

## 1087 - Ruling on saying ‘I am a Salafi’

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### the question

I have come to know a person who follows the Salafi da’wah and I have read a book about this movement. I believe that the Salafi da’wah is correct and that those who follow it have the sound ‘aqeedah (belief), but there are some matters I want to ask about.

How correct is it from an Islamic point of view to use the word “Salafi” and to describe oneself in this way?

If a person says that he is a Salafi, is he praising himself? Is this considered to be dividing the ummah?

If we tell the Sufis that their madhhab is not correct, and that neither the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) or his Companions taught it, they will respond that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) or his Companions did not use the word “Salafi” either, so how should we reply to them?

### Summary of answer

Each person is obliged to follow the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions. This is the way of Ahl al-Sunnah wa’l-Jama’ah and the followers of the righteous predecessors (al-salaf al-salih). For more about saying ‘I am a Salafi’, see the detailed answer.

### Detailed answer

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## Who are Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'ah?

We can answer this question with the following points:

Each person is obliged to follow the guidance of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his Companions. This is the way of [Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'ah](#) and the followers of the righteous predecessors (al-salaf al-salih). Allah says (interpretation of the meanings):

**“Say (O Muhammad): ‘This is my way; I invite unto Allah with sure knowledge, I and whosoever follows me with sure knowledge. And Glorified and Exalted be Allah (above all that they associate as partners with Him). And I am not of the mushrikeen (polytheists... those who worship others along with Allah or set up rivals or partners to Allah).’”** [Yusuf 12:108]

**“And whoever contradicts and opposes the Messenger (Muhammad) after the right path has been shown clearly to him, and follows other than the believers’ way, We shall keep him in the oath he has chosen, and burn him in Hell – what an evil destination!”** [al-Nisa 4:115]

## Who are the Salaf?

Whoever follows the way of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) belongs to the [salaf al-salih](#), even if the people call him something else; by the same token, whoever goes against it and deviates from the Sunnah is an innovator, even if he claims to be a Salafi.

## Can you say ‘I am a Salafi’?

If a person calls himself a Salafi to express his gratitude for having been guided to this way, or to clearly distinguish himself from innovation, then this is OK and is allowed in Islam. But if he says it only for the purpose of praising himself, then this is not allowed, because Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): **“... therefore justify not yourselves...”** [al-Najm 53:32].

Similarly, it is not allowed if it is said in a spirit of tribalism or sectarianism, because such attitudes are forbidden, as is clear from the following story: Jabir ibn ‘Abd-Allah said: “A man from the Muhajireen shoved a man from the Ansar from behind, so each man’s people gathered around him, saying ‘O Muhajireen (come and help)!’ or ‘O Ansar (come and help)!’ News of this reached the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and he said, ‘Stop this, for it is repulsive.’ Then he said, ‘What is this call of the people of jahiliyyah? What is this call of the people of jahiliyyah?’” (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 14105; the hadeeth is also to be found in al-Sahihayn).

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) called it the call of the people of jahiliyyah and described it as repulsive, even though the words “Ansari” and “Muhajiri” are Islamic words, the first referring to those who supported Allah and His Messenger, and the second referring to those who left the land of kufr and migrated to Allah and His Messenger. Why were they described in this manner? Because in this instance, the words were not used in a permissible fashion; the usage was a sectarian and political one that could have led to fighting between the two groups. The same applies to the word “Salafi”.

If the [Ahl al-Sunnah and the salaf](#) draw a line between themselves and the innovators, this is not considered to be dividing the ummah, as those who criticize the use of this word think is the case, but this distancing of oneself has to be done in accordance with the degree of bid’ah – whether it is major or minor – and should be regulated by the overall interests of the Islamic da’wah.

## **Response to the Sufi claims**

The Sufi claims mentioned in the question are not valid. The denunciation is not merely because of the word “Sufi”, which is a general word that may be applied to things approved of in Islam, such as asceticism (zuhd) and fear of Allah, or it may be applied to innovations such as monasticism and extremism. Rather the denunciation is because of the various types of shirk, major and minor, that are connected with [Sufism and its tariqahs](#) .

The word Tasawwuf (Sufism) now refers to the [Sufi tariqahs](#) and the kinds of innovations they have. Sufism – as is obvious from their books and how Sufis actually are – includes deviant ideas of kufr, such as hulool (incarnation or the belief that the Creator may be indwelling in His creation – exalted be Allah above what they say), ittihad (union) and wahdat al-wujood (pantheism or the unity of existence, which is the belief that the Creator and His creation are the same thing, and that everything in existence is Allah – exalted be Allah above what they say), and going to extremes in what they say about the awliya, in addition to their innovations in the matter of acts of worship and awrad (du'as).

## **Your way to salvation**

The one who is seeking salvation has to work hard to gain beneficial knowledge and do righteous deeds, and he should avoid vain arguments and futile discussions in which there is no benefit.

We ask Allah to help us and you to follow the truth and act upon it. May Allah bless our Prophet Muhammad.