

Is It Sunnah to Eat on a Floor Dining Mat?

Darulifta Ahlesunnat (Dawateislami)

Question

What do the noble scholars and jurists of Islamic law say about the following: Is spreading a dining mat on the floor and eating on it a sunnah?

Answer

Undoubtedly, the noble practice of the Prophet ﷺ was to eat on a dining mat spread on the floor. Therefore, sitting on the floor and eating on a dining mat is a sunnah. This is a sunnah mustaḥabbah, acting upon which is better and more virtuous.

There is a ḥadīth narrated in Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Sunan Ibn Mājah, Musnad Imām Aḥmad, Musnad Bazzār, Mishkāṭ al-Masābīḥ, etc. (the following is cited from the former):

عن أنس رضي الله عنه قال: ما علمت النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أكل على سكرجة قط ولا خبز له مرقق قط ولا أكل على خوان قط. قيل لقتادة: فعلى ما كانوا يأكلون؟ قال: على السفر

Translation: It is narrated that Anas رضي الله تعالى عنه said: "I do not know of the Prophet ﷺ ever eating from a small bowl, having thin bread prepared for him, or eating from a dining table." Qatādah was asked, "Then what did He eat on?" He replied, "On dining mats." (Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Book of foods, Vol. 05, p. 2059, Ḥadīth No. 5071, Publ. Dār Ibn Kathīr, Damascus)

‘Allāmah Nūr-Uddin Mullā ‘Alī Qārī رحمه الله تعالى عليه (d. 1014 AH / 1606 CE) states in the commentary of this ḥadīth:

ثم اشتهرت لما يوضع عليه الطعام جلدا كان أو غيره ما عدا المائدة لما مر من أنها شعار المتكبرين غالبا، فالأكل عليها سنة وعلى الخوان بدعة لكنها جائزة

Translation: The word sufraḥ became commonly used for anything on which food is placed, whether it be made of animal skin or anything else, apart from a table. The reason for this has previously been mentioned, which is that eating on a table was commonly a characteristic sign of the arrogant people. Therefore, eating on a dining mat spread on the floor is sunnah, while eating on a table is a bid‘ah, though it is permissible. (Mirqāt al-Mafātīḥ Sharḥ Mishkāṭ al-Masābīḥ, Book of foods, Vol. 07, p. 2696, Publ. Dār al-Fikr, Beirut)

Ḥakīm al-Ummah Muftī Aḥmad Yār Khān Na‘īmī رحمه الله تعالى عليه (d. 1391 AH/ 1971 CE) writes:

دستر خوان کپڑے کا، چمڑے کا اور کھجور کے پتوں کا ہوتا تھا۔ ان تینوں قسم کے دسترخوانوں پر کھانا حضور صلی اللہ علیہ وآلہ وسلم نے کھایا ہے، دسترخوان بھی نیچے زمین پر پچھتا تھا اور خود سرکار بھی زمین پر تشریف فرما ہوتے تھے، صحابہ کرام علیہم الرضوان کے ساتھ کھانا ملاحظہ فرماتے تھے۔ یہاں مرقاۃ نے میں فرمایا کہ میز پر کھانا بدعتِ جائزہ ہے اور دسترخوان پر کھانا سنت ہے۔

Translation: A dining mat would be made of cloth, leather, and date-palm leaves. The Noble Prophet ﷺ ate on all three types of dining mats. The dining mat would be spread on the floor and the Prophet ﷺ would also sit on the floor. He would eat with the blessed Companions عليهم الرضوان. Here, it is stated in Miqrāt that eating on a table is permissible bid‘ah and eating on a floor dining mat is sunnah. (Mir‘āt al-Manājīḥ, Vol. 06, p. 30, Publ. Maktabah al-Islāmiyah, Lahore)

‘Allāmah Taqī-Uddīn Muḥammad Bin Bīr ‘Alī Birkiwi Ḥanafī رحمه الله تعالى عليه (d. 981 AH/ 1573 CE) writes:

ويستحب الأكل على السفرة

Translation: It is mustaḥab to eat on a floor dining mat. (Al-Tarīqah al-Muḥammadiyah Wal-Sīrah al-Aḥmadiyah, p. 468, Publ. Dār al-Qalam, Damascus)

The Imām of Ahl as-Sunnah, Imām Aḥmad Razā Khān رحمه الله تعالى عليه (d. 1340 AH/ 1921 CE) writes:

(نبی کریم صلی اللہ علیہ وآلہ وسلم کی عادت کریمہ زمین پر دسترخوان بچھا کر کھانا تناول فرمانا تھی اور یہی افضل، اخرج الإمام أحمد في كتاب الزهد عن الحسن مرسلاً، والبزار نحوه عن ابن هريرة رضي الله تعالى عنه: كان رسول الله صلى الله تعالى عليه وسلم إذا أتى بطعام وضعه على الأرض، و أخرج الديلمي في مسند الفردوس عنه رضي الله تعالى عنه يرفعه إلى النبي صلى الله تعالى عليه وسلم وضعها على الحضيض، ثم قال: "إنما أنا عبد آكل كما يأكل العبد وأشرب كما يشرب العبد" وأخرج الدارمي والحاكم وصححه وأقرؤه عن أنس رضي الله تعالى عنه قال: قال النبي صلى الله تعالى عليه وسلم: "إذا وضع الطعام فاخلعوا نعالكم فإنه أروح لأقدامكم" وأخرجه أبو يعلى بمعناه، وزاد وهو السنة --- شرعة الاسلام اور اس کی شرح میں ہے: "(وضع الطعام على الارض احب الى رسول الله صلى الله تعالى عليه وسلم على السفرة وهي) اي والحال ان السفرة (على الارض) لا على شيء اخر فوق الارض "عين العلم اور اس کی شرح میں ہے: (ياكل على السفرة الموضوعة على الارض) فهو اقرب الى ادبه عليه الصلوة والسلام وتواضعه لمقام الانعام (فالخوان والمنخل والاشنان والشيع من البدع وان لم تكن مذمومات غير الشيع) فانه مذموم-

Translation: The noble practice of the Prophet ﷺ was to eat on a dining mat spread on the floor and this is more virtuous. Imām Aḥmad has narrated in Kitāb al-Zuhd from Imām Ḥasan with a Mursal narration, and Imām Bazzār, as well as others, have narrated from Abū Hurairah رضي الله تعالى عنه that when the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ would be presented food, he would place it on the floor.

Imām al-Daylamī has narrated in Musnad al-Firdous from Abū Hurairah رضي الله تعالى عنه, and he has drawn the chain of narration back to the Prophet ﷺ that (He ﷺ would say): "Place it on the ground." Then He ﷺ stated: "I am a human. I eat just like humans eat and I drink like humans drink."

‘Allāmah Dārmī and ‘Allāmah Ḥākim have narrated it (the following narration) and they have declared it Saḥīḥ, and other scholars have affirmed their grading: from Anas رضي الله تعالى عنه that the Noble Prophet ﷺ said: "When food is served, take off your shoes as it will be a means of relaxation for your feet." Imām Abū Ya‘lā has narrated this with a similar meaning, and he has added: "and this is sunnah."

It is stated in Shir‘ah al-Islām and its commentary: "Placing food on the floor (on a dining mat) was beloved to the Messenger ﷺ. The arrangement would be that the

dining mat would be spread on the floor, not on anything else which is elevated above the floor.”

It is mentioned in ‘Ayn al-‘Ilm and its commentary: “One should eat on a dining mat which is spread on the floor, for this is closer to the noble etiquette of the Prophet ﷺ and closer to showing humility for the blessings of Allāh. Moreover, a dining table, flour sifted using a sieve, ushnān, and eating to one’s fill are all among the bid‘ahs. However, these are not condemned, except for eating to one’s fill, which is condemned.” (Fatāwā Razawiyah, Vol. 21, p. 629-631, Publ. Razā Foundation, Lahore)

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ

(Allah Almighty knows best and His Messenger ﷺ knows best.)

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