

The Meanings of Taqleed

Books have been written to search out the meanings and purposes of the roots of words in Arabic language. If you open such books you will find that the word “Taqleed” means several things. You wear a necklace or put a wreath around your neck, you will be doing “taqleed”. The word “taqleed” comes from the root word “qaladat”. Qaladat means:

"القلادة: ما جعل في العنق"

“Something you put around your neck”.

There are several other actions called “taqleed”, such as giving responsibility to someone; following the footsteps of another individual; imitating someone or adopting someone else’s ways; wrapping a sword’s strap around the neck; putting a rope around a camel’s neck for recognition and so on. [1](#)

So far we have described what the linguists think of this word. Let us ask the experts of “law and the philosophy of law” what they understand about the word, “taqleed” because it is a part of their terminology and topic. The answer we get is: “if an individual is unaware of the religious intricacies and he unconditionally accepts the orders of an Islamic scholar; or someone, who himself is not a faqih, accepts the fatwa of a mujtahid with the intention of acting accordingly and without any arguments”. This is taqleed. [2](#)

At this point it is important to emphasize the following:

Some people who have not understood the philosophy of taqleed, propagate that taqleed implies obeying a particular individual. On the other hand all marajay, fuqaha and mujtahideen explain that after extensive research according to recognized rules, a mujtahid discovers a certain rule of sharia, an ordinary Muslim should accept his ruling. This is not the same as obeying or blindly following a specific individual. Rather, this is a reliable method of acting according to the sharia system and religious laws with the help of an able personality.

During the Siffin battle in the context of arbitration, Ameer al-Mu'minin 'Ali (as) stated, "Silent command (Quran) is in need of an interpreter and this interpreter can only be a human being."³

¹. Lisan Ul Arab, Ibn Manzoor, vol 3, p 366, published in Beirut; Taj Ul Uroos, Muhammad Murtaza Zubeidi, vol 2, p 475, published in Beirut; Misbah Ul Muneer, Ahmed Bin Muhammad Fayyumi, vol 2, p 512, published in Qum; Al Ain, p 683; Mufarredat, Raghil Isphahani; p 411, published in Beirut; Almanjid, p 649, published in Beirut.

². Kifayatul Usul, Akhund Muhammad Kazim Khurasani, p 472, published in Beirut; Al Urwatul Vusqa, Allama Muhammad Kazim Tabtabai, vol 1, p 4, published in Kuwait.

³. Nahjul Balagha, khutba 125, p 182, organized by Dr. Sahmi Saleh, published in Beirut.

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