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Even though there are several verses in Allah's Book that shed light on the issue of Taqleed. However, to keep it brief, we will refer to only two of them. One is:

فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

"If you do not know, then ask أَهْلَ الذَّكْر Ahluz Zikr, [i.e. those who know – the learned ones]." 1

This verse – full of guidance – describes a basic principle. The "ignorant" should benefit from the "knowledgeable". If someone is unaware of a fact, he should ask someone who is aware. Here it is quite obvious that the verse decrees it necessary that one should ask in order to know the issues of Sharia. So in case of ignorance it is mandatory (wajib) to ask an authentic scholar.

At this point the intellect asks. Is the question being asked just for the fun of it? Is it being asked to show off one's intelligence? Or is it being asked to test the knowledge of the scholar? It is quite obvious that the verse does not command asking frivolous questions. Rather the intent is that the lack of knowledge is taken care of. That the ignorant becomes wiser. And now that the person knows, he will not have any problem acting on it. This is the logical proof of the need for Taqleed.

It is possible that some people may say that the word Ahluz Zikr refers to the Virtuous Ahlul Bayt. Yes, we believe the same. It is our belief that at the first level, our Righteous Guides are the Ahluz Zikr. But then they tell us that after them Fuqaha and Ulama of the Ummah assume the leadership role. And if this clear fact and truth is not accepted, then no one can stop absolute ignorance from becoming the fate of the Ummah.

Not every member of the society is capable of scholarly discourse. And during the occultation of Last Imam – the true learned (who has been taught directly by the Creator) – no one has access to him, the only logical solution is to consult those who have been taught indirectly and know and act on Imam's teachings.

The second command of Quran comes in the one hundred and twenty second verse of Surah Tauba. The sacred verse says:

"It is not essential that all believers should go. However, it is important that a few people from all segments of the society and Ummah should embark on the path to acquire knowledge of religion. Once they have gained the capability, they should come back to their homelands and teach the local residents that they stay aware from bad deeds and avoid the path of denial."2

This verse provides sufficient guidance. The first message in this verse is that not all but a few need to come forward for mastering the religious faculties. In other words what is needed is that a few people become the scholars of religion and others should accept their scholarly leadership and follow their instructions.

You see, there are three key words in this verse that invite every individual of intellect to ponder. Tafaqqa, Nazar and Hazar. The first word came out of jurisprudence and means "to know" – not just knowing but knowing after deep thinking and getting to the bottom of an issue. Raghib Isfahani, considered a renowned expert on explaining the Quranic words, writes in his world–famous book "Almufarradat":

"Jurisprudence (figh) is the discovery of the unknown, the invisible and the hidden facts."

Regarding Tafaqqa he writes:

"Once something, that was sought after, has been found, gaining expertise in it is Tafaqqa".

The second word is Nazar or Inzar. It means informing about the upcoming danger. The greatest linguist, Muhammad Ibn Mukarram, writes in his dictionary, "Lisan UI Arab":

"He informed the nation about the dangerous situation. The nation realized the gravity and did whatever

it could to save itself."

The third word is Hazar.

It means to be careful. Ibn Mukarram writes in this context:

"Someone who is aware; laced with defensive weapons; ready to face any calamity; so well prepared to face any difficulties as if he is about to run into an emergency situation."

Now if we consider the overall impression of these words. And if we look at the message the verse is trying to convey, it appears that those members of the society who are active, who are doers and who have the capability, after acquiring the knowledge of Islam should fulfill their duty and others should benefit from them.

So the capable ones should use their intellect to seek the light, and those who do not have such capacities should get help from others. Nonetheless, this process of discovery, absorption, dissemination and give and take should continue. It is again submitted that this is exactly what Ijtihad and taqleed are all about.

- 1. Surah Nahl, Ch. 16, Verse 43.
- 2. Sura at-Tawbah, ch. 9 verse 122.

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