Imitation in Islamic Jurisprudence and Its Generational Impact

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Abstract

In this academic paper, the laws of imitation in Islam are studied closely, examining the meaning of imitation, both linguistically and according to Sharia. Also, it discussed when imitation is allowed and when it is forbidden by religious scholars. Furthermore, the study illustrated when the public must resort to independent reasoning instead of imitating a verdict. Finally, the study is concluded with a discussion on the generational impact of imitation. The views of fundamentalists regarding imitation have been collected for the purpose of this study, and are compared according to their admissible evidence. The study additionally highlighted some of the negative effects imitation has on young people today.

Keywords: Imitation, Principles of Imitation, Principles for Imitating Scholars, Consequences of Imitation

Introduction

Praise and Gratitude be to Allah, the lord of the universe, and prayers and peace upon the most noble of the prophets and messengers, Muhammad bin Abdullah and upon his family and his companions and whoever follows their way until the Day of Judgment. God blessed us by this great religion and glorified us by its teachings. God bestowed on us the goods of life, and this goodness is not limited to finance or belongings. This goodness is also health. It is understanding and the gift of awareness and reasoning. It has several forms. For example, many have been blessed with financial security rather than understanding and awareness. While others have been blessed with a deeper understanding of things and clearer reasoning, instead of finance.

Keeping this in mind, we ask ourselves, are all people equipped with the needed understanding and knowledge to study the Sharia rulings and its evidences? Are all people able to deduct verdicts from Islamic teachings? And will they be able to integrate opposing texts and point of views in their verdicts? The answer to these questions is that there are two kinds of people: There is the "Mujtahid" or the Scholar, whom God gave mental abilities to better understand Islamic teachings and evidences. And there is the "Muqallid" or the Imitator, whom is not equipped to cast judgment. Logical reasoning, or "Ijtihad", needs a certain type of person; therefore not everyone can be a Scholar. Therefore, those who cannot deduct verdicts from teachings and cast judgments must imitate the verdicts of those who can. But the questions present themselves: Is imitation valid in all matters and situations? And is it acceptable from all people? Or are there conditions to imitation?

Also, should the "Muqallid", the Imitator, apply reasoning and deduct verdicts on some matters? If so, what are those matters? Additionally, are there any negative consequences to imitation on our generation?

Therefore I classified this research to the following:

1) Chapter One: The Definition of Imitation
A- *First Section*: The Linguistic Definition of Imitation
B- *Second Section:* The Shari'a Definition of Imitation
2) Chapter Two: Principles of Imitation
A- *First Section*: In Regards to Beliefs.
B- *Second Section:* In Regards to Practical Aspects of Religion.
C- *Third Section:* Picking Who to Imitate
3) Chapter Three: Principles for Imitating Scholars
4) Chapter Four: Generational Consequences of Imitation

I collected the scholars' teachings in these matters along with the opposing views, and their arguments. And by closely examining today's generation, I have attempted to highlight the negative consequences of imitation. May God grant me the needed rationality in this subject, as he is the benefactor and the guider to the rightful path.

Chapter One: The Definition of Imitation

Imitation is a fundamentalist term. Therefore we must come to know and draw the meaning of it from its teachings, in order to fully understand it both linguistically and according to Shari'a, as is discussed in the following sections.

A- First Section: The Linguistic Definition of Imitation

Imitation "تقليد" – pronounced *Taqleed*- has many meanings. The triliteral root qāflāmdāl
(ق ل د) refers to something attached to the other, as in tied, it also refers to luck(1). However the word has many other meanings, such as:
-"He poured (قلد) the water in the basin" here it means he collected it. And "The sea overcame (أقلد) many creature"here the word means "joined" as in drowned the creatures, by enclosing them in its the depths.
- "Al Muqallid (المقلّد)" refers to a key shaped as a sickle. Also the word "Al Iqleed (الإقليد)" means key, and the plural form is "Aqaleed (أقاليد)".
- "Al Maqaleed (المقاليد)" means reserve or space, as in the following Quranic verse"To Him belong the keys (مقاليد) of the heavens and the earth", *Surat Az-Zumar, Verse 63*. "Al Maqaleed"can also mean keys. (2)
- "Al Qulada (القلادة)" here meaning necklace.
- "And he imitated (قلد) the work" means he replicated it, following previous examples in religion or business.
- "Al Taqleed (التقليد)" may refer to jewelry, a necklace worn by women. Or it may be the wearing of a badge of honor, as the word not only refers to the neck area, but it refers to the chest area as well along with the shoulder area. In a negative sense, the word can be used describing the placing of shackles around the necks of prisoners and captives. (3)

B- Second Section: The Shari'a Definition of Imitation

Scholars and fundamentalists differ when it comes to the definition of imitation. However, these definitions are all related to the linguistic meaning of the word, as the Muqallid -the Imitator - simply accepts other's truths without looking deeper for further evidence, as he "imitates" behaviors and verdicts. But imitating other's verdicts and accepting their evidence at some degree may be invalid, because there is no absolute undeniable evidence except in the words of Allah and the Prophet Mohammad, therefore anything else is open to discussion and rejection. This is the way of our ancestors, and of those who follow them, till doomsday.

Some definitions of imitation are as following:

AlJarajani defines imitation by saying "It's the others rhetoric, without evidence nor proof".(4)
He also mentions another definition of the word which confirms the linguistic meaning of Imitation. He says "Imitation is someone acting based on another's saying and belief, without examining the evidence. It is committing to another's belief without thought, wearing the ideal as a bounding necklace".(5)
While Ibn Qudamah explained "It is accepting the word of the other without evidence." (6)
Also, Abu Ishaq Al Shiraz defined imitation as "The acceptance of a truth without proof." (7)

From the above definitions, it is clear to us that imitation is the acceptance of the other's saying, without taking into consideration the evidence which he relied on to reach his conclusion. This meaning is in accordance with the linguistic definition of imitation, as the imitator follows others' beliefs, binding him in his religion. However, the imitator follows the teachings and beliefs of those he thinks are worthy of following, and he does not imitate in his religion, unless he thinks that the others are competent and knowledgeable.

However, as it has been discussed, the imitator has no proof or evidence, he simply follows a teaching and a belief. Is this acceptable in all matters? Does Islam allow imitation with all issues?
This will be further examined in the next chapter.

Chapter Two: Principles of Imitation

There are many issues that arise in the life of a Muslim, and these issues require appropriate answers. Naturally, not every Muslim is able to find an answer to each problem and situation by his own, as the average person does not possess the needed abilities to do so. Instead, they will resort to jurists, and then imitate their teachings and reasoning. However in some instances, this occurs with matters of faith and belief, or other Shari'a matters. Is imitation valid with these kinds of issues?
This will be discussed in the following sections.

A- First Section: In Regards to Belief

A Muslim's belief is the basis of his faith. If his belief is intact and whole, so is his faith. Furthermore, whoever has a sound and solid belief also has the ability to distinguish between what is wrong and right. He will inspect all situations with his mind and heart, studying these issues in regards to his deep-felt religion. The matters of faith and belief are of extreme importance as they have a personal and intimate subjectivity. One must ask himself, is imitating allowed in such matters? Jurists have disagreed on whether imitation is allowed or not in fundamentalist, belief-related matters.

We have two opposing opinions regarding this:

The First Opinion:

The majority of scholars and jurists don't allow imitation in fundamentalist, belief-related matters. (8)

Some of their sayings are listed below:

-Imam Ahmad said "Imitation is forbidden when it comes to matters of God, with issues relating to God's sole existence and also in matters of the Prophet and his message." Abu Al Khattab regarded this as a jurist's saying, while his companions regarded it as the belief of the majority. (9)
-"Imitation is invalid in the knowing of God, His Oneness, and the authenticity of the Prophet's message." (10)

They deducted the following meanings:

1. Contemplation is an obligation. With imitation, this obligation is overshadowed. The following Quranic verse explains the importance of contemplating the universe for example "Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the [great] ships which sail through the sea with that which benefits people, and what Allah has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every [kind of] moving creature, and [His] directing of the winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and the earth are signs for a people who use reason." Surat Al Baqarah, Verse 164.Therefore, the obligation of a Muslim is to contemplate and reflect on the creations of God and the Holy Quran, enriching and solidifying his faith.

2. The consensus is that it's a necessity to know God, and to distinguish between what is allowed and what is forbidden. However, with imitation, there is a chance that the person practicing it doesn't hold the necessary knowledge and is simply replicating a behavior and thought process. If this is the case, then it is an invalid approach, for the following reasons: Firstly, a "Mufti" or a Scholar is fallible. It's not an obligation to follow the words and beliefs of whoever is fallible. Therefore, if it's not an obligation to follow a set of words and beliefs, then it is of no use to us. Secondly, if imitating benefitted us, we would acquire knowledge and understanding by simply replicating and imitating others.

But it's impossible as the ancients had no one to originally imitate, therefore it's impossible to link past and modern times via this approach. Thirdly, if imitating was as useful as some claim, there wouldn't be such controversy in this matter.

3. Imitation has a history of disreputation in Islam, as it is not permissible to imitate except in general matters presented by a jurist. However, there is no evidence on the permissibility of imitation in matters of belief and faith ,therefore imitation is prone to disrepute, as explained in the following Quranic verse "And similarly, We did not send before you any warner into a city except that its affluent said: Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and we are, in their footsteps, following." Surat Az-Zukhruf, verse 23. (11)

This verse indicated that it's forbidden to imitate, because the mind leads to deeper understanding and belief, and everyone who has a functional mind should contemplate, discuss and reflect instead of imitate. (12) Ibn Qayyim protracts in his book "E'lam Al Mawqi'ain" about dispraising imitation in 80 aspects, providing the evidence to support his claim, and explaining his replies to who opposes his views.

The imitation Ibn Qayyim dispraised is the imitation of belief, however the imitation he permits is imitating a rightful jurist, in which case it is praiseworthy and rewarded, and not viewed as a misdeed. We can understand this from his saying "God dispraises who refuses God's revelation, and imitates their ancestors instead. This imitation is forbidden and a source of disrepute. However, who imitates in God's words and revelation in matters which he cannot understand -imitating whom has more knowledge than him - then his imitation is praiseworthy and rewarded and not considered a misdeed". (13)

From his perspective, there are three kinds of forbidden and disrepute kinds of imitations. The first one is the refusal of God's revelation and message to imitate the ancestors. The second is imitating those who aren't competent nor trustworthy. The third is blindly imitating without logical reasoning nor evidence.

God dispraises these three kinds of imitation in the following Quranic verses:

"And when it is said to them, "Follow what Allah has revealed," they say, "Rather, we will follow that which we found our fathers doing." Even though their fathers understood nothing, nor were they guided?" Surat Al Baqarah, Verse 170.
"And similarly, We did not send before you any warner into a city except that its affluent said: Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and we are, in their footsteps, following." Surat Azzukhruf, Verse 23.
"And when it is said to them, "Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger," they say, "Sufficient for us is that upon which we found our fathers." Even though their fathers knew nothing, nor were they guided?" Surat Al Maidah, Verse 104.

In the Holy Quran, we can find many verses dispraising whoever blindly follows their ancestors, leaving God's true message. (14)

4. When imitating belief, you face a dilemma: are you imitating someone who is infallible? Or someone who could be mistaken? If he is infallible, what is the evidence supporting this? If he isn't infallible, then there is doubt is his belief and verdicts, why imitate him?(15)
5. If the imitator depends on steadfastness in his imitation, then what is the difference between the imitator's steadfastness and that of the Jewish's and Christian's? And what is
6. Difference between the honesty of who he imitates and his opponents'? (16)
7. It is the consensus that knowing God cannot be by imitation, as the one being imitated could lie. (17)
8. Ibn Al Masoud said "A man shouldnever imitate in religion, if he believes then so be it, and if he doesn't, then he doesn't." (18)
9. Responsible is he who knows of the fundamentalist issues related to belief, and the imitator is no jurist because he allows error by who he is imitating. And there is a contradiction here, because you can't imitate in matters such as fasting and prayer, without understanding the essences of these teachings. If the imitator imitated an honest jurist, then he must imitate in all that is good. If he imitates in how to acquire knowledge, then he must imitate in learning the principles of jurisprudence. (19)

The Second Opinion:

It is permissible to imitate in issues related to beliefs. This was discussed by Obeid Allah Bin al Hassan AlAnbari(20), Al Hashwya(21) and Al Jalal Al Helay(22).

I have never seen a past or present jurist mention what Al Jalal AlHelay said about not differentiating between the imitation of belief and the imitation of other aspects of religion. However, by reviewing the interpretation book "*Rouh Al Ma'ani*" and by contemplating the following Quranic verse "*Ask the people of the message if you do not know.*" Surat An-Nahil, verse 43. I found this to coax imitation of the rightful jurist, and its true in this case that there is no differentiation between belief-related and none-belief related issues. (23)

The followers of this train of thought have come to these conclusions:

1. Contemplation is not obligatory, for the following reasons. Firstly, it is forbidden for the mind to wander in the Quran and the Sunnah, as illustrated by the following Quranic verse "No one disputes concerning the signs of Allah except those who disbelieve" Surat Al Ghafir, verse 4. Also in the Sunnah it is said that the Prophet – Peace be Upon him – stopped his companions from discussing matters of destiny. If Contemplation was allowed, he wouldn't have stopped them.
2. There aren't any accounts of the Prophet's companions arguing, discussing or
3. Contemplating issues. If that was the case, and contemplating was favored, the behavior would have been preserved for good measure.
4. There is no account of the Prophet, nor of his companions or followers till this day that they denied the public contemplation, however they ruled by God's word, believing fully in what was given to them.
5. If contemplating the matters of god is obligatory, then this should be an obligation to those who know and to the ignorant: in the first case, it is obvious that he will know without contemplating, as he is already knowledgeable. However, in the second case, ignorance is essential to allow contemplation in matters of God.
6. Contemplation is prone to disrepute as it causes conflict of opinions and the wandering to an unknown path, unlike imitation. Therefore, it is better to imitate than to freely contemplate.
7. The evidences relating to fundamentalist issues are much more mysterious than the evidences relating to the more basic religious rituals. So if it is allowed to imitate in the more basic religious matters, it would even more so with the fundamentalist issues.
8. The most basic religious matters and the most mysterious ones are equal obligations to Muslims, therefore imitation is allowed in the most basic matters as in the most spiritual ones. (24)

The predominant argument is that it is not allowed to imitate in belief for the clear evidence presented in this matter. A Muslim is not allowed to depend on others when it comes to understanding the words of God. Also, if imitation in belief was allowed, then how can we dispraise the Jewish and Christians for blindly believing their ancestors in their wrong ways?

Al Amadi argues the second opinion with the following:

A) By contemplating these verses: "*And they disputed by [using] falsehood to [attempt to] invalidate thereby the truth*" Surat Ghafir, verse 5. Here it is meant to encourage contemplating and discussing falsehood to reach the truth, and not to contemplate the truth causing us to steer away from it. We can see this also in the following Quranic verse "*And argue with them in a way that is best*" Surat An Nahl, verse 125.

- God praised those who contemplates and reflects, as seen in the Quranic verse "And give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth" Surat Al Imran, verse 191.
- The saying of the Prophet "Behold the Religion of Firm Belief" wasn't proved, therefore it is either correct or not.

B) The saying that "The Prophet's companions did not contemplate" necessitates them to have a degree of ignorance, to allow the contemplation and reflection relative positivity and usefulness. There is no account of the companions openly discussing and contemplating issues as their knowledge was whole and they didn't face the need to.
C) Their saying that the Prophet and his companions did not deny the public contemplation, and that's because knowledge is an obligation, and it can be obtained by reflection, wit needed evidence.
D) Their saying "The need to contemplate comes from ignorance of matters of God" necessitates ignorance, and possibly not being a Muslim. Also their saying "There has to be steps (order) in contemplation" is unproved, as it is not our religious duty to contemplate.

E) Their saying that "Contemplation and reflection most likely lead to mistakes and the loss of the rightful path", our answer to that claim is that the one who is being imitated, his belief is either an imitation as well, or a result of contemplation. In the first case, the imitated has imitated as well, which is a forbidden action as it may cause loss of truth. In the second case, where the imitated has contemplated his belief, and the imitator blindly follows it. The imitator here can follow, but only after personal reasoning, as the imitated belief might be mistaken.

Also arguing those who say imitating is safer than contemplation, it is a wrongful perspective, as many imitate wrongful verdicts and beliefs.

F) The saying that "Fundamentalist parts of religion are more mysterious than the general aspects of religion, therefore it is beneficial to imitate in the more mysterious aspects" is incorrect, as in the more fundamentalist, belief-related aspects of religion there has to be strong firm faith, which can only be achieved by reasoning and deep thought, unlike more basic aspects of religion where imitation is enough to serve their purpose. (25).And by responding to their arguments, it is noticeable that the first opinion represents the majority, where God coaxes and encourages his believers to contemplate and reflect on life and his creations.

One of the most important things in our modern life, in which the young generation must be aware of, is the importance of personal independent reasoning when it comes to faith. Faith should never be imitated. Most of the problems concerning our youth today stem from the blind imitation of faith and belief. This ignorance has caused much strife in our Islamic nations, an caused Muslim blood to be needlessly shed.

Second Section: In Regards to Practical Aspects of Religion

It was explained in the previous section that imitation is forbidden in fundamentalist, belief-related matters, and that this is exceptionally important to our young generation today. The question therefore presents itself: What about the more practical aspects of religion?

We should keep into consideration that imitating the more practical aspect of religion could be in aspects that are well known to the general public, such as prayer, fasting the month of Ramadan, the prohibition of adultery, almsgiving, and drinking alcohol…it is pointless to imitate in such matters as they are clear and well understood by everyone. However the practical aspects which need further contemplation and reasoning, such as matters of worship and social interactions, here the jurists have differed in opinion. (26)

The First Opinion:

It is permissible to imitate according to the majority of scholars, in regards to what Ibn Qudamah said "As for the imitation of practical aspects of religion, the consensus is that it is permissible."(27)

Also, they relied on the following to support their claim:

1. The Holy Quran, in the verse "So ask those who possess knowledge if you do not know."
Surat An-Nahil, verse 43. This ayah indicates that God orders people to ask the advice and guidanceof the scholar, if they don't have the needed knowledge to distinguish between what is forbidden and what is allowed. As an example, a blind person needs assistance to know the rightful position for prayer, and soby the same token, who does not know can imitate his scholar.(28) Al Amidi Also said that this ayah is addressed to the general public, and it refers to any subject (29), as God obligated us to ask those who are more knowledgeable, and the context of this ayah was addressed to all, with its simple meaning without an actual issue behind it. (30)
2. The Sunnah, as it was narrated on behalf of Jabir "We set out on a journey. One of our people was hurt by a stone, that injured his head. He then had a sexual dream. He asked his fellow travelers: Do you find a concession for me to perform tayammum? They said: We do not find any concession for you while you can use water. He took a bath and died. When we came to the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم), the incident was reported to him. He said: They killed him, may Allah kill them! Could they not ask when they did not know? The cure for ignorance is inquiry. It was enough for him to perform tayammum and to pour some drops of water or bind a bandage over the wound (the narrator Musa was doubtful); then he should have wiped over it and washed the rest of his body. (31) So the beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) guided and encouraged them to ask of any Islamic ruling before acting upon anything. (32).This indicates that the need to imitate those responsible and in charge, as people are not equal in their understanding of the religions texts, and many errors occurs when inept people resort to independent wrongful reasoning.

3. The Consensus is that people may imitate the scholar, as for example in the era of the Prophet's companions, scholars would simply answer people without validating their claim with evidence and the people imitated what was told to them. (33)

4. Reasonability, as in if someone doesn't have the needed competence to deduct jurisprudent verdicts, he must look at the evidence to give the right Islamic ruling or imitate other Islamic jurists because if he gives the wrong Islamic-ruling he affects the status quo of the society he lives in. This is seen the following Quranic verse "He has chosen you and has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty" Surat Al Haj, verse 78. Also, we can see this by the Prophet's saying "There is no harm in Islam" and this includes every aspect of harm. (34)

The Second Opinion:

Some of the Al Baghdadi Qadrya faction along with the Isolationists has forbidden imitation in the most practical aspects of religion. They believe the public must always contemplate and study the Islamic teachings to independently reach the verdict.

They relied on the following to support their claim:

1) Verses from the Holy Quran, such as:

- "*He only orders you to evil and immorality and to say about Allah what you do not know.*" Surat Al Baqarah, verse 169. Here the verse explains that if imitation, when imitating without further knowledge or awareness, is blind imitation and is forbidden.

- "*Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and we are, in their footsteps, following*." Surat Az-Zukhruf, verse 23. Here the Quranic verse dispraises those who imitate, and what is dispraised is forbidden.(35)

2) The Sunnah, as our beloved Prophet said "Seeking knowledge is every Muslim's obligation." (36) And also "Carry on doing good deeds". Both texts addressed the general public on every subject, and they both indicate to the need of contemplation. (37)

3) Reasonability and it has two arguments:

- The First: If the commoner was commanded to imitate, it wouldn't cross his mind that the one he is imitating might be at fault, therefore he would end up committing wrongful deeds as a result of invalid s=imitation, and this is forbidden.

- The Second: Belief related matters and more practical matters in religion are equal obligations to a Muslim, therefore if the more practical matters were allowed imitation, then also, belief related matters would be allowed the same approach, but this isn't so. (38)

It is clear that the first opinion represents the majority of scholars, which allows Muslims to imitate the more practical aspects of religion, as not all people are competent to study the evidences and texts to reach solid conclusions. Furthermore, the scholars supporting this argued the second opinion with the following:

1) Arguing that the public must contemplate teachings and texts is invalid by the consensus of the Prophet's companions, as they replied to the public's inquiries without asking them to further reflect on their reasoning. (39)

2)The consensus is that all Muslims are obligated to follow the religion's teachings, however not all are obligated to become scholars and jurists, as that would disrupt the social fabric of the Islamic nation if the more mundane jobs were ignored, causing the society's deterioration.(40)

3) What does the commoner do when he is presented with an issue or a happening that has no clear religious text and ruling? Does he resort to personal independent reasoning? Or does he address the scholars with his inquiries?

In the following Quranic verse, there is more than one indication "*And to say about Allah what you do not know*" Sura Al Baqarah, verse 169. Contemplation and reasoning deal with vague issues mostly and therefore the unknown. When we are presented with such a situation, we must reach a conclusion by studying the available texts thoroughly. In the aforementioned verse, it wasn't forbidden to do either. Also in a second verse "*Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and we are in their footsteps [rightly] guided*" Surat Az-Zukhruf, verse 22. Here imitation is dispraised, and the seeking of knowledge is encouraged.

4) In regards to the aforementioned sayings of the prophet, they don't indicate the obligation to reasoning, except for those who are able to practice this approach. Not everyone is competent in becoming a jurist.

5) The chance of a commoner committing a mistake is higher than a jurist's or a scholar's, as the commoner isn't as competent. (41)

Moreover, the rapid development of our time would require the commoner to be constantly up to date with all jurisprudential matters as the issues are ever growing and changing. And some aspects are far too complex and demanding to be studied by the common people. How can we ask them to fulfill such an obligation? These issues require scholars and jurists to review them in depth, in order to extract the true meaning of the texts owners. This requires a great deal effort and time spent by the scholars. One can only imagine how the common people would fair in such matters. Therefore, most likely, it is allowed for the commoner to imitate the scholar, once his competence is proven.

Third Section: Picking Who to Imitate

The fatwa is an important aspect of the life of Muslims. According to the words of Al Shatibi, the one who declares the fatwa - also known as the "Mufti" – is beheld as the nation's Prophet. This is indicated in the following phrase "The Mufti in a way forms Shari'a; as what he shares is either transcribed bya scholar, or deducted from the texts. In the first case, the mufti is the messenger of the ruling, and in the second casethe mufti took part in actually constructing the ruling. If jurists have the authority to deduct and construct verdicts and teachings, in this sense they are shaping the Shari'a, and it's the obligation and duty of every Muslim to follow the deducted rulings. (42)

It was previously found that the commoner is not obligated to contemplate religious texts to deduct a ruling; however the commoner is obligated to pick who he will imitate wisely. Now the question presents itself, if the commoner is faced with several muftis, each declaring a set of teachings, which mufti should he follow and imitate? Some said the most knowledgeable and competent mufti should be prioritized. Others said there is no need for that. (43)

It is best to be diligent when picking who to imitate and follow, as it is acceptable for the commoner to not know matters of jurisprudence deeply, but for a mufti and scholar, it is essential to make sure they are conducting their studies and reasoning fully and expertly. Especially in our time and age where scholars share wrongful rulings to the masses using unrestricted social media, creating immense discord and discriminatory acts between Muslims.
If two muftis equate in knowledge but not in religiosity, then the preference goes to the most religious. And if two muftis equate in religiosity but not in knowledge, then some say it doesn't matter which, and others say it is best to choose the most knowledgeable. A majority however prefer to pick the most knowledgeable over the most religious. (44)

Al Shatibi describes the mufti as "He who holds the people together, not limiting them nor allowing them to wander in sin."(45)

Al Shatibi also said "Let the imitator contemplate which path is the best. Even if all paths lead to God, there will always be a preference to the closer path to god, and the most contemplated." (46)
All the aforementioned arguments support the claim that the commoner must wisely pick who to imitate and follow, as he must find the most religious, knowledgeable and moderate scholar.

Chapter Three: Principles for Imitating Scholars

Previously it has been discussed the difference between when a commoner imitates a scholar in matters of faith, and in more practical aspects of religion. The question here is, can a scholar imitate other scholars?

Jurists have different opinions regarding this. The top arguments are the following:

- The judge Abu Bakr along with most scholars have forbidden the imitation of scholars by
- other scholars, regardless if the other scholars are more knowledgeable or not. (47)
- The scholar can imitate the Prophet's companions and the Prophet's followers. (48)
- According to Abu Hunaifa and Mohammed, it is allowed for scholars to imitate those who are more knowledgeable. (49)
- According to Al Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, Abu Ishaq, Al Shirazi, Ishaq bin Rahwyeh, and Sufyan Al Thawri, scholars are allowed to imitate other scholars indefinitely. (50)

- A scholar can imitate those more knowledgeable and of higher rank than him, but not those who equate him or less, this applied to the Prophet's companions as well, according to Mohammad bin Hasan. (51)
- A scholar may imitate those more knowledgeable than him if he cannot contemplate and examine the texts by his own accord, said by Ibn Al Sireij. (52)
- Scholars can imitate other scholars if they run out of time, and consequently their prayer and worship may suffer as an outcome of research and reasoning. (53)

- Scholars cannot imitate on behalf of other people, however thy can imitate when it is for their own sake. (54)

The evidence can be divided into two parts:

The First Part: Which Allowed Scholars to Imitate

1) The Holy Quran, as explained in the following verses:
- "So ask the people of the message if you do not know." Surah Al Nahil, verse 43.
- "O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you." Surah Al Nisa, verse 59.
2) The Sunnah, as the following sayings:
- "My companions are as stars, whoever you follow, they will guide you."
- "Follow my Sunnah, and of those who come after me."
3) The consensus of when Omar who followed the words of Ali and Mu'ath – may God be pleased with them. And also, when Othman bin Ouf encouraged the people to follow the Sunnah of the sheiks Abi Bakr and Omar. No one denied the companions of the prophet from following and imitating, even though they were able to deduct teachings and rely on reasoning by themselves.
4) Reasonably, as he cannot follow his judgment by guessing, however, verdicts and rulings casted by guessing are taken into consideration after diligent examination, therefore they are permissible.(55)

The Second Part: Which Forbid Scholars to Imitate

1) If he has the ability to reason and contemplate, then it is not allowed for him to imitate.
2) If he has contemplated and reached a conclusion, then he is not allowed to imitate, as his reasoning and conclusion might lead him to conflict with another scholar's reasoning.
3) If the commoner was allowed to imitate the Prophet's companions even though he had the skills to contemplate on his own, then it would be allowed to the Prophet's companions to imitate each other, but that would have rendered their discussions and debates futile.
4) The Prophet's companions left the hearsay via reasoning and contemplation, as other's actions were defined by it. They found that not pursuing these invalid actions was a preference. (56)

The majority of the arguments allow scholars to imitate other scholars if they are unable to conduct their own reasoning and research. While for the commoner, he is allowed to imitate when he unable to understand the essence of the religious texts. Especially since we live in a fast-paced era, issues grow and complicate each day and we need jurists to interpret and guide us through the newly found phenomena. However, a jurist can't perfect his knowledge in every field. If a scholar perfects his knowledge in a field, while he finds another scholar perfecting in subsequent field, why must he waste time and effort if there are those who already have obtained all the knowledge in that specific field?

Nowadays conferences and publishing houses help scholars identify other scholars easily, allowing them to examine each other and their fields. Usually in these public meeting places, reasoning and discussions are conducted in open groups, which helps obtain a finer degree of reasonability and truth. Also, it is worth mentioning that imitating should always be in regards to a timeframe, as in if scholars want to imitate scholars from another era, they must contemplate if their teachings are still valid and can be integrated in the modern world of today. The following are the replies to those who oppose:

1)It is said to those who say there is no imitation in thought process, which its requirement is knowledge, that it can't happen in imitation, unlike with contemplation and reasoning.
2) If the scholar contemplates and examines texts, which later fruit a conclusion the scholar believes in, then he must hold other scholars to the same standard he held himself if he wishes to imitate them.

3) The reasoning and contemplation abilities of the Prophet's companions are very developed, as they witnessed the growth of the Islamic nation and have co-existed with the beloved Prophet. Therefore, scholars are allowed to imitate them undoubting, unlike any others. (57)

4) A ruling presented by a scholar might oppose a teaching of any the Prophet's companions, or it might not. Therefore, we must result to reasoning to discern which is which. If it's the first case, then imitation is forbidden. If it is the second case, after examination and contemplation, imitation is allowed. (58)

Chapter Four: Generational Consequences of Imitation

By examining reality we find that imitation has many serious implications. Some of them are:

- Confusion among the youth in matters of faith and more practical aspects of religion, as they may believe imitation is allowed for all matters.
- Imitation in matters of belief and faith have completely blinded some youth, freezing their ability to think independently and reason for their own. This opens them to possible manipulation by dangerous members of society, enabling them to control and guide the confused youth at their will.
- Youth mixing between the concepts of obedience and imitation. Since they come to imitate the leader, or whoever is in charge, they do so without discussing the actions to further understand the meaning behind them. Some leaders go so far to take advantage of this, and forbid the youth from asking questions at all. This is unlike the teachings of our beloved Prophet, peace be upon him.
- Imitating in faith and belief cause the imitator to become one with the imitated, thus inheriting the enemies of the imitated. This is one of the leading reasons which turn Muslims against each other, causing the needless bloodshed.
- Even though imitation is allowed mostly in the practical aspects of religion, there have been recurring cases where Muslims have developed fanatical and discriminatory practices. Some even have come to enact weird unknown behavior in the name of Islam. A case for example, if a Muslim of a certain faction builds a mosque in the neighborhood, anyone who is a different faction will abstain from attending that mosque. We see these kinds of actions and behavior more and more between young Muslims, destroying the nation's unity.
- Social media has become attainable by everyone, offering an open platform to anyone who has anything to say. This is problematic when they start talking about the scripture, interpreting passages and texts at their whims. Some interpretations are acceptable, while others aren't at all. Most people don't possess the needed abilities to deduct interpretations, having a simple understanding of the Arabic language; they will only obtain the shallow meaning of the texts. And with social media, whoever commits this mistake is encouraged by followers to continue doing so, and those followers will continue blindly following the one posting on social media, creating conflict and discriminatory behaviors among Muslims.
- One of the tragedies of imitation is Muslims accusing each other of being non-believers simply because they don't share and imitate the same concept. This is a very serious and dangerous phenomenon among Muslims.
- The loss of a percentage of youth to fighting warring groups as a result of blind imitation. The youth are unable to understand what is happening, and therefore they hesitant and confused, without the ability to discern which faction is worth trusting and following.
- The worst consequence of imitation is the normality with which Muslim blood is shed, a result of youth blindly following their discriminating scholars, destroying the nation's unity in the name of Islam.

Conclusion

Praise is to God by which His grace brings righteousness, peace and blessings be on humanity, and upon the beloved Prophet Mohammed bin Abdullah, and upon who followed him, till the day of judgment.

As a conclusion to the research, there has to be emphasis on certain points, such as:

- Faith and belief are important and serious subjects in the life of a Muslim; therefore it is not right for him to imitate others in these matters.
- Faith in God Almighty is based on certainty, and this cannot be achieved by imitation, but rather by contemplation and reflection.
- Independent reasoning in understanding religion, and rejecting imitation, protects young Muslims from being lost, and it also protects the Islamic unity of the nation.

- In the generic matters of religion, imitation is not allowed. So how many a Muslim imitate others in belief, if he cannot – for example - imitate in prayer?
- It is an act of mercy by the Islamic religion to allow the general public to imitate several diverse religious matters.
- The public must strive to find those who are trustworthy in matters of religion. If the public consulted more than one scholar, then they must prioritize in regards to competence and trustworthiness.
- It is allowed for a scholar to imitate another scholar if the subject he is examining isn't his expertise, as it would take a huge amount of effort to reach a conclusion.
- Imitating belief in an intolerant and blind way has negative consequences, such as social division, fights, and the shedding of Muslim blood.

Finally, imitations a critical issue, albeit an old one, therefore this study recommends the following:

1. Spread awareness in regards to imitation, its pitfalls and principles in society
2. Focus on young people, whether in schools or universities to educate them on the matter.
3. Devise innovative ways to attract young people.
4. Introducing this subject in scholastic and higher learning courses.
5. Arranging public lectures, seminars and debates regarding imitation and highlighting its effects.
6. To take advantage of social media by constructing attractive and informative pages targeting young people, presenting and discussing the issue.
7. Presenting this issue via media and broadcast programs, in diverse and original ways, by progressively staying on par with the modern times to influence young people properly.
8. I have exerted what I could of effort in this study, as all that is good comes from Allah and what is a mistake stems from me and the devil. I ask Allah for forgiveness for any shortcoming.

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