



*SALAFISM* IN KERALA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE  
TO THE DISCOURSE ON '*AQĪDAH*

BY

ABDUL VASIH LAKKAL

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master in Islamic Revealed Knowledge and  
Heritage (*Uṣūl al-Dīn* and Comparative Religion)

Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human  
Sciences  
International Islamic University Malaysia

OCTOBER 2013

## ABSTRACT

*Salafism* is a movement that claims to be as old as Islam as preached by our beloved Prophet (Pbuh). Today, there is no doubt that *Salafism* has rejuvenated Islamic thought. Almost all reformation and revolutionary Islamic movements owe a great deal of debt to it. Modern Islamic history would have been a totally different story if it was not for *Salafism*. The seeds of its thought can be found all over the Muslim world and has resulted in the creation of hybrids or variants of this movement, all claiming to uphold the Salafī Ideology. The aim of this research is limited to the study of the role of *Salafism* in Kerala, a small state located in southern India. The study focuses on Kerala *Nadwah al-Mujāhidīn*, the dominant *Salafī* movement of Kerala. In the endeavors of the author to carry out this research, it became obvious that a revolutionary element existed in the proponents or Imam of this ideology. It was thus quite surprising to find a lack of this revolutionary spirit in the Kerala *Nadwah al-Mujāhidīn* as it exists today. Thus this research underwent a major shift in focus from a historical appreciation of *Salafī* movement in Kerala to a critical evaluation of the works of this movement from a holistic perspective. Thus, the study of the movement was not restricted to matters pertaining to religious duties or beliefs; rather the whole social and political implications of their activities were analyzed. It is hoped that this research will provide valuable insight not only for those interested in the evolution of *Salafism* in Kerala, but also for those interested in *Salafism* itself.

## خلاصة البحث

السلفية تعد من الفكر الإسلامي الفعال الذي تمتد جذورها إلى عصر الرسول صلى الله عليه وسلم. ومما لا شك فيه أن لها دورا مهما خلال مسير الأمة الإسلامية عبر التاريخ حيث ساعدتها بعطاياها الغالية في الحالات الحاسمة. والحركات الإسلامية الحديثة معظمها مدينة بهذا المنهج الفكري حيث إنه لا توجد حركة إلا وهي اقتبست من نوره الساطع. ولو لم يوجد هذا المنهج الفكري في التاريخ الإسلامي لما يكون وجهه في العصر الحديث في عزته الباهرة. ولهذا السبب قد طلعت إلى سماء الإسلام الواسعة حركات وجماعات تدعي انتمائها إلى السلفية في جميع أنحاء العالم. وهذا البحث يتناول الحركة السلفية التي تعمل في رحاب كيرالا وهي التي تسمى بندوة المجاهدين بكيرالا. ومما يجدر بالإشارة إليه هنا أن أئمة السلفية القدامى كانوا يقومون بنهضة الأمة وتجديدها ولديهم عنصر ثوري يتميزون به عن غيرهم. ولكن من العجيب ما رأيناه هو عدم وجود ذلك العنصر الثوري في ندوة المجاهدين بكيرالا إذ أنها تركز دائما على أمور افتراضية أو هامشية لا تحتاج إليها الأمة في حالها أو في مستقبلها، إلا أن فكرها تعرقل في بعض الأحيان مسيرة الدعوة الإسلامية مثل زعمها بفصل الدين عن الدولة وحصنها الإسلام في العبادات والأذكار المعينة. وهذا البحث بدأ يسرد جذورها التاريخية إذ أنها تزودت بأفكار الأئمة السلفية العالمية مع الإشارة إلى مراحلها المختلفة التي زلت عن المنهج السلفي الحقيقي. وهذا البحث لم يهتم بالمناقشات اللغوية أو الفرعية التي لا علاقة لها بصلب الموضوع بل هو يتناول أفكار الحركة السلفية بكيرالا وأنشطتها كحركة إسلامية تعمل في مجال الدعوة الإسلامية بالمقارنة مع السلفية العالمية. ويرجى أن هذا البحث سيحدي كل من له اهتمام بالحركة السلفية خاصة ونهضة الأمة عامة.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (*Usūl al-Dīn* & Comparative Religion).

.....  
Thameem Ushama  
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (*Uṣūl al-Dīn* and Comparative Religion).

.....  
Majdan Alias  
Internal Examiner

This dissertation was submitted to the Department of *Usūl al-Dīn* & Comparative Religion and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (*Uṣūl al-Dīn* and Comparative Religion).

.....  
Thameem Ushama  
Head, Department of  
*Uṣūl al-Dīn* and Comparative Religion

This dissertation was submitted to Kulliyah of Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement for the degree Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (*Uṣūl al-Dīn* and Comparative Religion).

.....  
Ibrahim Mohamed Zein  
Dean, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed  
Knowledge and Human Sciences

## DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Abdul Vasih Lakkal

Signature.....

Date.....

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

**DECLARATION OF COPYRIGHT AND  
AFFIRMATION OF FAIR USE OF UNPUBLISHED  
RESEARCH**

Copyright © 2013 by Abdul VasihLakkal. All rights reserved.

***SALAFISM IN KERALA WITH SPECIAL  
REFERENCE TO THE DISCOURSE ON 'AQĪDAH***

No part of this unpublished research may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior written permission of the copyright holder except as provided below.

1. Any material contained in or derived from this unpublished research may only be used by others in their writing with due acknowledgement.
2. IIUM or its library will have the right to make transmit copies (print of electronic) for institutional and academic purposes.
3. The IIUM library will have the right to make, store in a retrieval system and supply copies of this unpublished research if requested by other universities and research libraries.

Affirmed by Abdul VasihLakkal

.....

Signature

.....

Date

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

*All praises be to Almighty Allah, the Lord of the Universe. Let His regards and salutations be upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad, his family and companions.*

I would like to express my gratitude to respected supervisor Prof. Dr. Thameem Ushama for guiding, supervising and encouraging me to successfully complete this thesis. I also thank Dr. Majdan Alias for his deep concern, valuable suggestions and critical assessment on this thesis.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Al-Jamia Al-Islamiyya, Santapuram, where I accomplished my studies for more than a decade, and also sponsoring my studies. I courteously acknowledge my lovable parents for believing in my efforts. My acknowledgements would be incomplete if do not extend the token of appreciation to all my teachers, well-wishers, friends and especially the librarians' of Al-Jamia Al-Islamiyya, as they worked hard and cooperated well with this project.

May Almighty Allah, bestow His rewards and blessings on all.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Abstract in Arabic.....	iii
Approval Page.....	iv
Declaration.....	v
Copyright Page.....	vi
Acknowledgement.....	vii
Table of Contents.....	viii
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Statement of The Problem.....	2
1.2. Research Questions.....	3
1.3. Objectives of The Research.....	3
1.4. Significance of The Research.....	3
1.5. Methodology of The Research.....	4
1.6. Literature Review.....	4
1.7. Justification of The Research.....	7
1.8. Organization of The Research.....	7
<b>CHAPTER 2: HISTORY OF SALAFISM.....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1. Part One.....	9
2.1.1. Linguistic Analysis of <i>Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ</i> .....	9
2.1.2. Views on <i>Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ</i> .....	12
2.2. Part Two.....	20
2.2.1. History of <i>Salafī</i> Thought.....	20
<b>CHAPTER 3: SALAFISM IN KERALA.....</b>	<b>30</b>
3.1. History of <i>Salafī</i> Movement on Kerala.....	30
3.2. Objectives of Kerala <i>Nadwat al-Mujāhidīn</i> .....	31
3.3. Various Organizations under KNM.....	32
3.3.1. Kerala <i>Jam‘iyyat al-‘Ulamā’</i> .....	32
3.3.2. <i>Ittiḥād al-Shubbān al-Mujāhidīn</i> (ISM).....	32
3.3.3. <i>Mujāhid</i> Students’ Movement (MSM).....	32
3.3.4. Muslim Girls & Women’s Movement (MGM).....	33
3.3.5. <i>Bismi</i> .....	34
3.3.6. Publications.....	34
3.4. Contributions of Kerala <i>Nadwat al-Mujāhidīn</i> .....	34
3.4.1. Religious Thoughts.....	34
3.4.2. Education.....	36
3.4.3. Contributions to Society.....	37
3.5. Partition of <i>Salafī</i> Movement in Kerala.....	37
3.6. Root of <i>Salafī</i> thought in Kerala.....	38
3.6.1. <i>Salafī Manhaj</i> .....	42



<b>CHAPTER 4: SALAFISM AND POLEMICS IN KERALA.....</b>	<b>45</b>
4.1. Views on <i>Tawhīd</i> .....	46
4.2. Critique on Mawdūdī’s Interpretation of <i>Tawhīd</i> .....	47
<b>CHAPTER 5: SALAFĪ’S DISCOURSE ON ‘AQĪDAH.....</b>	<b>65</b>
5.1. <i>Tawhīd</i> in The View of Kerala <i>Salafism</i> .....	65
5.2. Explanations of Kerala <i>Salafism</i> on <i>Ḥākimiyyah</i> .....	68
<b>CHAPTER 6: CONCLUTION.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>80</b>

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

One of the main characteristics of Islam is its flexibility to move forward with time and space and its susceptibility for renewal. The best evidence for these qualities is that Islam has not bowed its head to any challenges it faced throughout history. No one has accused Islam of not being able to solve any problem which the world faces, using the Qur’ān and Sunnah as its sources. Another important attribute of Islam is that when its followers divert from the right path or carry innovations in *dīn* there should be a presence of a *Mujaddid* to guide them to a straight path and to a renewed Islamic society. The last Prophet (peace be upon him) has clearly indicated this reality which has been witnessed through all decades of Muslim history as he said “Indeed, Almighty Allah surely sends for this society (*Ummah*) one who renews its *dīn*, at the head of every hundred years”.<sup>1</sup> The Muslim scholars<sup>2</sup> explain this as “one who renews” that may be a person, a group, a movement, etc.

As the fulfillment of this promise, a lot of reformed movements or persons have emerged in different historical eras. The *Salafī* thought is one of the revolutionary movements of Islamic awakening. It was introduced by *salaf* (people of the first three Islamic generations) when the Islamic society faced challenges of misinterpretation from Muslim reverts. Most of the new comers were from the Greek and Roman societies who started to use their intellectual reasoning to interpret the Qur’ān and Sunnah, which led to the misunderstanding of Islamic doctrines. During

---

<sup>1</sup> Reported by Abū Dāwūd, No: 4291, Quoted: Nāṣiruddīn al-Albānī, *Silsila Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, (Bayrūt: Maktab al-Islāmī, 1970), 599.

<sup>2</sup> Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī. *Tārīkh al-Islām*, (al-Qāhirah: al-Maktabah al-Tawfīqiyyah), 23:180; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī. *Fath al-bārī*, (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Ḥadīth, n.d), 13: 295.

this period, leaders of Islamic revolution stated that Muslims should not use intellectual reasoning to interpret Islamic doctrines, and they should return to the teachings of *salaf* in the interpretation of Islamic evidence. This thought, which is known as *Salafī* method, has been practiced by many well-known Islamic scholars in different periods of history like Shaykh al-Islam ibn Taymiyyah, al-Shawkānī, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, etc.

Salafism is one of the three major Islamic movements in Kerala which started in 1921. In the beginning it was known as a ‘common platform for Muslim unity’. Then the members began to call themselves as a movement of ‘*iṣlāḥ*. At present they are known as ‘*Salafī*’. Salafism in Kerala is entirely different from mainstream Salafism. Such things will have far reaching consequences in the Kerala Muslim society.

### **1.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The purpose of the research is to study Salafism in Kerala with special reference to their discourse on ‘*Aqīdah* because Kerala Salafism is totally different from the original *Salafī* thought where they oppose the fundamental teachings of prominent *Salafī* scholars.

*Tawḥīd*, the fundamental concept of Islam, has been misinterpreted by Kerala Salafism. They also interpret the concept of ‘*Aqīdah* differently. One of their main claims of *tawḥīd* is that *Hākimiyyah* is not part of Islamic ‘*Aqīdah*. By advocating this, they criticize Abul A‘lā Mawdūdī who discussed *tawḥīd* by including *Hākimiyyah*. In addition, according to Kerala Salafism, Salafism is only to fight against innovations and superstitions, not other pertinent issues of the Muslim *Ummah*.

Thus, the purpose of this research is to study and analyze the concept of ‘*Aqīdah* in Kerala *Salafism* and its consequences on Kerala Muslims.

## **1.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What is *Salafī* thought?
2. What is *Salafī* ‘*Aqīdah*?
3. What is Kerala *Salafism*?
4. What is the interpretation of *tawhīd* according to *Salafism* in Kerala?

What are the polemics of Kerala *Salafism*?

## **1.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH**

The objectives of this research are:

1. To analyze *Salafī* thought and its interpretations.
2. To study *Salafī* ‘*Aqīdah*, based on their scholars’ classical writings.
3. To explore the development of *Salafism* in Kerala.
4. To study the views of Kerala *Salafism* regarding *tawhīd*.
5. To explore the consequences of *Salafism* in Kerala.
6. To analyze polemical issues as advocated by scholars of Kerala *Salafism*.

## **1.4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH**

The rigid concepts of Kerala *Salafism* and misinterpretations of *tawhīd* still remain a big hindrance to Islamic activities. However, they have a vital role in forming a new Muslim generation which is totally ignorant about the comprehensive characteristics of Islam. Due to their rejection of Allah’s *Ḥākimiyyah*, they confine Islam to some

form of rituals, worships and practices. This approach has rationalized the spread of a belief that a Muslim can follow the concepts of man-made ideologies such as communism and socialism besides his own religious belief.

This study is an attempt to explain the above mentioned problems. Therefore it is hoped that this is significant and equally beneficiary for the Kerala Salafism to rethink their dogmatic and conservative interpretations.

### **1.5. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH**

The research is qualitative as it follows an analytical approach. The first part of the study is on the history of Salafism, its origin, development and doctrines. This is followed by a thorough analysis of Kerala Salafism. It evaluates the scholars' opinions regarding the different aspects of *tawhīd*, in order to explain their misconceptions in 'Aqīdah. Thereupon the researcher clarifies the differences between Kerala Salafism and original Salafism on the concept of *tawhīd* in particular and 'Aqīdah in general.

### **1.6. LITERATURE REVIEW**

It is pertinent to note that no one has focused on this topic but we can see some scholars disseminating *Salafī* thought in various places. One of the important studies about *Salafī manhaj* is *Qawā'id al-manhaj al-salafī fī al-fikr al-Islāmī*, written by Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī Head of Islamic Studies Department, Cairo University. He explains the origin of *salafī* thought, diversion of some Islamic groups and the renewal missions of *salafī* scholars. He starts by analyzing various degrees of *salafī* thought. Further, he explains the history of *salafī* thought one by one from the period of the Companions until the modern era. Besides explaining the history of *salafī* thought, he adds more intellectual discourse to it.

Another important study on *salafī* thought is what is published by Sa‘īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī entitled *al-Salafīyyah marḥalah zamaniyyah mubārakah lā madhhab Islāmī*. This book is very famous for its critical thinking on *salafī manhaj*. Eventhough it is a critique, it contains a lot of positive attributes of *salafī* thought. It is worth mentioning that, this author does not deny *salafī manhaj* and its importance but refuses to accept the phenomenon of making *salafī madhhab* or movement. He starts by explaining the linguistic and historical meanings of the word. He demonstrates against the idea of Salafism being considered as the *madhhab* in subsequent chapters with proper evidence. He quotes the characteristics of *salaf* for the best generations of this *Ummah* and further divides them into two parts; the first is suitable for every generation and the second is suited only for them.

There are many books by *salafī* movement of Kerala criticizing the views of Abul A‘lā Mawdūdī and *al-Jamā‘ah al-Islāmiyyah* like “*Jamā‘ate Islāmī Pariwartanatilūde*”<sup>3</sup> written by Muhammad ‘Alī. This book is a critical study on the interpretations of Abul A‘lā Mawdūdī with regard to Islamic government and his explanations of an Islamic state. The book deals with the origin and history of *Jamā‘ate Islāmī* established by Abul A‘lā Mawdūdī. The author critically views each and every doctrine and policy of *Jamā‘ate Islāmī* from its inception and tries to evaluate the differences in the policies which are taken by *Jamā‘ate Islāmī* in accordance with the changes of various contexts and situations. According to the author, the differences in the policies taken by *Jamā‘ate Islāmī* are a pure sign that they are mere opportunists. In the author’s point of view, there is no distinction between the ideologies and policies and therefore, they understand the changes in the

---

<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad ‘Alī Sullamī, (Calicut: Mujahid Publishing wing, 1997).

policies which would be taken for the sake of the society as a deviation of *Jamā'ate Islāmī* from its ideologies. For instance, he states, in the beginning *Jamā'ate Islāmī* had taken a policy which required all Muslims not to take part in the election process in India. Over the course of time the decision was revised and the policy also being redefined. The revised policy demanded the Muslim *Ummah* to take part in the election process since the *Jamā'ate Islāmī* understood that it was a dire need of the Muslim *Ummah*. Even though the author has critically evaluated almost all policies and decisions of *Jamā'ate Islāmī* related to *tawḥīd*, he never perceives the movement and its stances through the Islamic prism which certainly allows to take different opinions in various occasions.

Another book which discusses 'Aqīdah of Kerala Salafism is "*Mujāhidukalk Ādarsha Wyatiyānamo*"<sup>4</sup> by 'Abd al-Salām Sullamī. The interpretation of *tawḥīd* by Kerala Salafism has been explained in this book by quoting the history of *salaf*. This book tries to establish that politics is not a major concern of Islam and hence, it is only a byproduct of *tawḥīd* which can be attained with the preaching of *tawḥīd*. According to the author's view, politics or power never became an objective of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and therefore, Muslims ought not to do anything for power and they are not accountable for what goes on in politics. Moreover, the author does not see politics as part of *tawḥīd* and as such, all aspects of human life are included in the concept of *tawḥīd*.

There are many books by *al-Jamā'ah al-Islāmiyyah* defending these critiques. They elaborate *tawḥīd* as it is inherited by *salaf* in publications "*Wimarshikkapedunna Mawdūdī*"<sup>5</sup> and "*Jamā'ate Islāmiyyum Mujāhid Wimarshnawum*"<sup>6</sup>. The last title

---

<sup>4</sup> 'Abd al-Salām Sullamī, (Malappuram: Anwār Publication, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Articles Collection, Translated and Edited by V.K. 'Alī (Calicut: Islamic Publishing House, 2000).

written by Shaykh Muḥammad Kārakkunnu, is in defense of the allegations and criticism against *Jamā'ate Islāmī*. The book answers all questions raised against *Jamā'ate Islāmī* and explains why *Jamā'ate Islāmī* was established, and what it stands for. This book introduces *Jamā'ate Islāmī* as a revival movement of Islam which appears in every century of Islam. The book points out that the movement stands for the cause of comprehensive Islam and manifests Islam in the new era.

There are many other booklets in Malayalam, which is the language of Kerala society, in which Kerala *Salafīs*' interpretations of '*Aqīdah* and *tawḥīd*', are found. All these works help the current study about this selected topic.

### **1.7. JUSTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH**

It is obvious that no research has been conducted on this topic whether in Kerala Muslim society or in other parts of the Muslim world. It is hoped that this study would help Kerala *salafī* movement to rethink its stand on the matter of *tawḥīd* and would benefit the efforts of Islamic renaissance in Kerala Muslim society.

### **1.8. ORGANIZATION OF THE RESEARCH**

The research is divided into six chapters. The first chapter provides a general background of the research, the statement of the problem, research questions, objectives, scope and significance of the research and a brief literature review.

The second chapter is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on the intellectual discourse about *salafī* thought and its linguistical analysis. The second part explores the history of *salafī* and its prominent leaders with special reference to their renaissance methods and ideas.

---

<sup>6</sup> Kārakkunnu, Shaykh Muḥammad, (Calicut: Islamic Publishing House, 2008).



The third chapter is also divided into two main parts; the first describes the history of Kerala *salafī* movement and the reasons for its establishment. It explains the different wings which work under this movement and their contributions to the Kerala Muslim *Ummah*. The second part of this chapter indicates the sources of Kerala *salafī* movement and the reasons for their differences from Gulf Salafism<sup>7</sup>. This part points out to the split that happened in the movement and the debate on *manhaj* which was the main reason for that split.

The fourth chapter clarifies the polemics of Kerala Salafism and it mostly focuses on *tawhīd*. The first part is dedicated to elaborating the views of Kerala Salafism on *tawhīd* in order to explain the reasons for the polemics. Therefore, the study focuses on the critiques of Kerala Salafism on Abul A‘lā Mawdūdī with special reference to four main terms: *ḥākimiyyah*, *‘ibādah*, *ṭāghūt* and *khilāfah*. It is followed by Mawdūdī’s explanations of for these terms and as the conclusion, the opinions of world *salafī* scholars are quoted in order to clarify the fact.

The fifth chapter is a study on the view of Kerala Salafism on *tawhīd* and it shows how their *tawhīd* concept differs from others. The part of *ḥākimiyyah* in *tawhīd* is discussed here separately because there are some controversial opinions on this matter.

The last chapter concludes the main points discussed in the research and ends by giving ideas about the current situation of the Kerala *salafī* movement.

---

<sup>7</sup> One of the Salafī thought consentrated on gulf countries.

## CHAPTER 2

### HISTORY OF *SALAFISM*

History of Salafism can be broadly classified into two major categories. The first category represents the immediate successors of the Prophet (pbuh) usually referred to as ‘*salaf al-Ṣāliḥ*’ and the second is a historical analysis of *salafī* thought. The main focus of the first part is an in-depth study of the term ‘*salaf al-Ṣāliḥ*’. It involves a linguistic analysis of the word, who it represents and the special qualities the people possess.

#### 2.1. PART ONE

##### 2.1.1. Linguistic Analysis of ‘*Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ*’

Prominent Arabic dictionaries provide various meanings for the word “*salaf*” and explanations indicate its definition to ancestor, predecessor or forefathers.

Ibn Manẓūr has delineated that “the words *salaf*, *salīf* and *sulfat* have been generally used for ancestors; Allah says (And We made them a precedent and an example for the later peoples. -Sūrat al-Zukhruf: 56- )”<sup>1</sup>

Al-Rāghib also has the same opinion as he indicates that “the word *salaf* denotes predecessors and ancestors”.<sup>2</sup> He quotes the above mentioned verse.

Muslim scholars have different opinions on whom the word *salaf* represents; some say it represents the companions of the Prophet (pbuh) and others say it represents both Companions and *tābi‘īn* -their immediate successors - while a third

---

<sup>1</sup> Muhammad ibn Mukram ‘Alī Jamāl al-Dīn Abul Faḍl ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ṣādir, 1420 A.H.), 7:233-234.

<sup>2</sup> Abul Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn Muhammad al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Mufradāt fī gharīb al-Qurān*, (Dimashq: Dār al-Qalam, 1422 A.H.),1: 484.

opinion is that it refers to the succeeding three generations of the Prophet (pbuh): *Ṣaḥābah*, *tābi‘īn* and *tābi‘ī al-tābi‘īn*.<sup>3</sup>

The same definitions apply in almost all other official dictionaries like *Qāmūs al-muḥīt*<sup>4</sup>, *al-Mu‘jam al-wasīṭ*<sup>5</sup> and *Tāj al-‘urūs*<sup>6</sup>, etc.

Ibn Kathīr, the famous Islamic scholar, is of the opinion that *salaf* implies “the first generation of *tābi‘īn*”<sup>7</sup>. The third opinion is much preferred by Muslim scholars, and it is surmised that *salaf* represent the three generations of the Prophet’s successors as ‘Imrān ibn Huṣayn reports that the Prophet (pbuh) said, “The best of Mankind is my generation, and then those who follow them and then those who follow them”<sup>8</sup>. There are many reports which strengthen the above mentioned *ḥadīth*.<sup>9</sup>

The Qur’ān indicates that some companions of the Prophet (pbuh) had more eminence and it is pious to follow them with *iḥsān*:

And (as for) the foremost, the first of the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār*, and those who followed them in goodness, Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them forever; that is the mighty achievement.<sup>10</sup>

In the Qur’ān, Allah has raised their status many times, as we see it in *Sūrat al-Anfāl*:

---

<sup>3</sup> Muhammad Bā Karīm Muhammad Bā Abdullah, *Wasāṭiyyah Ahl al-Sunnah bayn al-firaq*, (al-Riyāḍ: Dār al-Rāyah, 1415 A.H.), 110.

<sup>4</sup> Muḥammad ibn Ya‘qūb Fayrūz Ābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīt*, (Bayrūt: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1422 A.H.), 2:392.

<sup>5</sup> Majma‘ al-Lughah al-Arabiyyah, *al-Mu‘jam al-wasīṭ*, (Turkey: al-Maktabah al-Islāmiyah, 1392 A.H.), 1: 919.

<sup>6</sup> Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Razāq Murtaẓā al-Zubaydī, *Tāj al-‘urūs*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr, 1383 A.H.), 1: 5919-5920.

<sup>7</sup> Ismā‘īl Ibn ‘Umar ibn kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa al-nihāyah*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr, 1417 A.H.), 2:195.

<sup>8</sup> Abū Abdullāh Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Qalam, 1413 A.H.), 12:104.

<sup>9</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Qalam, 1413 A.H.), 17:478, 21:284, 22: 150, Muslim Ibn Ḥajjāj ibn Muslim al-Qushayrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. (Bayrūt: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1417 A.H.), 2:86, 3: 207, Abū ‘Īsā Muhammad al-Tirmuḍī, *Jāmi‘ al-Turmudhī*, (Bayrūt: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1420 A.H.), 8:328, 431.

<sup>10</sup> Qur’ān, *al-Tawbah*: 100

And (as for) those who believed and fled and struggled hard in Allah's way, and those who gave shelter and helped, these are the believers truly; they shall have forgiveness and honorable provision.<sup>11</sup>

Other verses in chapters like *Āl 'Imrān*<sup>12</sup>, *al-Wāqī'ah*<sup>13</sup> and *al-Fath*<sup>14</sup>, and many of the Prophets' sayings also denote the glory and highness of *Ṣahābah* as 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ūd cites "Allah has not sent with any prophet without having *ḥawāriyyūn* (helpers) with him, they act upon the Sunnah of the Prophet and obey the commands".<sup>15</sup>

We can see in another *ḥadīth* reported by al-Bukhārī, Abū Sa'īd al-Khudhūrī cites Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) as saying, "Do not abuse my Companions for if any one of you spent gold equal to *Uḥud* (in Allah's Cause) it would not be equal to a *Mudd*<sup>16</sup> or even a half *Mudd* spent by one of them".<sup>17</sup>

But the Qur'ān and Sunnah also clarify the criterion behind the glory and highness attributed to the *Ṣahābah* i.e., they have come forward for Islam at an early stage, sacrificed their life for Islam by suffering through difficulties and tribulations and fought with Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) for the establishment of Islam.

Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī reports from Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, "considering the first generation as the best is because they were exceptional in *īmān* while they lived in a society where the majority of them were disbelievers, tolerated many harms of disbelievers and they held tight to their *dīn*."<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Qur'ān, *al-Anfāl*: 74

<sup>12</sup> Qur'ān, *Āl 'Imrān*: 110

<sup>13</sup> Qur'ān, *al-Wāqī'ah*: 10-14

<sup>14</sup> Qur'ān, *al-Fath*: 29

<sup>15</sup> Al-Qushayrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:69.

<sup>16</sup> A mudd is an actual physical container (like a small bowl or pot, or a large cup), a standardized unit of measurement, one that was widely in use in the time of the Prophet (pbuh) in the marketplaces and in their houses.

<sup>17</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 12:433.

<sup>18</sup> Shihāb al-Dhīn Ahmad ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-bārī bi sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Salam, 1417 A.H.), 10:445.

### 2.1.2. Views on *Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ*

Now it is clear that *salaf al-ṣāliḥ* represents three group of followers i.e. *Ṣaḥābah*, *tābi‘īn* and *tābi‘ī al-tābi‘īn* whom Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) praised as great people.

But there are some disagreements among Islamic scholars in defining the terms *Ṣaḥābah*, *tābi‘īn* and *tābi‘ī al-tābi‘īn*. Al-Jurjānī defines *Ṣaḥābah* by stating “*Ṣaḥābah* are people who have seen the Prophet (pbuh) and lived with him for a long time, and even if he had not reported from the Prophet (pbuh) or if he was associated with the Prophet (pbuh) for only a short period, a person can still be called *ṣaḥābī*”<sup>19</sup>.

Al-Bukhārī says “*Ṣaḥābah* are the people among Muslims who met the Prophet (pbuh) and consorted with him”.<sup>20</sup> Ibn Ḥajar reports the opinion of ‘Alī ibn Madīnī that “anyone can be called *ṣaḥābī* if he had seen the Prophet (pbuh) and spent time with him for even a day”.<sup>21</sup> Ibn Ḥanbal opines after mentioning the *Ṣaḥābah* of Badr:-

The great *Ṣaḥābah* are those who lived during the Prophet’s time and if anyone stayed with him for one year or a month, or a day or an hour, he can be considered as *ṣaḥābī*, and they will be having *ṣuḥbat* according to their stay with the Prophet (pbuh), their learning’s from him and seeing of the Prophet (pbuh).<sup>22</sup>

The famous *tābi‘ī* scholar Sa‘īd ibn musayyab defines *Ṣaḥābah* more precisely “we have not counted the people as *Ṣaḥābah* if they haven’t stayed with him for one or two years and haven’t participated in one or two Islamic wars”.<sup>23</sup> But a more expedient definition is given by Ibn Ḥajar, “*Ṣaḥābah* are those who met the Prophet (pbuh) when they were believers and died as Muslims”<sup>24</sup>.

---

<sup>19</sup> ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al- Jurjānī, *al-Ta‘rīfāt*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1404 A.H.), 116.

<sup>20</sup> Al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-bārī*, 7:3.

<sup>21</sup> Al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-bārī*, 7:5.

<sup>22</sup> Aḥmad ‘Alī Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Kifāyah fī ‘ilm al-riwāyah*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1412 A.H.),68.

<sup>23</sup> Al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Isābah fī Tamayz al-Ṣaḥābah*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1414 A.H.), 1:9.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid,1:10.

Obviously, there are various definitions given by Islamic scholars on this. It shows that the great Islamic scholars differed in their definitions of *Ṣaḥābah* and they did not have a common opinion on this matter.

A second thing to understand about *salaf al-ṣāliḥ* is that these three generations are not the same in eminence as there are differences in knowledge between those who learned directly from the Prophet (pbuh) and those who learned Islam from the Prophet's followers.

The above said *ḥadīth* proves this fact. It clearly indicates that the level of *tābi'ī* cannot be more than *Ṣaḥābah* and that of *tābi'ī al-tābi'īn* cannot be more than that of *tābi'īn*. Moreover, there was great difference in the position enjoyed by the Prophet's followers (*Ṣaḥābah*) themselves.

The Qur'ān describes the significance of the first believers of Islam and those who spent their life for Islam in this way, "those who spent before the victory and fought are more exalted in rank than those who spent and fought afterwards".<sup>25</sup>

It is clearly mentioned in *Sūrat al-Ḥashr* that there was very special significance to the *anṣār* and *muḥājirūn*:

It's for the poor who fled their homes and their possessions, seeking grace of Allah and (His) pleasure, and assisting Allah and His Apostle: these it's that are the truthful.

And those who made their abode in the city and in the faith before them love those who have fled to them, and do not find in their hearts a need of what they are given, and prefer (them) before themselves though poverty may afflict them, and whoever is preserved from the niggardliness of his soul, these it is that are the successful ones.<sup>26</sup>

*Sūrat al-Anfāl* points the difference in eminence between the first and second generations of *Ṣaḥābah*:

O Prophet! Urge the believers to war; if there are twenty patient ones of you they shall overcome two hundred, and if there are a hundred of you

---

<sup>25</sup> Qur'ān, *al-Ḥadīd*:10

<sup>26</sup> Qur'ān, *al-Ḥashr*:8,9

they shall overcome a thousand of those who disbelieve, because they are a people who do not understand.

For the present Allah has made light your burden, and He knows that there is weakness in you; so if there are a hundred patient ones of you they shall overcome two hundred, and if there are a thousand they shall overcome two thousand by Allah's permission, and Allah is with the patient.<sup>27</sup>

Even among *Ṣaḥābah* there were categories like the people who were promised heaven, those who fought in Badr, those who were present in the 'Aqabah Pact, those who were present in the Riḍwān Pact, those who embraced Islam without any other choices during Makah victory, etc. The history of Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Balta'ah is famous; as everyone knows he had participated in Badr:

Narrated by 'Ubayd Allah ibn Abū Rāfi' who said he heard 'Alī saying: "Prophet (pbuh) sent me, Zubayr and Miqdād somewhere saying: Proceed till you reach Rawḍat Khākh. There you will find a lady with a letter. Take the letter from her! So, we set out and our horses ran at full pace till we got at Rawḍat where we found the lady and said (to her): Take out the letter! She replied: I have no letter with me! We said: Either you take out the letter or else we will take off your clothes! So, she took it out of her braid. We brought the letter to the Prophet (pbuh) and it contained a statement from Ḥāṭib to some of the Makkah pagans informing them of some of the intentions of the Prophet (pbuh). Then the Prophet (pbuh) said: Oh, Ḥāṭib! What is this? Ḥāṭib replied: O, Messenger of Allah! Don't hasten to give your judgment about me. I was a man closely connected with the *Quraysh*, but I did not belong to this tribe, while the other emigrants with you, had their relatives in Makkah, who would protect their dependents and property. So, I wanted to recompense for my lacking blood relation to them by doing them a favor so that they might protect my dependents. I did this neither because of disbelief nor apostasy nor out of preferring *Kufr* to Islam. The Prophet (pbuh) said: Ḥāṭib has told you the truth! Umar said: O, Messenger of Allah! Allow me to chop off the head of this hypocrite! Prophet (pbuh) said: Ḥāṭib participated in the battle of *Badr*, and who knows, perhaps Allah has already looked at the Badr warriors and said: Do whatever you like, for I have forgiven you!<sup>28</sup>

The Qur'ān praises those who were present at the Riḍwān Pact:

Certainly Allah was well pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance to you under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down tranquility on them and rewarded them with a near

---

<sup>27</sup> Qur'ān, *al-Anfāl*:65,66

<sup>28</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 11:170.

victory. And many acquisitions which they will take; and Allah is Mighty, Wise.<sup>29</sup>

From the above verses and incidents in *ḥadīth* we can conclude that every *Ṣaḥābah* were not in the same category.

Islamic scholars differed in the explanation of ‘Qarn’ which is used in the above mentioned *ḥadīth* about *salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* as Ibn Ḥajar indicates:

The word ‘Qarn’ means a community of people who work together for a special purpose. It is said that the word indicates the people who unite under the banner of a common standard, thought or a prophet. It also is used to mention a specific period. But there is a difference of opinion between Islamic scholars in defining this period.<sup>30</sup>

There are many explanations related to this in famous *ḥadīth* literatures like *Sharḥ Muslim*<sup>31</sup>, *‘Awn al-ma‘būd*<sup>32</sup>, *Tuḥfah al-aḥwādī*<sup>33</sup>, etc.

Muslim scholars have still not concluded whether this dignity is for the respective generation or for some specific people. Al-Shawkānī says that Abū Hurayra’s *ḥadīth*, “the greatest generation are of my generation” clarifies that *Ṣaḥābah* are the greatest and no one can claim this greatness which was given to each and every one individual in that generation.<sup>34</sup>

At the same time al-Shawkānī substantiates that the majority of scholars unite in the opinion that this dignity (*khayriyyah*) will be available to each and every person included in the above mentioned categories based on the quotes of Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr who opined that this greatness has been given to those three groups. Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr

---

<sup>29</sup> Qur’ān: *al-Faḥ*: 18,19.

<sup>30</sup> Al-‘Asqalānī, *Faḥ al-bārī*, 10: 445.

<sup>31</sup> Yahya ibn Sharaf Abū Zakariyyah al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ al-Nawawī ‘alā Muslim*, (Dimashq: Dār al-Khair, 1416 A.H.), 8:314.

<sup>32</sup> Sharaf al-Ḥaq ‘Azīm Ābādī, *‘Awn al-ma‘būd ‘Alā Sharḥ Abī Dāwud*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr, 1424 A.H.), 2:174.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Mubārakfūrī, *Tuḥfah al-Aḥwādī bi Sharḥ Jāmi‘a al-Turmudhī*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-kitāb al-‘Ilmiyyah 1421 A.H.), 6:3.

<sup>34</sup> Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Muhammad al-Shawkānī, *Nayl al-awṭār Sharḥ muntaq al-akḥbār*, (al-Riyād: Dār A‘lām al-Kutub, 1423 A.H.), 9:228