



Handbook of
**ISLAMIC
DA'WAH**

Edited by
Mohd Yusof Hussain



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Chapter 10

Short Notes on *Ahl Al-Sunnah Wa Al-Jama'ah*

ABDUL SALAM MUHAMAD SHUKRI

Introduction

Islam is the world's second largest religion after Christianity. According to a 2009 demographic study, Islam has 1.57 billion adherents, making up 23% of the world population. The vast majority (approximately 80-90%) of Muslim world-wide practise Sunni Islam, better known in Arabic as *Ahl al-Sunnah*, while an estimated 10-20% is minority that include the Shi'is and Kharijis.¹

This fact urges us to be on familiar terms with the *Ahl al-Sunnah* and their teachings since they represent the Muslim community at large. However, it is unfortunate to know that both the old and the new edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam* have no specific entry on "*Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*." Instead the readers are asked to refer to the entry on "Sunnah" in these encyclopedias, in order to locate information on *Ahl al-Sunnah*. In addition, the new encyclopedias such as *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Islamic World* (2009) and *Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (Esposito 2003) provides a brief entry on "Sunni Islam." In the former, an entry on "Sunni Islam: Historical overview" is written by M. E. Marmura, a scholar in the field of medieval Islamic philosophy. In the latter, a concise entry on "Sunni Islam" surveys its origins and development until modern period. It is worth mentioning that in the same dictionary, Barelvis or Barelwis which was founded in northern India in 1880s by Mawlana Ahmed Reza Khan Barelwi is identified as *Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-jamaah* (Esposito 2003: 10).