

## Taqleed or The Following of the Imams

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1. After the Holy Prophet (*sallal laahu alaihi wasallam*), the Sahaba-e-Kiraam and the Taabi'in, the most excellent are the four Imams of the Ahle Sunnat Wa Jamaat. They are such great Imaams that they are known as "*Mujtahideen Fi Shara*". They are Imam-e-Azam Abu Hanifa, Imam Maalik, Imam Shafi'i and Imam Ahmed bin Hambal (*radi Allahu anhum*).
2. Taqleed means to follow one of the four Imaams of religion concerning the commandments of Islamic Law (Shari'ah).
3. Today, Muslims throughout the world follow the Taqleed of these four Imaams. In the Masa'ile Furoo'iyah, there is no other fourth Madhab. The difference of opinion of the four Imaams is only in the laws of Furoo' (actions) and not in beliefs (Aqaa'id).
4. The followers of the four Madhabs are commonly known as Hanafi, Maaliki, Shafi'i and Hambali.
5. It is necessary (Waajib) to follow one of them, eg. to perform Salaah, or perform Saum, Zakaah, etc. as per what they have prescribed. This is known as *Taqleed Shakhshi*.
6. These Imams have not made a rule on their own accord but have explained the meaning of the Holy Quran and Hadith, which a normal person or even an Alim could not understand. Therefore, to follow these Imaams is really following the Holy Quran and Hadith.
7. Whoever follows one Imaam cannot follow another Imaam, for example, to follow some rules of one Imaam and other rules of another Imaam is not allowed. It is necessary to firmly follow only one Imaam.
8. A person is not allowed to change from one Imaam to another, e.g. to become a Hanafi after following the Shafi'i way. You have to follow your Imaam and continue following him.
9. It is also a joint agreement by all Ulema that you cannot follow another Imaam or a Mujtahid (religious director) except for one of these four Imaams.
10. The following verses are proofs from the Holy Quran on Taqleed:
  1. The Holy Quran says: "*Guide us on the Right Path, the Path of those on whom you have showered blessing*". (*Surah Fateha: 5*) The verse may be taken as the argument in favour of Absolute (Mutlaq) Taqleed as well as the Taqleed of Mujtahids. Those on the Right Path are the Mufassirin (Commentators of Quran), Muhaddiseen (Scholars of the Ahadith), Jurists, Awliya Allah, Ghaus, Qutub, Abdal, etc. They were all Muqallids proving there by that Taqleed is the Right Path.
  2. The Holy Quran says: "*Allah does not put burden on a person which he cannot bear.*" (*Surah Baqarah: 286*) This verse shows that Allah does not cause hardships to a man which he cannot endure. It means that the man who is incapable of Ijtihad, is unable to extract problems (masail) from the Qur'an as it amounts to over-burdening him if he is restrained from Taqleed and to expect him to derive problems from the Qur'an is not justifiable.
  3. The Holy Quran says: "*And the first and foremost among the Muhajireen and Ansar and those who followed them with good intentions these are those with whom Allah was pleased and they were pleased with Allah.*" (*Surah Tauba: 100*) It means that Almighty Allah is pleased with those who followed the footsteps of the Muhajirs and the Ansar. This is nothing but Taqleed.

4. The Holy Quran says: *"Obey Allah the Almighty and obey the Holy Prophet and those who wield authority in the land."* (Surah Nisa: 59) In this verse there is the command to obey Almighty Allah (Holy Quran) the Holy Prophet (Hadith), the person holding authority to command the Ulama versed in Fiqah (Jurisprudence) and Istimbat (Knowledge of deriving problem from the Quran and Hadith).
5. The Holy Quran says: *"Ask (enquire) from the persons of learning if you do not know."* (Surah Nahal: 43) The verse points to seeking advice and knowledge from the persons of learning if the common men do not know the real meaning or nature of any command. The men of learning explicitly refer to the Mujtahids.
6. The Holy Quran says: *"And follow the man who leads (people) unto Me."* (Surah Luqman: 15) The verse indicates that the following (Taqleed) should be done of those persons who have devoted themselves to Almighty Allah. Here there is no restriction on the nature of matters in which guidance is needed.
7. The Holy Quran says: *"And those who say: O our Lord! Provide us the coolness of our eyes from our wives and children and make us the leader of the right ous people."* (Surah al-Furqan: 25) The verse also demands that the Taqleed or following the men of Almighty Allah is on obligation.

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