

SHAR'EE RULING OF KEEPING A BEARD

It is Waajib (compulsory) for a Muslim male to grow a beard. It is also Waajib to let the beard grow a fist length. It is prohibited to cut or shave the beard. He who does so is a Faasiq (sinner) and to shorten it less than a fist length is Makruh Tahrimi (near Haraam). This is the view of the majority of scholars. (see Wujooab l'efaul-lihyah of Shaykhul Hadith, MI. Muhammad Zakariyyah and the footnotes of ex-grand Mufti of Saudia – Shaykh ibn Baaz)

Verdict of Keeping the Beard according to the Hanafi Madhab

Allaamah ibnul Humaam (RA) has mentioned that nobody has permitted the trimming of the beard lesser than a fist length. (Fathul Qadeer; Shaami; Fataawa Mahmoodiyyah vol.5 pgs.93, 105, 108)

Quotations of other Madhaahib

Hereunder are some quotations from the Ulama of other Madhaahib (schools of thought) which support the above. More clarity can be attained by referring to the present day scholars of each Madhab.

The Shaafi'ee Madhab

Allaamah Nawawi (RA) states, 'The correct view (according to the Shaafi'ee Madhab) is to leave the beard to grow and it is Makrooh to trim the beard whatsoever.' (al-Majmoo vol.1 pg.290; also see Sharh Saheeh Muslim vol.2 pg.143)

Allaamah al-Iraaqi (RA) states in his book entitled, 'Tarhu Tathreeb' (vol.2 pg.8): '... that the best is to leave the beard totally and not to cut anything from it at all, and this is the view of Imaam al-Shaafi'ee and his students.'

There are quotations from 2 great scholars of the Shaafi'ee Madhab that do not permit the trimming of the beard at all, not even upto one fist.

The Maaliki Madhab

Imaam Abul-Waleed al-Baaji al-Maaliki (RA) has stated that: It has been narrated from Imaam Maalik (RA) that he permitted the slight trimming of those hairs that are overgrown and are outside the general growth of the rest of the hair, and that Imaam Maalik (RA) was asked about a beard that had grown extremely long, he replied that it should be trimmed a bit.'

Imaam Abul-Waalid explains the following, 'And it has been narrated from Abdullah ibn Umar and Abu Hurayra (Radhiallaahu Anhum) that they trimmed upto one fist.' Hence, this is what was meant by Imaam Maalik. (refer al-Muntaqa vol.7 pg.266)

Imaam al-Qurtubi al-Maaliki (RA) has also mentioned something similar to this in his commentary of Sahih Muslim. (see al-Mufhim vol.1 pg.513)

The Hanbali Madhab

Imaam Saamiri (RA) – who is an expert Hanbali Faqeeh (jurists) - states: And he should not trim any bit from the beard except if he wishes to do so upto the extent of one fist. However, it will be best if he doesn't do so.' (al-Mustaw'ib vol.1 pg.260 – see Hukm al-Lihyah fil Madhaahibil arba'ah; Abdul-Aziz al-Nu'maani pg.50)

Another Hanbali scholar, Imaam Shamsuddeen al-Maqdisi (RA) states, 'It is forbidden to shave the beard and it is not Makrooh to trim what is in excess of a fist's length... because this is supported by the practice of Sayyiduna Abdullah ibn Umar (Radhiallaahu Anhu).' (Kitaabul Furoo vol.1 pg.130; Ibid) Similar verdicts are found in other sources of Hanbali Fiqh such as al-Mubdi of ibn Muflih, al-Insaaf of al-Maawardi; Kashful Qinaa, etc. (Hukm al-lihyah pg.50)

It is clear from all these quotations that it is permissible to trim the beard only up to a fist length. No one has explicitly mentioned that it is permissible to trim

the beard lesser than a fist length. In fact, according to some of these quotations, it will be better not to trim the beard at all.

Proof of Wujoob

There are various Ahaadith of Rasulullah [sallallaahu alayhi wasallam] in which the keeping and lengthening of the beard have been ordered. We will just mention a few that prove the above claim.

1) Imaam Bukhari (Rahimahullaah) reports on the authority of Imaam Naafi' [ra] who narrates from Sayyiduna Abdullah ibn Umar (Radhiallaahu Anhu) that Rasulullah (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) said, 'Oppose the Mushrikeen (polytheists); **lengthen the beards** and trim the moustaches.'

Imaam Naafi' (RA) further states, 'And ibn Umar (Radhiallaahu Anhu) during Hajj or Umrah used to hold on to his beard with his fist and cut off whatever was in excess of that.' (Bukhari vol.2 pg.875; Kitaab-ul-Libaas no.5892)

Note: This Hadith has also been narrated by Sayyiduna Abu Hurayra [Radhiallaahu anhu] and he is also reported to have trimmed his beard upto one fist.

The verdict of the growing of the beard being Waajib (obligatory) is deduced from this Hadith. That is because any explicit command of Rasulullah (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) will be regarded as Waajib, if there is no apparent, clear reason/proof which states that that particular command is for Istihbaab (preference). This is an established fact in Usool-ul-Fiqh (principles of jurisprudence). Rasulullah [sallallaahu alayhi wasallam] has commanded the Ummah to lengthen the beards. Allah Ta'ala has mentioned in the noble Qur'aan, 'Those who disobey his (Rasulullah – Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) should beware of a trial or painful punishment that will afflict them.' (Surah Noor 63)

Allamah Nawawi (RA) has explained that this Hadith has been reported with various wordings:

- The word, 'Waffiroo' is mentioned in Sahih Bukhari (Hadith5892)

- In another narration of Bukhari. The words 'Ufoo' is mentioned (Sahih Bukhari Hadith5893)
- The word 'Arkhoon' is mentioned in Sahih Muslim (Hadith602)
- The word 'Awfoo' is mentioned in Sahih Bukhari (Hadith5892) and Sahih Muslim (Hadith601).

All these words imply the same meaning and that is to lengthen and to increase the growth of the beard. (Fathul Bari vol.10 pg.429, 431; Sharh al-Nawawi alaa Saheeh Muslim vol.2 pg.143)

Hafiz ibn Jareer al-Tabari (ra) has stated that some Ulama have totally disliked that one trims his beard at all, while others have permitted trimming upto a fist length. (Fathul Bari vol.10 pg.430)

2) When the two messengers of Kisraa (Khusru – the Persian King) came to Rasulallah [sallallaahu alayhi wasallam], they had long moustaches and shaved beards. Rasulallah [sallallaahu alayhi wasallam] turned his face away in disgust and asked them, 'Who commanded you to do this (despicable deed)?' They replied, 'Our Lord, (i.e. King)' At this, Rasulallah [sallallaahu alayhi wasallam] mentioned, 'But my Lord has commanded me to **lengthen my beard** and shorten my moustache.' (Tabaqaat ibn Sa'ad vol.1 pg.147; Taareekh Tabari vol.2 pg.267-266; Bidaaya wan Nihaaya)

3) In this narration, Rasulallah [sallallaahu alayhi wasallam] has stated that to lengthen the beard is infact the command of Allah Ta'ala Himself.

Furthermore, the WujooB is further emphasized by the fact that Rasulallah (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) did practice on this in his entire life. Know well that Rasulallah (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) did not trim his beard in his life. In fact, the beard of Rasulallah [sallallaahu alayhi wasallam] was dense and almost covered his blessed chest. (Shamaail Tirmidhi Hadith8; Dalaail al-Nubuwwah of Imaam Bayhaqi vol.1 pg.235)

Actions of the Sahaaba [radhiallaahu anhum]

The narrator (Ibn Umar (Radhiallaahu Anhu) himself trimmed his beard upto a fist's length, this implies that the WujooB of keeping a beard is up to a fist length only (this will be explained shortly).

Furthermore, this (trimming upto a fist length) has also been reported from Sayyiduna Abu Hurayra (Radhiallaahu Anhu) and other Taabi'een. (Tamheed of ibn Abdul-Barr al-Muntaqaa and Fathul Baari vol.10 pg.430). Bear in mind that Sayyiduna Abu Hurayra [radhiallaahu anhu] has also narrated a Hadith wherein we are commanded to lengthen the beards. (Sahih Muslim Hadith602)

Moreover, for the benefit of your knowledge, the sayings and actions of the Sahaaba (Radhiallaahu Anhum) is a Hujjah (proof). This is also an established principle in Usool-ul-Fiqh.

A Misconception

Many individuals who fail to understand the above, argue that it is Waajib to keep a beard, but there is no mention of any specific length in the Hadith. Hence, if one has a bit of hair on his face – irrespective of the length – it would be permissible, because this is also called a beard!

They also argue that to keep a beard upto a fist's length is the act of a Sahaabi [- Sayyiduna Abdullah ibn Umar - radhiallaahu anhu – and Sayyiduna Abu Hurayra – Radhiallaahu anhu] and it is not the command of Rasulullah [sallallaahu alayhi wasallam]. Hence, the one who chooses not to do so will not be contravening any command of Rasulullah [sallallaahu alayhi wasallam], so why is such emphasis being put on the length of one fist?

This – unfortunately – is a result of a lack of understanding of the actual wording of the Hadith. Firstly, in the Hadith we have quoted, Rasulullah [sallallahu alayhi wasallam] has commanded us to **lengthen the beard** and not just to **'keep' a beard**. The difference between the two is quite clear. If one just 'keeps' a shortened beard, he will not be fulfilling the command of Rasulullah [sallallaahu alayhi wasallam].

Therefore, the one who intentionally keeps a trimmed beard will not be fulfilling the command of lengthening the beard. **The lengthening is Waajib, not just having any sort of a beard.**

Secondly, the Hadith – as is clear – is general and does not specify any length of the beard. The words, ‘u’ful lluhaa / waffiroo-lluhaa’ in the Hadith commands us to lengthen the beards, which will (literally) mean, ‘it is Waajib to let the beard grow’ upto whatever length it reaches. If we did not have the narration of Naafi’ that Sayyiduna Abdullah ibn Umar (Radhiallaahu Anhu) did trim his beard, then this would have been the case.

However, the narrator himself (Sayyiduna Abdullah ibn Umar and Sayyiduna Abu Hurayra – radhiallaahu anhuma) as well as other Taabi’een (Radhiallaahu Anhum) did trim their beards upto one fist’s length, the Ulama have deduced that this means that the Wujoob (obligation) of lengthening is only upto a fist’s length. Neither can we say that it is not permissible to trim it at all – resulting in the accusation of the Sahaaba (Radhiallaahu Anhum) of contradicting the explicit command of Rasulullah (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) and especially the narrator, (Sayyiduna Abdullah ibn Umar and sayyiduna Abu Hurayra - Radhiallaahu Anhuma). Nor can one claim the permissibility of trimming it upto less than a fist’s length, for there is no proof for this in Shari’ah.

Hence, if a person has to trim his beard up to a fist's length it would be permissible and if he does so up to shorter than a fist's length, he will be going against an act which is Waajib and this is not permissible, and if he chooses not to trim it at all, this will also be permissible.

The practice of the Sahaabi [radhiallaahu anhu] here is used for '**permissibility**' of cutting upto a fist's length, because – being the narrator – this is what he understood to be the intended meaning of Rasulullah [sallallaahu alayhi wasallam]. In other words, the Sahaabi [radhiallaahu anhu] had understood that the command of Rasulullah [sallallaahu alayhi wasallam] of lengthening the beard only applies upto a fist’s length and not more. That is why they (the sahaabah concerned – Sayyiduna Abdullah ibn Umar and Sayyiduna Abu Hurayra - radhiallaahu anhuma) used to trim what was in excess of one fist. It is not Waajib to follow them in doing so. What is Waajib in this situation is to

let it grow, and the action of the Sahaabi is used only to explain that Waajib and restrict going against that.

Severity of the Sin

One should ponder over the narration that we have quoted concerning the two messengers of the Persian King. How Rasulullah [sallallaahu alayhi wasallam] turned his blessed face away from them in disgust. Remember, these were Kaafirs (disbelievers). Imagine if Rasulullah [sallallahu alayhi wasallam] turns his face away from a Muslim on the day of Qiyaamat because he did not have a proper beard! Imagine the plight of that person, Allah forbid.

Furthermore, as for the act of shaving, by doing so, one is actually imitating the appearance of women. Rasulullah [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam] has cursed those males who aspire to resemble the females and vice versa.

(Sahih Bukhari)

After all, what is it that stops us from at least adopting the outer features of Rasulullah [sallallaahu alayhi wasallam]. Why is it so difficult to make our faces resemble in some way the Mubaarak and blessed face of our beloved Nabi [sallallaahu alayhi wasallam]. The translation of an Arabic couplet is as follows:

‘And resemble them if you cannot be identical. Verily the resemblance of the noble ones is also a form of success.’

Lastly, we hope that this article eradicates all misconceptions regarding the length of the beard. In fact, this would be sufficient for a sincere reader. May Almighty Allah grant each and every Ummati (follower) of Rasulullah (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) the ability to keep a beard that fulfils the requirements of the Shari’ah, Aameen.

and Allah Ta'ala Knows Best

Moulana Muhammad ibn Moulana Haroon Abassommar
FACULTY OF SPECIALTY IN HADITH SCIENCES

Checked & Approved by: MUFTI EBRAHIM DESAI (FATWA DEPT.) - with comments

May Allah Ta'ala accept the noble effort and research presented by Moulana Muhammad Saheb, Aameen. We urge each and every Ummati to read the article carefully and practise upon it. The beard is regarded as an integral part of Islam, and a great Sunnah of Rasulallah [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam], all the Anbiyaa [alayhimus salaam] and the Sulahaa. Adverse conditions should not deter us from fulfilling the obligation of lengthening our beards and fulfilling this great Sunnah of Rasulallah [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam]