

# THE BEARD

## AN INTEGRAL PART OF A BELIEVER'S APPEARANCE

FROM THE LETTERS OF SHEIKHUL ISLAM,  
HADHRAT MOULANA HUSSAIN AHMED  
MADANI RAHIMAHULLAH



WIFĀQUL 'ULAMA

ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN 'ULAMA

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Published by:  
Wifāqul Ulamā SA

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The authors, editors and typesetters and all those involved in making this publication possible humbly request your duas for them, their parents, families, Mashā-ikh and Asātizah.

Published by:

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South Africa

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First Edition: Rabi ul Awwal 1445 / October 2023

## Question

Respected Moulānā Sāhib. After conveying my wishes and respects, I wish to trouble you regarding one matter. I hope that despite your many commitments, you will be able to honour me with an answer.

I am a student at Meerut College. I try to follow the true Shari'ah strictly. Part of this is to grow the beard, which, Alhamdulillah, I have been keeping up to now. However, Moulānā Sāhib, I have become very distressed recently due to this. In the college environment, keeping a beard is something almost everyone mocks and looks down on.

They say that:

- 1) A person who keeps a beard is considered evil and uncouth.
- 2) Yes, our Nabi Sallallāhu 'Alayhi wa Sallam is known to have kept one; however, this was the custom of the

‘Arabs at that time. Since there is no habit or custom of it today, it is no longer necessary to keep one.

3) Nowadays, due to keeping a beard, a person fails his entrance exams because the examiners understand a person to be very old if he has one. If not old, then old-fashioned.

Nevertheless, these are the objections. It isn’t sufficient of a reply for these persons to say that Nabi Sallallāhu ‘Alayhi wa Sallam himself kept a beard. That is why I am turning to you, a master of the sciences of Din and dunyā. Perhaps you can explain the status of the beard in Sharī’ah, together with its wisdom, so that I may explain it to others. The reality is that I asked a certain Moulānā, and he replied, “Yes, it is Sunnah. However, it isn’t necessary (to keep one) nowadays.” This is why I eagerly anticipate your Fatwā and intend to practice upon it only.

That is all

A student of Meerut College

## **Answer**

Respected questioner: May Allāh Ta'ālā increase your honour!

Assalāmu 'Alaykum wa Rahmatullāhi wa Barakātuh

Your letter was a source of great happiness for me. I am currently under severe time constraints. Certain illnesses have also been affecting me recently. I feel some relief today, so I am penning a few words.

However, before going into the crux of the matter, reflect on the following essential introduction:

a) For every government department, some uniform is prescribed. The police have a particular uniform. The army's is different. The mounted troops in an army have a different one. The infantry has a different one. The ground forces have a different one, and the navy has a different one. The post office has its uniform. Railway workers have a different one. Then,

supervisors have a particular uniform, and those under them have a different one. Much emphasis is placed on this, to the extent that if, during work hours, anyone is found not wearing his uniform, he becomes deserving of some punishment. Royal guards have a certain uniform, and the ministers and close advisors also have different ones. This is the case in just one government; many departments, and each one has its own uniform.

Furthermore, the workers will be penalised and seen as wrongdoers for not adhering to their specific uniform. If an individual decides to wear the uniform of another department and his supervisor learns about it, he will be similarly or even more severely censored.

A person who arrives without a uniform is seen as insubordinate, and this is understood as integral to the running of a government. In like manner, nations and religions have always taken this into account. If you were to look, you would find that England, France, Germany, Italy, Australia, and the USA all have different flags and uniforms. A person in the know can easily tell their respective soldiers apart. This serves as differentiation on the battlefield and in other political settings.

Every nation and every religion understands the need to preserve its own distinctive signs and uniforms. Sometimes, carelessness in this regard can even have severe consequences. Try to topple the flag of a

particular country, dishonour it, or try pulling it out and see how quickly the army will react!

A 'uniform' is not confined to clothing. Sometimes, a sign is kept on a person's body. Certain nations tattoo themselves on their hands or other parts of their bodies. Some people wear peculiar nose rings or earrings. Some require the soldiers to lengthen their hair. Others are required to braid their hair.

The objective (of this introduction) was to show that this has always been the way in all different branches, nations, governments, and religions. It would be difficult to tell apart two different nations, systems, or departments were it not for their "uniform". How would we know whether this is a soldier, a general policeman, a railway officer, or a naval officer? Or whether this is a regular officer, the general, or the manager? Or whether he is American or of any other nation? And so forth. In every place and every era, this was regarded as necessary.

b) That nation or country that doesn't look after its uniform or differentiating factor will quickly assimilate and be absorbed into another nation to the extent that neither its name nor symbols will remain.

Look at India! The Greeks, Sathians, Afghans, Aryans, Tartars, Turks, Egyptians, and Africans migrated to India. From all these nations that arrived before the



Muslims, can any of them be identified in India today? Can any separate entity be identified? No! All of them have fully integrated into Hindu culture.

The sole reason for this is that they adopted the uniform of the majority. They wore the “dhoti” (traditional loin cloth), plaited their hair, wore the sari, and followed their different customs and habits. This is why their identity was wiped out. Despite their differing beliefs, all of them identify as Hindu and the unique features that used to set them apart no longer remain.

Yes, nations that stuck to their “uniform” can still be told apart and are regarded as different nations or creeds. The Persians came to India. The Hindus and their rulers wished to eradicate them. They forced their women to adopt Hindu dress and made them change their lifestyle and language. However, the males continued wearing their particular style of hat. As a result, they survived and are still recognised as having their own creed. The Sikhs kept their custom of growing the hair on their heads and beards, and so today, they are a nation that can be told apart and are regarded as existent.

The English arrived at the end of the 16th century, and around 250 years have passed. They used to live in an extremely cold country, and now, despite being in a warm country, they haven’t left out their coats, hats, pants, collars, and neckties. For this reason, a nation of 350 million could not exterminate them, and they

are still a separate nation and creed, which is widely understood the world over.

Over a thousand years have passed since Muslims arrived in this land. Had they not held onto their special “uniform”, then today, they would have become like the Hindus, similar to the nations that preceded them in India. Those nations assimilated and have been completely wiped out. Their only traces are now found in the pages of history. The Muslims didn’t just look after their own “uniform”; instead, they wiped out the uniforms of the majority and got them to wear the Muslim one! They were a few thousand in the beginning and are now in the tens of millions! They did not just protect their pants, kurtas, ‘Abāyas, jubbahs, ‘Imāmahs, etc. They also kept religious names for their men and women and preserved their unique manners and culture, their habits and customs, their languages, their types of buildings, etc. Due to this, they are regarded as a distinct nation in India and will remain in existence for as long as they hold on to all this. Once they abandon this, they will be wiped out.

c) Whenever any nation progresses, it makes an effort to ensure that its clothing, culture, religion, and language become overpowering and spread among other nations and countries. Read the history of the Aryan people and that of the Persians. Study the history of the Assyrian and Hebrew nations. Look closely at the revolutions of the Jews and Christians. There is no need to go that

far; the accomplishments of the 'Arabs and Muslims are apparent to you. The Arabic language was only prevalent in Arabia. Those in Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Sudan, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Iran, Libya, Senegal, Herat, etc., were unacquainted with the Arabic language, Islām and Islamic mannerisms. The 'Arabs spread their language, culture, and mannerisms in such a manner that even the non-Muslims in these countries now understand the Islāmic dressing, culture, and language as their own. The Israelites, Chaldean progenies, 'Arab families, Turkish communities, and other similarly influential nations have all blended in. Even if some of them have any knowledge of their previous identity, it's nothing more than a fleeting idea. They all now understand themselves to be 'Arab and lay claim to being Arab.

Now look at the English; they travelled from their island to Canada, Australia, America, New Zealand, Cape Town (South Africa), etc., and made such an effort that their language, culture, manners and ways, religion, and way of dressing spread. Even those who don't enter their creed are drawn into following their ways and fashion. This exact condition is found in India and is increasing day by day.

Seeing this flood (of English culture), the Hindu people are making a huge push to bring alive their dead language, Sanskrit, which historically was never the general language of India, or at least not that of the Aryan

people. Their lecturers stand up, and 50% or more of their words are Sanskrit, rendering their speech incomprehensible. Their own people don't even understand. Their religious speakers use around 80 to 90 percent Sanskrit. Yet, they look at this favourably. The reality is that their educational seminaries and religious leaders are determined to bring this forgotten language alive, even though no nations or countries on the face of the Earth speak it. It was most likely never a general language in the first place. They are making an effort that the whole of India uses their old writing script, even though it's highly deficient.

They are also making great strides to ensure that they do not leave out the tying of the dhoti (traditional loin cloth). Be it an MLC (Member of the Legislative Council), MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly), the president of an assembly, the council president, the judge, the deputy collector, etc., they all tie the dhoti, leave the hair open, wear a shirt and then attend official engagements. Even though, in reality, the dhoti uses much more material than pants, it doesn't even cover a person adequately, and neither is one fully protected from the cold and heat when wearing it. Despite all these realities, they choose not to wear pants. They also find it necessary to plait their hair, etc. What is all of this? Are these not hallmarks of a nation, the uniform of a nation? Is this not the reason why they haven't lost their special appearance?

The Sikh priests and their followers desired that their followers have a unique identity. Therefore, they decided they would not cut their hair or beard; they would wear an iron bracelet and keep a small sword. They made this their uniform. Despite the difficulty they experience due to the heat in this country, they will never agree to cut their hair. If they were to leave out these things, their differentiating factors and peculiar hallmarks would disappear from the world.

Considering the above, it becomes abundantly clear that the only way for any nation or religion to exist and uphold its independent and specific presence in the world is to hold firmly onto its specialities, manners and culture, communities, language, and actions. It was, therefore, necessary for Islām, whose beliefs, character, actions, and ways are far superior to any other nation or creed, to have its own special features and stipulate a “uniform”. The protection of these was to be understood as a protection of their identity and religion for which they would be ready to give their lives.

These specialities and “uniforms” were to be such that they would set apart the slaves of Allah who obey His commands from those who disobey and have become the enemies of Allah. It would serve as a differentiating factor between those who rebel and the faithful slaves of Allāh Ta’ālā. This is the secret behind the narration: “Whoever imitates a nation is from amongst them”, due to which youngsters sometimes become very

upset. Based on this, Nabi Sallallāhu ‘Alayhi wa Sallam stipulated a special “uniform” for his followers. Nabi Sallallāhu ‘Alayhi wa Sallam said to the effect: “The difference between us and the Mushrikīn is the tying of the ‘Imāmah (turban) upon the Topi.”

Based on opposing the Ahle-Kitāb (people of the book), Nabi Sallallāhu ‘Alayhi wa Sallam chose to keep a middle path (in his hair). Similarly, the command to keep the pants (lower garment) above the ankles was to set us apart from those who drag their garments out of pride.

Similarly, many laws of Islām were legislated to oppose and set us apart from the Jews, Christians, fire-worshippers, and Mushrikīn (idolators). There is much detail in this. These now serve as a means of distinction from them. It is for the same reason that males and females have also been given different ways of dressing, and men who dress like women and women who dress like men have been cursed. For a similar reason, the Khutbah is to be given in Arabic. The command to lengthen the beard and trim the moustache is also based on this.

Narrations are found in Bukhāri and Muslim.

Nabi Sallallāhu ‘Alayhi wa Sallam said: “Oppose the Mushrikīn. Lengthen the beards and trim the moustaches.” (Muslim)

“Cut the moustache and allow the beard to grow. Oppose the Majūs (fire-worshippers).” (Bukhāri)

“Whoever doesn’t trim his moustache is not from amongst us.” (Tirmidhi, Nasā’i)

Many similar narrations are found in the books of Hadīth, which clarify that the Mushrikīn and fire-worshippers used to trim their beards and grow their moustaches in that era like the Christians and Hindus do today. This custom was considered part of their special “uniform”; thus, it became necessary that Muslims were instructed to adopt a different “uniform” that set them apart from other religions.

This also brings to light the fallacy of those who claim that the lengthening of the beard and trimming of the moustache was based upon the prevalent custom of the Arabs of that time. In reality, the enemies of Islam at that time also had the same hallmark (i.e., they used to trim their beards and lengthen their moustaches). It becomes apparent through the above narrations that this was the “uniform” of the Mushrikīn and fire-worshippers, which, in turn, necessitated that Muslims adopt one contrary to them.

Similarly, a Hadīth mentions: “Ten things are part of the “Fitrah” (natural disposition) of man: trimming the moustache, lengthening the beard...” (Abū Dāwūd). This hadith explains that trimming the moustache



and growing the beard was also the special way and “uniform” of the close servants of Allah Ta’ālā and His Messengers (‘Alayhimus Salām). “Fitrah” here means the hallmarks of the Ambiyaa Alayhimus Salaam. This meaning is further understood from those narrations that mention words like “From amongst the Sunan of the Messengers” in place of the word “Fitrah”.

In short, (lengthening the beard and trimming the moustache) is a special way and “uniform” that the close slaves of Allah Ta’ālā have always adhered to. Other nations that were hostile to the command of Allah kept a different “uniform” in opposition to them. These are two reasons it becomes necessary to adopt our specific “uniform”. (i.e., following the special slaves of Allah and opposing the enemies of Allah)

It is only natural and logical that a “Muhammadi” should adopt the style, way of walking, outer appearance, inner qualities, fashion, and culture of his Master (Nabi Sallallāhu ‘Alayhi wa Sallam). He should, in like manner, totally abstain from the culture and fashion of the enemies of his Master. This is the dictate of logic and nature and is found in every nation and country. Today, who can be a greater enemy of Nabi Muhammad Sallallāhu ‘Alayhi wa Sallam and the Muslims than the West? Look at their history! Based on this, we ought to dislike their traits and fashion, whether British, French or American. Whether it be with regards to clothing or the body and whether it be with regards

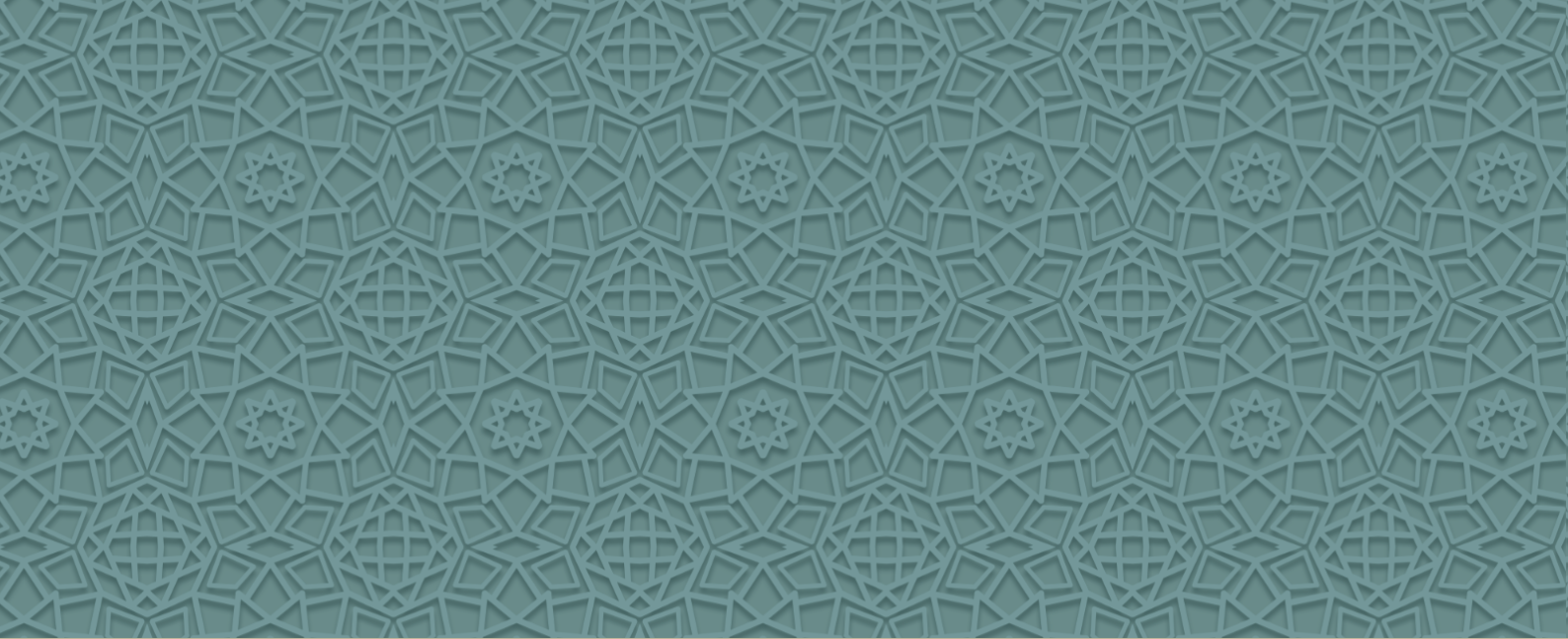


to language, mannerisms, and habits, in every respect, it is natural in every place and country that the traits of a beloved are held dear while those of an enemy are shunned. This is even more important with respect to those traits which have become the hallmarks of the enemy.

We should focus our efforts on becoming the slaves of Muhammad Sallallāhu ‘Alayhi wa Sallam and be prepared to sacrifice our lives for him rather than becoming the slaves of the British, French, and Americans.

The only thing that remains (of your question) is the matter of (failing) the entrance exam and the criticism you or any person working in an office are subjected to (for keeping a beard). These are all weak excuses. The Sikhs also take entrance exams. They hold both low and high positions. They hold firmly to their appearance and “uniform”, and no one even dares to look at them with a side-eye (to mock them). Despite their small numbers, they occupy several jobs and positions. Similarly, amongst the Hindus, many such individuals and families are found. Look at the beards of the “Patels” (community leaders) and look at the Bengalis and Gujaratis in the Brahma society, etc. The difficulty we encounter in this regard is due to our own weaknesses.

That is all,  
A shame to his predecessors, Husain Ahmad.



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“Whoever doesn’t trim his moustache is not from amongst us.” (Tirmidhi, Nasā’i)

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(Moulana Hussain Ahmed Madani Rahimahullah)