

Dear Mumins!

As Muhammad (s.a.w.) was and is the Prophet of the universal religion, His message and being model must have been universal as well. In light of the verses that order¹ obedience to the Prophet (s.a.w.) and emphasize² that there is a good example to be found in the Messenger of Allah for us, a mumin cannot doubt about the necessity of following Muhammad (s.a.w.) and taking Him as a model. Well, with that in mind, what does taking Him as model mean? And how does this happen? What are the differences between modeling and imitating?

Modeling someone or something is a conscious action. The one who models someone or something is aware of why he must model that person or action.

Regarding imitation, **it is generally an unconscious behavior.** Most often, a man is not aware of why he imitates someone or something. While modeling is an action that is concerned with the essence of the subject, **imitation essentially means repeating something just as it is, regardless of cause, reason, objective, wisdom, or principle, and whether the action is superficial, modal, or figurative.**

To comprehend truly the sunnah of Rasulallah (s.a.w.), the aforementioned differences must be taken into consideration. This is because while the Qur'ân condemns the attitudes of people who blindly imitate the ways of their ancestors, it also indicates³ the harm to be found in blind imitation. Hence, it instructed that Muhammad (s.a.w.) be taken as a model (ittiba') but that He should not be imitated (tashabbuh).

Although the Qur'ân mentioned our Prophet's superior moral personality, it did not state anything about His physical features, His clothes and finery, His eating and drinking, or any of His worldly skills. For example it has been stated in the Qur'ân, that He was an exalted character⁴; He was anxious for mumins⁵; He was shy⁶ and He dealt gently with mumins⁷. But almost nothing was expressed about His ordinary humanly activities.

Dear My Brothers and Sisters!

In person, the Prophet (s.a.w.) wanted mumins to take Him as a model consciously and not to imitate Him blindly. For instance, while the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) was leading his companions in prayer, He took off his shoes and placed them to his left. When the people saw that, they took off their shoes as well. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) asked, "What made you take off your shoes?" They said, "We saw you take off your shoes, so we took ours off too." He said, "Jibreel (a.s.) told me that there was something dirty on them."⁸ Thus, He (s.a.w.) advised that they should take the objective into consideration.

Although the Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "Perform the Prayer the way you see me performing it."⁹ He

did not say, "Get dressed like I do," "Eat and drink like I do," or "Lie down and get up like I do." Essentially, He did not impose his respective delights and preferences onto the others. Once, He did not eat the meat of a lizard (a kind of iguana) offered to him because He was not accustomed to it. But neither did He hinder the others who were eating it.¹⁰

The distinguished companions of the Prophet did not imitate Rasulallah

(s.a.w.) blindly. Umar (r.a.), for example, objected to the Prophet (s.a.w.) when He accepted the conditions of the Treaty of Hudaibiya, which seemed as though it was against Muslims.¹¹ Again, He opposed Him (the Prophet (s.a.w.)) in performing salatu'l-janazah for Abdullah b. Ubay b. Salûl, leader of the hypocrites (munafiqs).¹²

On the other hand, the fact that tahqîqî (based on research), not taqlîdî (imitated) eiman has been advised even regarding the faith obviously attracts attention. However because the ways of performing the worship cannot be determined through the mind, logical inference, or analogy (qiyâs), a limited imitation—only in this field—is discussed.

In order to make sunnah of Rasulallah (s.a.w.) worthwhile and effective in our present time, we should determine the underlying objectives of His remarks and deeds very well; we must be conscious of this so that we may take Him as our model.

On this occasion, I would like to congratulate your Miraj Night that we will arrive this Sunday. Thus, I invite all of you to attend the program that will be arranged in our mosque that same day.



¹ Refer to: Âl-'Imrân, 31-32; An-Nisâ, 13-14, 59, 64-65, 80; An-Nûr, 51-52, 54; Al-Ahzâb, 36.

² Al-Ahzâb, 21.

³ Al-Baqarah, 170.

⁴ Al-Qalam, 4.

⁵ At-Taubah, 128.

⁶ Al-Ahzâb, 53.

⁷ Âl-'Imrân, 159.

⁸ Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, III, 92.

⁹ Bukhâri, Azan, 18.

¹⁰ Bukhâri, At'imah, 10.

¹¹ Bukhâri, Conditions, 891.

¹² Bukhâri, Janaiz, 85.