

Att: Chris Gibbons

Re: Status of the beard in Islam

On the 6th of April 2005, certain views were expressed on your program concerning the status of the beard in Islam. These views were in direct conflict with the religious verdicts issued by the scholars over the centuries. However, from the outset, we would like to make it known that our intention is not to generate a debate surrounding the issue. Instead, we would like to present the facts, thereby removing any doubt that might have crept in to the minds of some of your listeners.

The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) has shown us everything, taught us the different aspects of worship, adorned all the outward and inward aspects of man and has clearly defined how both these aspects should appear. He has clearly outlined how we should dress, as well as the outward form and appearance we should adopt. He has prohibited us from identifying with and emulating idol worshipers and has prescribed for us Muslims such an insignia, which clearly distinguishes a believer from a polytheist.

Among the teachings and much emphasized instructions of the Prophet (PBUH) is the order of lengthening the beard and trimming the moustache. Imam Bukhari, in his authentic compilation of Prophetic traditions, mentions that the holy Prophet (PBUH) said, "Clip the moustache closely and lengthen the beard." In a similar manner, Imam Muslim narrates a tradition of the holy Prophet (PBUH), wherein it is mentioned that the Prophet (PBUH) said, "Cut your moustaches and allow your beards to droop." Imam Tahaawi has also mentioned a similar narration to that of Imam Bukhari. In addition to this, if we peruse the various books of Prophetic traditions we will come across many narrations concerning the beard.

It should be clear that when we say, "The beard is a Sunnah (practice) of the Prophet (PBUH),"

it revolves around the fact that it was one of many noble practices of the Prophet (PBUH). Not only did he keep a beard, but he also ordered the Muslims to grow their beards and showed his anger and displeasure at those who shaved it. All the companions of the Prophet (PBUH) and their successors meticulously observed this practice. All these elements serve to prove that it is obligatory for a Muslim to keep a beard.

Some might say that the Prophet (PBUH) kept a beard merely because it was an Arab custom. . Therefore, if the Prophet (PBUH) were present with us today, he would also shave his beard. Such statements can only be attributed to sheer and utter ignorance. They are totally ignorant of the fact that the Prophet (PBUH) was ordered by Allah to follow the ways of the Prophets who preceded him and not the ways of the arab polytheists of his time.

Those practices that were preserved in their original form was perpetuated by our Prophet (PBUH). On the other hand, if the teachings were distorted, he would not only shun it, he would also forbid his followers from practicing on it, like he forbade them from burying their daughters alive, answering the call of nature in public, gambling and drinking wine etc. However, amongst his teachings is that keeping a beard is an act of Islam and a symbol for Muslims.

An interesting fact is that one will not find in the sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) that the beard should be kept. Rather we find many narrations that command us to lengthen the beard. So the issue of whether to keep a beard or not was never under discussion in Islam.

In conclusion, all the scholars of Islamic Jurisprudence, throughout the centuries have unanimously agreed that the shaving of the beard is definitely prohibited.

