbali school).

The Messenger of Allah’s (Allah bless him & give him peace) constant practice was also that of keeping a beard:

5) Abu Ma’mar relates that we asked Khabbab (Allah be pleased with him) whether the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) used to recite the Qur’an in the Zuhr and the Asr prayers. He replied in the affirmative. We said, **“How did you come to know of this?”** He replied, **“From the movement of his beard.”** (Sahih al-Bukhari 1/971 & Sunan Abu Dawud, no. 801)

6) Sayyiduna Anas ibn Malik (Allah be pleased with him) narrates that when the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) performed ablution (wudhu), he would take a handful of water and put it under his jaws and pass it through his beard. He said, **“This is what my Lord ordered me to do.”** (Sunan Abu Dawud, no. 145, Sunan al-Bayhaqi, 1.54 and authenticated by al-Hakim)

7) Sayyiduna Jabir ibn Abd Allah (Allah be pleased with him) narrates **that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace).....had a thick beard....**” (Sahih Muslim, no. 1823)

The four Sunni schools of Islamic law (madhhabs) also quite clearly mention the impermissibility of shaving the beard:

### **The Hanafi School**

The great Hanafi jurist, Imam al-Haskafi (Allah have mercy on him) states in his Durr al-Mukhtar: **“It is unlawful for one to trim his beard....And as for shortening it when it is less than a fistful, as some North Africans and effeminate men do, this is something no one (i.e. of the Hanafi scholars) has said is permitted.”** (See: Radd al-Muhtar ala al-Durr al-Mukhtar, 2/113, Kitab al-Sawm)

This position is also confirmed in other works, such as al-Bahr al-Ra’iq, Fath al-Qadir, al-Fatawa al-Hindiyya, Bada’i al-Sana’i and al-Ikhtiyar.

### **The Maliki School**

Imam al-Dasuqi (Allah have mercy on him) states: **“It is unlawful (haram) for a man to shave off his beard, and the perpetrator will be disciplined.”** (Hashiyat al-Dasuqi ala Sharh al-Kabir, 1/90, Kitab al-Taharah)

### **The Shafi’i school**

It is stated in Sharh al-Ubab: **“The two shaykhs of the school (i.e. Nawawi & Rafi’i) state that it is Makruh (disliked) to shave the beard, but Ibn al-Rif’a objected to this stating that Imam Shafi’i (Allah have mercy on him) himself categorically mentioned in his book “al-Umm” that shaving the beard is unlawful (haram). Imam al-Azra’i said that the correct position of the school is that, to shave the beard without a valid medical reason is unlawful.”** (Sharh al-Ubab & Hashiya Ibn Qasim al-Abbadi, 9/376)

Imam Ibn Qasim al-Abbadi also stated in his Hashiya: **“It is said that, shaving of the beard is unlawful.”** (See: Hashiya Ibn Qasim al-Abbadi ala Tuhfat al-Muhtaj, 2/468, Kitab al-Salat)

### **The Hanbali School**

Imam al-Bahuti (Allah have mercy on him) states: **“(From the acts of nature (fitrah) is to lengthen the beard in a way that it should not be trimmed at all. It is stated in the school that, this is as long as it does not become abnormally long in a way that it causes abhorrence. And it is unlawful (haram) to shave it off.”** (Kashaf al-Qina’, 1/75).

This is also confirmed in the other major Hanbali works, such as: al-Insaf, 1/121 by al-Mawardi, Sharh Muntaha al-Iradat, 1/85 by al-Bahuti and al-Rawdh al-Murbi’, 27-28 also by al-Bahuti.

The above statements of the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) and the statements of the jurist (fuqaha) go a long way in proving that to shave the beard (or trimming it to a very thin line which in effect is shaving) is unlawful (haram). A Muslim (and especially one who classes himself to be practicing) can never look with favour towards the act of shaving the beard.

### **Length Of The Beard**

As far as the length of the beard is concerned, there is no doubt in the fact that the practice of the Mercy of both worlds, the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) and his Companions (Allah be pleased with them all) was that of keeping and growing the beard to at least a fistful.

The Hadith quoted above from Sahih al-Bukhari, wherein Khabbab (Allah be pleased with him) said that, they (sahaba) came to know of the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) reciting in his prayers due to the movement of his beard, is a clear proof of this. One can imagine the length of the Messenger of Allah’s beard if the Companions could see it moving from standing behind him in prayers.

Similarly, there are other narrations that clearly state that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) had a very thick and copious beard.

Imam al-Bukhari relates in his “Sahih” from Sayyiduna Abd Allah ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) said: **“Do otherwise than those who ascribe partners to Allah (al-mushrikin): leave beards, and trim moustaches.”** And Ibn Umar,

when he went on Hajj or Umra, **would grasp his beard with his hand, and removed what was in excess of it.**" (Sahih al-Bukhari, 7/206)

Other Companions such as Abu Hurayra and Umar ibn al-Khattab (Allah be pleased with them all) are also reported to have trimmed their beards to a fistful, thus the practice of the Sahaba, who understood the Sunnah more than anyone else, is a clear proof on the permissibility of trimming the beard to a fistful.

The great Hanafi jurist, Imam Ibn Abidin (Allah have mercy on him) states: **"when a narrator (Ibn Umar, in this case), does something in contradiction to what he has narrated (the words "leave/grow beards"), it indicates that the original ruling (of not trimming the beard at all) has been superseded (mansukh) by a subsequent one--permitting the beard to be trimmed, in this case. But trimming it when it is already less than a handful is not permissible in the Hanafi school."** (Ibn Abidin: Radd al-muhtar ala al-durr al-mukhtar, 2/113)

Thus, as also quoted earlier, the Hanafi School is quite clear, in that it is unlawful to trim the beard shorter than a fistful, as mentioned by both Imam al-Haskafi and Imam Ibn Abidin. There is also an opinion in the school that, to trim the excess hair of a fistful is necessary (wajib), although the preferred opinion is that it is recommended (mandub) to trim it to a fistful. (See: Durr al-Mukhtar)

The Maliki School is also quite clear in that it is impermissible to trim the beard unless it is extremely long. However, they don't restrict this to a fistful.

Imam Shaykh Ali al-Sa'idi al-Adawi (Allah have mercy on him) states: **"There is nothing wrong (in the sense that it is recommended) in trimming the beard if it is exceptionally long....It will be impermissible to trim it if it was not long enough or was only slightly long. Some commentators (on the risala) explained the meaning of "lengthiness" (kathra) that which is considered to be abnormal, for leaving (such a lengthy beard) causes abhorrence in one's appearance.....I would say: Some commentators have mentioned that trimming the beard when it has not grown (very) long will be unlawful similar to shaving it. But the apparent interpretation (of the text) is that the point of prohibition - as we have already demonstrated to you - is when clipping results in disfigurement (muthla), and this clear in the absence of lengthiness or when it is slightly long and one goes overboard in trimming. As for when it is (very) long and clipping it doesn't produce disfigurement, then the apparently correct interpretation is that it is contrary to what is more appropriate (khalaf al-awla)." (Hashiya of Shaykh Ali al-Adawi on the commentary (sharh) of Imam Abu al-Hasan to the Risala of Ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani, 1/409/410)**

Imam al-Qarafi (Allah have mercy on him) states: **"From the nature (fitrah) is the lengthening of the beard unless it becomes extremely long (Jiddan), in which case, it would be recommended to trim it."** (al-Zakhira, 13/278)

The Shafi'i school, which is the most liberal on the beard issue, states that it is disliked (makruh) to trim the beard.

Imam al-Nawawi (Allah have mercy on him) states: **"The correct opinion is that it is disliked to trim**

**the beard unrestrictedly (mutlaqan), rather, it should be left uncut however it grows.”** (al-Majmu’, 1/290)

Imam Ibn Hajar (Allah have mercy on him) says in his Tuhfa: **“The outward purport (dhahir) of what our imams say is that it is unconditionally disliked to trim the beard.”** (Tuhfat al-Muhtaj, 9.376)

The Hanbali School mentions that to leave the beard is necessary, and permissible to trim it to a fistful. (See: Kashaf al-Qina’, 1/75)

The upshot of all of the above is that, all the four schools of Islamic law regard the trimming of the beard less than a fistful as blameworthy (unlawful, according to the three schools and disliked according to the Shafi’i school). Thus, one should not trim his beard less than a fistful.

Scholars and those associated to Da’wa work must take extra care with regards to this. Even if trimming the beard less than a fistful is considered to be disliked, it is unfitting for a person active in Islamic work to involve himself in such a practice, for a person is more effective with his actions than his words.

Some individuals try to justify the shaving of the beard using many excuses, such as, it could be an obstacle in the way of effective Da’wa, etc, but these excuses are just that. When we have the clear guidance from the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace), then there is no other way for us other than that of the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace)

If the service to Islam and Muslims is done with adherence to the laws of Shariah, then one will be rewarded. However, service to Islam and the Muslims, whilst forgoing the injunctions of Islam is neither effective nor acceptable by Allah Almighty.

Consider the following incident recorded by Imam Ibn Kathir in his al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya, Imam al-Tabari in his Tarikh and Imam Ibn al-Athir in his al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh: **“When the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) wrote a letter to the King of Persia (kisra) inviting him to Islam, he (kisra) tore the latter apart and then sent two of his people to the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace). When they entered onto the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace), their beards were shaven and they had grown a big moustache, the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) disliked to even look at them, and said; **“Who commanded you to do this?”** They replied that their Lord (kisra) had ordered them to do so. The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) said, **“But my Lord has ordered me to shorten my moustache and lengthen my beard....”**** (al-Bidaya Wal-Nihaya, 4/269/270)

In the above episode, the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) disliked even to look at the Messengers of Kisra, for they had grown their Moustaches and shaved off their beards. This should serve as a great deterrent for all those who do not want to hurt the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) in any way, and thus abstain from any practice that would be disliked by him.

Before parting with the issue, I would like to mention that, the position taken above is according to

my understanding of the Islamic ruling with regards to the beard, and this is what I have learnt from the majority of my teachers. This is also the position held by the scholars of the Indian Subcontinent and elsewhere.

However, there are other major scholars, especially in the Middle East, who hold a more lenient position with regards to the trimming of the beard. And, as you have seen, that there is nothing clear and decisive in the Shafi'i school stating that the beard must be grown to a fistful unless one will be sinful, thus many great Shafi'i scholars (from Yemen, for example) do not consider growing the beard to a fistful as obligatory, rather merely somewhat disliked if not kept.

Therefore, it is necessary that we have full conviction in what we believe and respect the opinions of others, as long as it falls into the category of valid Ijtihad. The most one may do is offer sincere advice (nasiha) while respecting others' right not to follow the opinion one believes to be correct. This is the path of tolerance, and mercy.

### **The Ruling On Moustache**

The trimming and shortening of the moustache has been emphatically mentioned in many narrations of the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace), as we have seen above, thus, there is no need to repeat these narrations.

The Hadiths from the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) mention two things:

1) Some state, **"Shorten your moustaches."**

2) Others state, **"Remove your moustaches."** (See: Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim).

Thus, all the Schools of Islamic law agree on the fact that, it is impermissible to leave the moustache in a way that it covers the upper lip, for it is against the Sunnah and unhygienic, especially when eating. It would be unlawful to grow a very long moustache, as is customary in many people.

Zayd ibn Arqam (Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) said: **"Whosoever does not shorten his moustache is not one from us."** (Sunan Tirmizi, no. 2761, Sunan Nasa'i, no. 14 and Musnad Ahmad, 4/366, and Imam al-Tirmizi classed it to be authentic).

Sayyiduna Abd Allah ibn Abbas (Allah be pleased with him) narrates **that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) used to trim or take from his moustache, and the friend of Allah (khalil), the Prophet Ibrahim (blessings be upon him) would also do the same."** (Sunan Tirmizi, no. 2760 and Musnad Ahmad, 1/301)

However, the scholars differ as to whether it is better to shorten the moustache or remove it and shave it altogether.

The relied upon opinion in the Hanafi School is that, **it is even better to remove one's moustache,**

**though the sunnah is achieved by shortening the it such that it no longer covers the upper lip.**

Imam Ibn Abidin (Allah have mercy on him) states **that the opinion of shaving off the moustache being a Sunnah, was chosen by many scholars.** (Radd al-Muhtar)

Imam al-Tahawi said that **it is a Sunnah to shave the moustache, and it is better than shortening it,** affirming that this is the position of Abu Hanifa and both his main students (Allah have mercy on them). (See: Tahawi, Sharh Ma'ani al-Athaar, 4.229,

He also reported, with his authentic chains of transmission, that this was from the practice of great Companions, including Abd Allah ibn Umar, Abu Hurayra, Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, Abu Usayd al-Sa'idi, Rafi' ibn Khadij, Jabir ibn Abd Allah, Anas ibn Malik, and others. (ibid.)

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (Allah have mercy on him) used to shave his moustache, thus the Hanbali position is also similar to that of the Hanafis. The Maliki School states that the moustache should not be completely removed, rather only shortened. The Shafi'is also hold a similar view.

This is what I have, and Allah knows best.

Mufti Muhammad Ibn Adam al-Kawthari