

Sharia and Tariqa Sides of the Quran¹

Haj Dr. Nour Ali Tabandeh

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

In the holy Quran, God says: **“Tell them: “If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive your faults. Allah is forgiving and merciful.”**²

The Prophet had two sides: the sharia; announcing the rules in the Quranic verses revealed to him, and the tariqa; which means leading those who obeyed sharia rules to walking on the path of God if they deserved, these two sides gathered together in the Prophet's being. But after the Prophet, the 12 Imams were not sharia legislators, in other words, they did not legislate sharia, but they expressed their opinion based on the existing laws, like when you have a sharia question how to say prayers; what to do if we get distracted and confused during the prayers, how to fast, what things break the fast, and so on. You can ask a jurisprudent or a sharia teacher these questions, they may give you an answer you do not like very much but you carry it out. For instance, you ask a sharia teacher that how many of forty gold coins you should give away for zakat (the Islamic donation), he may take one and say: “pay only this much for zakat”, but when you ask a mystic like Shibli³ what to do with these forty gold coins, he would want you to donate all of them and say: “Besides, bring one more gold coin, that one for zakat and the rest of them to punish you so as why you have not donated them so far.” This is the difference between a sharia teacher's and a mystic's order. Now, the Prophet has to act like these two simultaneously and it is the most difficult task. The Quran addresses the Prophet: **“You are only a warner; be aware that there is a guide for every generation”**⁴, a warner means someone who warns against punishment, misdeed and committing sins; saying, you just announce the laws and surely every generation will have its own guide. No doubt that the Prophet was also the guide for that nation, but here, God insists on telling the commandments only. The guides will excavate the guidance from the innermost parts of these commandments and move on toward the faith.

In the above-mentioned verse: **“Tell them if you love Allah ...”** both sharia and tariqa commandments have come together. The first phrase reads: **“If you love Allah”** and if you ask any jurisprudent what it means to love God, they will go: God cannot be loved, He must be worshipped. He who is a tariqa practitioner realizes **“If you love Allah”**. He understands what it means. After this phrase, God wants the Prophet to say: **“then follow me”**, as such Quranic verses address the whole mankind and generally there are people among non-Muslims who love God, especially in Christianity in which Jesus (AS) paid a lot of attention to love and said all the time: “My religion is the religion of love”. Therefore Jesus said to his people: if you love God,

¹ A transcript of two speeches made by his honorable Haj Dr. Nour Ali Tabandeh in the public Sufi gatherings made on Dec 30, 2001 and Jan 20, 2002 in order to reply to some questions.

² The Quran, Al-e-Imran (The family of Imran), 31: **قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ**

³ رَحِيمٌ

³ Shaykh Abu Bakr Shibli (861 - 946) was an important Sufi of Persian descent, and a disciple of Junayd Baghdadi.

⁴ The Quran, Al-Rad (The Thunder), 7: **إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ**

then follow me and put into practice whatever I say. Here, both sharia and tariqa are there. The above verse continues: **“Allah will love you”**; if you follow me, then Allah will love you. This is a higher level; it is the greatest award for a lover to be loved by his beloved in return.

The prophet elaborates mystical attitudes via Qudsi (holy) hadiths or some of his words. Take this Qudsi hadith for example which reads: When God loves a man, He will be their ears so that they hear through Him, He will be their eyes so that they see through Him and He will be their tongue so that they speak through Him.⁵ It means God owns their whole being by one hundred percent. At the beginning of the practice, **“If you love Allah”** seems logical since the practitioner has free will. This attitude does not mean they are not practicing; on the contrary, they are on the way and have reached this stage. Just like the story of Moses and Khidr when Moses made the first complaint. He was only paying attention to the regular laws and comparing his action with that of Khidr’s and that, in case the boat had been scuttled, they would have been sunk. That was why Khidr said to him **“I did it”**⁶. In the second stage, Moses was paying attention to God and also himself, therefore Khidr said to him (suitable to Moses’s mood): **“We did it”**⁷. But in the third stage, **“Allah will love you”** takes place. God is behind whatever that takes place in this stage. So, Khidr said: **“Your God did it”**⁸. Here, the God’s lover will be in comfort and peace. They subconsciously fulfill whatever God the beloved desires; they do as they are expected to by God; **“Allah will love you and forgive your faults. Allah is forgiving and merciful.”**

Since Allah does not love people with blemishes on their souls, if anybody happens to reach this level to be loved by God, what He does is to remove those blemishes. It is said that an old woman said to the Prophet: “I hear you have said there are no old men or women in heaven”. “That is the truth” he said. The old woman cried: “There is no place for me then”. He replied: “If you deserve it, you will become young again and then enter into heaven”. God will remove all the blemishes; **“and forgive your faults”**, and this forgiving (*ghofran*) means ignoring the sins based on compassion, unlike the rejecting or denial (*kofran*) which is based on hostility. **“He will forgive your faults. Allah is forgiving and merciful.”** He is both forgiving and merciful. On the one hand, He has mercy on you so that you would not feel ashamed if you entered somewhere and saw that nobody other than you had any stains, He would mercifully forgive you and remove your stains. The same meaning lies also in a different verse: **“And we will remove whatever of ill-feeling is in their hearts”**⁹. It means all the filthiness and uncleanness will be removed from their hearts. Those believers who successfully pass the judgment and are supposed to enter into the heavens will be purified. It is said that there are many gates for heaven; in

° لا يزال العبد يتقرب إلى التوافل حتى أحبه فإذا أحبته كنت سمعه الذي يسمع به و بصره الذي يبصر به و لسانه الذي ينطق به

⁶ The Quran, Al-Kahf (The Cave), 79: **“But the boat, it belonged to some poor men who worked on the sea and I thought that I should damage it, and there was a king who seized every boat by force”**:

أَمَّا السَّفِينَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسَاكِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ فِي الْبَحْرِ فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَعِيبَهَا وَكَانَ وَرَاءَهُمْ مَلِكٌ يَأْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِينَةٍ غَصْبًا

⁷ The Quran, Al-Kahf (The Cave), 81: **“We did it so that their Lord might give them a better son instead of him in purity and nearer to having compassion”**: فَأَرَدْنَا أَنْ يُبْدِلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُ زَكَاةً وَأَقْرَبَ رُحْمًا

⁸ The Quran, Al-Kahf (The Cave), 82: **“So your Lord desired that they should attain their maturity and take out their treasure, a mercy from your Lord, and I did not do it of my own accord”**:

فَأَرَادَ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يَبْلُغَا أَشُدَّهُمَا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَبِّكَ وَمَا فَعَلْتُهُ عَنْ أَمْرِي.

⁹ The Quran, Al-Araf (The Heights), 43: وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِّنْ غَلٍّ

essence, there is no door such as usual doors in our home, and these are just figurative expressions to realize the idea. Of the doors of heaven are repentance, love, kindness, contribution, sacrifice and so on. These are the gates of heaven. We will be washed and cleansed at the gates, so to speak. There is no room for dirt or filth in heavens. Any kind of uncleanness will be washed away and then everyone will get along well as if they are blood brothers and sisters.

Since God is merciful, He will purify those who have passed these stages. There is no doubt that those who pass have been among the loved ones, as He says: “**If you love Allah**”, “**then follow me**”, follow God then “**He will love you**”. He has announced everyone that if they follow the Prophet He has sent, He will love them. When it comes to this stage, God will never leave any stain remaining; He will remove them out of mercy and pardon. This is an abstract of the stages of walking towards God from the beginning until the end; *Fana-e-fe-Allah* (Extinction of the self in God). How much we succeed depends on God as He has said: “**there is no power and will but God Almighty**”¹⁰, whatever we do, no matter good or evil, is determined by the will of God Almighty”.

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

Since the Prophet’s Bi’that and the appearance of Islam until the Prophet established the Islamic community, and later on, until his passing, verses of the Quran had been gradually revealed according to certain situations (i.e. Asbab Al-Nuzul). Also, hadiths and narratives were the same; meaning the Prophet answered a question based on who asked the question, where and when it is asked. It does not mean that hadiths and narratives can differ in nature, but they differ out of necessities of those who raised the questions in a certain place and at a certain time. Therefore, this point must be taken into consideration when the precise meaning of any verse or hadith is expected. For example, those verses revealed in Mecca before the Hijra (Migration) called Meccan Surahs, were revealed when the Prophet wanted to train every individual Muslim spiritually; since Mecca by the time was a small city and the population was more or less ten thousand, and among the people there were a few Muslims and all the aristocrats of the city were against Islam. Even the Prophet’s relatives were against him. Thus, the verses revealed in Mecca were supposed to equip the Muslims with the spiritual weapons; the ethical weapons. Because there was torture such as cutting Bilal’s tongue and torturing Yasir and Sumayyah; Ammar’s parents, to death, Muslims’ spirits needed to be reinforced. There were many examples of the kind but later on when the Prophet was invited to Medina and he moved to that city, the two tribes of Aws and Khazraj who had a falling out chose the Prophet to manage and rule the two of them as they both agreed on him. Therefore, when he moved to Medina, he was also responsible for legislation in addition to the spiritual duty he had had. The laws he issued- in fact it was God who did- had to be in conformity with the Islamic codes of ethics. Besides, he was also responsible for political affairs to govern the territory; the kind of politics conformed to the ethics, in other words, the Prophet did not believe that politics was separated from ethics; he believed that politics associated with religious ethics was appropriate for the mankind.

His holiness ruled this way, Ali (AS) also believed the same and if he had been the caliph immediately after the Prophet, no doubt that the same principles would have continued, but with the Rashidun caliphs, everything changed as Abu Bakr and Umar were so dedicated to Islam that they wanted it to be recognized and developed worldwide- or they might have probably desired for expanding their own ruling territory as there is such a greed in all mankind- for this reason they invaded many countries. The Arabian Peninsula was only a desert and there was nothing in it so that the people had to mash the date seed to make bread out of it, they lived that way, but they conquered the Levant where was a vast fertile land and there were all kinds of divine prosperities, or they occupied Persia where there were lots of treasures and accredited and wealthy merchants. Gradually, all this wealth gathered together in the Arabian Peninsula in such a way that when Abdurrahman Ibn Awf, for instance, who was one of the Sahabah (the Companions), also Uthman's brother or father in-law, and was one of those Arabs living in severe poverty, died thirty years after Hijra, it is said that he had enormous loads of gold bars and his inheritors shared the gold bars by breaking them into pieces using an axe. Another example is Talha and Zubair that one of them had four hundred bondsmen and bondswomen. In essence, this wealth caused them partly to ignore basic Islamic laws and that is why Ali (AS) could not rule in comfort, i.e. he said: I am told that Muawiah is a very smart politician, (I am telling you) I am smarter, the difference is he cannot help himself doing anything he wishes, but I want to rule in conformity with Islam, the same method the Prophet applied.

The Prophet felt responsible for two duties: one duty was to educate human individuals, in other words; to educate Muslims, as we; Shiites, call this subject matter Vilayah and later on Ali (AS) was designated to take over that position. The other duty was to rule, manage, govern and protect the people and the Islamic society which had to be carried out by The Rashidun Caliphs. These verses revealed for the purpose of governing society also contained the ethical codes.

One of the teachings which is individualistic but at the same time addresses the whole society is the verse of retaliation, saying: **“and there is life for you in (the law of) retaliation, O’ those who believe”**¹¹. In fact, this verse addresses the government and all people should follow this rule alongside the government. It is obvious that if someone gives no care about how others are and behave, they will be rebellious. But in the preceding verse, the harshness is softened, saying: **“but if anyone is forgiven by his (aggrieved) brother”**¹², it is better and desired by God. Now, you may raise a question why the latter verse contradicts the former one. It does not. The verse considers all the society including Muslims and non-Muslims, religious and non-religious, there are people from all walks of life, if they are not managed, there will be chaos. If one gets killed, there may ten people get killed to take revenge, if one is slapped in the face; his reaction may be beheading the attacker by sword, this verse handles these things. But the verse which says **“if you forgive, it is more favorable”** addresses the believers; **“O’ those who believe”** and follows as **“this is an alleviation from your Lord and a mercy”**. The verse addresses the believers, those who believe in the Prophet, those who believe all Muslims are their siblings. For these people; the believers, there will be no risk if they forgive. But for other

¹¹ The Quran, Al-Baqara (The Cow), 179: وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيَاةٌ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ

¹² The Quran, Al-Baqara (The Cow), 178: فَمَنْ عَفِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ

people, it is perilous because there will grudges be held in their hearts and it will have adverse consequences.

There is a verse in the surah of Al-Hujaraat giving a variety of teachings for both people and government. It reads: **“and if two families of the believers quarrel, make peace between them; but if one of them acts wrongfully towards the other, fight that one which acts wrongfully until they return to Allah’s command; then if they return, make peace between them with justice and act equitably; surely Allah loves those who act equitably”**¹³. This verse does not address only one person but the whole people. In the Arabic script of the Quran, this very **“fight”** is plural. However, there are a lot of verses addressing only one person such as **“but if anyone is forgiven by his (aggrieved) brother”**. The verb is singular and addresses only one person. The former verse addresses the whole society and the government. You must notice that which group is violating the other one’s right and is acting against God’s law. You must fight them but not in order to annihilate them as they are also believers; **a family of the believers**, but they have made some mistakes. You must stand against them until they follow the God’s law, as soon as they do, let them go and make peace among the two families as they are both your brothers and sisters as well. **“Make peace between them”** because God loves unbiased and even-minded observers. This teaching is for a society which wishes to follow the Islamic rules.

Since the verses are still alive; no verse is useless and inapplicable and can be applied even at the present time, they are useful in a way that if there are no weapons and forces available, we can stand against the believers who are violating the other one’s rights but we must not fight with them. We must talk and advise them not to violate. As sometimes it is read in the press that those who irrelatively enter the war will be backfired and consequently annihilated. Because none of the two quarreling parties is our enemy but our brothers. When they stop acting wrongfully and change their minds, we can personally make peace between them. But the problem is that we are not allowed to enter the war.

Therefore, this verse has been basically revealed for the governments but is nowadays beneficial for human individuals too. Every verse has been revealed for a reason and cannot be expired. Our Imams also said that what is between the two covers of this book is the very Quran; in other words, neither anything has been added to nor anything has been deducted from it. The best evidence is what God has said: **“Surely we have revealed the reminder (Zikir) and we will most surely be its guardian”**¹⁴. It is said that the order of verses in the Quran Ali (AS) recollected was different from the current Quran. In some parts, it is obvious that the order had not been like this. For example: after **“O’ wives of the Prophet! Take good care of yourself that you are not like any other women”**¹⁵, it continues: **“Allah only desires to keep the uncleanness away from you and to purify you, a thorough purifying, o’ people of the**

¹³ The Quran, Al-Hujaraat (The Private Apartments), 9:

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَاصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا فَإِنْ بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَى فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّى تَفِيءَ إِلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ فَاءَتْ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ

¹⁴ The Quran, Al-Hijr (The Expelled), 9: إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

¹⁵ The Quran, Al-Ahzab (The Clans), 32: يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَاءِ

House!”¹⁶ The rest of the verse is about the Prophet’s wives. We believe this verse does not belong here, because in this verse many Muslims made a mistake and thought “**people of the House**” means the Prophet’s wives. But as far as we know, the Prophet’s wives were not entirely innocent and this verse does not belong here. Another example is the verse in the surah of Al-Maeda which reads: “**Forbidden to you is that which dies of itself, and blood, and flesh of pig, and that on which any other name than that of Allah has been invoked**” and continues as “**this day I have perfected for you your religion and completed my favor on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion**”¹⁷, the former part also does not belong here as God has said in the preceding verses that which is halal (approved by Islamic laws) and which is haram (forbidden by Islamic laws), this part is almost a repetition. However, this matter is not a big issue to presume that the religion had not been completed and this verse completed it. The carrion is halal for one who is in urgent need. So this verse also does not belong here. Because it should belong where God orders the Prophet: “**O’ Messenger, deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and if you do not, then you have not delivered His message**” and after the Prophet designates Ali (AS), this is revealed: “**this day I have perfected for you your religion and completed my favor on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion**”.

Some verses may be in the wrong parts but they have not been distorted. A few jurisprudents also believe that some “**to Ali (AS)**” follows the verse “**O’ Messenger, deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord**”, or that there was an entire surah named Ali (AS) in the Quran, but all of our Imams said that what we read now is the very Quran. No one ever saw that Ja’far al-Sadiq (AS) or any other Imams go to a different room and read a different Quran. They read the same Quran and put it into practice. If we pay a careful attention to the verses of the Quran we read today, we will realize that they are both for the society in case it wants to conform to Islam and for every human individual if they want to follow the Islamic ethical codes.

¹⁶ The Quran, Al-Ahzab (The Clans), 33: إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

¹⁷ The Quran, Al-Maeda (The Table), 3:

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالْدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أُهْلِيَ لغيرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ وَالْمُنْخَفَقَةُ وَالْمَوْفُودَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيخَةُ وَمَا أَكَلَ السَّبُعُ إِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصَبِ وَأَنْ تَسْتَقْسِمُوا بِالْأَزْلَامِ ذَلِكُمْ فَسُقُ الْيَوْمَ يَيْسَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ دِينِكُمْ فَلَا تَحْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِ الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ فِي مَخْمَصَةٍ غَيْرِ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِإِيْمِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ