SUNNAH

• Definition
• Position and justification of Sunnah as a source of law
• The relationship of the Qur’an and Sunnah
• Classifications and Types of Sunnah
Definition

• Literal meaning: habitual or customary practice, whether this practice is good or bad.

• Technical meaning:
  - According to scholar of Fiqh (*faqih*): “Sunnah means recommended acts of worship.”
  - According to scholar of Usul al-Fiqh (legal theorist/usulli): It is defined as “what was transmitted from the Messenger of Allah of his words, acts and tacit.”
Position and justification of Sunnah as a Source of Law

• Sunnah is the second primary source of Islamic law and its position is next after the Qur’an.
• In case when the jurist does not find a text in the Qur’an for a case he has to settle, he has to recourse to the Sunnah in derivation of the rule.
• The Sunnah of sound and complete chain of narrator which meant for legislation and legal rules is as an authoritative source of Islamic law.
• Proof of the Sunnah as the source of law is established by Qur’an and Ijma’.
Proofs by The Qur’an

1. The Qur’an points out that whatever originated from Messenger of Allah does not come out from his own desire but it is a type of revelation.

“Nor does he say (aught) of (his own) desire. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him” (al-Najm (The Star): 3-4)

2. There are many verses of the Qur’an command the believer to follow the Sunnah i.e. to obey the Messenger of Allah

“O ye who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger...” (al-Nisa’(4): 59)
Proofs continue...

- Obedience to Messenger is obedience to Allah. “He who obey the Messenger, obeys Allah” (al-Nisa’(4): 80)

- To follow whatever is brought by Messenger and to refrain whatever is prohibited by him. “And whatever the Messenger gives you, take (observe) it, and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it.” (al-Hashr(59):7)

- To refer any dispute to Qur’an and Sunnah “O ye who believe! Obey Allah and Obey the Messenger and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger...” (al-Nisa’(4):59)
Proof by Ijma’

- Muslims from the time of Messenger of Allah till today are in agreement that the Sunnah is a source of Islamic law. The Muslims are bound to follow legal injunctions that are derived from Sunnah and they do not differentiate between the legal injunction which laid down by the Qur’an and the Sunnah.
The relationship between the Qur’an and Sunnah

- The Sunnah has close relationship with the Qur’an.
- It is a secondary and complementary to the Qur’an.
- It is an elaboration and explanation of the Qur’an.
- Recourse to the Sunnah is required in case if the words of the Qur’an convey ambiguous meaning and have possibility of more than one meaning.
- Thus the Sunnah plays significant role with respect to the Qur’an in explanation of legal rules.
The Role of Sunnah With Respect To The Qur’an

1) The Sunnah reemphasizes and reiterates the injunction of the Qur’an. That is a particular injunction is based on two authorities and derived from two sources. This indicates that such particular injunction is established by the Qur’an and supported by the Sunnah.

Example: Injunction relating to the prohibition of taking a property of other person without his consent.

“It is unlawful to possess a property of a Muslim without his express consent” (It is reported by al-Darqutni)

This Sunnah emphasizes the Quranic injunction:

“O ye who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves unjustly except it be a trade amongst you by mutual consent...” (al-Nisa’(4):29)
The Role of Sunnah continue...

2-The Sunnah explains and clarifies the verses of the Qur’an. This is in three ways.

a) Explains and elaborates the concise verses of the Qur’an.

- Example: The Sunnah explains the manner of performing prayer, fasting, types of Riba etc
The Role of Sunnah continue...

b) Specify the generality of rule of the Qur’an.
E.g. The Sunnah: “He who kills the deceased will not inherit” specifies the generality of the rule contained in the Qur’anic verse “Allah command you concerning your children: for the male is the equal of the portion of two female.” (al-Nisa’ (4): 11)

c) Restrict the absolute rule of the Qur’an.
E.g. The Sunnahs restrict the absolute rule of the verse “As to the thief male or female cut off his or her hands: A punishment by way of example from Allah for their crime...” (al-Ma’idah(5):38) by prescribing the value of property, the property must be under custody and that it is the right hand that is to be cut.
• 3) The Sunnah abrogates the rule established by the Qur’an. E.g. According to majority of Muslim jurists, the Sunnah: “No will should be made to legal heir” abrogates the verse prescribed to make a will to parent and near relatives i.e. “ It is prescribed for you, when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind some goods to make a will for parent and near relatives.” (al-Baqarah (2): 180).
The Role of Sunnah continue...

4) The Sunnah lays down legal injunction that is silent by the Qur’an.

E.g.

• the prohibition of wearing a gold ring by man
• prohibition of combining a woman together with her paternal auntie and maternal auntie in marriage
• permissible of the carrion (death animal) of the sea etc.
Classifications and types of the Sunnah

• Classification of Sunnah as according to its nature

1) Verbal Sunnah or the Sunnah by word (al-Sunnah al-Qawliyyah):
   It is the sayings of Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him) meant for legislation and legal rules. The Sunnah in this sense is synonym of Hadith. A large number of the Sunnah is of this type.

2) Practical or actual Sunnah (al-Sunnah al-Fi’liyyah):
   It is the actions of Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) having legal content such as his prayer, fasting and pilgrimage to Mecca.
Classifications continue...

3) Tacit Sunnah (al-Sunnah al-Taqririyyah) or the Sunnah by the tacit approval or disapproval of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him):

- It is the commission of certain acts, by word or deed, by some Companions and the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) keeps silent. His silence and not objecting to the word or deed of Companion is called tacit Sunnah. Meaning that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) allows them to continue to do the act and confirmed the validity of their words and deeds.
- E.g. The Prophet does not object the playing of spear by two boy in the mosque.
- The eating of lizard (iguana) by the companions.
Classifications continue...

- Classification of Sunnah as according to its manner of transmission
  1) Sunnah with continuous chain (*al-Muttasilah*): A Sunnah whose chain of transmitters is continuous and not broken.
  2) Sunnah with broken chain (*ghayr muttasilah*): A Sunnah whose chain of narrators is not continuous but broken.
Sunnah with continuous chain

• According the majority of Muslim jurists, there are two types of the Sunnah with respect to the continuous chain: *Sunnah Mutawatirah* and *Sunnah Ahad*.

• The Hanafi jurists added a third category in between these two. It is called *Sunnah Mashhurah*.

• It is to be noted that the classification of the Sunnah into *mutawatirah, mashhurah* and *ahad* is based on the transmitters of the three periods i.e. the period of the Companions, the period of the Successors and the period of the Followers of the Successors.

• This is because the Sunnah was compiled after the period of the Followers of the Successors and all the Sunnahs become well-known.
Sunnah continue...

- **Sunnah Mutawatirah:**
  “is one narrated by such a large number of people whose secret agreement on lie is usually impossible, and that is from the beginning of the chain to its end.”

  Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)

  **Transmitters**
  (Generation of Companions) Large number

  **Transmitters**
  (Generation of Successors) Large number

  **Transmitters**
  (Generation of Followers of The Successors) Large number
Sunnah with continuous chain continue...

The position of Sunnah Mutawatirah is definitive with respect to its transmission or establishment. This means that we are sure and certain about its attribution to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). In this respect, it is similar to the Qur’an.
Sunnah continue...

- **Sunnah Mashhurah (well known Sunnah):** is one whose number of narrators does not reach the level of tawatur in the first generation but reaches this extent after that.

  Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)
  
  Transmitters
  
  (Generation of The Companions) One or more persons
  
  Transmitters
  
  (Generation of The Successors) Large number
  
  Transmitters
  
  (Generation of The Followers of The Successors) Large number
Continue...

• The position of the Sunnah Mashhurah is lesser in strength than the Sunnah Mutawatirah but is stronger than Sunnah Ahad.

• On the other hand, according to majority of Muslim jurists, this type of Sunnah is considered as Sunnah Ahad and thus it is probable in its establishment
• **Sunnah Ahad (solitary sunnah):** is one narrated by one, two or more narrators from the beginning of the chain to its end.

Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)

Transmitters
(Generation of The Companions) one or more persons

Transmitters
(Generation of The Successors) one or more persons

Transmitters
(Generation of The Followers of The Successors) one or more persons
The position of the Sunnah Ahad is probable with respect to its transmission and establishment.