

Legislative Inimitability and the Educational Role of the Prophet's Legal Particularities in Shaping the Muslim Community

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Abstract

This article examines the concept of legislative inimitability in the Qur'an and its manifestation in the Prophet Muhammad's legal particularities, and explores their educational impact on the Muslim community. Drawing on classical exegetical and legal sources, the study clarifies the meaning of *i'jāz tashrī'i* (legislative inimitability) and distinguishes it from other forms of Qur'anic inimitability. It then analyses selected Qur'anic verses and prophetic rulings that are specific to the Prophet, such as his unique marital rulings, the prohibition of marrying his wives after him, the etiquette of entering his household, and the permanent command to invoke blessings upon him. These legal particularities are interpreted as divine instruments for honouring the Prophet, affirming his superior status, and educating believers on proper attitudes towards him. The article argues that these rulings carry profound pedagogical lessons related to creed, ethics, social discipline, and communal cohesion. It concludes that legislative inimitability in the Prophet's specific rulings not only confirms the divine origin of Islamic law, but also functions as a comprehensive programme for cultivating reverence, obedience, and moral responsibility within the Muslim community.

Keywords: Legislative Inimitability, Prophetic Particularities, Qur'anic Law, Islamic Education, Prophetic Ethics

Introduction

The doctrine of Qur'anic inimitability (*i'jāz al-Qur'ān*) occupies a central place in the Islamic intellectual tradition (Mahmoud, 2010). Muslim scholars have long argued that the Qur'an is beyond human capacity to imitate in its linguistic style, prophetic information, and legal system (al-Rāzī, 1999). While modern research often highlights linguistic or scientific aspects of inimitability, the dimension of legislative inimitability (*i'jāz tashrī'i*) remains relatively under-explored in contemporary English scholarship, despite its prominence in classical works on Qur'anic sciences (al-Qaṭṭān, 2000).

Within legislative inimitability, one particularly rich field of inquiry concerns the Prophet's legal particularities (*khuṣūṣiyyāt al-nabī*). These refer to rulings that apply exclusively to the Prophet Muhammad, such as some aspects of his marriage, the status of his wives, specific acts of worship, and particular social etiquettes (Ibn Ḥajar, 2001). Classical scholars viewed these rulings not as arbitrary exceptions, but as manifestations of the Prophet's unique rank and as pedagogical tools for educating the Muslim community about his status and rights (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1985; Al-Qarāfī, 1994).

This article seeks to examine how the Prophet's legal particularities exemplify legislative inimitability and how they function pedagogically in the formation of the Muslim community. It addresses three main questions: (1) How is legislative inimitability defined in the Qur'anic and legal tradition? (2) In what ways do the Prophet's particular rulings manifest this inimitability? (3) What educational and ethical lessons do these rulings impart to individual believers and to the community as a whole?

Methodologically, the study is qualitative and text-based. It analyses relevant Qur'anic verses along with selected classical sources in *tafsīr* and *fiqh* that discuss legislative inimitability and the Prophet's specific rulings, such as works by al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Sa'dī, al-Qurṭubī, and others (Al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī, 1992; Ibn Kathīr, 1999; Al-Sa'dī, 2000; Al-Qurṭubī, 1964). The findings are primarily analytical and synthetic: they organise scattered discussions from the classical heritage into a coherent framework that highlights the educational dimension of legislative inimitability.

Conceptualising Legislative Inimitability

The Meanings of I'jāz And Tashrī'

Lexically, the root 'j-z conveys the sense of incapacity and inability. Classical lexicographers define *i'jāz* as rendering someone unable to perform an act or to reach an objective; it is the opposite of *qudrah* (Al-Rāzī, 1999; Al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī, 1992). Applied to the Qur'an, *i'jāz* denotes the permanent inability of human beings to produce anything comparable to its discourse, guidance, and law (Mahmoud, 2010).

The term *tashrī'* derives from *shar'*, which originally referred to a clear pathway to water. From this image, *sharī'ah* came to denote a clear and straight path leading to spiritual life and salvation (al-Aṣḥānī, 1992). In legal terminology, *tashrī'* refers to the act of legislating, while *sharī'ah* denotes the body of divine laws revealed to guide human conduct (Al-Qaṭṭān, 2000). Thus, legislative inimitability refers to the human incapacity to match the comprehensiveness, coherence, and wisdom of the legal system revealed in the Qur'an and embodied in the Sunnah (Mahmoud, 2010).

Legislative Inimitability in The Qur'anic Discourse

Classical authors observing Qur'anic law emphasised several features that mark its inimitable nature. First, Qur'anic legislation is comprehensive, addressing the individual, family, and community in spiritual, moral, social, economic, and political dimensions (Al-Qaṭṭān, 2000). Secondly, it is balanced, combining rights and duties, mercy and justice, stability, and flexibility (Al-Sa'dī, 2000). Thirdly, it is consistent, free from internal contradiction despite being revealed over 23 years in changing historical circumstances (Ibn Kathīr, 1999; Al-Qurṭubī, 1964).

This coherence is evidenced by the Qur'an's ability to organise the lives of diverse communities, past and present, while preserving essential moral values and protecting the five higher objectives of the law (al-ḍarūriyyāt al-khams): religion, life, intellect, progeny, and property (Al-Shātibī, 1997). No human legislator, it is argued, could foresee all contexts and outcomes in this way, which indicates that the law of the Qur'an is of divine origin (Al-Qaṭṭān, 2000).

The Prophet's Legal Particularities as Manifestations of Legislative Inimitability

The Notion of Khuṣūṣiyyāt Al-Nabī

The term **khuṣūṣiyyāt al-nabī** refers to rulings that apply to the Prophet Muhammad alone and not to his community. Classical jurists have dedicated independent chapters and monographs to this topic, such as discussions in Ibn Ḥajar's *Fatḥ al-Bārī* and al-Qarāfī's works on legal maxims (Ibn Ḥajar, 2001; Al-Qarāfī, 1994). They classify these rulings into areas of worship, social dealings, and personal status. The purpose of these particularities is two-fold: to honour the Prophet and to educate the community. They highlight his distinct rank among creation and provide concrete legal expressions of that rank, which in turn cultivate reverence and obedience among believers (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1985).

Honorific Forms of Address

One clear indication of the Prophet's unique status is the Qur'anic choice of address. While earlier prophets, such as Adam, Noah, and Moses, are called by name: "O Adam," "O Noah," "O Moses", the Prophet Muhammad is addressed predominantly with titles such as "O Prophet" (yā ayyuhā al-nabī) and "O Messenger" (yā ayyuhā al-rasūl). Classical exegetes, including al-Zamakhsharī and Ibn Kathīr, interpret this pattern as a legislative indication of the respect owed to him (Al-Zamakhsharī, 1987; Ibn Kathīr, 1999). Believers are commanded not to address him by name alone, but to use honorific titles, thereby internalising etiquette, humility, and recognition of his rank.

The Prophet Is Closer to The Believers Than Themselves

The verse, "The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves, and his wives are their mothers" (Quran, 33:6), encapsulates both theological and legal particularities. Exegetes explain that the Prophet's precedence in love, loyalty, and obedience over one's own soul is part of complete faith (Al-Ṭanṭāwī, 1997). The legal consequence is that his wives acquire a maternal status with respect to the believers, making marriage to them absolutely forbidden and imposing upon the community a duty of respect and protection (Al-Qurṭubī, 1964, on Quran, 33:6).

This ruling protects the family of the Prophet from potential exploitation or scandal, ensures that his wives remain symbols of piety, and educates the community to see their relationship with him as deeper than ordinary social ties. It also strengthens communal cohesion by making love for the Prophet and his family a unifying principle (Ibn Kathīr, 1999).

Prohibition of Marrying the Prophet's Wives After Him

The prohibition of marrying the Prophet's wives after his death (Quran, 33:53) is another unique ruling. Classical jurists interpret it as a permanent legal barrier distinguishing the Prophet's household from all others (Al-Sa'dī, 2000; Al-Qurṭubī, 1964). It affirms that the marital bond between the Prophet and his wives transcends death and that they retain a

unique status in the community. Legally, it blocks avenues for individuals to seek prestige or political advantage through claiming marital ties with the Prophet's household. Educationally, it instils in believers a sense of sacredness regarding the Prophet's personal life and protects his honour from later manipulation.

Marriage by Gift and Relaxation of Certain Marital Constraints

The Qur'an grants the Prophet specific concessions around marriage, such as the permissibility of a believing woman offering herself in marriage to him without a dowry (Quran, 33:50), and permission to have more wives than the standard limit of four. Classical works on verses of legal rulings (āyāt al-aḥkām) highlight these concessions as "exclusive to you, not to the believers" (Al-Sā'is, n.d.).

From the perspective of legislative inimitability, these rulings illustrate a legal system that considers the unique responsibilities of the final prophet. They demonstrate a level of contextual sensitivity and long-term wisdom that goes beyond what human legislators typically achieve (Mahmoud, 2010).

Etiquettes Of Entering the Prophet's House

The Qur'an lays down specific etiquettes for visiting the Prophet's home: believers should not enter his house for a meal too early, nor remain afterwards engaging in casual conversation, and they must address his wives from behind a curtain (Quran, 33:53). Al-Sha'rāwī's reflections on this verse stress how these rulings protect the Prophet's comfort and his family's privacy while cultivating social manners among believers (Al-Sha'rāwī, 1997).

This fusion of historical context, spiritual etiquette, and social regulation is another sign of legislative inimitability: the ruling solves an immediate problem while generating timeless educational benefits.

Permanent Obligation to Send Blessings Upon the Prophet

The verse, "Indeed Allah and His angels send blessings upon the Prophet. O you who believe, send blessings and salutations upon him" (Quran, 33:56), commands believers to continuously invoke peace and blessings upon the Prophet. Classical exegesis emphasises that this verse combines several layers of honour and elevation for the Prophet (Al-Qurṭubī, 1964, on Quran, 33:56; Ibn Kathīr, 1999). Prophetic traditions, such as the hadith in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, "Whoever sends blessings upon me once, Allah will send blessings upon him ten times", further underline the spiritual significance of this practice (Muslim, 1997, ḥadīth 384).

The ruling is not merely devotional; it is also educational. Regularly sending blessings reinforces love for the Prophet, keeps his example alive in the hearts of believers, and connects daily practice to the broader spiritual narrative of the ummah.

Educational and Ethical Lessons

Strengthening Faith and Loyalty

The requirement that believers love the Prophet more than their parents, children, and all people, as stated in the authentic hadith reported by al-Bukhārī, is concretised through legal structures that emphasise his precedence and sanctity (Al-Bukhārī, 2001, ḥadīth 15). Observing the rulings discussed above develops in believers a deep sense of loyalty and

readiness to prioritise prophetic guidance over personal inclinations (Ibn Kathīr, 1999; Ibn Taymiyyah, 1985).

Cultivating Proper Etiquette and Modesty

The etiquettes of speech, visitation, and interaction with the Prophet's household train believers to exercise self-restraint, modesty, and consideration for others' privacy (Al-Sha'rāwī, 1997; Al-Qurṭubī, 1964). These values extend beyond the specific historical context to inform general Islamic manners in visiting homes, interacting across genders, and respecting boundaries. Such refined social ethics contribute to a dignified communal environment and reduce opportunities for gossip, slander, or moral corruption (Al-Sa'dī, 2000).

Protecting the Prophet's Honour and Defending the Faith

The severe warnings directed at those who harm Allah and His Messenger, including the divine curse and humiliating punishment (Quran, 33:57), establish clear legal and ethical boundaries. Commentators such as Ibn Kathīr and al-Qurṭubī derive from these verses the prohibition and punishment of insulting the Prophet (Ibn Kathīr, 1999; Al-Qurṭubī, 1964). Juristic works on the ruling of sabb al-nabī affirm that deliberate insult constitutes disbelief and carries serious legal consequences (Ibn Qudāmah, 1994; Ibn 'Ābidīn, 1992). Educationally, these rulings teach believers that protecting the Prophet's honour is integral to protecting the sanctity of the religion itself.

Consolidating Communal Identity and Cohesion

By designating the Prophet's wives as "mothers of the believers" and forbidding marriage to them, the law weaves familial language into the structure of the community (Al-Qurṭubī, 1964). Believers see themselves as members of an extended prophetic family, which strengthens their mutual bonds. The continuous practice of sending blessings upon the Prophet further unites Muslims across time and space in a shared devotional act, sustaining a collective identity rooted in love for him (Muslim, 1997; Al-Sa'dī, 2000).

Safeguarding the Higher Objectives of the Law

The Prophet's particular rulings also illustrate how Qur'anic legislation protects the higher objectives of the law. By regulating access to his household and by prohibiting slander and harm, the law safeguards honour ('ird) and faith (dīn). By clarifying boundaries regarding his marriages and family, it protects lineage (nasab). Through educating believers in respect, modesty, and obedience, it indirectly protects intellect and property as well (Al-Shāṭibī, 1997). These connections reveal a sophisticated legal design aimed at holistic human welfare.

Conclusion

This article has argued that the Prophet Muhammad's legal particularities constitute a significant manifestation of Qur'anic legislative inimitability (Mahmoud, 2010; Al-Qaṭṭān, 2000). The unique rulings concerning his person, family, and household are not arbitrary exceptions but carefully calibrated norms that honour his status and educate the Muslim community (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1985; Al-Qurṭubī, 1964). In their linguistic formulation, legal structure, and long-term social effects, these rulings exhibit a level of wisdom and coherence that supports the claim of divine authorship.

Educationally, the Prophet's specific rulings form a comprehensive programme for cultivating reverence, obedience, ethical conduct, and communal solidarity. They teach believers to prioritise prophetic guidance over personal preference, to internalise refined social manners, and to defend the honour of the Prophet as an expression of faith (Ibn Kathīr, 1999; Muslim, 1997).

For contemporary Islamic education, these findings suggest that curricula should pay greater attention to legislative inimitability and to the Prophet's particular rulings, not only as historical or legal curiosities but as living resources for character formation. Further research may compare Islamic legislative inimitability with other religious or philosophical legal systems, or explore specific sets of prophetic particularities, such as those related to worship or governance, in greater depth (Mahmoud, 2010). Such work would continue to illuminate the richness of Qur'anic law and its enduring relevance for Muslim societies today.

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