

Question:

Al-salāmu ‘alaykum. What is the ruling of a *sunnī* Muslim who believes that ‘Alī (*raḍy Allāhu ‘anhu*) was the best companion? It is permissible to believe that ‘Alī should have been the first caliph? Please answer both of my questions.

Answer:

In the name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful

Wa ‘alaykum al-Salām wa Raḥmat Allāh wa Barakātuh.

Allah has complete perfection. Allah’s creation, by the mere fact that they are creation, do not. The Prophets are the most perfect of all. And from them, the Seal of the Prophets ﷺ is above all. By virtue of the Prophet ﷺ, the Companions are the best people after him ﷺ and the other Prophets (upon them peace).

In the Qur’ān, Allah says: “*We elevated some above others.*” (An‘ām, (6):165) And He says: “*Allah shall raise the believers among you and those who have knowledge [many, varying] ranks.*” (Mujādilah, (58):11) The Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) said: “*Treat people according to their status.*”¹ This indicates that there are varying levels of virtue. Also, it instructs us to act on our knowledge of that. Some companions are more virtuous than others.

Ahl al-Sunnah unanimously agreed that Abū Bakr is the most virtuous Companion; after him ‘Umar (Allah be pleased with them all) is the most virtuous. There is a difference among Ahl al-Sunnah regarding ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī (Allah be pleased with them both); most believe that ‘Uthmān is of greater virtue.² Preference, regardless of who it is given to, is a general assessment; thus, some may be more virtuous than others in respect to specific qualities of character or because of specific deeds which they performed.

¹ Abū Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-Adab, Bāb Tanzīl al-Nās Manāzila hum*, Sunan Abī Dāwūd, 7:210.

² Abū al-Yusr al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl al-Dīn*, 199-202; Nūr al-Dīn al-Ṣābūnī, *al-Kifāyah fi-l-Hidāyah*, 232-38; al-Ījī and Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8:397-405; Mulla ‘Alī Qārī, *Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, 135-53; Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāshid*, 5:240-300.

As for those who preferred 'Alī over all others, they are guilty of innovation.³ The erudite scholar, 'Allāmah Khalid Mahmood (Allah shower him in mercy), said:

Whoever does not believe in the superiority [*afḍaliyah*] of Abū Bakr is from *ahl al-bid'ah* [people of innovation] and outside of Ahl al-Sunnah.⁴

This is because they have contravened a standing consensus. Abū Dāwūd included a chapter on giving of preference (i.e., *tafdīl*) in his book. He cited Sufyān al-Thawrī as saying:

Whoever claims that 'Alī was more entitled to leadership [*wilāyah*] than [Abū Bakr or 'Umar] has [most assuredly] discredited Abū Bakr, 'Umar, the *Muhājirūn*, and the *Anṣār*. I do not think that, with this [belief], any of his actions will ascend to Heaven [to be accepted].⁵

And it is Allah who grants *tawfīq*.

Shaheer Pathan

Checked and Approved by,



Mufti Hisham Dawood

Darul Ifta, Darul Qasim

³ Ṭāhir b. Aḥmad al-Bukhārī, *al-Khulāṣah fi-l-Fatāwā*, 4:381; 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Laknawī, *Majmū'ah Fatāwā Mawlānā 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Laknawī*, 26-7; Muftī Mahmūd, *Fatāwā Muftī Maḥmūd*, 1:276. Also see: 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dihlawī, *Fatāwā Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz*, Urdu Trs. Khūrshīd 'Ālim, 412-3.

⁴ Khalid Mahmood, *'Abaqāt*, 84. Also see epistle 202 of the *Maktūbāt Imām Rabbānī*, *Naf' al-Muftī of Imām al-Laknawī*, and *Imdād al-Fatāwā* of Mawlāna Thānvī.

⁵ Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (Kitāb al-Sunnah, Bāb al-Tafḍīl), 4:206.