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Foreword

When a man does not know something he wants to enquire about it. Children ask their elders. The grown-ups seek assistance from others with more knowledge than themselves. This is the norm of the society; especially, in religious affairs people tend to be more sensitive and also majority is generally ignorant of true facts. Therefore, all of these people consult trustworthy people knowledgeable in religious affairs to solve their problems. It is the nature of humans. It is the ruling of the Islamic constitution. And this modus operandi is called Tagleed in the language of Sharia.

However, there are people who raise a variety of objections such as:

- 1. Some call it innovation in religion (bidaat).
- 2. Others call it saint-follower relationship.
- 3. Another segment of the society terms it oppression by the religious scholars.
- 4. There are others who label this action as mental slavery. They claim that Islam has actually condemned this way of life. They think that Quran is a very easy book and why should we not get the answers to our queries straight from the book.
- 5. Besides, there are no reliable arguments to be found in favor of tagleed in Allah's holy book and the teachings of Fourteen Infallibles. If you sift through the history of Shias, you will not find any mention of tagleed and litihad for the longest time.

The fact of the matter is that all these comments are indicative of lack of study and lack of desire for research. The response to each of the objections listed above is as follows:

- 1. In no way tagleed is an innovation. From all perspectives it comes from knowledge and constitution.
- 2. Similarly no saint is followed. It is a purely scholarly, full of vigor and dignified approach.
- 3. And there is no compulsion. If someone is interested in the wellbeing of his religion and integrity of his deeds, he should consult the most aware person about the affairs of sharia and should get his answers

from him. This person of high faculties is a mujtahid or marjae taqleed. The marjae taqleed is trusted in the everyday problems of life because of his highest knowledge – he is above all the scholars of his time.

4. Our submission to those, who consider tagleed counter to the freedom of thought, is that nothing reaches its logical conclusion without some contemplation. So if we do not know something, finding out about it is a testimony of a civilized mind, freedom of thought and breadth of imagination.

Now as far as Quran being easy to understand is concerned, this collection of constitution and laws is not so easy that anybody can get to the depth of its meanings on his own. As an example, a verse says, "pray and pay alms". How is it possible to get from this verse explanations about the form of prayers, its composition, what is wrong and what is right; similarly conditions of alms and its related issues?

In addition, the biggest difficulty at the first step to get to the real meanings is the language. The holy book came in Arabic. Arabic language has such depth and breadth that even the Arabic speaking people lose heart in trying to get to the details.

To understand the idiosyncrasies of Arabic language scores of higher level text books are available all over the world. Also most scholars are familiar with voluminous classic collections such as Mughniul Labaib, Alkhasias by Ibnul Janni and Almukhassas by Ibn Sayyeda Undlusi.

Even if one wants to partially understand Allah's book, in addition to having command over all the rules of the language, one will need to benefit from all the valuable guidance we have received from our leaders who knew the temperament of Holy Quran. At this point we wish to seek the spiritual pleasure of reciting a few parts of a detailed tradition by the Holy Prophet (S). He says:

The Holy Quran has two sides to it. One is visible and the other is hidden. The visible is all rules and regulations. What is hidden is a source of knowledge, wisdom and deep understanding of the Creator. If you look at the obvious, all you observe is beauty and happiness. If you look at the invisible, you see tremendous depth. Its pages are decorated with stars. (Shining proofs of Allah's existence) And then there are even brighter stars. (Shining proofs on top of proofs)1

In addition, the most knowledgeable of all about the intricacies of Quranic philosophy – Amirul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Talib – comprehensively identified in one of his speeches certain elements that are essential to benefiting from the Holy Book. He says:

كتاب ربكم فيكم مبينا حلاله وحرامه وفرائضه وفضائله وناسخه ومنسوخه ورخصه عزائمه وخاصه وعامه وعبره . وإمثاله ومرسله ومحدوده ومحكمه ومتشابهه

The Holy Prophet left among you the book of the Creator and His Highness clearly told you what is in the Book. What is allowed and what is prohibited. What obligatory (vajib) means and what recommended (mustahab) signifies. He mentioned the cancelled verses and the verses that superseded the cancelled verses. He told you about certain situations of distress where you could use your own judgment and where you had to follow the rules unconditionally. He pointed out to you the specific and the general.

He made you aware of certain events that you could learn lessons from. He identified the deeds you could do and the ones you were prohibited from. He also talked about the facts that were easy to understand and the ones that were difficult for ordinary people to comprehend.2

By referring to the Last Prophet (S) Hazrat Amir (as) wants to tell the people that Quran belongs to everyone and is for the benefit of all. Also in order to spread its benefits the Holy Prophet explained some of the more difficult portions. However, can a sane person honestly say that points identified by the Amir (as) are so easy that anyone can get to the correct meanings and the purpose on his own? Will he be able to gain enough understanding to perform his deeds? Anyone with a conscience will holler that absolutely not; until there is someone to guide properly, it will not be possible to understand everything.

So this continued insistence on Quran being a very easy book; that we should consult only and only Quran to find answers to all our questions; and that whatever intelligence we have, with the help of a dictionary it will catch every hint given in Allah's Book is rather illogical.

One other point: it will not be inappropriate at this time to recall that this holy book has gone through some tough moments when it was subjected to a use against its spirit. The first such terrible moment was when the Great Prophet (S) asked for a pen and a paper to write his will and the answer he was given was, "there is no need for any writing, Quran is enough for us"3. Thus the foundation was laid to detach from the holy book its most trustworthy and most understanding companion, the sacred family of the Prophet (Ahlul Bayt).

The second sad episode took place at the Siffin war when one platoon of Imam Ali's (as) army instead of obeying the Imam, raised the slogan "we will accept no one's order except Allah's". History tells us that for a long time this gang bloodied their hands through the murder of many innocent people.4

Then several centuries later around 1025 AH fairly well known intellectual of Shia sect, Mullah Muhammad Ameen Ustrabadi, was prompted by his teacher, Mirza Muhammad Ustrabadi, into writing a book "Al-Fawahid ul Madniyyah". The essays in this book created a lot of discontent in the Shia school of thought. Al-Fawahid ul Madniyyah gave birth to a new school of thought called Akhbariat. The followers of this school did not do justice to Quran.5

Afterwards at the beginning of the twentieth century an individual from the Vazir Mosque of Lahore raised his voice. He used to say that solutions to all our ailments are in Quran and we should satisfy all our needs through only and only Allah's Book. The result was that a number of people started studying and teaching Quran on their own.

One of those who gained prominence was Mr. Aslam Jirajpuri and now his successor, the head of Idara Tulu-e-Islam – Mr. Pervez – is spreading the message, but the impact is very slow.

However, the success of Islamic revolution in Iran has given life to a new wave at many places. It seems to have little religious and more of political fervor. The ones who have been most afflicted are graduates of western style institutions or those who have been influenced by them. Suddenly, they have decided to unite against marjiat and Ijtihad for the purpose of destroying the system of taqleed and they are using Quran to achieve this malicious goal. These days there are around twenty journals of high standard being published in Arabic – 80% being printed in the West and 20% in the East. It is interesting that the owners of these publications are either Christians or those who cannot stand the word, "Ijtihad" – all of them singing the same tune.

What is startling is that the movement is the strongest in the Indian Sub-continent; especially, in Lukhnow and Hyderabad-Deccan. Attempts are being made in Karachi and Lahore as well but the progress is slow. This is probably why the pulpit is being used generously and often times speakers are invited from abroad. It is being reported that the intent is to disgrace Iran and for this purpose the instruments of writing and speech are being hired with funding from overseas.

Nevertheless, one argument could be that if the answer to our question could not be found in Quran, then it can be sought out of the Prophet's (peace be upon him and his progeny) traditions. However, the difficulty will be that to extract knowledge from the traditions one will have to have thorough knowledge of Arabic language and literature, keen insight into jurisprudence, in depth understanding of traditions and awareness of the faculty of understanding people ('Ilm ul–Rijal); otherwise, it will not be possible.

5. In the end, the decision of intellect and sharia is that an individual who is not familiar with the laws of jurisprudence, needs to consult a judicious person knowledgeable of religious faculties and then act accordingly. This is the commandment of Allah, teaching of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny), advice by the Aimma and assertion by the scholars (ulama); and our history has been consistently saying the same thing.

Let us move forward and by using scholarly ways explore taqleed and ljtihad so that we could get peace of mind and conscience.

- 1. Usul al-Kafi, vol 2 p438, published by Maktaba Islamia, Tehran
- 2. Nahjul Balagha, first lecture, p. 44, compiled by Dr. Saji Saleh, published in Beruit, 1387H
- 3. Sahih Bukhari , Sharah Kirmani, vol 2, Kitabul Ilm, tradition # 114, page 126; published: Ahya Al Tarasul Arabi; second edition.
- It should be kept in mind that Bukhari has quoted this tradition six times in his Sahih and Muslim Bin Hajjaj has listed it three times in his Sahih. See vol 2 Kitabul Vasiyya, tradition # 21; vol 3 page 1257 ± 1259; published Beirut
- In addition, we have with us about twenty scholarly collections put together by narrators of traditions and historians that quote the same thing.

- 4. The two people who initiated this slogan were Zaraa Bin Alburj Altai and Harqoos Bin Zuhair As–Saadi. Tarikh (History) Tibri, vol V, p 72, published Beruit; Kamil Bin Aseer, vol III, p334, published Beruit.
- 5. Akhbar is plural of khabr. According to the terminology used by Scholars of Islam a saying of the Prophet and Ahlul Bayt is called a khabr. The followers of Akhbariat were called Akhbaris and they considered the sayings of the virtuous fourteen as the source of all religious (sharai) commandments. And as far as Quran is concerned they thought that since our intellect cannot fathom its meanings when a need arises we should only consult Akhbar (traditions). Insha Allah there will be more discussion in the context of Ijtihad later in the book.

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