Introduction to Islamic Sciences

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Introduction to Islamic Sciences, Part 1

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Abstract

Acquiring and possessing knowledge is highly recommended in Islam as God encourages people to seek knowledge as seen in the Qur'an and hadith. Educators and scholars hold a revered position because of their efforts of pursuing knowledge and using it to influence their actions.

This article introduces the most important Islamic sciences that have long been studied in Islamic seminaries. A brief definition as well as the nature and history of each of the widely studied disciplines by Islamic scholars will be offered, namely theology (kalam), philosophy, mysticism (irfan), and jurisprudence (fiqh).

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Islamic sciences apply to three different types of disciplines:

Knowledge originating from religion: This includes statements that are either mentioned in religious sources or excerpts from sources that religion considers valid. In Islam, such disciplines mostly rely on the Qur'an and Sunnah, or are intellectually understood. Therefore, all of them are deemed Islamic. Some of such disciplines are theology (kalam)[2], jurisprudence (fiqh),[3] Ethics (akhlaq)[4] and Mysticism (irfan).[5]

Introductory and prerequisite disciplines: teachings that are a preliminary to the above-mentioned disciplines; they are the essential means to understand religious texts and benefitting from sources such as the Qur'an, Sunnah, and reason. For this reason, they are termed 'Islamic.' Examples of such disciplines are logic, Arabic literature, Qur'anic sciences, hadith sciences, and principles of jurisprudence.

Sciences that do not originate from religion: sciences that are not exclusive to Islam or any other religion, although they have developed in Islamic atmospheres and therefore have a particular spirit. For example, philosophy consists of rules and principles far beyond a specific school of thought. However, according to some scholars,[6] development of its rules and principles by Islamic scholars in an Islamic atmosphere makes it possible to speak of 'Islamic philosophy' and label it as a religious discipline.

According to the above-mentioned categorization, some of the most important and widely studied disciplines in the Islamic seminaries will be introduced.

1. Theology (kalam)

Islam has always demanded its followers to have unwavering faith in its revealed teachings while simultaneously insisting on the rational aspect of its instructions. The Qur'an inspires believers to ponder about the divine creation and signs of the Holy Essence of God to strengthen their faith. In some cases, the Qur'an itself justifies the existence of God.

These religious inspirations and giving the opportunity to contemplate the divine signs is a valuable opportunity for Muslim thinkers to discuss

religious doctrines and to verity its truth through reasoning. Kalam follows the track of reasoning and benefits from the traditions received from the Imams (a).

The nature of Kalam

Kalam is one of the traditional sciences in Islam that scholars have referred to throughout history with terms such as 'principles of religion',[7] 'greater fiqh,'[8] 'science of religious opinion and reasoning,'[9] 'science of monotheism and attributes,' and the 'science of Kalam' (Islamic Theology).[10] The most common term is kalam itself which is named thus so in Shi'a narrations.[11]

Religious sciences today are divided into three major categories: beliefs (kalam), rulings (fiqh), and ethics (akhlaq). Beliefs refer to the fundamental and basic issues of a religion that corresponds with Islamic ideology.

The issues discussed in beliefs include the existence of God, His attributes and actions, Prophethood, Imamate, the Hereafter and general issues about humankind's destination. Additionally, new questions have been raised in this field that led to a new branch, 'The Modern kalam' or 'Modern Problems of Kalam'.

Since discussing practical rulings can be meaningless before one's religious beliefs are confirmed, this discipline is also called 'The Greater Fiqh' or 'The Principles of Religion'.

According to the problems, goals, and approaches they have followed, various definitions of this discipline have been offered. By exploring all definitions of kalam, two factors have been common in most of them:

1) Proving religious beliefs and

2) Defending them against objections raised.

Thus, Kalam is a discipline that involves understanding, regulating, explaining, and justifying or proving beliefs through various approaches based on either reason or tradition and is responsible for defending it against any doubt."

The ultimate goal of kalam is to prove the principles of religion and shield it against any doubt. This objective can be achieved in various ways that are not limited to providing demonstrations (burhan) and deductive reasoning. Thus, the aim of this discipline is sometimes achieved through providing demonstrations.

In some cases, if the addressee is a layman and is not capable of understanding complicated philosophical arguments, to convince him, a theologian may use some of the ideas of the addressee himself or those which are commonly accepted to prove or disprove his position the addressee's position.

The Qur'an also emphasizes on the three approaches of justification i.e. wisdom (illustration or burhan), good preaching (khitabah of speech) and debate (jadal or dialectic) when inviting others towards God and proving the revealed teachings of religion.[12]

History

Theological issues are as old as humanity. For example, all prophets, including Prophet Adam (a), have taught the doctrine of monotheism, which

is the most important issue in kalam. Similarly, prophethood too existed since the beginning of time. The first instruction of the Prophet was 'Oneness of God'.

The Qur'an entails a plethora of theological issues about general principles and detailed descriptions of the Oneness of God, Prophethood, and the afterlife. There also have been numerous debates between the Prophet and Jewish and Christian scholars.[13] Such evidences prove that theological discussions and debates existed from the very beginning of Islam.

Therefore, the teachings presented by the Prophet (s) triggered the discussion of theological issues. The verses of the Qur'an not only supported raising such issues, but they were essential in forming theological trends.

However, the collection of such discussions and debates is not the discipline of kalam, although some believe that it is kalam, and those who sought these discussions were called Mutakallim.[14]

There truly is no proof for this claim. Thus, the grounds for emerging theological discussions or the discipline of kalam are the teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophet rather than the influx of Greek philosophy, even though Greek philosophy was influential in generating such issues.[15]

Imamate was among the first theological discussions considered as the most important about which Muhammad ibn 'Abdulkarim Shahristani (479 – 548 AH) says, "Muslims have not fought over any other issues as much as over this."[16]

This issue arose soon after the Prophet (s) passed away, and it led to the emergence Sunnism and Shi'ism, the two major Islamic schools of thought. Sunnis believe in the election of a caliph as that which relies on the counsel of people, just as Abu Bakr was appointed as the caliph.

On the other hand, the Shi'a believe that appointment of the successor of the Prophet (s) must be through Allah, and the sole person qualified for this task was Ali ibn Abi Talib. The concept of Imamate led to debates among scholars that developed over the course of history and led each group to write voluminous treatises and books.

Various methods have been used by kalam scholars of different theological schools of thought. Shi'a scholars such as Hisham ibn 'Abd al-Malik, Hisham ibn Salim, and Mu'min al-Taq emphasized on reason as well as tradition; Mu'tazilite Kalam scholars such as Wasil ibn 'Ata', Abu al-Hudhayl 'Allaf, Abu 'Ali and Abu Hisham Juba'i – who followed the Sunni school of thought – insisted on using reason.

The People of Hadith – another Sunni sect – used strict interpretation and ruling to the mere appearance of verses and traditions and would not accept any question about its content and message. This strong opposition encouraged Asharite and Matridite Kalam scholars such as Abu al-Hasan Ash'ari and Abu Mansur Matridi from other Sunni sects to mediate and reconcile the Mu'tazilites and the People of Hadith.

The history of kalam in the following centuries shows that some philosophical issues entered kalam first seen in the works of Sheikh Mufid (d. 413 A.H.) such as in his Awa'il al-Maqalat and the works of Sayyid

Murtada (d. 436 A.H.) such as Al-Dhakhirah fi 'Ilm al-Kalam among Shi'ite sources.

Later, philosophical issues were seen in the works of Fakhr Radi (d. 606 A.H.) such as Al-Muhassal and in Al- Barahin fi 'Ilm al-Kalam among Sunni sources. It was seen afterwards in the works of Khajeh Nasir al-Din Tusi (d. 672 A.H.) such as Tajrid al-I'tiqad and the works of Ibn Maytham Bahrani (d. 699 A.H.) such as Qawa'id al-Maram. This mixture lasted for centuries to the present time when such issues were seen in kalam texts.

Although kalam is among the most essential Islamic science, this discipline has had serious opposition among both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. Those who fervently objected to kalam were the People of Hadith as they resisted against any interpretation of verses and traditions based on reason.

Accordingly, Ahmad ibn Hanbal said, "There are three things that are not found in Islam: Maghazi, Malal:im, and Kalam."[17] He also declared, "One who knows kalam can never achieve salvation. Kalam scholars are heretical."[18] Abu Hanifa's student, Abu Yasuf, said, "Anyone who seeks [to understand] religion through kalam is a deviator."[19]

Shafi'i said accordingly, "If God afflicts His servant with all great sins except polytheism, it would be far better than He afflicts His servant to learn anything from kalam."[20] He also declared as a ruling, "If a man leaves all his books to another in his will, and a book on kalam is to be found among them, that book could not be left included with other books."[21]

The peak of the Shafi'is' opposition with Kalam and its scholars is understood in the following statement: "They [Kalam scholars] must be lashed and taken around among tribes and announce that 'This is the punishment of those who abandon the Qur'an and tradition to learn Kalam.'"[22]

Branches of Kalam

Emergence of various branches of Kalam in religion was triggered historical and social factors; however, one of the most important features is the difference of opinions towards the nature of religion, religious texts, their interpretation, and the details of religious issues.[23]

In different periods and after each occasion, an ideological and intellectual issue arose which led to formation of different schools. Each group distributed their own ideas and beliefs to attract more followers, and Islamic society ultimately faced the formation of new sects.

Thus, the debate regarding the concept of imamate divided the Islamic society into Shi'as and Sunnis. The important issues that led to the emergence of the Khawarij and Murji'ah were faith, deeds, and the rulings regarding major sins. The method of interpreting verses and narrations that led to thinking of God as a corporeal being led to the emergence of sects such as Hashwiyyah and Kiramiyyah.

On the whole, the most distinguished sects and schools of kalam in the Islamic world include:

1. The Shi'a: Those who believe in the uninterrupted succession of Imam Ali (a) after the Prophet (s). They eventually divided into different groups such as the Zaydis[24], Isma'ilis,[25] and Waqifids.[26] The most distinguished Shi'a kalam scholars living contemporary with the Imams (a) were great

personalities such as Qays ibn al-Masir, Mu'min Taq (d. c. 160 A.H.), Hisham ibn Hakam (d. c. 199 A.H.), Hisham ibn Salim, and Fadl ibn Shadhan (d. 260 A.H.).

Since the beginning of the Age of Occultation of the Twelfth Imam (a), there have been eminent kalam scholars such as Sheikh Sadaq (d. 381 A.H.), Sheikh Mufid (d. 413 A.H.) Sayyid Murtada 'Alam al-Huda (d. 436 A.H.), Khajah Nasir al- Din Tusi (d. 672 A.H.), 'Allamah Hilli (d. 726 A.H.), and Fadil Miqdad (d. 826 A.H.).

2. The Mu'tazilites: The Mu'tazilites, whose founder was Wasil ibn 'Ata (d. 131 A.H.) believe in five principles: the Oneness of God, justice, position between positions, reward and punishment, enjoining the good and forbidding the evil.[27] The peak of the Mu'tazilites' power was during the era of Ma'man 'Abbasi until the ruling of Wathiq 'Abbasi (198 – 232 A.H.). Afterwards, this sect began its decline.[28]

The most renowned kalam scholars of this group were Abu Hudhayi 'Allaf (d. 227 A.H.), Ibrahim ibn Sayyar Nazzam (d. 231 A.H.), Abu 'Uthman Jahiz (d. 255 A.H.), Abu al-Hasan Khayyat (d. c. 300 A.H.), Abu 'Ali Juba'i (d. 303 A.H.), Abu Hashim Juba'i (d. 321 A.H.) and Judge 'Abd al-Jabbar Mu'tazili (d. 415 A.H.).

3. The Asharites: The founder of this sect was Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Isma'ii Ash'ari who began as a Mu'tazilite and later searched to find a way between the Mu'tazilites' rationality and textualism of the People of Hadith. Thus, he broke away from them and founded this new school of thought. He presented new theories, among which is the famous 'theory of acquisition (kasb)' as opposed to determinism (jabr) and "delegation of affairs to humanity" (tafwid).

Nowadays, the most well-known Sunni kalam school of thought is Ashari. Its prominent kalam scholars include Judge Abu Bakr Baqilani (d. 403 A.H.), Abu al-Ma'ali 'Abd al-Malik Juwayni (d. 478 A.H.) known as Imam al-Haramayn, Abu Hamid Muhammad Ghazzali (d. 505 A.H.), Muhammad ibn 'Umar Fakhr Razi (d. 606), Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Abi Ali Sayf al-Din Amadi (d. 631 A.H.), Judge 'Adud al-Din Iji (d. 756 A.H.), and Sa'd al-Din Mas'ad ibn 'Umar Taftazani (722 – 792 A.H.).

4. Maturidiyyah: This sect was founded by Abu Mansur Matiridi (d. 333 A.H.). He rose in central Asia (Samarqand) – similar to Abu al-Hasan Ash'ari – with the intention of reforming religious beliefs. His viewpoints were close to the Asharites' although they differed in some issues such as intellectual goodness and badness, where the Shi'a and Mu'tazilites perspectives are similar in this regard. Prominent Matiridi Kalam scholars include Abu Mu'in Nasafi (d. 508 A.H.), Najm al-Din 'Imran Nasafi (d. 537 A.H.), and Abu al-Barakat Nisfi (d. 701 A.H.).[29]

2. Islamic Philosophy

Philosophy is among the common intellectual sciences among Muslim scholars. Although the time of emergence of philosophical thoughts and issues existed long before Islam and assumed to have emerged in Old Greece, the role of Islamic philosophers in its development is not hidden to anyone so far as Muslim philosophers such as Farabi and Ibn Sina are concerned as they are infamous names in the field of philosophy.

The Nature of Philosophy

The term 'philosophy' termed by Socrates, is a Greek word derived from 'philosophia' meaning "the lover of knowledge." Philosophy would be the title for three types of sciences: a) all real sciences b) all real and conventional sciences and c) Non-empirical sciences and knowledge.[30]

In a general sense, philosophy includes all rational sciences as opposed to scripture-based sciences. This includes lexicology, hermeneutics, rhetoric, prosody, exegesis, hadith studies, Islamic law, and principles of Islamic law.

In this sense, philosophy has been applied to all intellectual sciences including intellectual theology, mathematics, politics, and ethics. But today, the term 'philosophy' is commonly applied to a specific branch of intellectual sciences which studies the 'descriptions of being qua being.'

In this application, philosophy can be considered a discipline that independently discusses the concept of being, and general descriptions of it using rational and analogical methods as well as self-evident propositions; it ultimately provides a comprehensive and rational interpretation of the entire world.

History of Islamic Philosophy

When the Islamic territory expanded and included different tribes and nations, many scientific centers were established in these lands. This created the grounds for the exchange of knowledge by scholars of diverse regions.

And because the official language of these countries was Arabic, many books from Indian, Hebrew, Latin, Persian and other languages were translated to Arabic to prepare the grounds for Muslim thinkers to become acquainted with philosophical opinions of notable scholars of other regions, especially ancient Greece.[31]

In doing so, brilliant people such as Farabi and Avicenna made great endeavors as people who were prolific in all philosophical thoughts of their period and analyzed them selectively using their God-given talent under the light of revelation and sayings the Ahlul Bayt. They founded a philosophical system which although influenced by the views of Plato, Neoplatonists and Aristotle[32], it included novel beliefs which were considered a new system.

Another deep evolution in Islamic philosophy was owing to the endeavors of Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi (549–587 A.H.). Using the ideas of ancient Iranian philosophers and comparing them with the ideas of Plato, Plotinus, and Stoics, Suhrawardi founded a new school called "The School of Illuminationism" which is mostly influenced by Platonic ideas.

However, some Islamic scholars[33] believe that Suhrawardi adopted his illuminationist approach under the influence of Islamic Sufis and mystics. Merging mystical findings with reasoning was his innovation. The main difference between the two illuminationist and peripatetic philosophical schools is that illuminationism does not consider reason and intellectual justifications enough for studying philosophical issues, especially theosophy.

It considers the efforts made for the spiritual journey that leads to purification necessary to discover realities, though the peripatetic philosophical school relied on mere reasoning.

In later periods, notable philosophers such as Khajih Nasir al-Din Tusi and Muhaqqiq Dawani critiqued previous scholars' views and generated new theories that enriched Islamic philosophy; this eventually carried Islamic philosophy to a new age of development.

Khajih Nasir al-Din Tusi (597 – 672 A.H.) a peripatetic philosopher, revived the philosophy of Ibn Sina, titled "The Chief of Paripatetics," in the 7th century A.H. by compiling notes on Avicenna's Isharat wa Tanbihat and organizing it to eventually preserve Ibn Sina's philosophy.[34]

In that book, he answered all major objections issued by Imam Fakhr Razi (d. 606 A.H.) who himself had an explanatory book on Avicenna's Isharat wa Tanbihat. The connections between these two explanatory notes on Isharat wa Tanbihat led to discussions between Muslim philosophers of different generations.[35]

Peripatetic philosophy was later led by Jalal al-Din Dawani (830 – 908 A.H.) who was a famous philosopher of the 9th century A.H. He had a liking for peripatetic philosophy and so he wrote his comments on one of the explanatory books on Khajah Nasir al-Din Tusi's Al-Tajrid. His comments, reviewed by Sadr al-Din Muhammad Dashtaki (d. 903 A.H.), were later called Ifashiyeh-ye Qadim or The Old Comments. In his second series of comments, Dawani answered to Dashtaki's objections in his review.

Again later, Dashtaki reviewed and critiqued Dawani's answers and again Dawani responded to Dashtaki's objections in his third series of comments, later called Ifashiyeh-ye Ajadd or The Newer Comments. All three series of Dawani's comments and the two reviews by Sadr al-Din Muhammad Dashtaki are known as a collection called Tabaqat al-Jalaliyyah wa al-Sadriyyah.[36]

Ghiyath al-Din Mansur Dashtaki Shirazi (d. 948 A.H.), son of Sadr al-Din Muhammad Dashtaki, can be considered as the connecting link with the new era of Islamic philosophy which was called The School of Isfahan. He was among the great Shi'a scholars of the Safavid period in rational sciences as well as fiqh and its principles.[37] He trained students who filled the gap between his period and the time of Mirdamad, the founder of the School of Isfahan.

Mir Burhan al-Din Muhammad Baqir Damad is seen as the representatives of the first generation of philosophers during the Safavid period in Iran. He was son of Mir Shams al-Din Damad, the son-in-law of Muhaqqiq Karaki (or the second Muhaqqiq [meaning "researcher"]) who came to Iran at the beginning of the Safavid period. Mir Damad[38] was born in Astar-Abad.

He later moved to Mashhad with his family and afterwards moved to Isfahan. There, he became proficient in both fields of rational and traditional sciences. His works include literature in philosophy, kalam, Prophetic traditions, narrations of the Imams, Shi'a jurisprudence, Qur'anic exegesis, ethics, mysticism, and logic.

Nonetheless, he knew himself as a philosopher by calling himself "The Third Teacher" after Aristotle and Farabi.[39] His philosophy works include Al-Siraf al-Mustaqim wa al-'Ufuq al- Mubin, his most important work

being Qabasat Ifaqq al-Yaqin fi Ifudath al-'Alam or simply, Qabasat, a book about the creation of the world and the possibility of its origination in God.

Selected philosophers in Isfahan contemporary with Mir Damad were Sheikh Baha'i, Mir Fendereski, and Judge Sa'id Qummi (d. 1103 A.H.) who were considered among the most distinguished personalities of the Isfahan School of Philosophy.

Isfahan's main goal was to unite various and sometimes contradictory rational approaches, each of which would have been accepted by a group of Muslims over the course of history and to incorporate all of them under the title of Shi'a teachings.[40]

Its founder, Mulla Sadra Shirazi, a distinguished student of Mir Damad, mixed the harmonious elements of peripatetic and intuitive philosophy and mystic disclosures and added his own views to present 'transcendental philosophy,' a term well-rooted in Islamic philosophy.

Among the most important measures of Sadr al-Muta'allihin[41] in transcendental philosophy was organizing philosophical topics in the order mystics have taught regarding the spiritual journey of the soul. According to Sadra's system, philosophical topics and issues are categorized in four groups of issues: a) Principles and base of issues about monotheism, b) Monotheism, theology, and divine attributes, c) Divine actions and universals in being, and 4) The Hereafter and soul.

The Four Journeys by Asfar Arba'ah is written according to the mentioned system.[42]

Philosophical issues

As was mentioned before, philosophy is "being qua being" and it is clear that issues discussed in philosophy are about the mentioned subject and its surroundings. Thus, most important issues in philosophy are categorized into four groups[43] of issues that deal with:

Existence itself versus non-existence. More specifically, the fundamentality of existence and quiddity.

Different types of existence such as necessary being versus contingent being, created being versus eternal being, external being versus mental being.

General laws of existence such as causality, ontological homogeneity of cause and effect, priority and posteriority, and togetherness in the levels of existence.

The affirmation of the levels or realms of existence. Islamic philosophers categorize realms of existence into four groups: The world of nature (nasat), the world of analogies (malakat), the world of intellect (jabarat) and the realm of Divinity (lahat).

Islamic Mysticism

One of the disciplines that originated and developed in Islamic culture is mysticism (irfan). Although some people believe that mysticism and delicate mystical thoughts have been imported from outside of Islam such as the ideas that mysticism is rooted in Christian thought[44], neo- Plutonian[45] belief, or inspired by Upanishadic (Hindu) teachings.[46]

However, mysticism in Islam, whether in practical or theoretical aspects, originated from Islamic genuine sources and has later adapted principles accordingly. During the course of its development, it has been influenced by kalam, philosophy, and particularly illuminist philosophy.[47] Islamic culture includes vast theoretical and practical issues as well as spiritual models that motivated Muslims towards mystical issues.[48]

Description of Islamic Mysticism

Lexically, mysticism means 'knowing' and terminologically it is "knowing the monotheistic and spiritual truth of existence in which its origin includes a simple, general, obscure, and subconscious quality and in an internal-knowing process, that origin turns to an intuitive, distinctive, clear, and definite knowledge."[49] This unique knowledge cannot be grasped through sensation, experience, reason, or tradition, and is attained through internal intuition and spiritual perception.[50]

As a cultural and scientific system, mysticism has theoretical and practical aspects:

Theoretical mysticism is the knowledge of that which the mystic achieves through his intuition at the end of his spiritual journey. This includes knowing God and the manifestations of His Names and Attributes, as well as His relation with plurality. A mystic's monotheism is the ultimate point of the perfection where the he or she comprehends that everything other than God is a mere image; there is actually nothing but God.

The rest are manifestations and aspects of the Truth. Scholars of theoretical mysticism claim that they grasp these truths through intuition and they are taught in the form of analytical knowledge and words. They would make efforts to benefit from similes, metaphors, and allegories to create even an ambiguous and incomplete image from those truths in the minds and hearts of their listeners.[51]

Accordingly, subjects of theoretical mysticism are categorized into three groups:
• Mystical theology (or specific unity of existence)
• Mystical cosmology (or the order of creation)
• Mystical anthropology (or the notion of perfect man)

In fact, mystical issues revolve around the origination and circulation of plurality from the essential unity of God, the relation between this plurality with that essential unity, and the explanation of manifestations of Divine Names and Attributes.[52]

Practical mysticism is the relation of a person with himself, the world, and with God. This is about the traveler's journey, that is, his starting point, the steps he must take, the states of heart experienced within each step, and the position attained after each step for a traveler on the spiritual path to reach the highest level of perfection i.e. Unity.[53]

In practical mysticism, mystics take heed to the heart and its actions. The meaning of actions is broader than the mere actions of limbs; it includes the actions of the heart as well and practical steps are taken to improve it. [54] Overall, practical mysticism paves the way of spiritual journey for the mystic to ultimately reach his or her final goal.

The mystical journey, like any common developmental stage, is a spiritual movement that begins from the lower and superficial levels of the soul and ends with profound levels. These phases correspond with the spiritual stations that the traveler experiences:

The initial stages of the spiritual journey that correspond to the traveler's soul.

The middle of the way towards God that correspond to the traveler's soul; the traveler enters after he passes the stations of the self.

The final stations of the mystical journey that correspond to the most interior aspect of human being, i.e. his 'inner self' (sirr).

Each of above stages includes particular stations and each of those stations includes positions that comprise of one hundred stations and positions the traveler must pass. Khajih 'Abdullah Ansari's Manazil al-Sa'irin (or the Hundred Statzions) a prominent work in the field of Mysticism, elucidates the hundred mentioned stations in detail.

History

Islamic mysticism traces back to the first century after hijrah. Although the development of Sufism and Irfan and the groups attributed to them did not exist in the first century A.H., the existence of theoretical and practical concepts of Irfan in the first century confirms that all that the mystics achieved in the following centuries can be found in the teachings of the Prophet (s), Imams (a) and in their companions' acts.[55]

From the beginning of Hijrah, people such as Abu Dhar al-Ghiffari and Salman Farsi, who were trained in comprehending Islamic rulings, spread the message and taught people how to purify their souls. People such as Kumayl ibn Ziyad Nakha'i and Uways Qarani (d. 37 A.H.) as well as many Sufis followed Abu Dhar and Salman.[56]

Centuries after them, Sufi historians listed mystics such as Hasan Basri (d. 110 A.H.), Malik ibn Dinar (d. 131 A.H.), Ibrahim ibn Ad-ham (d. 166 A.H.), Rabi'ah 'Adwiyyah (d. 135 or 185 A.H.), Fudayi ibn 'Ayad (d. 187 A.H.) and Shaqiq Balkhi (d. 194 A.H.). However, Islamic Irfan bloomed in the beginning of the third century A.H.

Islamic Irfan entered a new stage during the beginning of the third century A.H. until the beginning of the seventh century A.H. In this period, mystics became prolific authors in their field as great mystical works were published. The specific Irfan terminology was adopted mostly from Islamic concepts and sometimes from philosophy and kalam (Islamic theology).

Practical Irfan, the base of Islamic Irfan until the seventh century A.H., reached its peak. In that period, organization, group hierarchy, traditions, and Sufi rituals were fully developed.[57] Renowned mystics of that period included Harith Muhasibi (d. 243 A.H.), Dhu al-Nan Misri (d. 245 A.H.), Ba Yazid Bastami (d. 261 A.H.), Junayd Baghdadi (d. 297 A.H.), Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 306 or 309 A.H.), Abu Sa'id Abu al-Khayr (d. 440 A.H.), Abu al-Qasim Qushayri (d. 465 A.H.), Khajeh Abullah Ansari (396 – 481 A.H.), and Abu Hamid Muhammad Ghazzali (450 – 505 A.H.).

The evolutionary process of Islamic Irfan continued until the seventh century, making it the turning point of Islamic irfan. Practical Irfan reached its peak although theoretical Irfan was also frequently discussed in their

works. Through Sheikh Akbar and Muhammad ibn Ali Muhy al-Din Arabi (560 – 638 A.H.), theoretical Irfan became independent and about which an independent book was written. Muhy al-Din organized topics in Irfan. He also explained the details of topics in theoretical Irfan which were often seen in the works of previous mystics.[58]

Muhy al-Din Arabi's two important works are Fusas al-Hikam and Futahat Makkiyyah. The latter is like an encyclopedia of theoretical and practical Irfan. Regarding Fusas al-Hikam, Muhy al-Din claimed it to have been bestowed on him by the holy Prophet (s) in a dream.[59]

Muhy al-Din's efforts in Irfan resulted in three achievements: 1. Irfan was drawn near to philosophy and philosophers and mystics became better friends; 2. Discussions on the concept of the perfect man drew Muhy al-Din's school close to the school of Shi'ism and Imamate. 3. Religious law (i.e. all religious beliefs) was drawn near to Irfan.

Muhy al-Din's Irfan was adopted from religious law as he benefited from the verses of the Qur'an and narrations in Futahat Makkiyyah.[60]

After Muhy al-Din, his school of Irfan was developed and promoted through his students, at the top of whom was Muhammad ibn Isl;aq Sadr al-Din Qanawi (603 - 773 A.H.). In the 7th, 8th and 9th centuries, his school reached its height through great personalities such as Abd al-Razzaq Qasani (d. 716 or 730 A.H.), Dawad ibn Mahmud Qayari (d. 751 A.H.), Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Turkah, Sayyid Haydar Amuli (d. 783 A.H.), Ali ibn Muhammad Turkah (d. 835 A.H.), Abd al-Rahman ibn Ahmad Jami (d. 898 A.H.). But from the 10th century A.H. on, theoretical Irfan declined as less researchers in Irfan were available. With Mulla Sadra in the 11th century, Irfan and Islamic thought entered a new era.

Mulla Sadra helped promote its progress which Muhy al-Din had begun in the 7th century A.H. in drawing reason, heart, philosophy, and Irfan to its perfection and full agreement with philosophy.

He enriched the language of philosophy and the usage of precise terminology to simplify matters in Irfan. Mulla Sadra also made understanding theoretical Irfan easy for those after him without having to have embarked on a spiritual journey, even though being on one would prove beneficial in understanding truths in Irfan.[61]

From among Mulla Sadra's other efforts was separating genuine Islamic Irfan from the Sufi movement of his time which was going astray. Mulla Sadra's Asnam al-Jahiliyyah critiqued the Sufi order that did not coincide with Islamic mysticism and instead promoted heterodox beliefs, limiting performance only to the rituals, and paying less attention to religious practices and law.

One of the results of such efforts is differentiation in the meaning of the terms Sufi and 'Arif [mystic], in a way that Sufi and Sufism had negative connotations and they were used to distinguish false movements of Irfan from the genuine Islamic Irfan. Since then, true great mystics did not accept Sufi orders and instead gradually made a certain chain of order like a purified sapling which benefitted Shi'a with great fruits and blessings.

Some luminaries after Mulla Sadra, have been the fruits of the mentioned sapling such as: Mulla Muhsin Feyd Kashani (d. 1091 A.H.), Qac.i Sa'id

Qummi (d. between 1107 and 1100 A.H.), Mulla Ali Nari Mazandarani (d. 1246 A.H.), Mulla Hadi Sabzwari (d. 1289 A.H.), Akhand Mulla Husayn Quli Hamadani (d. 1311 A.H.), Sayyid Ali Aqa Qadi Tabataba'i (d. 1366 A.H.) and Muhammad Taqi Bahjat Famani (d. 1430 A.H.).

Stations and positions in Islamic Irfan

Mystics believe that without passing the stations of true mysticism, one would not reach true irfan. As said before, according to some mystics like Khwajah Abdullah Ansari, there are one hundred stations. In what follows, we refer to some of the major stations along with the outcomes of passing through them as explained by Ayatollah Murtada Mutahhari.[62]

The first station: This is 'desire,' a kind of inclination and liking that befalls a person as a result of thinking, worshipping, or having faith; this occurs when a person's soul moves towards the truth. This desire is in fact a kind of awakeness and incentives will be created in it to enable it to answer the truth.

The second station: Action, self-discipline, and asceticism. The goals of ascetics are three: a) driving out all but God that is actualized through an ascetic life, b) controlling the soul which tempts people towards vices and its control can be achieved through worship and presence of the heart, c) to soften and purify the soul to foster awareness through true love together with reserve and constraint.

The third station: The mystical trances[63] that the traveler experiences. At the beginning, this state is transient, unless the traveler continues his or her asceticism. It is quite possible that a mystic looks at something and then quickly recalls the realm of the Holy. In mystical terminology, it is called 'the time' (waqt).

The fourth station: A continuation of the mystical raptures. Transient attractions turn into continued and ever-following raptures so that the mystic would be familiar with the Truth. In other words, it is as if he has always been together with the Truth and has experienced it with it, while becoming distressed when he distances himself from Him.

The fifth station: The mystic is drawn to seeing the truth while it is no more under his control. He would see God behind anything he sees and he would detach himself from anything other than God. At such a state, his conscience is a clear and unclouded mirror that reflects the Truth. In a way which cannot be described by words, spiritual pleasures cast upon the mystic, which shuttles between two views: a view towards the Truth and a view towards his self [as the mirror]. He would sometimes look into the One reflected in the mirror and sometimes look into the mirror itself which reflects that One.

In the next stage, the mystic becomes [ignored from and] invisible to himself and sees only God. This is when the mystic is connected with the Truth and the mystic's journey from the self to the Truth ends.

After finishing this journey, the mystic makes a journey in the Creator Himself. This means that he becomes familiar with the Divine Names and Attributes and tries to manifest them in himself as much as possible.

In his next journey, the mystic returns to the people without disconnecting himself from the Truth. While he is with the Truth, he turns to people to help and guide them.

Finally, the mystic's last journey is among people of the Truth in which he is with people and among them and tries to direct their affairs in the way that they can be directed towards God.

Notes

1. Lecturer at the Jami'at al-Zahra (a), Qum.

2. Islamic theology

3. Islamic jurisprudence

4. Islamic ethics, spirituality and moral teachings

5. Islamic mysticism

6. 'Abd al-Razzaq, Mustafa, Zamineh-ye Tarikhi-ye Falssafeh-ye Eslami (translated title), trans. by Fathali Akbari, p. 18.

7. Ibn Meytham Bahrani who was a scholar of Kalam in the 8th century AH reports from other Kalam scholars call this discipline as 'principles of religion'. Qawa'id al-Maram fi 'Ilm al-Kalam, p. 20.

8. Taftazani, a Sunni scholar of Kalam, has used this term in Sharh al-Maqasid, p.164.

9. Ibid.

10. Halabi, Ali Asghar, Ilm Kalam dar Iran wa Jahan-e Islam, p. 28.

11. The hadith narrated by Ibn Abi al-'Awja' is among such hadiths. He came to Imam Sadiq (a) and asked: "Do you allow me to enter the science of Kalam?" Imam (a) allowed him. Sadaq, Al-Tawhid, Ch. 36, hadith no. 4.

12. "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice and dispute with them in a manner that is best." Qur'an, (16: 125)

13. Cf. Tabarsi, Ahmad ibn Ali, Al-Ihtijaj, vol. 1, pp. 14 – 89.

14. 'Abd al-Halim, Muhammad, Kalami Qadim, trans. by Mohsen Jahangiri, cited in Tarikh-e Falsafeh-ye Islami, supervised by Sayyid Husayn Nasr and Oliver Leaman, p. 132.

15. Fakhri, Majid, Sayr falsafeh fil Islam, trans. by a group of translators under supervision of Nasrullah Par Javadi, Tehran, Markaz Nashr Daneshgahi, 1994, p.59

However, elsewhere in his book, the author clearly says that emergence of the discipline of Kalam in the second century [A.H] was due to a new questioning spirit in people raised by entering the Greek philosophy in Islamic world. Ibid. p. 221.

16. Shahristani, Muhammad ibn 'Abdulkarim, Al-Milal wa al-Nilhal, vol. 1, p. 24.

17. Cf. Tafsir al-Minar, quoted from Ali Asghar Halabi in Ilm Kalam dar Iran wa Jahan-e Islam, pp. 32 and 33.

18. Ibn Jawzi, Abu al-Faraj, Tilbis Iblis, p. 87.

19. Halabi, Ali Asghar, Ibid., p. 33.

20. Ibid.

21. Fakhr Razi, Tafsir Kabir, vol. 2, p. 96 quoted by Ali Asghar Halabi, ibid., p. 33.

22. Ibn Jawzi, Ibid.

23. Sabiri, Husayn, Tarikh Feraq-e Islami (1), p. 31.

24. The supporters of the imamate of Zayd ibn Ali.

25. The supporters of the imamate of Isma'il ibn Ja'far.

26. Believers in accomplishment of imamate in Imam al-Kazim.

27. Cf. Ash'ari, Abu al-Hasan, Firaq wa Madhahib Kalami, pp. 276 – 277.

28. Cf. Rabbani Gulpayigani, Ali, Firaq wa Madhahib-e Kalami, pp. 276 & 277.

29. Sabiri, Husayn, Tarikh Feraq-e Islami (1), pp. 303 - 305.

30. Misbal; Yazdi, Muhammad Taqi, Amazesh-e Falsafeh, p. 65.

31. Ibid. p. 30.

32. Aristotle and his followers were called "peripatetics" with reference to Aristotle's practice of walking to and fro while teaching

33. Mutahhari, Murtada, Ashna'i ba 'Ulam-e Eslami, vol. 1, p. 145. [trans. as "Understanding Islamic Sciences", ICAS, 2000: London]

34. Sayyid Husayn Nasr and Oliver Leaman, History of Islamic Philosophy trans. by a group of philosophers, vol. 3, p. 39.

35. Ibid., p. 43.

36. Ibid., pp. 110 – 111.

37. He had a discussion with Muhaqqiq Karaki on the issue of the accurate calculation of the direction of Qiblah which resulted in correction of direction of Qiblahs in all mosques in Iran. During that discussion, they entered into a dispute and Shah Tahmasb Safavi backed

Muhaqqiq Karaki and took the title and position of Dashtaki as the "Sadr al-Din" and gave it to Karaki.

38. Mir Burhan al-Din Muhammad Baqir Damad

39. Ibid., pp. 130 – 132.

40. Ibid., p. 165.

41. Byname of Mulla Sadra Shirazi

42. Mutahhari, Murtada, Ashna'i ba 'Ulam-e Eslami, vol. 1, p. 157. [trans. as "Understanding Islamic Sciences", ICAS, 2000: London]

43. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 163.

44. Badawi, 'Abd al-Ral;man, Tarikh al-Tasawwuf al-Islami, p. 32.

45. Ibid., p. 40.

46. Ibid., p. 35.

47. Mutahhari, Murtada, Ashna'i ba 'Ulam-e Eslami, vol. 2,p. 84. [trans. as "Understanding Islamic Sciences", ICAS, 2000: London]

48. Amini Nejad, Ali, Ashna'i ba Majma'eh-ye 'Irfan-e Eslami, p. 62.

49. Muvahhidiyan 'Attar, Ali, Mafham-e Irfan, p. 433.

50. Misbal; Yazdi, Muhammad Taqi, Dar Justujay-e Irfan-e Eslami, p.33.

51. Ibid., p. 38.

52. Yathribi, Sayyid Yahya, Irfan-e Nazari, p. 218.

53. Misbal; Yazdi, ibid.

54. Amini Nejad, Ibid., p. 403.

55. Ibid., p. 87.

56. Ibid., p. 88.

57. Ibid., pp. 99-100

58. Yazdan-Panah, Seyyed Yadullah, Mabani wa Usal Irfan Na'l?ari, p. 26.

59. Muhy al-Din, Fusus al-Ifikam, p. 47.

60. Yazdan-Panah, Ibid., pp. 54 – 56.

61. Ibid. pp. 58-59.

62. Mutahhari, Murtada, Ashna'i ba 'Ulam-e Eslami, vol. 2, p. 124. [trans. as "Understanding Islamic Sciences", ICAS, 2000: London]

63. "About the state of trance, some mystics have said that: Upon the encounter with the heavenly souls, the soul of the mystic receives impacts enabling him to learn about incidences in the future. He would receive such impacts in his dreams while sleeping as well as while he is awake. Whatever he sees while he is asleep are truthful dreams and whatever he sees while he is awake are visionary disclosures and whatever he experiences between sleep and wakefulness is trance." Cf. Sajjadi, Ja'far, Farhang-e Ma'arif Islami, vol. 2, p. 929.

Introduction to Islamic Sciences Part 2: Fiqh and Usul al-fiqh

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Abstract

The previous article - Introduction to Islamic Sciences, Part I - presented some of the most important Islamic sciences that have long been studied in Islamic seminaries, namely theology (kalam), philosophy, mysticism (irfan), and jurisprudence. This article touches upon two subjects: Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence) and Usul of Fiqh (Principles of Fiqh). Fiqh - the profound understanding of religious rulings - is the most comprehensive subject in Islamic sciences. Among the five schools of thought, namely, Ja'fari, Hanafi, Hanbali, Shafi'i, and Maliki, this article delves into Shi'a Ja'fari fiqh, offering a glance into its history, key subjects, and sources.

Its major subjects comprise of acts of worship, contracts, occasions, and rulings, while its sources include the Qur'an, Sunnah, consensus, and reason. Connected with fiqh is the study of Usul of Fiqh (Principles of Fiqh), or the study of rules used in deducing Islamic laws. This will be studied with a brief look into its history and key issues.

3. Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence)

Fiqh is among the broadest and most comprehensive Islamic sciences. There are five major schools in fiqh: Ja'fari, Hanafi, Hanbali, Shafi'i, and Maliki. Ja'fari fiqh is a title given to the school of Ahl al-Bayt's (a) fiqh; the other four schools are Sunni schools of fiqh. Except the mentioned four schools of fiqh, there have been other schools of fiqh among Sunnis which have lost their followers so far, and most Sunni Muslims currently follow the four mentioned schools around the world[1].

The major difference of opinion among the Shi'a and Sunni schools of fiqh revolves around their ways of understanding the Prophet's (s) conduct (Sunnah) and the sources of fiqh. Sunnis have adopted the Prophet's (s) hadiths and conduct from the companions of the Prophet, while the Shi'a have received them from his progeny (a).

On the other hand, Sunni schools of fiqh follow the opinions of some scholars of fiqh (faqihs) of Medina and Iraq, while the Shi'a schools of fiqh follow the opinions of the Imams (a). Among the Shi'a, the Twelvers, who constitute the great majority, follow the opinions of their twelve Imams (a), especially their sixth Imam, Abu Abdullah Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq (a) and due to which they are well-known as Ja'fari[2].

Ja'fari fiqh will be introduced below and the definition, history, issues and sources of fiqh will be explained in the Twelver school of the thought.

Definition of Fiqh

The term 'fiqh' means 'a profound understanding'. In the terminology of Twelver faqihs, fiqh refers to 'the knowledge of secondary rulings[3] of Islam and practical tasks acquired through explanatory sources for them.'[4]

Islamic scholars have categorized Islamic teachings into three: a) beliefs such as subjects concerning the origin of creation, the hereafter,

Prophethood, revelation, the angels, and Imamate; b) morality and educational issues including spiritual virtues such as piety, self-restraint, generosity, courage; as well as vices a person is expected to refrain from such as greed, begrudging, and lying; c) rulings and practical issues which allocate our tasks and practical duties in certain conditions and the quality of their accomplishment during lifetime; i.e. laws and rulings made by God for regulating people's deeds.

The last mentioned category of Islamic teachings is the subject of fiqh, or Islamic jurisprudence, which is the extension of the Islamic law (sharia) explained in the Qur'an often accompanied by tradition (Sunnah) and implemented by the rulings and interpretations of Islamic jurists (fuqaha).

History of Imami Fiqh

History of Imami Fiqh[5]

If we consider fiqh as the knowledge of divine rulings, it has a history as long as the rise of Islam itself. Undoubtedly, the holy Prophet (s) is the primary source for adopting the rulings; he issued rulings through direct contact with divine revelation[6] and thus, his speech is the final word on fiqh. Thus, following his orders are mandatory whether in legislation or in resolving arguments.[7]

The history of Imami [Ja'fari] fiqh after the Prophet (s) are divided into four main periods:

1. The time of the companions [of the Prophet (s)] (until 40 A.H.)

2. The Era of the Followers (tabi'in)[8] and their followers and the followers of their followers until the Minor Occultation (260 A.H.)

3. The time of the Four Agents and the four delegates until the Major Occultation (329 A.H.)[9]

At the time of the Followers (tabi'in), there were seven persons known as the Seven Fiqh Scholars as the authorities to whom people referred after the companions. They are listed as follows in chronological order of their death: 1. 'Urwah ibn Zubayr ibn 'Awwam (d. 74 A.H.) 2. Sa'id ibn Musayyib (d. 91 A.H.) 3. Abu Bakr ibn 'Abd al-Rahman (d. 94 A.H.) 4. Sulayman ibn Yasar (d. 94 A.H.) 5. 'Ubaydallah ibn 'Utbah (d.98 A.H.) 6. Kharijah ibn Zayd (d. 99 A.H.) 7. Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr (d. 101 A.H.).[10]

The infallible Imams (a) approved some of the mentioned faqihs according to the late Kulayni quoted from Imam Sadiq (a): "Sa'id ibn Musayyib, Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, and Abu Khalid Kabuli were reliable and trustworthy in the eyes of Ali ibn al- Husayn (a)."[11]

During the time of the Infallible Imams (a) which continued until the middle of the third century A.H., the major source and the reference of people for their questions in fiqh and practical rulings were the Imams (a) themselves. Still, they would introduce certain persons as faqihs and ask them to answer people's questions in fiqh through ijtihad.[12]

Notable faqihs of this period were 1) Zirah, 2) Ma'ruf ibn Kharbud, 3) Abu Basir Asadi, 4) Barid ibn Mu'awiyah, 5) Muhammad ibn Muslim Ta'ifi, 6) Yunis ibn 'Abd al-Rahman, and 7) Safwan ibn Yahya Biya' Sabiri.[13]

Although some of them wrote on fiqh and their books contained their perspectives, they were mostly relied on hadiths; they would convey

authentic hadiths on any topic and practice it accordingly. Therefore, their books have been compiled in the form of hadith collections.[14]

After the period of the Imams' (a) presence and the beginning of the Minor Occultation when the Shi'as were able to contact the last Imam (a) only through his four special agents, distinguished faqihs emerged. Although ijtihad in fiqh had become more prominent during this period, it was through the indirect contact of the scholars (ulama) with the infallible Imam (a) that the jurists could receive the Imam's (a) guidance and supports in complex issues.

Generally, the history of Twelvers' fiqh is divided in some periods, namely:

1. The beginning of minor Occultation up until the time of Sheikh al-Oa'ifah - Sheikh Ousi (d. 460 A.H.)

2. The era of Sheikh Ousi until the time of 'Allamah Hilli (d. 728 A.H.)

3. The era of 'Allamah Hilli until the time of Aqa Baqir Behbahani (d. 1208 A.H.)

4. The time of Aqa Baqir Behbahani until the present era.[15]

The history of fiqh after the occultation of the Twelfth Imam (a) until the time of Sheikh Ousi can be considered a period of Shi'a fiqh that had two distinctive features: a) categorization of hadiths, and b) development and promotion of ijtihad.[16]

In that period, collections of hadiths based on various topics were categorized thematically according to topics in fiqh whereas previous hadith collections excluded any specific order. The Four Books of Shi'a are the most important heritage of this period which were written with thematic classification.

In addition to the faqihs' great efforts in writing these collections, ijtihad also had a key role in this period to such an extent that some researchers call the faqihs of this period as Ahlul Fatwa as the authorities to whom people referred to for receiving religious permission and knowing their practical duties. Faqihs such as Ali ibn Babiwayh Qummi (d. 329), Ibn Junayd Iskaf1 (d. 381) and Sayyid Murtadha known as 'Alam al-Huda (d. 436).

A great turning point in the history of Shi'a fiqh is the emergence of Sheikh Tusi, one of the few most prominent figures who greatly influenced fiqh for around a century. His progeny were among scholars and faqihs for some generations. He was born in 385 A.H. and immigrated to Baghdad - the center for Islamic culture and sciences - in 408 A.H.

He became the scientific and legal Shi'a authority following his teacher, Sayyid Murtadha. After Sayyid Murtadha's death, Sheikh Tusi's house and library were plundered due to some riots, and as a result, he moved to Najaf where he established a seminary. He passed away in Najaf in 460 A.H., leaving behind prominent works, the most important being Al-Tahdhib and Istibsar, two of the Four Books of Shi'a traditions.

He also left behind Al-Nihayah which has been one of the textbooks for seminary students from long ago, Mabsut, the finest descriptive book in Shi'a fiqh, and Khilaf, a collection of all Shi'a and Sunni scholars' opinions in fiqh.

About a century after he passed away, his ideas were followed by many Shi'a faqihs. The method of ijtihad (individual judgment) which made the essential element of Shi'a thought was the major element of his fiqh fundamentals and thoughts. The situation did not change until the sixth century, when the seminary of Hillah flourished and the Twelvers' fiqh entered a new period of development and progress.

Indeed, Ibn Idris Hilli (543 – 598 A.H.), the great faqih and mujtahid was the one who started that progress. Thanks to his lively mind and outstanding talent, he made ijtihad about many issues in fiqh, without having to think twice as to whether his judgments and justifications contradicted those of previous scholars such as Sheikh Tusi's or not.

In Sara'ir, although he showed utmost respect for Sheikh Tusi, when his opinion differed from Sheikh Tusi, he managed to bring firm justification and judgments and reviewed Sheikh Tusi's works for clarification in some of his works. Sheikh Tusi's opinions were similar to that of Ibn Idris.[17]

The innovation of Ibn Idris in the seventh century was a great turning point in the history of Shi'a fiqh. In that century, tens of critical works in fiqh that were published have been among the most significant references of Shi'a fiqh. The principles of fiqh received great attention from the scholars of that period, and rules and regulations were made for assessing the authenticity of hadiths.

There are many other prominent scholars living in the seventh and eighth centuries such as Najib al-Din ibn Namay-e Hilli(565 – 645 A.H.), Najm al-Din Ja'far ibn Hasan Din, known as Muhaqqiq Hilli(602 – 676 A.H.), the author of Shara' al-Islam fi Masa'il al-Halal wa al-Haram, Jamal al-Din Hasan ibn Yusuf Hilli, known as 'Allamah Hilli (648 – 726 A.H.), the author of Tadhkirah al-Fuqaha' wa Nihayah al-Ahkam fi Ma'rifah al-Ahkam, Muhammad ibn Hassan ibn Yusuf known as Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin (682 – 771 A.H.), the author of Idah al-Fawa'id fi Hall Mushkilat al-Qawa'id, Muhammad ibn Makki 'Amili (734 – 786 A.H.), and the author of Durus al-Shar'iyyah fi fiqh al-Imamiyyah wa al-Lum'ah al- Damishqiyyah.

[After this period] Muhammad Baqir Behbahani (1118 – 1205 A.H.), the great Mujtahid with a high scientific status, revived the Shi'a method of ijtihad. Historians considered his life as the beginning of a new period in Shi'a fiqh.

In the eleventh century, Muhammad Amin Astarabadi[18] founded the Akhbari school of thought. The Akhbaris are Twelver Shi'a Muslims who excluded the use of reasoning in deriving verdicts, and believe the Qur'an and hadith as the only source of law.

Unlike Usulis, Akhbaris do not follow marjas[19] who practiced the modern form of ijtihad. Akhbari's argue that Imams did not allow ijtihad. In al-Fawa'id al-Madaniyyah, Astarabadi expressed that deriving verdicts according to the apparent meaning of the Qur'an is not permitted because of the existence of numerous modifiers and the possibility of imposing one's personal opinion on the Qur'an unless there is a tradition from the Ahlul Bayt (a) in such an interpretation.[20]

Moreover, he considered hadiths from the Ahlul Bayt (a) as the only valid source for knowing speculative (not self-evident) doctrines of religion

including major and minor ones. He also rejected the necessity of agreement between reason and hadith and insisted on necessity of following hadith.

Relying only upon the surface meaning of hadiths and rejecting reasoning as a valid source of understanding, this school of thought seriously threatened Shi'a fiqh relying on ijtihad. The Akhbari thought transformed a progressive phenomenon that could fulfill the needs in any period based on original sources in religion to a static and inoperative element. In such an atmosphere which prevailed over the seminaries of Iraq and Karbala in the twelfth century and was driving out the Usuli[21] faqihs, Muhaqqiq Behbahani rose to defend the fiqh relying on ijtihad and principles of fiqh and fought against the Akhbari school of thought. He expressed that to practice according to the apparent meaning of the Qur'an after considering all the modifiers is different from following one's personal opinions. He wrote a treatise on goodness and badness (husn-o-qubh) according to the intellect and considered the rule of reasoning about Mustaqillat al-Aqli[22] as valid. He also criticized intellect in some hadiths to be speculations such as (deduction) qiyas or istihsan.[23]

Thanks to the scientific endeavors of Muhaqqiq Behbahani, intellectual reasoning returned to fiqh circles of Iraq and was used again in interpretations and judgments in fiqh. The principles of fiqh was once again widely held. Moreover, many Akhbari scholars were convinced by the arguments of Muhaqqiq Behbahani and the Akhbari movement declined in later periods.

After Muhaqqiq Behbahani, fiqh relying on ijtihad and reasoning began its evolutionary movement. It flourished thanks to great publications on principles of fiqh that bloomed in renowned works such as Jawahir al-Kalam.

Sheikh Muhammad Hasan Najafi's fiqh encyclopedia Jawahir al-Kalam fi Sharh Shara'i' al-Islam is among the noble works of Shi'a fiqh that was written in 30 years. Its richness of content manifests the intelligence, perseverance, and endless endeavor of the author. Sheikh Najafi was one of the renowned jurists and finally possessed the absolute authority in the Shi'a world. He passed away in 1266 A.H., contemporary with the beginning years of Nasiruddin Shah's kingdom.

After Sheikh Muhammad Hasan Najafi, the second most distinguished recent Shi'a fiqih is Sheikh Murtadha Ansari. Originally from Dezful, Iran, he was homeschooled by his father until the age of twenty and then left Iraq with him. When his contemporary scholars saw his extraordinary talent, they asked his father not to take Murtadha with himself to Iraq.

After staying in Iraq for five years and benefitting from the lessons of great teachers, he returned to Iran, travelled to different cities, and benefitted from famous teachers throughout his journeys. In 1253 A.H., he returned to Iraq, began teaching, and reached absolute authority after Sheikh Muhammad Hasan Najafi.

There are very few scholars in Shi'a history similar to Sheikh Ansari in precision and insight. He entered the principles of fiqh and fiqh itself into a new era and made new exceptional innovations. His two prominent works, Rasa'il and Makasib, are still taught as textbooks in all seminaries. The

scholars after him were mostly his followers and wrote various commentaries on the margins of his books. He passed away in 1281 A.H. in Najaf.

After Sheikh Ansari, there were great scholars in fiqh and ijtihad such as Muhammad Hasan Shirazi, Mulla Muhammad Kazim Khurasani, Sayyid Abu al-Hassan Isfahani, and Haj Aqa Husayn Burujirdi. They transferred the valuable heritage of fiqh from the Ahlul Bayt to contemporary Shi'a faqihs.

The history of Shi'a fiqh as taught in seminaries from the beginning of the Age of Major Occultation until today have been functioning uninterruptedly to the extent that the lineage of student-teacher relationships has never halted. For any contemporary Shi'a jurist chosen, his chain of teachers can be traced back to the time of the Ahlul Bayt (a). Such an unbroken chain seems to be unavailable in other civilizations and cultures. One might find longer courses in their history, but there have been many interruptions and breaks in them.[24]

Major Subjects in Fiqh

Generally, Islamic teachings are categorized into three categories: beliefs, ethics, and practical rulings. Beliefs include the thoughts and knowledge a Muslim must have; ethical codes are the good attributes every believer must endeavor to achieve; and practical rulings are orders from Allah upon Muslims to organize their lives accordingly.

Fiqh generally includes the practical orders of Islam and thus it describes the rulings Allah has issued upon Muslims. The most important topics in fiqh are classified in four groups: acts of worship, contracts ('uqiid), one-sided obligations (iqa'at), and rulings.[25]

About the reason behind the mentioned classification, it has been stated that topics in fiqh are either related to the hereafter and a person's spiritual life or they are related to a person's worldly life.

The first part is acts of worship; the second part is transactions, which by themselves are divided into two kinds: a) obligations that people have towards one another and b) obligations that are not reciprocal. The former type is divided in two: a) some of them are reciprocal; i.e. the parties are responsible towards the other parties and they are called contracts, and b) some others are when one party takes on obligations, called one-sided obligations.[26]

It is customary now that books of fiqh address the topics in all the four mentioned divisions. However, in the beginning centuries after the hijrah, books were written concerning one or some topics in fiqh. Another point to mention accordingly is that major topics of fiqh which refer to a certain topic are known to faqihs as Books; each chapter is called a 'book' i.e. The Book of Prayer or The Book of the Marriage.

Topics and subtopics of each of the four mentioned divisions in Books of fiqh are as follows:[27]

A) Acts of Worship

a. The Book of Cleansing (concerning Nijasah [impurities /filth] and cleaners. Also, it includes a chapter on the rulings associated with non-Muslims and corpses.)

b. The Book of Prayer: topics on the time of prayer and Qiblah are discussed. Also in the section of Friday congregational prayer, there are discussions on the social status of a faqih, his duties, and the nature of the Islamic government.

c. The Book of Zakah[28]

d. The Book of Khums: a fifth of everyone's outcome taken out from all types of outcomes is considered as khums by Shi'a fiqh and must be paid. Also, rulings concerning non-Muslims living in an Islamic territory are mentioned in this section since one of the cases for which the fifth (khums) is calculated and extracted is the lands sold to non-Muslims. The end of this section includes a discussion including the issues about Anfal, or the properties of an Islamic government including all the dead lands and the natural resources.

e. The Book of Fasting

f. The Book of I'tikaf, or the recommended act of seeking solitude in the major mosque of the city for the purpose of worship. The Book of Hajj, or the pilgrimage to Mecca and performing certain actions and rituals in Dhil Hijji, the last month of the Hijri calendar.

g. The Book of 'Umrah which is the simpler way of pilgrimage to Mecca and can be performed at any time of the year.

h. The Book of Jihad, or holy war, whether offensive or defensive, the latter of which is to defend against external or internal enemies. In this book, the relations between the Islamic government and other non-Islamic governments, the situation of non-Muslims living in the Islamic territories and similar issues are discussed.

i. The Book of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil includes discussions on the associated rulings with this common social duty of all individuals living in an Islamic society.

B) Contracts

a. The Book of Transactions discusses the right and wrong ways of transactions and financial exchanges, illegal transactions, different options of withdrawal [from transactions], rulings about the conditions of contracts and similar issues. This chapter also includes discussions on the ownership and tax system of different types of land in the Islamic territory. The ruling about working for unjust and illegitimate governments, their rights and limits over Muslims treasures (and in the recent sources of fiqh since the last century on, there has been a chapter on Wilayah of Faqih). Issues such as listening to music and financial interest on interest-free loans are discussed in this chapter.

b. The Book of Mortgage

c. The Book of the Bankruptcy: About bankruptcy and the government's responsibilities toward such a person, whose income is not enough for his debts.

d. The Book of [legal] disability, regarding one who has no right to make decision on his property or he cannot sell it as this is applicable for the insane and the underaged children.

e. The Book of Trust: Financial guarantee for persons (bail) are discussed in this chapter.

f. The Book of Agreement: about an agreement between two persons on a particular subject, the details of which are not clear, such as an agreement between a debtor and a creditor on a specific value when the value of debt is not clear.

g. The Book of Partnership

h. The Book of Sponsorship: about an agreement on a partnership in which the capital is provided by one party and business is performed by the other party.

i. The Book of Crop-sharing contract (muzara'ah) and a lease of planation for one crop period (musaqat) is about situations when a landowner gives his land to the peasant in return for a part of product.

j. The Book of Keeping in Trust

k. The Book of Deposit (Keeping someone's property as a trust)

l. The Book of Loaning

m. The Book of Leasing

n. The Book of Delegation (Deputyship)

o. The Book of Devotion and Donation

p. The Book of (temporary) Allocation

q. The Book of Competition and Archery (archery, horse, and camel racing which are the only cases where betting is allowed in Islamic fiqh reserved for contestants).

r. The Book of Conducting Wills

s. The Book of Marriage

C) Occasions

a. The Book of Divorce

b. The Book of Khul' and Mubara'ah (two kinds of divorce in which the wife redeems herself from the marriage contract on certain grounds)

c. The Book of Zihar (When a husband likens his wife to his mother in certain way which charges him with atonement)

d. The Book of Tla' (when a husband swears to abstain from his wife which makes her forbidden for him for a period of more than four months, in which he must either break his vow or have a divorce)

e. The Book of Li'an (which is the husband's swearing at his wife for her unfaithfulness at the presence of the court or the wife's swearing the same way at her husband, the repetition of which action leads to the cancelation of the marriage).

f. The Book of 'Itq (pertaining the laws and rules of manumission of slaves)

g. The Book of Tadbir, Mukatibah, and Istilad (three ways of manumission of slaves. Tadbir becomes possible when the owner of the slave dies. Mukatibah is a contract between the owner and the slave. Istilad is about a female slave who becomes pregnant by her owner and becomes free after her owner dies because of her child.)

h. The Book of Iqrar (issues pertaining the acknowledgement of a person about his debt, his family relationships and as such)

i. The Book of Ju'alah (when a person owes money to another because of his commitment to him)

j. The Book of Tman (about swearing on the great name of God)

k. The Book of Nadhr (undertaking to do something for the sake of God, provided that something specified would not happen or something specified would happen).

D) Rulings

a. The Book of Hunting and Slaughtering

b. The Book of Foods and Drinks

c. The Book of Extortion (Usurpation)

d. The Book of Shuf'ah (pre-emption) (the right of the partner in buying the other part of property)

e. The Book of Reviving Barren Land (to change an arid land to farmable land. This section is about the fiqh of lands and studying the common issues such as water and pasture)

f. The Book of Luqtah (Found Property)

g. The Book of Fara'id (about inheritance computation)

h. The Book of Judgment (about judicial issues)

i. The Book of Testimonies (in cases of bearing witness and testimony)

j. The Book of Penal Laws

k. The Book of Retribution (as of the right for the oppressed to retribution)

l. The Book of Compensations (as blood money, for money, etc.)

4. Sources of Shi'a Fiqh

As it was mentioned in the definition of fiqh, it is the knowledge of drawing practical rulings[29] from original sources. Now let us refer to the authentic sources of the Twelvers' fiqh used for deducing ruling:

The Qur'an

It is the primary source containing the rules in Islam and is agreed upon by all Islamic schools of thought to be the main source for knowing the rulings.[30] In the Qur'an, there are more than 500 verses (about one-thirteenth of the Qur'a) about rulings. Islamic scholars have written numerous books about them, such as Ayat al-Ahkam by Muqaddas Ardebili, a pious Shi'a faqih and mujtahid.

Since early Islam, Muslims referred primarily to the Qur'an, but at the time of the Safavids, the Akhbarids forbade referring to the Qur'an and claimed that only the Prophet (s) and Imams (a) have the right to refer to and interpret it, while others must refer to the sunnah, i.e. narrations and hadiths. Although, the Akhbari movement could expand its ideas through some of the southern cities of Iran and some of the religious cities of Iraq at the beginning, their influence was counteracted by eminent mujtahids and were eventually pushed aside.

Sunnah

The speech and act of the Ahlul Bayt or their acknowledgement of something. Shi'as believe that imamate is in line with prophethood; there is no difference between the sayings and acts of Imams (a) with the Prophet (s). Their only difference lies in the issue of revelation.[31] Therefore, if there is a statement about a ruling in the sayings of the Prophet (s) and Imams (a) or it is proved how they have acted in a certain situation or others have performed religious obligations in front of them and the Prophet (s) or Imams (a) have approved that act verbally or in action, i.e. they maintained silence towards that act, then a faqih can refer to it and allow or disallow an act accordingly.

Consensus

The agreement of scholars on one opinion towards a ruling. In Shi'a fiqh, consensus is not accepted as an independent source for religious rulings, yet it is acceptable once it is the means for understanding the Infallibles' speech; it serves as a proof that either the Prophet (s) or Imams (a) have had the same opinion as of the scholars' who have reached consensus over one issue.

Among Shi'a scholars, Usuli scholars have different methods to achieve the mentioned discovery with certainty. For instance, some scholars assume the consensus of all scholars on the wrong as inadmissible, suggesting that it is incumbent upon the Imam (a) to provoke disagreement between them in order to save the Ummah from going astray. Another group of scholars assume the consensus of all scholars on one issue indicates the existence of a hadith which has been available to those scholars and they could issue a fatwa based on it.[32]

Reason

Shi'a scholars believe that there is full correspondence between religious rulings and reason and that reason supports any Islamic ruling; thus, they always have considered reason a valid means for knowing religion and its rulings in the absence of other sources such as the Qur'an and Sunnah.[33]

However, they distinguished between the issues of Mustaqillat al-Aqli[34] and other issues and they considered reason to be valid only regarding the former issues. Furthermore, in cases where intellectual judgments are the products of sane intellect and not mingled with carnal intentions and desires, the judgment of reason is valid and the intellect can understand an issue independently and without the assistance of religion.

However, sometimes a judgment is based on carnal desires and inclinations, and they prevent reason from having sound judgment. In such cases, those who are not sharp-sighted would consider these judgments as intellectual, while the fact is that such judgments are unreliable and are not the products of sound intellect.[35] Therefore, in religious epistemology, only sound intellect can be used as a source for knowing the religion and its rulings.

5. Usul of Fiqh (Principles of Fiqh)

Principles of Fiqh, briefly known as usul, is "the knowledge of general rules for deducing Islamic rulings from their sources i.e. the Qur'an,

Sunnah, reason, and consensus."[36] The relation between fiqh and usul is like the relation between philosophy and logic.[37]

Fiqh is the profound understanding of Islamic rulings using the basic sources of religion. This discipline is essential since many details of Islamic rulings are not specifically mentioned in the Qur'an or even Sunnah. Thus, the jusrist (fuqaha) come to a judgment about specific cases concerning mukallafs[38] through looking into the primary source using the general and common rules. This in turn requires a new discipline to formulate the rules for jurists to understand jurisprudential issues and eventually deduce the rulings.[39]

Therefore, the study of the principles of jurisprudence is the study of the rules to be used in deducing Islamic laws along with teaching students the correct way of doing so. This discipline enables students to discern the valid method of deducing and extracting the laws of Islam from the sources of jurisprudence by using reason and the proofs provided by God through the Prophet and the Imams.

The History of Usul in Shi'ism

Some believe that usul first emerged through Sunni scholars. Ibn Idris Shafi'i was the founder and first author of usul;[40] however, history reveals that some topics in usul such as orders, prohibitions, and broad and specific issues were discussed among the Shi'a before Shafi'i.

Existence of some treatises[41] which were written by the companions of the Imams (a) proves that they were already involved in usul and that the discipline of usul did not emerge among the Shi'a just after the Occultation of Imam Mahdi (aj).

Thus, issues relating to this discipline existed at the time of Imams (a), particularly Imam Sadiq (a) and Imam Baqir (a), both of whom prepared the grounds for usul by teaching its principles and demonstrating to their students how to infer from the Qur'an and Sunnah.[42]

Sayyid Murtadha: Since the beginning of the Major Occultation, the first scholar who wrote books in usul and whose works were discussed for centuries after him was Sayyid Murtadha 'Allam al-Huda (d. 436A.H). He lived in the fourth and fifth centuries and was Sheikh Mufid's student.[43] His most famous work in usul was Al-Dhari'ah Ila Usul al- Shi'ah.

Sheikh Tusi: After Sayyid Murtadha, Sheikh Abu Ja'far Tusi (d. 460 A.H) - a student of Sayyid Murtadha and Sheikh Mufid - was the leading scholar. His ideas remained very influential for three to four centuries.

He also established the seminary of Najaf. His book in Usul al-fiqh, 'Uddat al-Usul, was very well received. Both Al-Dhari'ah Ila Usul al-Shi'ah and 'Uddat al- Usul were unmatched in their quality as they were the most influential sources of usul until the end of the 5th century.[44]

After Sheikh Tusi, the disciplines of fiqh and usul declined in Shi'a seminaries in the sixth century. Some have argued that this was largely due to the fact that in the Sunni world fiqh and usul al-fiqh had declined and therefore there was no serious debates and discussion happening among the two schools of Islam.[45]

However, the promotion of the Seminary of Hillah and the scientific endeavors of Ibn Idris Hilli(d. 543 – 549 A.H) in the seminary steered Shi'a

fiqh and usul to a new stage of development. Although Ibn Idris did not compose a work on usul, he used the Qur'an, Sunnah, consensus, and reason to eloquently discuss issues in fiqh and usul in his book Sara'ir. He also benefitted from Bara'ah (exemption) and Ihtiyat (precaution) as a means of reasoning from time to time.[46]

In the seventh century, usul was reinvigorated through the scientific quality in the works of Najm al-Din Ja'far ibn Hasan Hilli,[47] the great Shi'a scholar known as Muhaqqiq Hilli. He wrote two books in usul: Ma'arij al-Usul and Nahj al-Wusul ila Ma'rifah al-'Ilm al-Usul, the former of which is now available to us.

Ma'arij al-Usul is a brief yet comprehensive reference for the most important topics in usul. Its other advantages include the separation of issues in logic and kalam from usul, as well as its more developed organization and classification compared to previous references in usul.[48]

After Muhaqqiq Hilli, Shi'a fiqh flourished through his nephew, Jamal al-Din Hasan ibn Yusuf Hilli[49] known as Allamah Hilli. He was the most prolific author in the history of usul; some of his books include Tahdhib al-Wusul ila al-'Ilm al-Usul, Mabadi al-Wusul ila al-'Ilm al- Usul, Nihayah al-Wusul ila al-'Ilm al-Usul, Muntaha al-Wusul ila al-'Ilm al-Kalam wa al-Usul.

Subsequently, usul continued its development in the 10th and 11th centuries, its works including: Tamhid al-Qawa'id written by Zayn al-Din 'Amili[50] (or Shahid al-Thani). In this book, he discussed the related issues after each principle in usul. Doing such a comparative practice, he demonstrated the principles of usul as a prerequisite for fiqh and avoided irrelevant details and discussions.[51]

After Shahid al-Thani, Sheikh Hasan ibn Zayn al-Din,[52] author of Ma'alim, was the most eminent figure known to Shi'a scholars in usul. His Ma'alim al-Din wa Maladh al-Mujtahidin was referred to by researchers and was long being taught in seminaries with commentaries written on it for centuries after him, namely: Hashiyeh,[53] Mulla Salih Mazandarani, Hashiyeh-ye Sultan al-'Ulama and Sheikh Muhammad Taqi Isfahani's Hidayah al-Mustashriqin.

Among the most important historical challenges faced in usul was the emergence of the Akhbari movement in the 11th century. Akhbaris opposed usul considering it as a derivative and misleading knowledge towards the common tradition of the companions in referring to the infallible Imams (a) and following their hadiths.

They considered the commonly known ijtihad[54] as a knowledge that created doubt in that referring to usul to derive practical rules was impermissible. They brought many reasons[55] in rejecting it and wrote many critiques regarding the principles of muijtahids to verify their arguments.[56]

Muhammad Baqir Wahid Behbahani[57] strongly rose up against the Akhbari movement. He had entered the Karbala Seminary when the Akhbari movement was strongly influential. While teaching usul and ijtihad, he also debated and held discussions with Sheikh Yusuf Bahrani, the grand Akhbari scholar of Karbala Seminary.

During these years, he trained outstanding students such as Kashif al-Ghita', Sayyid Ali Oabataba'i and Mirza-ye Qummi through whom he revived usul and emphasized on the need for mujtahids. Among his works are: Marginal Notes (Hashiyeh) on Ma'alim al-Usul, Marginal notes (Hashiyeh) on Mirza-ye Qummi's Qawanin al-Usul, critical marginal notes on Fayd Kashani's Al-Fawa'id al-Usuliyyah, and Al-Fawa'id al-Ha'iriyyah.

In the contemporary centuries, the most influential usul scholar distinguished among others was Sheikh Murtadha Ansari, who brought usul to a new stage and whose opinions are currently taught and discussed in seminaries.

His deep influence gained him the status of being the founder of a new school in usul.[58] All scholars after him followed his school as there has not been any doctrine that drastically changed this department.[59]

In addition to being an usul scholar, he was great in theorization, without ignoring the importance of literature review in research. His works indicate his reviews of the opinions of the previous scholars. He also classified the discussions sequentially and added additional theories, integrated them into a developed one, and afterwards critiqued it.[60]

Sheikh Murtadha Ansari's most important work which includes much of his research and innovations in usul is Fara'id al-Usul, predominantly known as Rasa'il. Most scholars after him followed the example of this book in structure and content, and it has been officially taught in seminaries since then.

Because of its significance, there has been more than eighty Hashiyehs and commentaries written about it,[61] among which are Bahr al-Fawa'id written by Muhammad Hasan Ashtiyani,[62] Durar al-Fawa'id fi Sharh al-Fawa'id written by Mulla Muhammad Kazim Khurasani and Hashiyeh-ye Rasa'il written by Muhammad Kazim Yazdi.[63]

The most renowned student in Sheikh Murtadha Ansari's seminary was Mulla Muhammad Kazim Khurasani[64] who wrote the valued book of Kifayah al-Usul. This book has also been among the collections of works in seminaries from long ago. After the late Mulla Muhammad Kazim Khurasani (known as Akhund Khurasani), there has been an emergence of new perspectives. Currently, its development carries on with the on-going courses and discussions in seminaries that address issues in usul.

Issues in Usul

Issues in usul are classified into four categories:[65]

1. Linguistic Discussions address the application of terms for concepts and the way people use them in both factual and allegorical senses. Other general issues included in this section refer to different models of enjoining good and prohibiting bad, the approach to apply general rules to certain cases ('amm and khass; general and specific), absolute rules and their specific cases (muflaq and muqayyad; absolute and conditioned) and major and minor reasons for rules (meaning and appearance).

2. Intellectual Discussions study the rulings that are not expressly mentioned in the Qur'an or hadiths but are implied logically by them such as a) the correlation between a religious rule and an intellectual one, b) the religious necessity of the prerequisites for a religious obligation, c) the

possibility of being addressed by a command and a prohibition at the same time from two different aspects, and d) the question whether the opposite action to what has been commanded becomes prohibited.

3. Religious Proof (hujjat) refers to an action that fulfils one's duty towards God and discharges him from a religious obligation. This way, the validity of issues such as a khabar al-wahid خبر الواحد .

Although in Arabic the term "wahid" means one, technically it is not meant to only refer to a narration narrated by one person. It refers to every hadith which cannot be classified under mutawatir and furthermore does not have any other evidence to prove that it I definitely from the Prophet (s) or his household (a). Also, the validity of acting according to the apparent meaning of the Qur'an and the validity of other sources of fiqh such as tradition, consensus, and reason is discussed.

4. The Principles of Application (al-usul al-'amaliyyah) study validity and the limits of the validity of practical principles. These practical principles are bara'ah,[66] ihtiyat,[67] takhyir[68] and istishab.[69] These four principles include all cases where the real obligation is not clear.[70]

If an instance has a history and its previous state is clear, then according to istishab (continuance), the latest rule must be followed, otherwise, bara'ah (exemption) suggests that there is no obligation regarding that instance.

However, if the existence of an obligation is obvious, but its quality and limits makes two or more options, then one must fulfil all related options as obligatory about that instance based on ihtiyat until he is certain about the fulfilment of his obligation. This can be applied only if it is possible.

If not, that the person does all of those options. Afterwards, according to takhyir (option), he can choose one of the options to fulfil. In the recent Shi'a Usul of fiqh, these four principles including their application and domain of usage are crucial and have been scrutinized. Many logical and philosophical concepts have been used and through these discussions, many new logical and philosophical ideas emerged for the first time.[71]

Further to the four mentioned types of issues, there is another common chapter in the books of usul about ta'adul[72] and tarajih.[73] When referring to narrations, it frequently occurs that there are various narrations about one subject which contradict each other. A great deal of the efforts of usul scholars is dedicated to collect such hadiths or to find regulations and evidence for rejecting one narration and acting according to another. Some of these regulations are instructions suggested by Imams (a) are known as 'ilajiyyah (remedial) hadiths.'

The upcoming articles in these series continue with the sections entitles "Hadith Studies" and "Qur'anic Sciences."

Notes

1. Tawakkuli, Mohammad Ra'uf, The Four Imams of Sunnah and Jam'ah, p. 9.
2. Tabataba'i, Sayyid Husayn Mudarrisi, Muqaddameh-1 bar Fiqh Shi'a, trans. by Muhammad Asif Fekrat, p. 11.
3. Rulings other than principles of religion.
4. Meshkini, Mirza Ali, Istilahat al-Usul wa Mu'azzam Abhathiha, p.180.

5. Twelvers' fiqh.

6. As an instance, one might refer to the event of asking the Prophet (s) of the ruling on the way of inheriting of Kilalah (brothers and sisters of one's father or mother) which is mentioned in the Surah of Nisa' (Women), ayah no. 176.

7. Subhani, Ja'far, Tarikh fiqh wa fuqaha-ye Imamiyyah, translated by Hassan Jalali, p. 40.

8. This refers to the people who did not see the Prophet (s), but saw some of his companions.

9. Khurasani, Mahmud ibn Abd al-Salam Turbati Shahabi, Adwar Fiqh (Shahabi), vol. 3, p. 64.

10. Ibid., vol. 3, p. 328.

11. Kulayni, Al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 472

12. A method of independent judgment

13. Subhani, Ja'far, Tarikh fiqh wa fuqaha-ye Imamiyyah, translated by Hassan Jalali, p. 71

14. Mutahhari, Murtadha, Ashna'i ba 'Ulum-e Islami, vol. 3, p. 61. [trans. as "Understanding Islamic Sciences," ICAS, 2000: London]

15. Khurasani, ibid., p. 64.

16. Subhani, Ja'far, Adwar al-fiqh al-Imamiyyah, p. 73.

17. Ibid., p. 167.

18. Believing only in Khabar (a tradition or hadith from Imams (a) explaining an issue)

19. scholars as models for imitation.

20. Astarabadi, Muhammad Amin, Fawa'id al-Madaniyyah – Shawahid al-Makkiyyah, p. 269.

21. Relying on principles of fiqh for judgment.

22. Issues understood by intellect independently from religion.

23. Leaving deduction by the faqih or judge and prefer what is easier for people according to the intellect.

24. Mutahhari, Murtadha, Ashna'i ba 'Ulum-e Eslami, vol. 3, p. 85. [trans. as Understanding Islamic Sciences, ICAS, 2000: London].

25. In Al-Marasim al-'Alawiyyah wa al-Ahkam al-Nabawiyyah, Sallar Daylami categorized fiqh in two groups of acts of worship and transactions. Then, he categorized transactions into contracts and rulings. He categorized rulings into penal rulings and other rulings. Muhaqqiq Hilli wrote his book called Shara'i' in four parts of acts of worship, contracts, one-sided obligations and rulings. This approach was accepted by all faqihs after him. Modarrisi, Sayyid Husayn, Muqaddamih-yi bar fiqh Shi'a, trans. by Muhammad Asif Fikrat, p. 21.

26. Iqa'at.

27. Excerpt from Tabataba'i, Sayyid Husayn Mudarrisi, Muqaddameh-i bar Fiqh Shi'a, pp. 25- 28.

28. Obligatory alms on livestock

29. Rulings other than principles of religion

30. Mohammad Ibrahim Jannati, Manabi' Ijtihad az Didigah Madhahib Islami, p. 5.

31. Ibid. p. 75.

32. Meshkini, Ali, Istilahat al-Usul wa Mu'zam Abhathiha, pp. 23 – 24.

33. Ibn Idris, Sara'ir al-Hawi li Tahrir al-Fatawi, p. 19.

34. Intellectual Independents

35. Mohammad Ibrahim Jannati, Manabi' Ijtihad az Didigah Madhahib Islami, p. 243.

36. Sadr, Sayyid Muhammad Baqir, 'Ilm Usul (Marhaleh Awwal wa dowwom), trans. Nasrullah Hekmat, p. 30.

37. Ibid., p. 35.

38. Those for whom worship is obligatory in Islam

39. Sadr, Sayyid Muhammad Baqir, Al-Ma'alim al-Jadidah, Collection of Works no. 8, pp. 19 – 22, (Qom: Congress of the Martyr Sadr)

40. Suyuti, Jalal al-Din, Al-Wasa'il ila Ma'rifah al-Awa'il, p. 117.

41. Treatises such as Al-Alfaz and Al-Alfaz Kayf Tasih written by Hisham ibn Hakam (d. 179 or 199 AH), Ikhtilaf al-Hadith wa Mas'alah 'an Abi al-Hasan Musa ibn Ja'far written by Yunus ibn 'Abd al-Rahman (d. 183 AH).

42. Mir'Imadi, Sayyid Ahmad, ibid., p. 18.

43. a renowned famous Shi'a kalam (theology) scholar who died in 413 A.H

44. Alipur, Mahdi, Dar'amadi bi Tarikh 'Ilm Usul, p. 127.

45. Sadr, Muhammad Baqir, Al-Ma'alim al-Jadidah, pp. 88 – 89

46. 'Alipur, Ibid., p. 148.

47. 602 – 672 AH

48. 48 Ibid. p. 156.

49. 648 – 726 AH

50. 911 – 965 AH

51. Ibid. p. 183.

52. 959 – 1011 AH

53. A type of commentary in the form of notes written in the margins of the original book.

54. In Islamic law: a scholar's independent interpretation or use of reason to derive a rule of divine law from the Qur'an if not precisely described in the Qur'an, hadiths, and scholarly consensus.

55. Cf. Astarabadi, Muhammad Amin, Al-Fawa'id al-Muduniyyah, pp. 90 – 120.

56. Also cf. Mulla Muhsin Fayd Kashani's Al-Usul al-Asliyyah, Sheikh Tusi's Al-Fawa'id al-Tusiyyah and Sheikh Hurr 'Amili's Al-Fusul al-Muhimmah.

57. 1118 – 1205 AH.

58. Aqa Bozorg Tehrani, Al-Dhari'ah, vol. 16, p. 132

59. Mutahhari, Murtadha, Ashna'i ba 'Ulum-e Eslami, vol. 3, p. 23. [trans. as "Understanding Islamic Sciences", ICAS, 2000: London].

60. 'Alipur, Mahdi, Dar'amadi bi Tarikh 'Ilm Usul, p. 366.

61. Aqa Bozorg Tehrani, Al-Dhar1'ah, vol. 6, pp. 152 – 162.

62. 248 – 1319 AH

63. d. 1337 AH

64. d. 1328 AH

65. Al-Muzaffar, Muhammad Reza, Usul ul-Fiqh, p. 8.

66. Principle of exemption.

67. Principle of precaution.

68. Principle of option.

69. Principle of continuance.

70. As it was mentioned in the Twelvers Shi'a definition of Usul, this discipline helps faqih drawing up the rules for specific cases from the four major sources of fiqh. However, it is possible that through ijtihad, a faqih might face cases, for which he cannot reach a judgment out of the four sources of the Qur'an, tradition, consensus, and reason. In such cases, due to the problem of the people in finding the real rule for their specific cases, religion has considered a series of alternative rules and practical tasks for people called "apparent rules."

71. Mudarrisi, Sayyid Hassan, Muqaddameh-yi bar Fiqh-e Shi'a, p. 17.

72. Balance. This refers to equality of both hadiths in their validity

73. Preferences. This refers to preferring one hadith because of having more evidence on its side

Introduction to Islamic Sciences Part 3

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Abstract

The previous article - Introduction to Islamic Sciences, Part II – touched upon two subjects: Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence), and Usul of Fiqh (Principles of Jurisprudence), and offered a glance at its history, key subjects, and sources. This article delves into four additional subjects: Hadith Sciences, Qur'anic Sciences, the Science of Exegesis and the Science of Islamic Ethics.

Hadith studies includes studying its history – such as the phenomenon of forging hadiths and its branches – Rijal, Dirayah al-Hadith, Fiqhul-Hadith, Gharibul-Hadith, Alajul- Hadith, and 'Ilalul-Hadith. Qur'anic sciences include revelation studies, the Qur'an's miraculousness, and the compilation of the Qur'an. This will be followed by a brief study of the history and important methods of exegesis. The paper ends with a brief introduction to Islamic Science of Ethics.

6. Hadith Sciences

After the Glorious Qur'an, the conduct (sunnah) of the noble Prophet(s) and the Infallibles (a) is the main reference for Islamic rulings andbeliefs. The Infallible Imams (a) are the true heirs to the Prophet's (s) knowledge, and their hadiths reflect the Prophet's (s) conduct.

After the Prophet (s) passed away, the necessity of referring to Prophetic hadiths became inevitable to Muslims; thus, since then they began collecting and organizing hadiths. Although narrating and registering hadiths were banned by the first three caliphs and this ban continued in the Sunni world until the reign of Umar ibn Abdul Aziz, Shi'a narrators from the onset were involved in narration and compiling collections of hadiths[1].

The History of Hadith among the Shi'a

The history of hadiths among Shi'a underwent different stages as any other discipline, though two major periods are generally referred to: the period of early scholars of hadith and the period of later scholars.The former period includes the first five centuries. In this period, the Imams (a) initially issued hadiths as their companions and transmitters of hadith wrote them.

Those hadiths were classified and organized by scholars of later centuries and were finally included in the Four Books[2] by the first three scholars of hadith[3]: Sheikh Kulayni, Sheikh Saduq, and Sheikh Tusi.Most hadiths in this period are received from Imam Baqir (a) and Imam Sadiq (a). Tens of thousands of hadiths were accurately recorded from them by their companions and students and transmitted to later scholars.

The later period is when complementary collections of hadiths were compiled by Shi'a scholars. This period began from the early sixth century AH and continued until the time of the contemporary scholars.

In that period, great scholars of hadith emerged who compiled valuable works in hadith. The most eminent scholars of that period were Sheikh Hurr Amili, author of Wasa'il al-Shi'a, Feyd; Kashani, author of Al-Wafi, and

Allamah Majlisi, author of Bihar al-Anwar. Bycomparing the two mentioned periods, it is understood that the hadiths among the Shi'a is the fruit of the former period in one sense, and the works of the later period is a classification, completion, and analysis of the works of the earlier period.

The Phenomenon of Fabricating Hadiths and the Necessity of Knowing Authentic Hadiths.

One of the factors that increased the importance of hadith studies in Islamic sciences was the phenomenon of fabricating hadiths. This was the insertion of forged hadiths fabricated and attributed to the Prophet(s) or any of the Infallibles (a). The history of fabricating hadiths goes back to the time of the Prophet (s) when he (s) introduced the Qur'an as the main factor for finding genuine hadiths.

The issue of recognizing genuine hadiths from fabricated ones became more important during the time of Imam Baqir (a) and Imam Sadiq (a) due to factors such as the expansion of the Islamic world, interest in narrating hadiths, freedom of writing [i.e. recording hadiths] after the period of prohibition, and the activities of Ghulat[4] and Taqiyyah[5].That was when Imam Baqir (a) and Imam Sadiq (a) introduced the examination criteria in recognition of genuine hadiths, most importantly to check the hadiths with the Qur'an and the Prophet's (s) Sunnah[6].

Knowing the mechanisms of recognizing genuine hadiths and removing fabricated hadiths are very important in hadith studies; thus, hadith scholars have long been adopting criteria to distinguish genuine hadith from fabricated hadiths and have written accordingly such as Al-Du'afa' by Bukhari (d. 256 AH), Al-Mawdu'at by Naqqash (d. 414 AH), Al-Mawdu'at by Ibn Jawzi (d. 543 AH), Al-Luma' fi Asma' man wad'a by Suyuti (d. 911 AH) and Tustari's Al-Akhbar al-Dakhilah.

The followings are among the most important criteria introduced by hadith scholars to distinguish fabricated hadiths[7]:

Confession of the transmitter to fabricating hadiths or existence of evidence that can serve as his confession

Contradiction of a hadith with the indisputable and frequently mentioned sunnah of the Prophet (s) and the infallible Imams (a)

Contradiction of a hadith with self-evident intellectual propositions

Contradiction of a hadith with rules agreed by the Islamic Nation(Ummah)

Different Branches of Hadith Studies

The following introduces the different branches of Hadith Studies:

Rijal

This discipline studies the trustworthiness of the transmitters in the chain of the hadith. In The criteria, which approve the transmitters' reports, are also studied. They include: Reliability of the transmitters, their capability in recording hadiths, and their commitment to religious laws. Various of the biographical details such as the dates of births and deaths, or the land and clan of the transmitter are usually not considered. Such issues are discussed in another discipline i.e. Tarajim (Writing Biographies)[8].

Most important works

Shi'a scholars have long been examining the transmitters of hadiths and wrote about them accordingly, although those works are currently unavailable. The oldest related available work is al-Rijal by Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid Barqi (d. 274 AH). Among other

important works in this field are Rijal Kashi written by Muhammad ibn 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-Aziz Kashi contemporary with Sheikh Kulayni, Sheikh Tusi's Al-Fihrist[9], Najashi's Al-Fihrist[10] which mostly introduces Shi'a authors, and Sheikh Tusi's Rijal which introduces and describes the Infallibles' companions and their contemporaries.

Dirayah al-Hadith

This branch of hadith studies a) the methods of recognizing genuine hadiths from fabricated ones and b) the criteria in accepting or rejecting hadiths. The subject matter of this discipline is the narrator of the hadith and the narrated text to see if it can be accepted or not[11].

After hadith scholars know the transmitters of hadiths in Rijal studies, they examine the criteria to evaluate the authenticity of hadiths and classify them accordingly. Early Shi'a scholars classified hadiths into two groups: genuine (sahih) and not genuine (ghayr sahih). They verified genuine hadiths by locating them in the authentic books of hadiths. They also verified the reliability and trustworthiness of each author.

Since the time of Ahmad ibn Tawus[12] or Allamah Hilli[13], Shi'a scholars have been examining the criteria for judging the various hadiths by classifying them according to their transmitters. They defined the hadiths as follows:

Sahihah: The transmitters of a sahih hadith are reliable Twelver Shi'as whose trustworthiness has been expressly confirmed, and the chain of transmitters is unbroken.

Hasanah: The transmitters of this hadith are reliable Twelver Shi'as although their reliability has not been expressly verified. Muwathaqah: The transmitters of this hadith are described to be reliable, although at least one of them is not a Twelver Shi'a[14].

Da'if: Contrary to the above hadiths, this type of hadiths is not acceptable by scholars and cannot be considered as a valid evidence. However, if such a hadith enjoys popularity among the narrators (shuhrat-e riva'i) or popularity among jurists in issuing fatwa accordingly (shuhrat-e fatwa'i) its validity is reinforced, the same way that if scholars have not acted upon a hadith that can be technically authenticated the validity of that hadith will be decreased.

The criteria for weak hadiths are as follows:

a) A person in the chain of the transmitters of the hadith has been accused of lying

b) The transmitter is accused of fabricating hadiths

c) The transmitter is known for making mistakes

d) The transmitter is known for his lewdness

e) The transmitter is unknown or revealed in some sources as reliable and elsewhere as an unreliable[15].

Among the most important works in the branch of hadith studies is Shahid Thani's[16] Al-Ri'ayah Libal al-Bidayah fi 'Ilm al-Dirayah and Sheikh

Bahai's[17] Al-Wajizah. Moreover, great works have been written by contemporary scholars. For example, one may refer to Ja'farSubhani'sUsul al-Hadith waAhkamuhu fi 'Ilm al-Dirayah.

Fiqh al-Hadith

Fiqh al-Hadith studies the interpretation of hadiths. Consequently, commentaries on the Four Books of Shi'a and Sahi Bukhari are written accordingly. Among the most famous commentaries writtenon the Four Books of Shi'a are Mir'at al-Uqul by Allamah Majlisi[18] and Rawdah al-Muttaqin by Muhammad Taqi Majlisi[19].

Gharib al-Hadith

This branch focuses on lexicological studies and hadith terminology. Tahiri's[20] Majma' al-Bahrayn is one of the most important references among the Shi'a scholars.

Ilaj al-Hadith

This branch of hadith studies the contradictions and disagreements between hadiths. One important work in this field is Sheikh Tusi's[21] Istibsar.

Ilal al-Hadith

This branch of hadith analyses the decrease in the validity and authenticity of some hadiths[22].

7. Qur'anic Sciences

Qur'anic sciences are a collection of sciences that are used to understand the Qur'an and respond to misunderstandings regarding its validity and divine origin. It addresses issues such as the revelation of the Qur'an, its order, method of collection, writing it, its recitation, and nasikh[23] and mansukh[24] verses in the Qur'an. This does not include the sciences of the Qur'an regarding sciences such as theology, cosmology, and anthropology. The Qur'anic sciences deal with various issues about the Qur'an from an outsider's perspective[25].

The necessity of studying Qur'anic sciences is that looking through the meaning of the Qur'an is meaningful if first it is proved that the Qur'an is from God. To reach the original message descended upon the Prophet (s), it must be first clarified whether all the recitations (qira'at) versions or some of them lead us to the original message. Regarding the issue of naskh[26], recognition of a mansukh verse from a nasikh verse is also a prerequisite.

Historical Background and Related Works

The first figures who studied issues under this discipline were among the companions of the Prophet (s). Scholars of Qur'anic sciences believe that from among the companions of the Prophet (s), Ali ibn Abi Talib (a) was one of the pioneers in Qur'anic sciences; another eminent figure in the field was Ibn Abbas[27].

However, topics related to Qur'anic sciences were organized in the second century AH. It is important to notice that Qur'anic sciences as understood today are different from what was meant in the early centuries AH. In the past, Qur'anic sciences also included topics discussed in

hermeneutics, but later, due to the variety of topics, hermeneutic issues about the Qur'an became separate from Qur'anic sciences.

Generally, the related works in Qur'anic sciences are classified in four groups:

1. Works written in the early centuries in a specific branch of Qur'anic sciences. Distinguished authors who wrote such works include: Yahya ibn 'Umar (d. 89 AH) who wrote a book regarding the recitations (qira'at) of the Qur'an; Hasan Basri (d. 110 AH), author of Nuzul al-Qur'an wa 'Adad Ay al-Qur'an; Abdullah 'Amir Yahsibi (d. 118 AH), author of IkhtilafMasahif al-Sham wa al-hijaz; Ata ibn Abi MoslimMaysirah al-Khurasani,

the pioneer in collecting rulings of the Qur'an, Aban ibn Taghlab (d. 141 AH); the first author in the science of the recitation (qira'at) of the Qur'an, Khalil ibn Ahmad Farahidi (d. 170 AH); the inventor and author in dots and drawings, Ali ibn Abdullah Sa'di, an ingenious author in the events of revelation (asbab al-nuzul); Muhammad ibn Junayd (d. 281 AH), a scholar in the analogies of the Qur'an and Muhammad ibn Yazid Wasiti (d. 306 or 309 AH), the leading writer on miracles of the Qur'an and author of Miracles of the Qur'an available to use today[28].

2. Books regarding various branches of Qur'anic Sciences.

3. Works by authors who attempted to include all issues related to Qur'anic sciences such as: Al-Burhan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an, the most comprehensive work in Qur'anic sciences by Zarkashi in the eighth century, and Jalal al-Din Suyuti's[29] Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al- Qur'an, one of the most important references in Qur'anic sciences inspired by Al-Burhan.

In recent centuries, valuable works have been published with similar approach in Qur'anic sciences, among of which are: Manahil al-Irfan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an by Muhammad 'Abdul Azim Zarqani, Mabahith fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an by Dr. SubhiSalih, Haqa'iqHammahHawlal-'Ulum al-Qur'an by Sayyid Ja'farMurtadaAmili and Al-Tamhid fi 'Ulum al- Qur'an by Muhammad HadiMa'rifat.

4. Commentaries at the beginning of which exegetes have discussed some issues of the Qur'anic sciences such as Jami' al-Tafasir by RaghibIsfahani, and Ala' al-Rahman by Sheikh Muhammad JavadBalighi, Tafsir by Qurtubi, Tafsir by Ibn Kathir, Tafsir by Tabari and Tafsir Ala' al-Rahman[30].

Significant Topics Studied in Qur'anic Sciences

The following are some of the most fundamental topics in Qur'anic Sciences:

Revelation Studies focuses on the nature of revelation from the viewpoint of the Qur'an, the different types of revelation, and the relation between revelation and infallibility.

Miraculousness of the Qur'an covers issues such as different aspects of its miraculous nature in both its language and content.

Compilation of the Qur'an covers the different ways the Qur'an was descended (either gradually or at once), the order in revelation, and the way of writing the Qur'an and different recitations.

Immunity of the Qur'an studies immunity of the Qur'an from any type of distortion; it also focuses on historical evidence for the frequency of reports

on the singularity of the text of the Qur'an, and answers questions raised by the believers regarding its distortion.

Principles of understanding the Qur'an includes issues such as the possibility of understanding and interpreting the Qur'an, linguistics of the Qur'an, the means and resources for interpreting the Qur'an, the way of distinguishing mubkam[31] verses from mutashabih[32] verses, and understanding nasikh (abrogating) and mansukh (abrogated) verses.

8-The Science of Exegesis

Qur'anic exegesis is amongst the primary Islamic sciences. Through the use of various methods, this science expounds upon the intricate meanings of the Holy Qur'an. These methods may include the use of Qur'anic verses [to shed light upon other verses], the narrations of theInfallibles (a), and the intellect[33]. In this sense, exegesis differs from ta'wil[34].

Through the use of Arabic linguistics and the rational principles of speech and dialogue, exegesis is the study of the apparent meaning of the Qur'an. Ta'wil, on the other hand, considers the hidden aspects and meanings which otherwise cannot be ascertained using these methods[35].

History

The history of this science is rooted in early days of Islam. The Prophet of Islam (s) is the first person, who upon the command of God, was tasked with explaining the divine verses to the masses[36]. After him, the Ahlul Bayt and their companions used the Qur'an and narrations left by the Prophet (s) to expound upon the verses.

In the second century, manuscripts that were translated and the influence of Roman and Iranian ideology amongst the Muslims led to the introduction of intellectual reasoning as another method of approaching Qur'anic exegesis.

The centuries that followed brought about the development of various sciences. Scholars, through the scope of their respective fields, referred to the Qur'an to expand upon the verses that discussed matters pertaining to their area of expertise. This resulted in the emersion of exegeses from perspectives such as Islamic theology (kalam), mysticism, and jurisprudence (fiqh).

The scholars' efforts in collecting the narrations of the Infallibles (a) and the dedication of exegetes in striving to understanding Qur'anic concepts can be witnessed today in the invaluable inheritance they left for seekers of religious knowledge. Of course, benefiting from these works requires a structured course of study and comprehensive research skills.

The Most Important Methods of Exegesis

The most important methods of exegesis include:

A) Interpreting the Qur'an by the Qur'an

In this method, the exegete aims to explain the meaning of the verse by making reference to another verse. In other words, the goal is to create a connection between the two verses to display the hidden meaning of one verse by means of the other.

The most common sub-methods of this approach consist of:

a) Referring mutashabih[37] verses to those which are muhkam[38]

b) Exegesis of absolute (mutlaq) verses in light of conditional (muqayyid)

c) Exegesis of general (am) verses in light of specific (khas) verses

d) Explaining brief (mujmal) verses through the use of those which are expressive (mubayyin) or detailed (mufassal)

e) Determining the application of a verse through the means of other verses

f) Using the context or style of the verse in exegesis

g) Considering similar verses, giving attention to opposing verses and resolving any apparent differences

h) Using other verses to determine Qur'anic expressions,

i) Selecting one meaning over others by considering different Qur'anic verses

j) Collecting abrogating (nasikh) and abrogated (mansukh) verses

The following are among the most important books in which the method of explaining the Qur'an by means of the Qur'an has been extensively used:

Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an by 'Allamah Tabataba'i (1321-1402 AH)

Al-Qur'an fi Tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an by Muhammad Ñadiq Tehrani (a contemporary exegete)

Ala' al-Rahman fi Tafsir al-Qur'an by Shaykh Muhammad Jawad Balaghi[39].

B) Interpreting the Qur'an by Hadiths

The method of exegeses through narrations is one of the oldest and most common methods of Qur'anic exegesis. In this method, to interpret the meaning of the verses, the exegete makes use of the hadiths of the Prophet (s) and the Ahlul Bayt (a). The use of this method began during the time of the Prophet (s) and continued throughout the lives of the Ahlul Bayt (a) and their companions. Ultimately, these works were gathered into valuable compilations of exegesis.

In brief, the application of narrations in Qur'anic exegesis is described as follows: Interpretation of the words within a verse, applying verses to different cases, expressing the intricate details and conditions of verses pertaining to Islamic law, explaining abrogating (nasikh) andabrogated (mansukh) verses, and stating the conditions in which verses were revealed along with their inner meaning and ta'wil.

The following are the most important and renowned Shi'a narration-based exegesis:

Tafsir al-Qummi by Ali ibn Ibrahim ibn HashimQummi (born 307 AH)

Tafsir al-'Ayyashi by Abu Nadr Muhammad ibn 'AyyashSamarqandi

Tafsir al-Safi by MullaMuhsinFaydKashani (1007-1091 AH)

-Al-Burhan by Sayyid HashimHusayniBahrani (born 1107 AH)

-TafsirNur al-Thaqalayn by 'Ali ibn Jum'ah 'ArusiHuwayzi (born 1112 AH)

C) Intellectual Interpretation of the Qur'an

The intellectual approach to exegesis – often titled the ijtihadi approach – holds a special place amongst the methods of exegesis. In this method,

intellectual reasoning in the form of logical evidence (qara'in) and proofs are used to gather verses and narrations. For example, logic dictates that when the Qur'an states, "the hand of Allah is above their hands" (48:10), what is intended is certainly not a hand as a limb with five fingers.

The clear reason is that God is not a material being who is limited in creation or capable of being annihilated. He is infinite and immortal by nature. He possesses no beginning or end in His existence. Bearing this in mind, we understand verse 48:10 to mean that the power of God is above all else.

Though the companions of the Prophet (s) and the next generation (tabi'in) held narrations pertaining to exegesis in high esteem, they also considered reflection, deliberation, and intellectual reasoning to be the foundation of understanding verses. They looked at narrations as one of the prerequisites in understanding the Qur'an. Of course, incases where narrations did not refer to the meaning of a particular verse, they used the intellect to discover the meanings of the Qur'an[40].

Among the Shi'a books of exegesis that implement the intellectual approach one may refer to:

-al-Tibyan by Shaykh al-Tusi

-Majma' al-Bayan by Tabarsi

-al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an by 'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i

9) The Science of Islamic Ethics

In the classical books of Islamic seminaries, the science of ethics ('ilm al-akhlaq) has been presented as an independent field of study. This science addresses the positive and negative qualities pertaining to man's self (nafs) and the actions associated with it. Furthermore, it explains how one should go about developing these positive attributes and abstaining from those that are negative in their nature. In turn, it is intended to lead a person to becoming inclined towards performing good deeds and distancing oneself from bad deeds[41].

That having been said, the Islamic concept of ethics, as taught by the Qur'an and the Ahlul Bayt (a), is associated with two different meanings: One refers to the fundamental questions posed by the ethical sciences, which is commonly discussed today in the field of the philosophical ethics; the other defines ethics as a means of developing man's qualities and traits to render him a "complete" human being.

Thus, this path seeks to discover both the theoretical and practical means through which a person can reach the highest of spiritual states[42]. Bearing these definitions in mind, Islamic ethics pertains to discussions within the fields of philosophical ethics, theoretical ethics, and practical ethics.

Major Characteristics of the Islamic Ethical System

The most important qualities pertaining to the field of Islamic ethics include:

A) The Close Link between Ethics and One's World View

In Islamic ethics, ethical values influence how a person advances upon the path toward true perfection. In this system of ethics, to reach perfection

lies in gaining proximity to God and recognizing His majestic Essence. This can only be achieved through servitude to Him. For this reason, Islamic ethics considers morality and purification of the self as keys to earning the highest levels of happiness. This happiness, of course, lies in gaining proximity to God and ascending to the eminent stages of humanity[43].

B) Comprehensive System of Values

The Islamic system of values stands in contrast to many other systems of ethics in terms of its comprehensiveness. While many schools of thought solely limit themselves to topics concerning social ethics, Islam discusses ethical values in a number of arenas. Included in this field are topics pertaining to man's association with his Lord, other forms of creation, himself, his family, society, and even matters pertaining to international relations. Since these various matters constitute the different aspects of man's life, each requires special consideration[44].

C) Taking into Account All Dimensions of Man

A point of criticism often made against many schools of ethics – including but not limited to emotivism, utilitarianism, conscious-centric ethics, power-centric ethics – is that they often consider only one dimension of man's existence while ignoring other aspects. Meanwhile, Islam's theocentric system of ethics considers the various aspects of man's being – physical, mental and spiritual – and thus, brings into the fold all positive qualities found within these different schools.

Therefore, if someone reaches the highest stage of ethical perfection (i.e. proximity toward God), they will in turn reach an immortal existence, the purest form of everlasting pleasure, and the most complete form of strength[45].

Different Methods in Islamic Ethics

Muslim scholars and experts within the field of ethics have generally adopted one of the following methodological approaches in their ethical studies[46].

Philosophical Ethics

This approach is heavily influenced by the concept of middle position or moderation when approaching the matter of ethics. Immoderation is considered an undesirable moral quality. This approach studies different human faculties, along with the concepts of moderation and immoderation, as its main point of focus in all ethical discussions.

The following books have been written using this method: Tahdhib al-Akhlaq and Taharah al-A'raq by Ibn Miskawayh, Akhlaq al-Nasiri by Khajah Nasir al-Din Tusi, and to an extent Jami' al-Sa'adat by Muhammad Mahdi Naraqi.

The Principles of Anthropology in Philosophical Ethics

Principle One: The human soul has three distinct faculties: shahawiyyah (the faculty of desire or appetites), ghadabiyyah (the faculty of anger), and natiqiyyah (the faculty of intellect).

Principle Two: These three faculties interact with and are influenced by one another.

Principle Three: The quality that renders man distinct from other forms of creations is his awareness and ability to foster wisdom.

Principle Four: The perfection of each being is dependent on their ability to completely manifest and perfect each of their distinctive attributes. It is these attributes that separate that being from other forms of creation, thus, granting them a separate identity. A person's ability to reach perfection also depends on this process; before attaining perfection, he must first completely manifest the trait that distinguishes him from others – that trait being the faculty of intellect[47].

Mystical Ethics

This approach to ethics, which has generally been adopted by mystics, primarily focuses on the concepts of ethical development and spiritual wayfaring. In this method, striving against the desires of one's self is considered the means of attaining ethical perfection. For an individual embarking upon this path, the various stages – leading to the ultimate goal of attaining perfection – are specified.

Mystics believe that in the same manner in which the world is comprised of a manifest reality (alam al-shahadah) and a hidden reality (alam al-ghayb), man too is a being composed of both manifest and hidden realities. They consider the hidden aspect of man's existence capable of maturing through ten stages. When a person is born, they possess the lowest and most manifest degree of humanity – otherwise known as the animalistic self.

However, over time and as that individual develops in terms of their intellect, other aspects of their existence begin to display themselves. Mystics state that in order to acquire true perfection and prosperity, one must delve deep within the inner-most levels of their hidden self. In doing so, these stages of development can be reached through means of the potentials that exist intrinsically within man's self.

In each stage of development, the spiritual wayfarer must meet certain requirements in order to advance further. These requirements, in addition to the basic principles of ethics, may necessitate enduring spiritual trials and tribulations along with adhering to particular rules and ethics[48].

The most renowned work based on this approach within the field of Islamic ethics is the book Manazil al-Sa'irin by Khajah 'Abdullah Ansari. This book contains 100 subjects, most of which address the topic of man's relationship with his Lord. Meanwhile, some subjects concerned with the topic of "individual ethics" expound upon that specific topic or explain the various stages of ethics. In addition, parts of this book touch briefly upon the topic of social ethics[49].

Scripture Based Ethics

This refers to works containing compilations of narrations from the Infallibles (a) concerning the topic of ethics. These books are solely collections of narrations and may, at the very most, categorize the narrations contained within based on their subject. This approach relays ethical points that have been revealed in the Qur'an and traditions of the Infallibles (a) without giving heed to the order or association between the points presented. Instead of explaining the foundations of ethical concepts or

guiding one to their practical implementation, this method focuses primarily on describing ethical concepts[50].

The following works have been written using this approach:

-Musadaqat al-Ikhwan by Shaykh Saduq

-Ihya' al-'Ulum by Muhammad Ghazali

-Mishkat al-Anwar by Tabarsi, Al-Mahajjat al-Bayda by FaydKashani

-Ghurar al-Hikam by 'Abd al-Wahid Amudi

General Characteristics of Scripture-Based Works on Ethics

1. Islamic ethics and Islamic etiquettes and manners (adab) are discussed together.

2. The volume of these works is generally greater than those based on other schools of ethics. Furthermore, books of traditional ethics tend to cover more subjects than those written in the philosophical or gnostic approach.

3. Generally speaking, the contents of these books are not arranged using a specific method of organization. Therefore, the narrations presented on a given topic may not necessarily be uniform in their level or may not be intended for a particular audience[51].

The next part of this series is on the historical origins of the most important religious seminaries in the Shi'a world.

Notes

1. Ma'arif Majid, Tarikh Umumi Hadith.

2. The four most important Shi'a reference books of hadiths.

3. A hadith scholar and/or transmitter.

4. Literary meaning: exaggerators. Referring to those exaggerating about the Imams (a)

5. The principle of preservation, which suggests hiding one's belief in case of danger, or other reasons.

6. Rafi' i Muhammadi, Nasir, Darsnameh Vaz hadith, p. 302.

7. Ibid.. pp. 195-259.

8. Jamshidi, Asadullah, Tarikh Hadith, p. 374

9. Contains information about written works of Shi'a and also names of more than 900 Shi'a authors.

10. D. 450 AH

11. Shahid Thani, Al-Ri'ayah Lihal, al-Bidayah fi 'Ilm al-Dirayah, p. 51.

12. D. 673 AH

13. D. 726 AH

14. Tarikh Hadith, pp. 390-392.

15. Rabbani, Mohammad Hasan, Danesh Dirayah al-Hadith, p. 98

16. 911-965 AH

17. 935-1030 AH

18. d. 1111 AH

19. d. 1070 AH

20. 907-1085 AH

21. d. 460 AH

22. Rabbani, Mohammad Hasan, Ibid, pp. 13-14.

23. Those ayahs which bring a new rule over a previous rule.

24. The ayahs, rule of which have been abrogated by other ayahs.

25. CF. Eskandarloo, Mohammad Javad, Ulum Qur'ani (excerpting from speech scripts of Ayatullah Ma'rifat's classes), p. 12.

26. Abrogation of a rule by bringing a new rule over a previous rule in a later descended ayah.

27. Zarkashi, Mohammad ibn Bahadur, Al-Burhan fi Ulum al-Qur'an, vol. 2, p. 87.

28. Javan Arasteh, Husayn, Darsnameh Ulum Qur'ani, p. 32.

29. d. 911 AH

30. Ibid.. p. 22.

31. Verses having explicit meaning

32. Verses having implicit meaning

33. Ridayi Isfahani, Mohammad Ali, Methods and Directions of Qur'anic Exegesis.

34. Derived from the root word 'awwala', the word ta'wil literally means to 'explain' or 'interpret'. As an expression, it is defined as the skill used in expounding upon the inner and concealed meanings of the Qur'an.

35. Rajabi, Mahmud, The Method of Qur'anic Exegesis, Page 20.

36. "…{and sent them} with manifest proofs and scriptures. We have sent down the reminder to you so that you may clarify for the people that which has been sent down to them, so that they may reflect." Chapter Nahl, Verse 44.

37. These are the verses which can possess many meanings according to the rules of the Arabic language. Therefore, assigning meanings to these verses requires thorough thinking so that an appropriate understanding is derived from them.

38. These are the verses which possess only one meaning according to the rules of the Arabic language. Therefore, the meanings of these verses are clearly known.

39. Born in 1352 AH.

40. Amid Zanjani, Abbas Ali, The Foundations and Methods of Qur'anic Exegesis, p. 331.

41. Tusi, Khajah Nasir al-Din, Ethics of Nasir, Page 48.

42. Ahmad Daylami and Mas'ud Adhar Bayjani, Islamic Ethics (second edition), p. 26.

43. Misbah Yazdi, Ethics in the Qur'an, Research and Composition: Mohammad Husayn Iskandari, Page 95.

44. Misbah Yazdi, Mohammad Taqi, Critique and Assessment of Ethical Schools, Research and Compostion: Ahmad Husayn Sharifi, Page 352.

45. Ibid.. p. 354.

46. Ahmad Daylami and Mas'ud Adhar Bayjani, Islamic Ethics (second edition), pp. 22-25.

47. Mahdi Ahmad poor and Others, the Book of Understanding Islamic Ethics, Page 30.

48. Ibid.. p. 45.

49. Ibid.. pp. 198-199.

50. Ahmad Daylami and Mas'ud Àdhar bayjani, Islamic Ethics (second edition), pp. 22-25.

51. Ibid.. p. 57.