



WHAT IS TAQLID AND IS IT NECESSARY TO ADOPT ONE OF THE FOUR SCHOOLS?

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

This question has filled volumes in books hence I will never be able to do the subject justice in a few paragraphs. I have however discussed the concept of the Traditional approach in the soon to be released book, 'Muslims in non-Muslim Lands'.

Here I will give a very brief outline of the concept.

Taqlid is adopting an interpretation of a legal jurist without necessarily being aware of the evidence nor the reasoning the interpretation is based upon. An example is we may visit our GP as we are suffering from dizziness and sensitivity to light. He may ask us a number of questions and then give his interpretation (diagnosis in this case) based upon the evidence (symptoms in this case) applying his reasoning (understanding of the diseases and their effects in this case). Now he may say it is Influenza and advice you to take painkillers and some rest. However, another GP may come to the conclusion that it is Meningitis – as both share the same symptoms. Now obviously one is correct (2nd GP) and the other is wrong (1st GP), but the 1st cannot be accused of malpractice as he has applied his knowledge to the best of his ability. We wouldn't be asking either of them to explain the concept of viral infections and the biological processes involved from infection to cure; how the medicine would affect the infection and the biological changes the human body will be going through. We respect the GP as an expert in his field; we expect he is trained in his field and sincere in his work. This is Taqlid in application.

The four individuals who head the four Traditional Schools – Abu Hanifa, al-Shafi'i, al-Malik and Ahmad ibn Hanbal, were the main individuals however they the school was made up of hundreds of great scholars from virtually after the passing of our Prophet until now. The legal theory which they laid down, the blueprint is being applied now as it was theorised and applied a thousand years ago. This Traditional Approach allows the Umma to maintain a link with the Scriptural Sources – al-Qur'an and al-Ahadith. It is ridiculous to suggest that a person follows Abu Hanifa and not the Sunna of the Prophet; as Imam Malik and the others were interpreting the Sunna from the Hadith.

This is also important to understand that the ahadith are just that ahadith they are not the Sunna – the Sunna is derived from hadith by experts in the field, spiritually and academically. These individuals had memorised the Qur'an and thousands and thousands of hadith. They were experts in both legal theory and positive law. Their interpretation of the sources have been applied by millions of Muslims for hundreds of years in many different settings.



Therefore, as we cannot dedicate our lives to the study in the manner the scholars of these schools have then we must accept and adopt their methodologies, hence the need for Taqlid of the four main schools.

والله اعلم و علمه احكم واتم

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