

Question 2: How to ponder on the Philosophy of Islamic Laws?

From the aspect of contemplating on their secrets all the Islamic are not the same, but they can be divided into four different types.

It is correct for every Muslim to discuss about the philosophy of Islamic laws as we come to know from the logic of Qur'an and through the style of the Islamic laws. It doesn't mean that we say anything without any law and rule and every person gives and spreads the logic of Islamic laws according to his own mind because interpretations based on personal whims and fancies are very harmful, dangerous and illogical and in the same way as to force a person to pray without asking any questions.

That is why the question arises that how should we begin this discussion and how to continue it? What are the limits that we must observe?

First of all it is important to mention that as we know our worship and practicing of religious commands doesn't increase an iota of the grandeur and greatness of Allah nor His disobedience reduce an iota of His Glory and Majesty, as Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

The sins of the transgressors do not harm Him nor the obedience of the worshipper benefit him. He is the bestower to the whole Universe. Everything that we and other creatures have is given by Him. Nor can we give Him anything as He is needless and Independent and it is not that we have a thing and He doesn't have so that we may give it to Him. Whatever we get, we get from Him only and He gives whatever He deems fit for us and the original treasure is with him:

And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure. [1](#)

Can a drop of water, which acquires its capital from the huge sea, give anything to the sea? Can a small mirror, which is kept in front of the Sun, give light to the Sun? The whole humanity, however powerful it may be is just like a drop or like this small mirror.

Therefore if any benefit or harm is hidden in these Islamic laws it is related to us only.

Seen from another angle we are not only physical bodies that whatever orders that come from Allah should be for the training and building of our health and not only we are just spirit (Ruh) that all the orders should be established for the spiritual effects, we are a compound of body and soul (Ruh) and these Islamic laws are for the perfection of both; our body and soul.

Therefore those people are also misguided who only search for the medical and economical benefits and perform worship acts, pray and supplicate to Allah so that it has a good effect on their spirit and physical body and also to get rid of pains and worries and difficulties and make it a medium for getting tranquility and think that this is the sole purpose of it.

And they are also wrong who wear clean clothes, cut their nails, remove cobwebs, and do not drink water from a cracked bowl and to protect oneself from that water, which is been used for bath (Ghusl), consider these teachings to be have spiritual effects, regarding whom knowledge and science has still unveiled their secrets. In reality some of the Islamic laws are for the spiritual perfection and for training of the self and some for discipline in physical life and many Islamic laws affect both.

Now we return to our original topic and see the limits of research about the logic behind Islamic laws?

Religious commands can be divided into four types:

(1) Those orders whose philosophies was clarified to the people at the start of Besat (proclamation of prophethood) and people understood according to their caliber and the information already had and to make the people to follow the orders regularly rules and regulation were made for example: lying, breach of trust, allegations, murder, stealing, injustice and cheating was prohibited.

Justice, cleanliness, honesty, helping the oppressed, hard work, doing good to parents, relatives and neighbor, etc. Any sane person understands the philosophy and purpose of these commands. As and when the knowledge and information of practical life of a man increases he will be able to comprehend the values of the Islamic laws in a better way.

(2) Those orders whose wisdom was not understood by the people and sometimes even the scholars of those times the Qur'an or the sayings of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) expounded their philosophies. For example maybe the people of that time were unaware of the three fold benefits of Fasting (ethical, social and medicinal) and did not know about its philosophy. That is why the Holy Qur'an has pointed towards its ethical effect by saying

So that you may guard (against evil).[2](#)

Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) pointed out its social effect and said: So that the wealthy and the poor live a similar life and the wealthy become familiar with the hunger of the poor and try to help the needy.

Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) has said that you should keep fast so that your body becomes healthy (and the unused and waste matter, which is harmful and creates bad odor is expelled.)

In this way there are many other commands whose secrets and logic is mentioned by the ayahs (verses) of the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the Holy Imams (a.s.), As mentioned earlier Shaykh Sadooq has collected such traditions in *Ilalush Sharae* and the famous traditionalist Shaykh Hurr Al-Ameli has explained about the philosophies of Islamic laws in *Wasaelush Shia* at the beginning of every chapter.

But it is necessary to remember that benefits and secrets were explained according to the level of intelligence the people and it does not mean that whatever philosophy is being given is limited to that alone. It also does not mean that it is not allowed to contemplate more on it.

(3) Those laws whose secrets were revealed due to the passage of time and subsequently we could understand the greatness of divine commands.

Like the physical, spiritual and social evils of alcoholic drinks. They even affect the unborn child and regarding whose harms we come to from statisticians. Or the psychological ills of games of chance and the deaths caused by it or the bad effects of uneven distribution of wealth on the society, or the obvious social and economic ills of usury which can be written on paper like mystical figures, or the dirty foods, water and the destruction of homes which are strictly forbidden in Islam and the ills that have assumed gigantic proportions after the spread of germs and viruses.

All these problems are such that the passage of time and scientific developments increased the understanding of man and he was able to understand the wisdom regarding them, which was hitherto unknown to him.

But it is necessary to point out that in this method any sort of extremism, going beyond the limits of reason, wrong notions, short sightedness, mistaken insight and more than anything else to consider half baked research to be confirmed fact takes one further away from the truth. Instead of making us cognizant of the secrets and knowledgeable about the logic behind the Islamic laws it takes us to wander on a wrong path.

Therefore till science does not have absolute proof about something and it does not become a confirmed fact we must not make it a basis of explaining the logic behind an Islamic law.

When we have nothing to say we must insist on discussing the logic behind a particular law and even if we have something to say we must never claim that the logic of that particular law is based on this very explanation and limited to it.

(4) The last types of laws whose logic was neither explained in the beginning, nor they were explained in the Islamic books and the passage of time has revealed their secrets to us. The number of Rakats

(units) of Prayers, the minimum quantity of the items on which Zakat is obligatory, or some rituals of Hajj etc fall into this category.

Should the people of the future try to unveil the secrets of these laws with the help scientific discoveries and advancement of knowledge?

Is the last vicegerent of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) appointed to explain and expound these affairs?

Or they are from those laws whose logic would not be understood by the people in the future also?

We do not know any of these things. We only know that the laws of the fourth category are as deserving of respect and their fulfillment is as important as those of the first three categories. Since the source of all these laws is same and the Last Prophet who has brought these laws to us, his appointment to prophethood is proved to us by irrefutable proofs.

[1. Surah Hijr 15:21](#)

[2. Surah Baqarah 2: 183](#)

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/philosophy-islamic-laws-naser-makarem-shirazi-jafar-subhani/question-2-how-ponder-philosophy-islamic#comment-0>