

start with the summary of the answer as introduction.

Ijma and Its Importance In Islamic Shariah

I. Meaning of Ijma

Ijma (Arabic: إِجْمَعٌ) means consensus or agreement. In Islamic legal theory, it refers to the unanimous agreement of qualified Muslim jurists (Mujtahideen) of any generation after the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) on a particular religious issue. It is the third primary source of Islamic law, after the Quran and Sunnah.

II. Definitions by Prominent Scholars

Imam Al-Ghazali:

"Ijma is the unanimous agreement of the Ummah after the death of the Prophet (ﷺ) on a matter of religious significance."

Imam Al-Shafi:

"When scholars of a generation agree on a specific issue, their consensus is considered binding and authoritative within the Muslim community"

III. Foundations of Ijma in Quran and Sunnah

A. The Basis of Ijma in the Quran

And consult with them in conducting matters. Once you make a decision, put your trust in Allah
(Al-Quran, 3:159)

O believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you.
(Al-Quran, 4:59)

try to add the arabic of quranic ayats.

This includes scholars and rulers whose consensus becomes a form of obedience.

Who respond to their Lord, establish prayer, conduct their affairs by mutual consultation, and donate from what We have provided for them;
(Al-Quran, 42:38)

B. The Basis of Ijma in Hadith

My Ummah will never agree upon misguidance.
(Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah)

Prophet (ﷺ) sent Muadh Ibn Jabal to Yemen, when asked how he would judge, Muadh said:

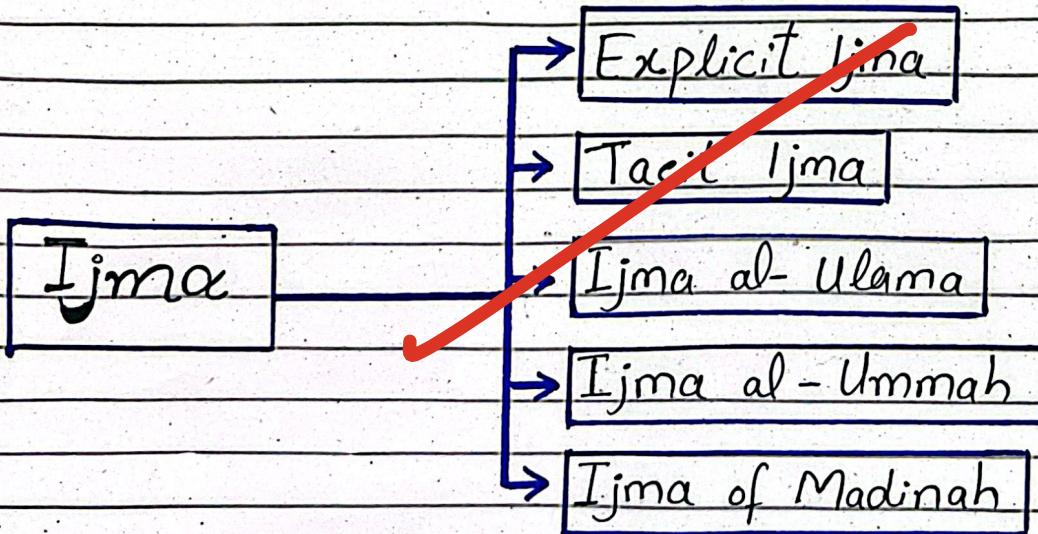
“By the Book of Allah, and if not found there, then by the Sunnah of the Prophet, and if not found, then by my own judgment.”

The Prophet approved this, showing the basis of Ijma and Qiyas.

I do not think the people will ever agree upon something that is wrong

(Hazrat Abdullah Ibn Abbas (RA))

IV. TYPES of Ijma



V. Importance of Ijma:

- A. Preservation of Islamic Teachings
- B. Unity of the Ummah
- C. Flexibility with Authenticity
- D. Evidence in law (Hujjah Shariyah)
- E. Response to Modern Issues
- F. Protection Against Misinterpretation
- G. Legitimacy of Governance and Caliphate
- H. Clarifies Ambiguous Rulings (Tafsir of Practice)
- I. Continuity of Prophetic Methodology
- J. Resolving Juridical Conflicts between Madhabs (Schools)

A. Ijma Preserves and transmits authentic Islamic teachings across generations

Ijma Protects the integrity of Islamic teachings from distortion or innovation by safeguarding the established interpretations. For example, consensus on the number of daily prayers or prohibition of alcohol has remained unchanged throughout Islamic history.

Imam Al-Ghazali emphasized that:

“Ijma is like a fortress in which the Ummah takes refuge. It is ultimate confirmation of legal rulings after the Quran and Sunnah.”

B. Ijma Strengthens the unity of the Muslim Ummah by Preventing Sectarianism

Ijma plays a key role in avoiding sectarianism, especially after the Prophet's (ﷺ) death. It ensures that all scholars and communities remain bound to a unified body of law, avoiding chaos and contradiction.

Ibn Taymiyyah

“Whoever opposes Ijma has followed a path other than that of believers, and”

the Sharīah warns against such deviation"

2. Ijma balance flexibility in law with the authenticity of Islamic Sources

This ensures that Islamic law is not rigid, but evolves with changing contexts through scholarly consensus.

Example:

- Rulings on paper currency (which did not exist in the early Islam) based on Ijma
- Use of loudspeakers for Adhan, justified through collective scholarly agreement.

Shah Waliullah Dehlawi:

"Ijma serves as a mechanism to adapt Sharīah rulings with new circumstances while remaining loyal to foundational principles"

D. Ijma Serves as a binding legal Proof (Hujjah Sharīyah) in Islamic Jurisprudence

Islamic jurists across all four Sunni schools (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali) consider Ijma as binding legal proof (hujjah). Once a consensus is established, no individual opinion can contradict it.

Examples:

- Ijma on Inheritance laws
- Ijma on the Prohibition of Interest (riba)

Imam Al-Shafi'i :

"If the people of knowledge agree on something, that agreement is a binding proof"

E. Ijma Enables Scholars to respond collectively to new and unprecedented issues

Ijma is increasingly important in the modern age to tackle new challenges not directly addressed in the Quran and Sunnah.

Contemporary examples include:

Organ transplantation : Permitted by collective fatwas from institutions like Al-Azhar and Islamic Fiqh Academy, using Ijma principles.

Gender interaction in workplace : Regulated via Ijma-based fatwas in many Muslim-majority countries.

∴ Ijma Protects the Shariah from Personal Opinions and misinterpretation of texts

Ijma acts as a filter against individual misinterpretations of Quran and Sunnah. While personal ijtihad (independent reasoning) is allowed, Ijma acts as a safeguard, preventing because baseless or extreme views from becoming part of mainstream Islam.

Imam Nawawi:

"Anything against Ijma is batil (null), even if reasoning seems to support it"

∴ Ijma validates the legitimacy of Islamic Governance and the Caliphate

Ijma plays a role in political legitimacy, especially in early Islam. It helped establish the Caliphate after the Prophet (صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلٰيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), maintaining continuity and orders.

Example from Caliphs:

After Prophet Muhammad (صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلٰيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) passed away, Ijma of the Sahaba led to the selection of Abu Bakr (RA) as the first Caliph.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"My Ummah will never agree upon error."

H. Ijma Provides Clarification on Ambiguous or Unspecified Rulings through Practice

When the Quran or Hadith leaves a command open-ended, Ijma clarifies it through the collective practice of Ummah.

↳ Examples:

How to pray Salah is not detailed in the Quran. But Ijma - especially of the Sahaba established:

- Number of rak'aat
- Sequence of actions
- Recitation

I. Ijma Continues the Prophetic methodology through Collective Ijtihad of Scholars

Ijma is the continuation of the Prophet's approach. He used to consult companions before major decisions (Shura), which became the method of reaching ijma after Him.

“and consult with them in conducting matters. Once you make a decision, put your trust in Allah”

(Al-Quran, 3:159)

The Prophet (ﷺ) :

“Hold fast to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the rightly guided caliphs after me”

c. Ijma helps reconcile juridical conflicts between different Islamic schools of thought.

It offers a higher level of agreement that can bridge differences among madhabs and bring cohesion in legal matters.

While madhabs differ in some rulings, Ijma acts as a common ground to resolve disputes or prioritize consensus rulings over individual madhhab positions.

Example:

Hanafi and Shafii differences on touching a woman nullifying wudu - but Ijma on the

obligation of wadu before Salat is accepted by all. Modern fatwa councils often look for cross-madhhab Ijma before issuing a binding ruling.

Ibn Qudamah:

"Ijma is the strongest rope among the proofs because no true madhhab contradicts it."

add more arguments in this part.

VI Conclusion

Ijma holds a vital place in Islamic law as the third primary source after the Quran and Sunnah. It preserves the authenticity of Islamic teachings, ensures unity among Muslims, and provides solutions for emerging issues through collective scholarly agreement. By following the Prophet (ﷺ) and the rightly guided Caliphs, Ijma maintains consistency in the Shariah across time. Its authority is affirmed by Quran and Hadith, making it an essential tool for preserving the integrity and adaptability of Islamic law.

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