

## The role of Sunnah in promoting socio-economic conditions in Nigeria

<sup>1</sup>Malam Yusuf Muhammad Yunus, <sup>2</sup>Dr Sulaiman Olayiwola Rabiu

<sup>1</sup>Government Technical College, Binji - Sokoto, Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Law, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria.

### Abstract

Nigerian society is multi-religious in search of a viable solution to its problems which posed threats to her since almost fifty-two years of her independence. Over the years, various policies have been introduced by the Federal, state and local governments in an attempt to address the many problems confronting Nigeria socially, economically and politically. Some of the policies during the Military era led to the establishment of Directorate for Food and Rural Infrastructure (DIFRI), Mass Agency for Mobilization and Socio-Economic Recovery (MAMSER), Poverty Reduction Programme and Poverty Alleviation Policy to mention but a few. However, these policies have failed to tackle the problems of Nigeria. Sunnah as a designed path by Allah with instructions from Him to His beloved Prophet to teach mankind so that in the society there will be peaceful co-existence. The ignorance of Sunnah of the Prophet in our society hinder our development. Hence, this paper presents the beautiful picture of the life of the Noble Prophet and his practice i.e. his Sunnah for our generation to emulate.

**Keywords:** Directorate for Food and Rural Infrastructure (DIFRI), Mass Agency for Mobilization and Socio-Economic Recovery (MAMSER), Sunnah

### Introduction

This paper analyses some ways by which the social and economic sectors of Nigerian society can be reformed through the application of the Sunnah of the prophet Muhammad (SAW). The Nigeria society is a multi-religious society which comprises non-Muslims such as religion may ask that why Sunnah of the prophet has to be applied to solve Nigeria socio-economic problems since the country consists not only of Muslim. The reply to it is that, the country seems to be in search of a viable solution to its problems which posed threats to her since almost fifty-two years of her independence. Over the years, various policies introduced by the Federal, state and local governments in an attempt to address the many problems confronting Nigeria socially, economically and politically of the policies during the Military era led to the establishment of e.g. (DIFRI), Directorate for Food and Rural Infrastructure. (MAMSER,) Mass Agency for Mobilization and Socio- Economic Recovery, Poverty Reduction Programme and Poverty Alleviation Policy to mention but a few. However, these policies have failed to tackle the problems of Nigeria. Therefore Sunnah as a designed path by Allah with instruction from Him to His beloved prophet to teach mankind so that in the society there will be peaceful coexistence. The ignorance of Sunnah of the Prophet in our society hinder our development. Therefore the essence of this paper is to present the beautiful picture of the life of the noble prophet and his practice i.e. his Sunnah for our generation to emulate.

### Definition of Sunnah

Sunnah means a praise or path <sup>[1]</sup>. It is a path worthy of praise to whosoever establish it. The Sunnah of our noble prophet Muhammad (SAW) is an action worthy of praise but not blame. The scholars of Hadith define Sunnah as what emanated from the prophet Muhammad (SAW) pertaining to

his sayings, deeds, tacit approval, or the description of his history and activities before or after his messenger ship <sup>[2]</sup>. The prophet says:

*“He who set a good precedent in Islam there is reward for him and for this act of goodness and also for those who acted according to it up to the day of resurrection”*

The Usulist (The Scholars of principle of Jurisprudence) define Sunnah, as is has to do with Islamic laws whether such in the Glorious Quran or what has come from the prophet (PBUH). It also includes the intellectual efforts of the companions such as the compilation of the Glorious Qur’an and the act of making people to recite the Qur’an uniformly, as well as the documentation of Hadith <sup>[4]</sup>. The prophet says:

*“Sunnah is (categorized) into two: the obligatory and non-obligatory Sunnah, the obligatory Sunnah is that which its origin is from the Book of Allah the Most High adopting lead one to the straight path while ignoring lead one astray. But the non-obligatory Sunnah is that which its origin is not from the Qur’an the most high adopting it is a blessing and ignoring it is, not a mistake <sup>[5]</sup>”.*

In view of this Hadith, it is obvious that Prophetic traditions are obligatory, while some are non-obligatory but to emulate Him attract mercy and blessings of Allah which attachment to its practice will be very much essential and beneficial to whoever emulates Him. The prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in his farewell pilgrimage address pointed out the legacy left behind for Muslims in order to be guided and control their social and economic life sphere. He says:

*“I left for you two things of which whosoever hold it will not be astray the Book of Allah and my Sunnah <sup>[6]</sup>”.*

In another Hadith, the prophet (PBUH) described all irreligious act as an act that will be reprobated. He says:

*“Whosoever works any work which does not belong to this affair of ours (Islam) will be reprobated”<sup>[7]</sup>.*

The prophet observed that the act of worship is to love what Allah loves and hate what Allah

### **The Position of Sunnah in Islam**

The Sunnah of the noble prophet occupies a great position in Islam and as such the Glorious Qur’an in many places reiterated the need to uphold with high esteem. The following are some of the verses that emphasized this position: (Quran; 3; 32)<sup>[8]</sup>.

Allah also warned Muslims from going against the commandment of the Prophet (PBUH) which indicate the position of respect given to him by Allah as (Quranl 6: 5 = 7)<sup>[9]</sup>.

Allah commands each and everybody to take whatever prophet gives to them in terms of worship (i.e. Ibadah) or etiquette and moral to control their ways of life for a just and moral society.(Quran; 59; 7)<sup>[10]</sup>.

Another commandment was revealed to indicate that the Sunnah of the prophet came next to Allah’s commandments:

All the verses stated the importance which Allah attached to the beloved prophet. Therefore, to emulate him wholeheartedly will surely sanitize and purify out socio-economic vices in Nigeria.

### **Sunnah as a source of law**

The Sunnah of the noble. Prophet is the second source of Islamic law and it comes next to the Qur’an. This means that after the Qur’anic 3:32<sup>[11]</sup> injunction, the next important source of Islamic law is Sunnah as stated in the (Qur’an. 3: 32.) (Q, 5; 9)<sup>[12]</sup>.

Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) in his farewell pilgrimage address pointed out to the generality of the Ummah the legacy left behind for the Muslims to guide them to the favour of Allah. He says:

*“I left for you two things of which whosoever hold it will not lust, the Book of Allah and my Sunnah”<sup>[13]</sup>.*

### **i) It completes the teachings of the Qur’an**

The Sunnah of our noble prophet Mohammad (PBUH) further explains the verses of the Glorious Qur’an in many ways. Prayer, Zakat, Hajj and fasting of the month of Ramadan are injunctions ordained by Allah (SWT) in the Qur’an Allah says:

*“And those who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend out of what we have provided for-them”<sup>[14]</sup>,*

In another verse of the same surah; Allah commands:

*“And establish prayer, and give zakat, and bow with those who bow in worship and obedience”<sup>[15]</sup>”*

Allah gives His directive in another verse of the same surah to establish prayer: He says:

*“And speak good (words) to people and establish prayer and give Zakat”<sup>[16]</sup>.* In the above Qur’anic quotation, Allah does not mention the number of times to establish the prayer either daily weekly monthly or even yearly and He does not mention the number of Raka’at consist in each prayer. The Sunnah of the prophet demonstrated the full detail of the mode of prayer, the number of times to pray in a day, the mode of their observations what, what vitiate the prayer and,

the establishment of the college of Ba’di and Qabl to correct mistakes de in the prayer. Prophet says: *“Observe prayer as you have seen me observing it”<sup>[17]</sup>.*

### **ii) Sunnah as best interpreter of the Qur’an**

The most authoritative source of the interpretation of the Quran is the Sunnah of our noble t (PBUH). The Glorious Qur’an says:

*“(We sent them) with clear proofs and written ordinances. And we revealed to you the message (i.e. the Quran ‘an) that you may make clear to the People what was sent down to them and that they might give thought”<sup>[18]</sup>.*

Although, the Qur’an was revealed in Arabic language, the language of Arabs, one may therefore dwell that the need for any interpretation as the literal meaning of the verses is well known to the Arabs is no more necessary. The above statement could not be said to be true as the intended meaning of the Qur’an cannot be known except through an explanation from the prophet who received it from Allah. To this effect Allah (SWT) assured the prophet (PBUH) that he would teach him the real interpretation of the Qur’an<sup>[21]</sup>. This is contained in the verse which says:

*“Then upon us is its clarification to you”<sup>[19]</sup>”*

It therefore follows that the explanation of the prophet (PBUH) regarding the Quran, the true intended meaning of Allah who teaches the prophet reflects. For example Allah says:

*“It has been made permissible for you the night preceding fasting to go to your wife’s (for sexual relation). They are clothing for you and you are clothing for them. Allah knows that you used to deceive yourself so lie accepted your repentance and forgive you. So now have relations with them and seek that which Allah has decreed for you (i.e. offering). And eat and drink, until the white thread of dawn becomes distinct to you from the black thread (of night) (i.e. sunset), and do not have relation with them as long as you are staying for worship in the Mosque. These are the limit (set by) Allah so do not approach”<sup>[20]</sup>.*

This verse explained the series of endurance which Muslims have exhibited in the early age of Islam. It stated that Muslims were not permitted to have sexual intercourse with their wives during the night of Ramadan. Ibn Kathir stated that Muslims could only have sexual intercourse with their wives only between Maghrib prayer and Isha’I and anything after even if they slept off during the time for breaking fasting, they are to continue with fasting till the following day. This is the mode of fasting during the early ages of Islam. Later, this burden was removed and permission was granted them to have sexual intercourse with their wives throughout the night of Ramadan. The Quran says the wives of Muslims are their night garment and vice versa.

The Burden of drinking and eating during the night of Ramadan was also removed by Allah when he metaphorically stated that Muslims should eat and drink until white thread is distinguished from black once. When this verse was revealed, Ibn Hazim took both black and white threads to explain the interpretation of the above verse but all in vein. The following day, he went to the prophet to report his experience to him. The prophet (PBUH) replied that Allah means the

lightening of the day and the darkness of the dawn <sup>[21]</sup>. By so doing it further shows the importance and more recognition of Sunnah.

#### **As of Source of History**

The Glorious Qur'an has narrated various stories such as the history of the people of Kahf, the story of Ad and Thamud, the history of battle of Badr, Uhud, etc but the prophet gave explicit explanation of these stories to enable Muslims learn lessons from them. The Qur'an stated that all Allah's signs shown to the people is manifest and sufficient source of history. Allah says:

*"We will show them our signs in the universe and in their own selves, until it becomes manifest to them that this (the Qur'an) is the truth, is it not sufficient in regard to your Lord that He is a witness over all things <sup>[22]</sup>"*

It is absolutely believed by every mankind and particularly Muslims that Allah is the sole creator of creatures and the Qur'an. It is His revealed words to the prophet, therefore the capacity to witness incidences and happenings belong to him. Widened the scope of the Qur'anic injunctions on Zakah al-Fitri, explanation of not marrying two sisters together, eating of meat. which Allah's name is not mentioned when slaughter and also a source of details about Qur'anic injunction and gives physical demonstration regarding the injunction of the Qur'an on prayer, Zakah, fasting and Hajj. Likewise the capacity to widen the explanation of the injunction of the Glorious Qur'an belong to the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as the capacity to narrate the story of the happenings to whom He wishes belongs to Him.

#### **Moral Bankruptcy in the Nigerian Society**

A Muslim should try to comprehend that, his neighbour has some rights over him whether they are both from the same religion or not. Likewise, each and every individual should be conscious of his behaviors and his duty to perform towards his neighbour either from the same tribe or religion, this would make them to establish good atmosphere and strengthen trust between themselves. The bankruptcies in the two spheres of lives are social and economic are as follow:

##### **i) Social Life Sphere**

It is quite unfortunate that vices that did not happen in the early period of the independence have taken over the country. A Perpetrators very good example to mention but few is child abuse. This crime use different mode of operations e.g child trafficking, rape, child neglect etc. Some Nigerians children were trafficked to Europe, Middle East and other countries to engage in hard labour, domestic servitude and sexual exploitation. Girls and women were trafficked for prostitution to Italy, France, Spain, Netherlands, Cote De Voire and Benin Republic.

Children were trafficking for voluntary domestic and agricultural labour from Nigeria to other countries. Nigeria is one of the leading countries for child trafficking.

This ugly act came into existence in the early period of 1980s and gradually developed to an alarming rate. In 1999, about twelve (12) young Nigerian girls were deported from Italy for engaging in sexual commercialization i.e. prostitution. In the year 2000, another ninety two (92) Nigerian girls were also deported from Germany, American and Canada for engaging

in the act. Some of these girls were below the age of twenty used for either house-keeping, or hard labour in factories with little salary. On raping, report shows that more than 13,000 women were raped within 1999-2006 and another report confirmed that 2000 girls were raped in Nigeria in 2007 <sup>[24]</sup>. The rate of child abuse in Nigeria is alarming and needs to be urgently arrested.

##### **ii) Examination Malpractice**

Another social life sphere which require urgent solution is examination malpractice. It can be defined as an act of dishonest or indiscipline of a candidate or candidates, or any other person to contravene the existing rules and regulations of examination body in order to enjoy an undue advantage over others. This has been recurring event in the history of Educational sector in Nigeria.

In the year 2000, for example the then JAMB Registrar Professor Bello Salim.

Affirmed that Nine thousand eight hundred and nine (9809) candidates caught for examination malpractices. In 2005, one 'of the National Dailies reported that there was leakages of WAEC questions. The news added that the something happen in other Examination bodies like: NABTEB, NTI, JAMB and NECO, The principals and proprietors of Schools do connive with security agents and invigilators to enable their candidate engage in examination malpractices. This ugly scenario needs to be quickly arrested.

##### **iii) Another Social Vice is Drug Abuse/Addiction**

This could be defined as taking of drugs for a reason other than medical treatment. This is another dangerous habit which destroyed 'life style of our youth today in this country. Drug abuse is also common to some of our politician, artisan, and many of our force men. Nigerians generally cultivated the' habit of self-medication which also amounts to drug abuse.

In Nigeria today, drugs hawkers have taken over the streets selling drugs without measurement and prescription. Drug abuse definitely have negative effect either in social or particularly in academic life of people in the globe generally and Nigeria in particular.

##### **Economic Sphere**

Economically, Nigeria is among the top corrupt nation of the world. For example, some individual firms or corporate organizations in an attempt to evade tax payment colluded with government officials who helped them to adulterate audit reports <sup>[29]</sup>. Many custom officers in Nigeria ignore their oath of allegiance to be faithful to the country. They colluded with some bad citizens to have custom duties waived for them. The most unfortunate aspect of it is the smuggling in and out of the country, some goods or drugs that are harmful to human health are being allowed to smuggle in, for exchange of money, whereas the Government is paying them their emoluments monthly. All these acts including human and currency trafficking across the Nigeria borders were in most cases carried out with the knowledge of some of unpatriotic custom officers <sup>[30]</sup>.

Some civil servants also contributed to the economics mess of the nation through the collection of *bribes*, *embezzlement of public funds*, *mismanagement* of public properties and other form of corruptions. Another fraudulent acts, carried

out in the Nigeria society includes the various forms of banks fraud, which some fraudulent citizens have gone to the extent of taking signatures of some people in order to enjoy some financial advantages while many accounts have been rendered empty through the fraudulent activities of some Nigerians<sup>[31]</sup>.

Corruptions have ruined Nigeria both home and abroad. Even though, not only Muslims are involved in above mentioned offences but what we are saying is that let the Muslims whom I believe to have formed huge number of the working class in Nigeria stop from committing such acts and perhaps the rest of the citizen would be forced to stop doing so.

### **The Effects of Immoral Conduct on Nigeria Citizen and Society**

As a result of the various forms of abnormal activities which that have engulfed all sphere of life in the country, the country has turned to the source, transit and destination for exhibiting bankruptcies. To this effect, the nation is facing a lot of problems which include the following:

#### **i) Spread of Diseases**

Head of National Agency for prohibition and Trafficking in person and other related matter (NAPTIP) Kano State Zone, Ahmed M. Bello has disclosed that over 60% of victims of trafficking repatriated to the country tested are HIV positive. He added that the victims are mainly teenagers who engaged in, commercial prostitution abroad.

#### **ii) Loss of Hope and confidence on the Government**

Nigerians have lost hope in their rulers because they are only there to enrich themselves, in addition, the inability of government to maintain security of lives and properties due to the incessant socio-economic crises, the inability of the government to ensure social justice and free and fair election have all resulted into loss of confidence on the Nigeria government<sup>[33]</sup>.

#### **iv) Bad Image**

For Nigeria to be ranked among the top corrupted nation in the world, it has injured our image both home and abroad. All the fraudulent acts committed by Nigerians anywhere in the world tarnished our image and integrity before the committee of nation<sup>[34]</sup>.

#### **v) Health Implication**

With various forms of sub standards, fake and expired drugs import into the country and with the illegal sexual affairs (i.e. child abuse) made or the state of the health in Nigeria become downtrodden. Transparency international noted that corruption could deprive a nation of a commendable state of health, because the resources allocated to the sector will not reach the required destination where it is needed<sup>[35]</sup>.

#### **vi) Grooming of dishonest future leaders**

Students who have passed the examination through cheating and other forms of corruption, it may be very difficult, if not impossible for such people to be a good leader in the future. These are the potential future leaders of this country, who raise up and achieve their aims through cheating and fraudulent means and what do you expect from.

Having discussed the problems facing Nigeria society in

socio-economic sphere of life, the next is to check how can the application of Sunnah eradicate and reform these our corrupt ways of life.

### **Sunnah as a Way out in our Socio-Economic Life Sphere**

The problem of child-abuse, exam malpractice, and other forms of corruptions can be effectively eradicated with the aid of Sunnah. All these types of problems were in existence in the pre Islamic society before the arrival of the prophet and were sincerely conquered during the life time of the prophet. Problems associated with sex, evading of tax, breaking of oath of allegiance, smuggling of fake or expired drugs, mismanagement of government properties and other forms of corruptions emulating the style and teaching of the Noble Prophet (SAW) in society.

#### **i) Prophetic tradition on Trust of Allah Entrusted on man**

Health and children are among the greatest resources bestowed on man, but unfortunately many people do engage in the practices that endanger their health e.g. drug abuse, prophet Mohammad (PBUH) teaches Muslim various traditions for them to realize and abstain from what can endanger their health. For example prophet says:

*“There are two gifts of which many are deprived (namely) good health and leisure<sup>[37]</sup>.”*

Another tradition stated:

*“Ask Allah for forgiveness and health, after certainly of faith, nothing better is given to man than good health<sup>[38]</sup>.”*

In recognition of the greatness of this blessing the prophet says:

*“The first question that is put to the worshipper on the Day of rising about the pleasure of this world is “Did I not give you, a health body<sup>[39]</sup>”*

The above quoted tradition cautioned mankind from engaging in what could affect their health e.g. drug abuse, drug addiction and consumption of drugs as well as consumption of alcoholic drinks etc. which affect the health of the user negatively. If people comply with the instruction of above mentioned tradition, the issue of spreading of disease will decline in our society because each and every body will opt to protect his health by limiting himself to the lawful foods and abstain from unlawful ones. Millions of soldiers have been provided by Allah in the blood of our body to attack any form of virus that could cause disease but the abuse of drugs render these soldiers useless and create different kinds of disease in our body.

Children are blessings and trust entrusted on man by Allah as such man shall be questioned about how he takes care of them. The following prophetic tradition says:

*“Verily each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock. So the head who is placed over the people is a shepherd responsible for his flock; a man is placed over the member of his family and he is responsible for his flock; a woman is placed over the family of her husband and his children and she is responsible for them, a servant of a man is placed over the property of his master and he is responsible for it<sup>[40]</sup>.....”*

Children are special blessings from Allah but if they are not

properly and islamically taking care of and they behave against the will of Allah, the wrath of Allah may be ultimate result.

Custodians of examination's papers are also people entrusted with some responsibilities and they shall stand before Allah to give account of the task given to them, on how do they discharge the duties impose on them. The application of the above tradition if comply with in our society it could give positive change.

The application of the above tradition in our society could assist in bringing positive changes to our life and more especially to the life of those who engaged in the sales of question papers, expired and fake drugs, those who mismanage or embezzled public found as well as those who engaged in breaking of their oath sworn before they were assigned duties and responsibilities. Each and every one of them should remember that they are shepherd given responsibilities and they will be questioned on the Day of Judgment over their flocks, Muslims belief on the Day of Reckoning and perpetrators of evil acts should remember this day.

Cheating of whichever type has been condemned by the prophet (PBUH). In an attempt to phase out this irreligious and unethical conduct from man's life he announced that on the Day of Judgment every traitor would be raised carrying the flag of his betrayal and a caller will carry out in the vast arena of judgment, pointing to him and drawing attention to him. Prophet says:

*"Every traitor will have a banner on the Day of Resurrection and it will be said: this is the betrayal of so and so"*

Our society would have been a smooth and religious one if people could ignore our difference in terms of race, religion and work towards the same goals and objectives. This will make evil conducts, bankruptcies and all other irreligious activities declines as mentioned in the tradition of prophet below.

*"Truthfulness leads to kindness (Birr) and kindness leads to paradise. A man continues to speak the truth until he is recorded in the sight of Allah as a sincere lover of truth (sidiqi) falsehood leads to iniquity and iniquity leads to hell. A man will continues to speak falsehood until he is recorded in the sight of Allah as a liar<sup>[42]</sup>".*

Prophet (PBUH) cautioned Muslims against nudity which is an arrow of raping and weapon of sexual harassment either in public or otherwise. The habit of proper dressing was instructed by the prophet for both male and female of which if it is adopted, our society will be safe from evil f raping, public sexual harassment and spreading of diseases. He described the act of lowering of gaze as an act of sweatiness of the soul for whosoever abide by it and also an act which protects men from unnecessary hungry of sex.

Prophet (SAW) said:

*"Sighting is an arrow among the satanic arrow, whosoever abandoned it for the sake of Allah. (Allah) will replace for him with sound faith which its sweetness will be tasted by his soul<sup>[43]</sup>".*

In another tradition the prophet cautions all Muslims to lower their gaze and ignore the practice of looking at the prettiness

of a woman which may eventually lead to unnecessary ejaculation.

Prophet says:

*"Whosoever among the believers look at the Prettiness of a lady or a woman and (quickly) lower his gaze. Then Allah will establish for him the worship which it's sweetness will be tasted by his soul".*

### Conclusion

The paper clearly pinpointed out that the socio-economic life sphere in Nigeria are faced with enormous problems which include lack of tolerance and good faith, These problems are the primary cause of cruelty, nepotism, embezzlement and mismanagement of public funds. The teaching of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) on justice, and good leadership, would assist in reforming and addressing the Nigerian socio-economic problems. This paper mentioned some socio economic problems which purely emanated from our young one, who are potential future leader of this country. All the aforementioned habits must be corrected through proper understanding and emulation of the teaching and practices of the noble Prophet Muhammad (SAW) if that is done definitely our society would be free of all source of corruption, and automatically the image of our country will be restored both in and outside the country.

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