

Do we have the right to ask about the Logic behind Islamic ?Laws

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Now we discuss the most important topics about Islamic laws, its rules and regulations and their philosophy and most of the questions and answers are based on this.

"Why should we pray Prayers is the question every person asks himself? Why should a person go for the pilgrimage of House of Allah? Why it is forbidden to take interest in Islam? What is the philosophy for prohibiting pork? Why is polygamy allowed in Islam? Why it is prohibited to eat in gold and silver utensils? etc...etc...

Some learned people and scholars have discussed about these in a beautiful way. From them some have derived only one side of the question. Some think that we should not inquire about the Logic behind the Islamic Laws and others think the opposite of this; that it is necessary to understand the logic behind the Islamic laws.

Keeping in mind the views of these scholars, we present our views on the subject: You may be astonished that both the groups are right. We have this right to ask and we also don't have this right. We mean that while idea of each group is not accepted, but only the special part of it is accepted.

It can be explained in this way: From the holy Qur'an, Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the traditions of Holy Imams (a.s.) and from the sayings of the companions and friends we come to know that there was always a tradition of discussing the philosophy of Islamic laws among themselves and it should also be like that because they were thinking that the holy Qur'an was an independent and logical way and they had given the right to themselves that they should discuss the Islamic laws in a logical way and ask questions about its philosophy.

According to the principles of Islam, which introduces Allah in this way: He is such an existence, which has infinite knowledge and wisdom and He is independent from all things and persons. All His acts are based on wisdom, whether we understand it or not. His acts never include any foolishness or meaninglessness and He has sent the Prophets for teaching, training and inviting the people towards truth and justice.

The introduction of Allah in such a way encourages us to question about the Islamic laws, its effect and it's Philosophy, which naturally have great influence on our life.

It is a mistake to think that the holy Qur'an is not about the practical law and other information; and that it only is about the roots of religion and beliefs because we see that the holy Qur'an

after the command of fasting in the holy month of Ramadhan says: "You keep fast so that you
can become pious."^[1]

In this way He wants us to know that the logic behind Fasting is to remain away from sins, which can be attained through this spiritual exercise and through controlling the desires. The Qur'an says about the sick and travelers who are exempted from keeping the fast: And whoever is sick or upon a journey, then (he shall fast) a (like) number of other days; Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire for you difficulty...^[2]

And Allah doesn't want hardships and mistakes; this is the philosophy behind it. The Qur'an prohibits gambling and wine and says about them: The Shaitan only desires to cause enmity and hatred to spring in your midst by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to keep you off from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. Will you then desist?
(Surah Maidah 5:91)

The Qur'an says about the strange women by not looking at them: Say to the believing men that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts; that is purer for them; surely Allah is Aware of what they do. (Surah Nur 24:30)

This deed is good for their chastity. And it says about the prohibition of the entering of the infidels in the mosque of Mecca that: O you who believe! the idolaters are nothing but unclean, so they shall not approach the Sacred Mosque after this year...^[3]

The infidels are impure and that is why they are not allowed to enter the holy mosque. The Qur'an says about the public property and its one part should be spent on the poor people that: Whatever Allah has restored to His Apostle from the people of the towns, it is for Allah and for the Apostle, and for the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer, so that it may not be a thing taken by turns among the rich of you...^[4]

Allah has reserved this wealth for the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and general expenses, so that the wealth may not be limited between the rich and wealthy people and that the common people may not remain poor.

And in this way many philosophies of the Islamic laws are explained, to mention all of which would lengthen the book unduly.

We also get such examples from the traditions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and Imam's (a.s.). The Imam's (a.s.) themselves explained the philosophies of the Islamic laws or replied when asked by their companions. The great Scholar Shaykh Sadooq (a.r.) has written a famous book, Ilalush Sharaeh, as the name itself shows the book is the Collection of such traditions. Therefore when we see that the glorious Qur'an itself and the Islamic leaders on many occasions have explained the logic behind Islamic Laws, it is a proof that they have given us

the right to discuss about it. If the situation were opposite they would have refrained us from
contemplation and research in the Islamic Laws.

From whatever is said above we conclude that it is allowed to do research and find the reasons
behind Islamic laws.

And in this way the style and explanation of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the Holy Imams
(a.s.) has given us the right to know the secrets of Islamic laws.

It is wrong to think that by explaining the philosophies of Islamic laws their importance and
value is decreased, but in fact explanation of these things satisfies intellect and reason of a
person and then he applies laws in his practical life, which makes their life more dynamic. And
in this way a person doesn't follow the Islamic law in a dry way but acts on the laws of Islam
with a great fervor. This was one side of the question.

The other is that, as the time goes no matter how much our knowledge increases, also shall
always be limited. We cannot come to know everything. If man had known all the things of the
world, then the caravan of knowledge and research would have been stopped.

Rather the things, which we do not know is like a huge ocean, and the things, which we know is
just like a drop, or the things, which we know is like one line from a big book. And to know the
things, which we do not know, we will require a Professor from the other world, and then also
we will be not be able to understand them. In the same way if the people who lived a thousand
years ago were taught the scientific knowledge of this age so they would not have been able to
understand. They would not have been able to reach the depth through their own thinking and
intelligence.

We all know that the source of heavenly wisdom is from the infinite knowledge of the Almighty
Allah. He is such a source that He is aware of the whole Universe. For Him words like past,
future, absent, present have no meaning; rather He is all knowing and aware of everything.

After considering these facts can we expect that we can understand all the philosophies of
Islamic laws? If this was so, what was the need for Prophets? We would sit and correct those
things, which we feel right according to our whims and fancies and would lead a life roaming
the deserts. And on the other side the question arises: are we aware of the philosophy behind
each existence of each creature in the world and about the laws, which govern them? The
religious laws are not different from the creation and our knowledge regarding both of them is
limited.

From this discussion we conclude as follows: In all the ages only those philosophies of the
Islamic laws can be understood, which are in the ambit of their knowledge and according to
their standard. Basically, we should not expect more because of our limited knowledge and the

depth of the laws. We conclude by saying that for following the Islamic laws we cannot put the condition of knowing their philosophies, otherwise it means we are claiming to have unlimited knowledge and we are considering our intelligence equal to Allah's and this is itself against logic.

In short the discussions about the hidden logic behind the laws and the right to discuss about them is one thing and to obey these laws is another. The latter is not conditional to former. We discuss about religious laws to increase our knowledge about their benefits, importance and different effects. We do not discuss these things to decide whether we should practice these laws or not.

It is like asking the doctor about our treatment, about the medicines prescribed; their effects and benefits etc. so that we can acquire more information about these things. However our taking of medicine is not conditional on his explanation, otherwise it would be necessary that the person should also be a doctor.

It is necessary to keep this point in the mind, that the purpose to discuss the secrets and hidden wisdom of the laws to the utmost level is to guess and imagine with fancy ideas the philosophies of the high religious laws. For example if it is said that Azan is the medium to make loud sounds, Prayers is a kind of Swedish exercise and the purpose of fast is to lose weight, Hajj is the means of income for Arabs and prostration (sajdah) and bowing (ruku) are the means to protect the bones.

No - Not at all, this is not the purpose about the Islamic laws, because fancy ideas and imagination not only distract a person from Islamic laws but also reduce their value and it implies that the Islamic laws are unreliable

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.[5]

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).^[6]

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

Notes:

[1] Surah Baqarah 2:183

[2] Surah Baqarah 2:185

[3] Surah Tawbah 9:28

[4] Surah Hashr 59:7

[5] Surah Hjr 15:21

[6] Surah Baqarah 2:183