139531 - Did Prophet Muhammad Have 99 Names?

the question

Is it true that Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) has 99 names (Asma-un-Nabi), e.g. Ahmad, as-Siddiq and al-Amin? And if not, can you tell me who started this concept and this idea? Give reference from the Quran and from the authentic Sunnah about this situation

Summary of answer

1- Some of the names of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) are clearly proven in the Quran and Sunnah. In the Quran, he is called Muhammad and Ahmad. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “I have several names. I am Muhammad, I am Ahmad, I am al-Mahi and I am al-Hashir.”
2- The scholars differed concerning many names and whether they may correctly be attributed to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) or not. This led to them differing concerning the number of these names.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Names of Prophet Muhammad in the Quran and the Sunnah

Some of the names of Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) are clearly proven in the Quran and Sunnah. In the Noble Quran, he is called Muhammad and Ahmad. In the sahih hadiths, it says that he has a number of names, as follows:

“I have several names. I am Muhammad, and I am Ahmad, and I am al-Mahi (the eraser) by means of whom Allah erases disbelief, and I am al-Hashir (the gatherer) at whose feet the people will be

gathered, and I am al-‘Aqib (the last) after whom there will be no other.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari (4896) and Muslim (2354)

Abu Musa al-Ash‘ari (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) mentioned several of his names to us. He said: “I am Muhammad, and Ahmad, and al-Muqaffi (the last in succession) and al-Hashir (the gatherer) and the Prophet of Repentance and the Prophet of Mercy.” (Narrated by Muslim (2355)

In some hadiths, the number of names of Prophet Muhammad is apparently defined. In Sahih al-Bukhari (3532), it is narrated from Muhammad ibn Jubayr ibn Mut‘im that his father (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “I have five names: I am Muhammad, and Ahmad, and I am al-Mahi (the eraser) by means of whom Allah erases disbelief, and I am al-Hashir (the gatherer) at whose feet the people will be gathered, and I am al-‘Aqib (the last).”

Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“What appears to be the case is that he meant: I have five names that are unique to me, which were given to no one before me, or they were not venerated or well-known among the earlier nations; he did not mean that he wanted to limit their number.

It was suggested that the wisdom behind limiting it to the five names mentioned in this hadith is that they were more well-known than others that are to be found in the ancient books or among previous nations.”

Literature on the names of Prophet Muhammad

The scholars wrote many books in which they compiled the names of Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and there are more than fourteen such books. The scholars who wrote of the Prophet’s biography (sirah) and attributes (shamail) wrote specific chapters in which they highlighted his names (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), as was done by al-Qadi ‘Iyad in ash-Shifa bi Ta‘rif Huquq al-Mustafa (1/228), in a chapter entitled Fasl fi

Asmaihi salla-Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallam wa ma tadammanathu min Fadilatihi (Chapter on his names (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and what they highlight of his virtues).” Al-Hafiz Ibn ‘Asakir also devoted a chapter to this topic in Tarikh Dimashq.

Al-‘Allamah Bakr Abu Zayd (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

“A number of books were written about the names of Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). In Kashf az-Zunun, there is a list of fourteen books, as it says in Mu‘jam al-Mawdu‘at al-Matruqah fi’t-Talif al-Islami by Shaykh ‘Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Habashi al-Yamani (p. 435-436). These books are by Ibn Dihyah, al-Qurtubi, ar-Rassa, as-Sakhkhawi, as-Suyuti, Ibn Faris and others.

This topic is also discussed in the books of biography (sirah), Prophetic characteristics and commentaries on hadith, as in ‘Aridat al-Ahwadhi (10/281), of which ar-Riyadh al-Aniqah fi Sharh Asma al-Khaliqah by as-Suyuti has been printed.” (Mu‘jam al-Manahi al-Lafziyyah (p. 361)

Different views on the number of the names of Prophet Muhammad

The scholars differed concerning many names and whether they may correctly be attributed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) or not. This led to them differing concerning the number of these names.

One of the most significant reasons for the difference of opinion is the fact that some of the scholars thought that every description given to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in the Noble Quran was one of his names. So they included names such as ash-Shahid (the witness), al-Mubashshir (the bearer of glad tidings), al-Nadhir (the warner), ad-Da‘i (the caller who invites to Allah), and as-Siraj al-Munir (the lamp spreading light) – because of the passage in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“O Prophet (Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him))! Verily, We have sent you as witness, and a bearer of glad tidings, and a warner. And as one who invites to Allah by His Leave, and as a lamp spreading light.” [al-Ahzab 33:45-46]

At the same time, the scholars said that these are descriptions and not names.

Imam an-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “Some of the words mentioned are descriptions, not names.” (Tahdhib al-Asma wa’l-Lughat (1/49)

As-Suyuti (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “Most of them are descriptions.” (Tanwir al-Hawalik (1/727)

Al-‘Allamah Bakr Abu Zayd (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“Some of them made them ninety-nine names, like the number of the beautiful names of Allah, of which approximately seventy names are the same as the names of Allah, may He be exalted.”

In Dalail al-Khayrat, al-Jazuli listed two hundred names.

In his book al-Mustawfa fi Asma al-Mustafa, Ibn Dihyah listed almost three hundred names.

One of the Sufis took it to a thousand names. He said: Allah has one thousand names and His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) has one thousand names.” (Mu‘jam al-Manahi al-Lafziyyah (p. 361)

Hence it was said that these numbers contain a great deal of exaggeration. The correct view is that the names of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) are far fewer than that, and it is not permissible to regard every description of him that is proven in the Quran and Sunnah as being among his names. Moreover, his names are a matter of tawqif, i.e., it is not permissible to add to them anything that is not proven in the Quran and sahih Sunnah.

Al-‘Allamah Bakr Abu Zayd (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“That which has a basis in the texts is either a name, of which there are few, or a description, of which there are more. Everything else apart from that has no basis, so it cannot be applied to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), so as to guard against exaggeration and going to extremes. The prohibition is more emphatic if these names and attributes for which there is no basis involve any element of exaggeration or going to extremes in praising him. This

category is what we are concerned with in this book, so as to warn against using any names that were not narrated from Allah or from His Messenger, of which there are very many. They usually occur in the books of Sufi tariqahs and innovated awrad and adhkar, such as Dalail al-Khayrat by al-Jazuli. These names include Uhayd, Wahid, Minah, Mad'u, Ghawth, Ghiyath, Muqil al-'Atharat, Safuh 'an az-Zallat, Khazin 'Ilmillah, Bahr Anwarik, Ma'din Asrarik, Mu'ti ar-Rahmah, Nur an-Anwar, as-Sabab fikulli Mawjud, Ha ar-Rahmah, Mim al-Mulk, Dal ad-Dawam, Qutub al-Jalalah, as-Sirr al-Jami', al-Hijab al-A'zam, Ayat-Allah.

Ninety-nine of these names are printed on the back cover of the Mushaf, and on the front cover are printed ninety-nine of the names of Allah, may He be exalted. That is in the Indian edition. Our shaykh, Shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) pointed out that this should be removed from the Quran, and that was done; may Allah reward him with good. They are also written on the qiblah wall of the Prophet's Mosque. May Allah enable whomever He will of His slaves to remove from the Mosque of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that which was not narrated from him. And Allah is the source of strength.

After that I came across some very useful words, the meaning of which had crossed my mind – to Allah alone be praise. They were written by the great scholar of the Arabic language, Ibn at-Tayyib al-Fasi, in his commentary on Kifayat al-Mutahaffiz by Ibn al-Ajdabi. He said (p. 51):

Then he – the author of Kifayat al-Mutahaffiz – described the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) as Allah, may He be exalted, describes him in the Noble Quran, as being the Seal of the prophets, following good etiquette in that, because describing him as Allah described him – in addition to being in accordance with following his Sunnah , as he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would not approve of anything else – is also acknowledging one's inability to come up with new ways of describing him and to praise him as he deserves, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him. Hence you will find the greatest scholars simply mentioning him – peace be upon him – according to what is mentioned in the Islamic texts, Quran and Sunnah, without inventing new phrases by themselves, in most cases." (Mu'jam al-Manahi al-Lafziyyah (p. 362-363)

And Allah knows best.