

## Question 100: Following (Taqlid) The Religious Maraja (Mujtahid)

**Question:** There are among us such people also who do not think that doing Taqlid in Islamic law is obligatory. They argue that it is incumbent on all to derive the laws of the Shariah from the Holy Qur'an and other sources. Because:

1. The Holy Qur'an is opposed to any kind of following (Taqlid) and it is absolutely against blindly following anyone.
2. Taqlid is to follow without question, and reason and wisdom do not like this type of following.
3. Taqlid is the cause of disunity among the Muslims because there are usually more than one Maraja and their legal rulings are not the same.

**Answer:** We think that the source of all these objections is one. It is that there are two meanings of the word 'Taqlid'. One of them is a general meaning which is the usual connotation.

It has another literary meaning with which discussions are initiated in the books of Jurisprudence and principles. The previous and the present objections are regarding the first meaning while there is no connection between the first meaning and the second meaning.

The explanation of this is usually Taqlid is used for improper actions in everyday life which people usually do by imitation without any proper thought or justification. To imitate foolish people is certainly a greater foolishness. It is neither sanctioned by reason nor by Islamic law. And no sane person is ready to follow any other person blindly.

It is the same Taqlid with which the idolaters used to justify their idolatry. They used to say that their ancestors used to follow that custom and they were not prepared to forgo the customs of their ancestors.

The Holy Qur'an has mentioned their argument in the following verses:

***Surely we found our fathers on a course, and surely we are followers of their footsteps.*** [1](#)

They used to justify their foolish custom (of worshipping wooden and stone idols) by saying that their ancestors also did that. They used to blindly follow their customs. It is that same type of Taqlid that is responsible for the spread of social evils like racing, fashion and sexual perversion.

Maulana Rumi has indicated this same type of Taqlid: “Their foolish Taqlid has destroyed the people”.

As mentioned above most of the objections with regard to Taqlid are there due considering the first meaning of Taqlid which is used in general sense. However, the second meaning of Taqlid, used in religious terminology is completely different. It can be expressed in one sentence: “Following the specialists by non-specialists people in some matters.”

That is, those who are not having the knowledge of religious problems, which require specialization and years of study they have to compulsorily follow the religious Mujtahid and act upon their rulings. In this sense is the meaning applicable for Taqlid—that is the following of a learned person by a less learned person. It is the basis of human life in all the fields, be they agriculture, manufacturing or medicine.

If at any time this is taken out from human life, that is a patient does not visit a doctor, or people do not consult lawyers for legal advice, one does not consult the engineers and architects, one does not use the services of artisans, mechanics and experts of other fields, the social structure of the world would be endangered and every field will become extinct.

The religious problems are not exempted from this system. Without any doubts, in the principles of faith like Tawheed, Adl, Nubuwwat, Imamat and Qiyamat, everyone has to do proper research themselves and their justification is nothing difficult and complicated also.

Every person can do this according to his or her understanding capacity. However, for the Islamic practical laws: Worship acts, business transactions and politics like Prayer, fasting, holy war, penalties and punishments, relations and blood money marriage and divorce and thousands of other day-to-day matters.

Not everyone can obtain the knowledge of all these laws individually, neither all can derive benefit from the sources of Islamic law, like the Holy Qur’an, traditions, Reason and Consensus.

Therefore people have no option but to follow the religious scholar for these problems. The scholars who have put in years of study and have gained deep knowledge of the book of Allah, the practice of the Prophet, and the sayings and writings of the Imams of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.).

From this discussion we conclude that following a Mujtahid is not blind following without justification. This Taqlid has the logical and reasonable proof as follows:

The view of a scholar, a wise man and specialist and that also that it is harmless; it is usually nearest to the truth and generally it is not away from the truth.

And even if there is a mistake in it the error is limited while a non-learned person tries to act on his own he will do most of things in a wrong way.

For example when a sick person goes to a doctor he usually takes a prescription and it is possible that the doctor might commit an error in it. However, his error will not have very serious repercussions in the prescription. (Here doctor denotes a knowledge and learned person).

However, if man stops following the advice of doctors and whenever he is sick he takes whichever medicine he likes, then indeed he would be performing a risky thing. He has put his life into danger.

The result of this discussion is that the layman following a specialist is logical and reasonable proposition.

This is also established that this type of following and seeking benefits is not a sign of helplessness of man; it is rather a proof of his capability. Because we know that the sphere of knowledge is so vast that every field has hundreds of specialized branches and even if a person has the age of Nuh (a.s.) and the brain of Avicenna he cannot even specialize in 1/100 of the sciences. Thus there is no other option but that he follows the specialists in the fields in which he himself is not an expert.

For example if an engineer falls sick, he goes to a doctor and when a doctor wants to construct a house he goes to his favorite architect so that he may construct a plan for him. And when these two have some problem with their cars they go to an automobile mechanic. Also, those who are not specialists in Islamic law they follow the Mujtahids.

Now the point remains that when people refer to the religious scholars and one dispensed appropriate advice why are they not allowed to ask questions?

It is like saying that: What is the problem in the patient asking for explanation and justification of all the medicines that the doctor has prescribed for him. Is it possible for the doctor to explain all the prescriptions to his patients? Even if we presume that the doctor agrees to do so, but what use would it be for a person who is neither an expert in biology nor pharmacology and how would he accept all this to be true?

Those who utter such things are indeed ignorant of the vastness of Islamic sciences. They don't know that to understand the Holy Qur'an and hundreds of thousands of traditional writings is not a job of a layman. Years of study is required to understand the verses of Holy Qur'an, the traditions, the narrators of traditions and the system of knowing whether a particular tradition is correct or not; the interpretation of the sayings of the Prophets. All this requires specialization.

Sometimes it also happens that to find the solution to a problem related to marriage, divorce or rearing of children one has to see many verses of Qur'an and refer to tens of traditions. Then one has to closely study the accounts of tens of narrators of traditions in the books of Ilm ar-Rijal. Can everyone really

have this much expertise? Does it not mean that everybody should leave their work and get busy in studying religious law? While we do not even know if all the people have the ability to reach to the level of Ijtihad or not. Whether they have the capacity to derive the laws of the Shariah or not. It is possible that in most of the people have different abilities.

And to say that following different Mujtahids causes disunity is indeed a strange allegation!

1. In every period there is only one or a few Maraja who are well known to all. But if all the Muslims express their views regarding the Islamic law there would be chaos in the community.
2. There is difference of opinion among the scholars in only the third or fourth level problems. There is no controversy regarding the basic laws and principles. That is why you see people who follow different Mujtahids standing together in the same row during congregational prayers. The partial difference in laws does not prevent their coming together of Jamat Prayers. All of them go for Hajj in the same days and perform the Hajj rituals and the difference in religious decree (Fatwa) does not inconvenience a single man of the caravan.

All these things indicate that the differences in religious decree are only in the matters that do not affect Communal unity.

[1.](#) Surah Zukhruf 43:23

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