

Taqleed, and Hanafi-Wahabi Differences

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The Hanafi-Wahaabi differences are of two types; the first being a difference in a few corollary Masaa`il, for example, where to place the hands in Salaat? How far apart must the feet be in Salaat? At which junctures must Raf`e Yadain (lifting hands to ears for different postures in Salaat) take place? Is "Ameen" to be said loudly or softly? Must Surah Faatihah be read behind the Imaam or not? Etc.

These type of Masaa`il, regardless of how many they are, I regard them as being corollary differences. It is necessary for each of these groups to practice upon whatever their research shows them. If the Ahle Hadith" are not satisfied with the research and rulings of our Imaam Hadhrat Abu Hanifah (rahmatullahi alaih), then why must they be forced to do so? The same applies to us, in that if we are not satisfied with their research and rulings, then it is not necessary for us to follow their rulings. Just as I had mentioned earlier on that such differences in corollary Masaa`il existed between the Sahaabah, Salf-e-Saaliheen and Aimmah-e-Mujtahiddeen.

If such differences remain within their bounds then it is regarded as a blessing for the Ummat. Every Sunnah of Nabi (sallAllaahu alaihi wasallam) is alive in some way or form in some group or the other – however I do not regard these differences to be in such a serious light that the one group foud-mouths the other or that the one group, due to these differences, condemns the other as being astray. If such extremities come about because of such differences, then it is no longer regarded as a mercy, but rather as a calamity. The practical strength of this Ummat will then be annihilated due to our wasting time in quibbling about such differences. If everything remains within its prescribed limits and bounds then it will be fine. When they start transgressing these bounds then it becomes objectionable. This, then, is the condition with these corollaries.

The second type of difference between the Hanafis and Wahabis is that of "theoretical differences".

In this regard I differ with the view of the Ahle Hadith (often referred to as "Wahabis" and "Ghair Muqallideen"). In fact, I regard their stand as being incorrect. In principle, there are two points to this difference; firstly, according to the Ahle Hadith, there is no need to follow any one specific Imaam, in fact (they believe) that every person should practice upon whatever he understands from the Qur`aan Majeed and Hadith. This Mas`alah is famous under the discussion of "Taqleed and abandoning of Taqleed".

This is one issue with great diverse opinions. I will suffice on presenting just a few points in this regard:

(1). The meaning of Taqleed is to accept the ruling of some reliable and trustworthy person's research without making any investigation into the matter, seeking proofs. If one accepts and follows one person, and his views are not more trustable than another, then it is clear that it would be incorrect to follow to him. And if this person, whom one follows, is an expert in his field, then it would be totally incorrect for an ordinary person to seek proof from him. Understand this by the following example, assume you go to a doctor or specialist and he prescribes a treatment for you. But this doctor is not an expert in his field, in fact, he has merely acquired the practice, then in the first place it would be incorrect for you to have gone to him. And if this doctor is a qualified expert in his field, and then to investigate and query his every prescription and to debate it and seek proof for it, would be totally incorrect and unacceptable.

The reason being that an ordinary person would only go to an expert when his intellect, comprehension and understanding of the issue at hand are insufficient. In a similar way the matters of Deen and Shariah can be understood. Hence, those Masaa'il in the Deen which were transmitted authentically and continuously from Nabi (sallAllaahu alaihi wasallam), and which every Muslim knows about that this is the Mas'alah, in such matters it is not unnecessary for any person to go to any Aalim for clarification. With regard to Deeni Masaa'il, the only time it will be necessary to refer to the knowledgeable and learned ones will be when an issue is beyond the understanding and comprehension of laypeople like us. In such a case there are two possibilities; the first being that we open the Qur'aan Majeed and Hadith and seek the Mas'alah for ourselves, and whatever comes to our minds we accept as being "Deen" and practice thereupon. The second option being that we refer to those persons who are expert at the Qur'aan Majeed and Hadith, and we rely on whatever ruling they issue which they have done after their expert reflection and understanding of the Qur'aan Majeed and Hadith and also their lengthy experience and foresight. The first option is one's own opinion and the second is called "Taqleed", which is the logical need of reasoning and the obvious solution.

To leave aside the research of the experts of Shariah and for a layman to seek for every ruling by contemplating on the Qur'aan Majeed and Hadith is like the similitude of a person who has a very complicating illness and he deems it to be below his dignity to refer to the experts in the medical field. So in order to alleviate and solve his problem he purchases the best and most authentic books on the subject of medicine and he relies on his own understanding and research of these books and seeks a cure for his illness. I am quite certain that no intelligent person will resort to such foolishness. If any person is silly enough to carry out his treatment in this fashion, in that he does his own research and leaves aside the medical experts, then it is almost certain that he will never gain good health or a cure. In fact, he should first make arrangements for his burial before attempting to cure himself.

In a similar fashion, will a person who subjects the Deen to his own understanding fall into the pit of deviation and waywardness. It is for this reason that as many deviant sects we have before us are all the result of such abandonment of Taqleed and subjecting the Deen to whims and understandings. The famous Ahle Hadith Aalim, the late Moulana Muhammed Hussein Bataalwi, mourns his concept

of self-opinion and abandonment of Taqleed, stated so aptly: **“We have understood the following after 25 years of experience – those people who depart from general Taqleed and they become Mujtahid without having any knowledge, they ultimately end up "saying goodbye" to Islaam.**

There are numerous reasons for kufr and irtidaad, but one of the main reasons for those who are Deenconscious to lose their Deen is to abandon Taqleed notwithstanding their being bereft of any knowledge. Those amongst the Ahle Hadith who have little or no knowledge and claim to abandon general Taqleed, should fear such a result. Such a group will become free thinkers and self-opinioted.” [Ishaa`anu Sunnah, number 4, vol.1]

(2). From this discussion the following question arises as to why an ordinary layman needs to make Taqleed of a specific Imaam? That person who has gained such expertise in the science of the Qur`aan Majeed and Ahaadith that he has attained the stage of making his own Ijtihad, will no longer be regarded as a layman but a Mujtahid. For such a person it is not merely not necessary to make Taqleed of another expert in this field, in fact, it is not permissible. (However nowadays, students like us should not languish this false notion that we have become Mujtahid by seeking the assistance of the Urdu translated versions of the major Kitaabs).

And for that person who has not attained the rank of a Mujtahid, will remain a layman regardless of how many Kitaabs he has read. He will, however, have to refer to and consult the rulings of a Mujtahid. So, therefore, when a person has chosen a specific Imaam and he has faith in his (Imaam`s) rulings and he practises thereupon, then he has fulfilled the duty and necessity that the Shariah has placed upon him. But, if he takes from another Imaam what suits him, then the question arises that what is the distinguishing factor which allows him to choose between what he likes and dislikes? If it is said that this person has made the Qur`aan Majeed and Hadith his distinguishing factor, and he opts for that ruling which (he finds to be) in conformity with the Qur`aan Majeed and Hadith, then in reality such a person has made his intellect the distinguishing factor. It is exactly for this reason we had outlined that for such a person who is an expert in the sciences of the Qur`aan Majeed and the Hadith and he is able to distinguish and find proof directly from these sources, such a person is a Mujtahid himself and for him it is not permissible to make Taqleed of another expert. And if such a person is not an expert in the sciences of the Qur`aan Majeed and the Hadith and he uses his intellect as a distinguishing factor, then such a person is a one who follows his own base whims and fancies. This will lead to the destruction of his Deen.

(3). It was the habit of many Auliya-ullaah that they gather the statements and rulings of the Aimmah. They would then choose from all the rulings those rulings wherein there is the most precaution. For example, if according to one Imaam a certain thing was necessary and according to another it was not, so they would choose the ruling of necessity and practice thereupon. Also, for example, if a certain act was Makrooh according to one Imaam and not so according to another, then these personalities would opt for the ruling of Karaahat (being Makrooh) and consider it such, thereby abstaining from that thing. This is the sign of the true Allaah Ta`ala -fearing servants. However, nowadays, abstaining from any Math-hab means that a person would opt for that ruling which best suits his naffs and desires, and practice thereupon. This, in reality, is not following the

Qur`aan Majeed and Hadith, it is following one`s own desires and passions. Shaitaan has given it the hue of following the Qur`aan Majeed and Hadith.

(4). Shah Waliullaah Muhaddith Dehlwi (rahmatullahi alaih) stated that prior to the fourth century it was not a norm in any society to follow any specific Imaam. The custom in those days was such that if any person needed to know any Mas`alah, he would refer to an Aalim and get his answer, whereupon he would practice. However, after the fourth century, Allaah Ta`ala gathered the Ummat in making Iqtidaa (Taqleed) of the four Imaams. It was then understood to be necessary to make Taqleed of one of the four Imaams. During those times, there was much goodness in this. The reason being that the Taqwa and Allaah-fearing in the people became less and was steadily decreasing. If it was not necessary to make Taqleed of only one specific Imaam, then the masses would pick and choose between all the rulings and opt for what their fancies desire. The Deen would then have become a toy.

Hence, a cure for this „personal opinion“ was that every person chooses one expert in the Shariah and remains steadfast upon his rulings. This is what is termed “Taqleed-e-Shakhsi”.

(5). The argument of the Ahle Hadith is that since the "custom" of Taqleed came about after many centuries, therefore they say it is a "Bid`ah". However, it is their error to term Taqleed a Bid`ah, because firstly, if this was the case then the entire Ummat, besides the Ahle Hadith – who only sprang up around the thirteenth century – is astray, Nauthubillah! This is precisely the same claim and argument presented by the Shiah with regard to the Sahaabah-e-Kiraam (radhiAllaahu anhum). Since, Islaam has come until the day of Qiyaamah, for anyone to accept that it did not exist for even one second, is spurious.

Secondly, this custom and habit existed even during the era of Nabi (sallAllaahu alaihi wasallam) and the Sahaabah (radhiAllaahu anhum), that if any ordinary person was unaware of a ruling he would refer to the learned, and he would practice thereupon without seeking any proof. This is what is termed as “Taqleed”. Even though this system was not termed as Taqleed in those days, in practice it was exactly this. So, you also, do not call it “Taqleed”, term it “Iqtidaa” or “Ittibaa”.

Thirdly, let us assume that the pattern of Taqleed did not exist in those days, even then one cannot term it a Bid`ah. The reason being that it is Fardh for every person to follow the Deen and Shariah, and as I have illustrated above that nowadays if any person attempts to tread the path of the Shariah, without making Taqleed of a specific Imaam, then he is almost certain to fall prey to the snares of shaitaan and the naffs. Therefore, to tread the correct path of the Shariah, without any pitfalls, this is one of the only ways, that is, to make Taqleed of an expert Imaam of the Shariah. If one views the condition of the Ahle Hadith, then it will be seen that besides a few Masaa`il, they follow the Muhadditheen. Even though they refute the term “Taqleed” they are also "guilty" of this very same concept, without admitting to it. This Deen is not an invention of the mind and intellect; in fact, it is based upon Revelations and transmissions. For this chain of transmissions to remain intact, it is necessary for every latter generation to follow in the footsteps of their predecessors. This

is a natural phenomenon, without which it would be difficult to tread upon the Shariah.

(6). The birthplace and origin of the Ahle Hadith is un-segregated India, the reason being that previously, the Hanafi Math-hab was widespread here. It is for this reason that all their objections, from the first to the last, is directed at the Hanafi Math-hab. This was not sufficient; they even attacked the personality of Hadhrat Imaam Hadhrat Abu Hanifah (rahmatullahi alaih).

I regard this attitude of theirs to be extremely destructive for themselves, because a significant sign of his lofty status and rank is that personalities such as Mujaddid Alfe Thaani and Shah Abdul Azeed Dehlwi (rahmatullahi alaihim) are amongst his Muqallideen. The objection and dissention of a few limited-intellect persons will make no difference to the loftiness of Imaam Saheb. However, the impending harm that is sure to befall people who slur and revile the Salf-e-Saaliheen is to their peril.

Another point of the theoretical differences of the Ahle Hadith, is that sometimes these people, through their enthusiasm of making their own Ijtihad, tend to separate themselves from the Ijma (consensus) of the Ummat.

Here I will quote two such examples:

a). You may be well aware that the practice of twenty Rakaats Taraaweeh Salaat has continued amongst the Ummat since the Khilaafat of Hadhrat Umar (radhiAllaahu anhu) until the present time. All the four Imaams of the Mathaa-hib are unanimous on this also, but the Ahle Hadith crowd have branded this practice a Bid`ah. Regarding this Mas`alah, I have heard with my own ears, some people using distasteful words for Hadhrat Umar (radhiAllaahu anhu).

b). The second example is that of three Talaqs in one sentence. That is, if a husband gives his wife three Talaqs in one sentence or one sitting, then all three Talaqs will be effective. This Fatwa was passed by Hadhrat Umar (radhiAllaahu anhu) and all the Sahaabah and Tabieen accepted this ruling. I know of not a single Sahaabi or Tabiee who disagreed or differed with this ruling. This is also the unanimous ruling of all the four Mathaa-hib. However, the Ahle Hadith state very vociferously that in such a case only one Talaq comes into effect.

In citing these two examples, I do not wish to discuss their objections and views, I am merely making this point that in such Masaa`il these Ahle Hadith people differ with the consensus of the Ummat and in doing so they bear a great similarity to the Shiahs. Nabi (sallAllaahu alaihi wasallam) had ordered the Ummat with following the path chalked out by the Khulafaa e-Raashideen. This connection and string has slipped from their hands.

I deem the following scenario as being the root of deviation, that any ruling of the Sahaabah-e-Kiraam, Taabieen, Aimmah and pious predecessors of the Ummat is not regarded as being correct, and the so-called well-studied individuals of today regard their differences to the rulings of the pious predecessors as being more correct and their views as being authentic. Nauthubillah!

[Differences in the Ummah and the straight path]