

Cultivating young Hearts on the Fertile soils of Islam

ما معنى كلمة الفقه لغةً واصطلاحاً؟

## WHAT DOES THE WORD FIQH MEAN?<sup>1</sup>

Before we learn how to worship Allah correctly, let's first learn what the Arabic word **الفقه** means. When the scholars of Islam teach us the meanings of words, they teach us their meanings according to

- (1) The Arabic Language (اللغة العربية)
- (2) Islamic Law (الشريعة الإسلامية)
- (3) Its technical meaning (المعنى الاصطلاحي).

The **language meaning** of a word is the meaning that we find in the dictionary. The **Islamic legal meaning** of a word is the meaning found in the text of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The **technical meaning** of a word is the meaning used by scholars in different legal sciences of Islam (العلوم الشرعية). This introductory lesson will help us to understand the different meanings of the term **فقه**.

So what does the word **الفقه** mean in the Arabic Language? In the Arabic language, the word means in English “**understanding**” or “**comprehension**”. This is what you would find if you went to an Arabic/English dictionary:

**فقه** *faqih* a (*fiqh*) to understand, comprehend (s.th.); — *faqih* a (*fiqh*) and *faqih* u (*faqāha*) to have knowledge, esp.,

<sup>1</sup> Compiled by Abu Ameenah AbdurRahman Bennett.

The Arabic word **فَهُم** is another word for **فَفَهُ** and therefore it is a synonym.<sup>2</sup> Allah teaches us in His Mighty Book how to use the word **فَفَهُ** as a verb. He, the Most High, states,

قَالُوا يَشْعَبُ مَا نَفَقَهُ كَثِيرًا مِّمَّا تَقُولُ ٩١

They said: O Shu'ayb! We do not **understand** much of what you say.  
[Hood 91]

We also have a beautiful hadith from our Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) that uses the word **فَفَهُ**. The Prophet

مَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ بِهِ خَيْرًا يُفَقِّهْهُ فِي الدِّينِ

When Allah wants good for a person, He causes him to **understand** the religion.<sup>3</sup>

Now that we understand what it means in the Arabic language, we can move on to learn what it means according to **Islamic law** and according to **the scholars**.

In Islam, the word **فَفَهُ** has two meanings. One meaning is used in Islamic law and the other meaning is used by the scholars who study and teach **فَفَهُ**.

The meaning in Islamic law is

مَعْرِفَةُ أَحْكَامِ اللَّهِ الْعَقْدِيَّةِ وَالْعَمَلِيَّةِ

Knowledge of Allah's laws in beliefs and actions.

So this meaning of **فَفَهُ** includes creed (beliefs) and actions. This is the greatest type of **فَفَهُ** because it includes the tawheed of Allah and other extremely important beliefs of a Muslim. Correct belief is the most important thing in Islam because it decides whether someone is a Muslim or a non-Muslim. The great scholar of Islam, Imam Abu Haneefah called this type of

<sup>2</sup> A word having the same or nearly the same meaning as another in the language.

<sup>3</sup> Saheeh Muslim (129).

fiqh **الفقه الأكبر** (The Greatest Fiqh) because you cannot worship Allah in your actions correctly until you learn about Allah's Lordship, Names and Attributes and Worship.

The meaning according to the scholars of fiqh is

مَعْرِفَةُ الْأَحْكَامِ الْعَمَلِيَّةِ بِأَدْلَتِهَا التَّفْصِيلِيَّةِ

Knowledge of the action-based rulings based on their detailed evidences.

We are not going to be able to understand this definition right now, but there is no harm in memorising it now and then studying its meaning when we get a bit older insha Allah.

This is the meaning of **الفقه** that is going to play a starring role in our lessons on **الفقه** because our future lessons are about understanding and learning how to worship Allah correctly in our actions.

The great scholars of Islam have divided the third meaning of **الفقه** into six types:

1. **Acts of worship (العِبَادَاتُ)** – so these will be Islamic rulings that are related to acts of worship, such prayer, zakat and fasting.
2. **Personal matters (الأَحْكَامُ الشَّخْصِيَّةُ)** – these are rulings that are related to matters such as marriage, divorce and other personal matters.
3. **Worldly transactions (المُعَامَلَاتُ)** – these are rulings that are related to transactions that take place between people, like selling and buying.
4. **Government rulings (الأَحْكَامُ السُّلْطَانِيَّةُ)** – these are laws that are related to rulers looking after their citizens.
5. **Legal Punishments (الْحُدُودُ)** – these are rulings that are related to punishments for people who commit crimes, like stealing.

6. International human rights laws (الْحَقُوقُ الدَّوْلِيَّةُ) – these rulings are put in place to govern how Muslim countries cooperate with other countries.

Now that we have a good understanding of the term **فِقْهُ**, we can now begin our lessons on **فِقْهُ الطَّهَّارَةِ** (understanding how to purify and clean ourselves correctly).

## Questions on the meaning of Fiqh

1. The scholars of Islam teach us that words can have three meanings. What are these three meanings?
2. What does the word **فِقْهٌ** mean in the Arabic language (i.e., the dictionary meaning), and can you provide another Arabic word that has the same meaning?
3. What is the posh word for words that have the same meaning?
4. Give an example from the Qur'an where Allah, the Most High, uses the verb of the noun **فِقْهٌ**.
5. Can you write the Islamic law meaning **فِقْهٌ** in Arabic and English?
6. What does the Islamic law meaning include in the meaning of **فِقْهٌ**?
7. Before we learn about **فِقْهٌ** in worship, what **فِقْهٌ** should we learn first?
8. What did Abu Haneefah call this type of **فِقْهٌ** that we should learn first?
9. Why should we learn this **فِقْهٌ** first?
10. Can you write the meaning of **فِقْهٌ** according to the scholars in Arabic and English?
11. What type of **فِقْهٌ** will we be studying in our next lessons?