



Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullah,

With all the options of different ulama' and Muftiyān it is really new form of test for a questioner to keep his intention pure. Along with a pure intention, ikhlāṣ in action plays a very important role.

The goal of asking question from a Mufti is to find out what Allah wants from a person in a certain dilemma. This is the crux of asking a fatwa. By knowing what Sharī'ah demands at that specific juncture in life, one comes to know what action a person has to take so he gains closeness of Allah by fulfilling His orders. Hence, the intent should not be about what is the easiest way to score "pass" on some concern.

With that in mind, a common layman should find one Muftī that he and his heart completely trusts, and always stick to asking him. To choose this Muftī he should make sure that the Muftī is well-researched enough to give him all the answers. Hence the suggestion is not to find someone who once completed his Iftā' course and gained the title of Muftī, rather someone who has continued his research, and actively issues/answers fatāwā. Once a person finds such a Muftī, and his heart is content with him, then he should stop asking multiple Muftiyān, and stick to this particular Muftī. This will make his life so much easier and the focus will be shifted towards fulfilling the rulings instead of researching them and trying to find out which Muftī's opining seems stronger.

While the above is an ideal condition, in todays time it becomes almost impossible for one Muftī to have excellence on all the broad fields in Sharī'ah. Hence, if one has access to multiple Muftiyān, then while retaining the ikhlāṣ, he can certainly take benefit from multiple Muftiyān.

Keeping that mind, while all credible Allah fearing muftiyaan are equal for questioner to approach for his question, still there remains a certain decorum which one should try to uphold while doing so. Remember, the only reason one is broadening one's list of Muftiyān is to seek experts in respective field. For example, Muftī A may be expert in Islamic Finance and Technology, while Muftī B maybe an expert in

‘ibādiyāt (worships). So the questioner should formulate his list of trusted Muftiyān as per their field of expertise for him.

Hence, the essential element is trust in one's heart. This does not only refer to a generic trust on Mufti A or Mufti B, rather it could mean one's reliance on Mufti A in regards to financial issues, while reliance on Mufti B with regards to food halal/haram etc.

Now that we have so many avenues of different muftis, I recommend that if a person cannot just stick to one mufti all-together, then he should have a set group of Muftiyān for specific field. At first it may seem tedious, but remember that we are not making a huge database of Muftiyān. When an issue arises, one will simply review the listing to see which Muftī to approach for that field. Thereafter handling the responses will become much easier.

If an individual can make such a list with only a single of his most relied Muftī, he makes his life very easy. But just in case he has more Mufti to approach then he should follow the following method. Lets assume that the questioner knows that Mufti “A” and Mufti “B” are expert in financial issues. He has complete ṭminān on their decision. While in the field of food issues he relies on Mufti “C” or Mufti “D” who or Organization “E” who are expert in food science. His heart is completely content with their decision knowing that they have expertise.

So now, when a question in finance comes to him, he does not need to look at C,D,E. He knows he can simply look up A and B. Remember that the questioner already knows that his reliance is on both of them.

- If both Muftiyān in his list of relied upon Muftiyān give a unanimous answer, then he does not need to look any further.
- However, if one of them gives permission while other does not, then since his primary goal of asking question is to gain taqwa, he will follow and practice whichever opinion takes him close to Allah i.e through taqwa.

- If one has more than two Muftiyān in such a list, then generally taqwa would still demand to opt for the cautious view. This is why, I generally do not suggest adding too many Muftiyān in the mix, as it only makes one's decision making difficult.

Application of this procedure would mean that opting for the cautious fatwa is the key. If the questioner has a question in relation to food. Then ask the C,D and E to get their expert opinion.

- If their answers are unanimous, then there is no further question required.
- If they give a differing response about permissibility or impermissibility, then cautious opinion demands that one opts for impermissibility.
  - If the item about which he questioned is in fact permissible, he would have stayed away from it out of caution, and gained additional rewards from Allah.
  - But if the item happens to be impermissible (i.e the Mufti who gave fatwa of permissibility erred), then the questioner would have saved himself from something impermissible.

Similarly, in case of ʿibādah let's say the questioner is wondering if he should repeat some act of worship he performed which may have been invalidated due to some act. According to his list of relied upon Muftis he will ask only them.

- If both Muftis in his list tell him a unanimous answer then he does not need to worry.
- But if one Mufti gives a fatwa of repeating the act of worship while the other gave the fatwa of not doing so, then opting for the cautious fatwa here would mean to take the fatwa of repeating the act.
  - This is because, if the act was in reality did not need to be repeated, his act would become nafl and he would get rewards for the act as well as opting for cautious opinion.
  - But if it had to be repeated, then he would save himself from the sin of not repeating it.

Once you understand this mechanism, you will realize that questioner's own sincerity plays an important role. By keeping to this code, one would always aspire to be better oneself in one's religion for the sake of Allah.

The only question then remains is that, “If the taqwa position is to take the cautious view, does that mean taking the non-cautious view is still permissible?”. To answer shortly, “Yes, it is. However, since the desire of a mu’min is to do best for Allah, one’s aim should be to do the taqwa. Having this though in one’s heart will always keep the questioner yearning for best. But if for some reason he is unable to do the best, and does not opt for the cautious opinion, then he will still retain the desire in his heart along with regret to have lost the opportunity to gain more rewards. We hope that Allah will still shower his blessing upon him.

But at this point, the person should always remember that he has knowingly chosen the lesser opinion and those who take the better opinion have shown greater strength and love of imān.”

Wallāhu A‘lam

Muftī Faisal al-Maḥmūdī