

ALI 655: Esoteric Foundations of the Shia Faith

Session Two

This moment [death of the Prophet] both cosmologically and metaphysically, signals the start of the *wilāyah*, the beginning of its temporal and exoteric manifestation. It is at that point when the *wilāyah* [guardianship] ceases to be a latent, nameless reality, and transforms itself into a manifest and named reality.

Understanding Wilayah

- Creates a partnership between the secular and spiritual lives of believers.
- Combines the ritual and spiritual aspects of life.
- Inhibits the infiltration of human ego and desires into the Quranic message.
- Preserves the wholeness of Islamic teachings.
- Allows theology, jurisprudence, and spirituality to flow from the same spring which is Divinely sanctioned.

Quotes from the Text

Since spiritual authority and temporal power come from God above, it is impossible for a man to receive the sacred investiture of Imām or *khaīfah* through a classicist covenant or a political plot between parties.

The Imamate and religious leadership in Islam may be studied from three different perspectives:

- i) from the perspective of Islamic government
- ii) of Islamic sciences and injunctions
- iii) and of leadership and innovative guidance in the spiritual life.

Shi'ism believes that since Islamic society is in dire need of guidance in each of these three aspects, the person who occupies the function of giving that guidance and is the leader of the community in these areas of religious concern must be appointed by God and the Prophet.

The function of Shī'ism, like that of Sūfism, is similar to the human heart in the sense that the heart is the vital center of the human body as well as being, in reality, the intellectual 'center' of a reality that transcends any formal determination.

The possibility of the personal religious tradition of the Prophet, at least in some important matters, being carefully handed down to the Imāms of the House of the Prophet, the people who undoubtedly had the best opportunity of knowing the true interpretation of many a principle of Islām.

Esoteric Role of the Imam

- 1) The successor to the spiritual office of the Prophet, the executor of his *bātin* or the esoteric interpreter of the word of God.
- 2) The leader of the caravan of the people to God, and preserver of the link between humanity and the inner reality.
- 3) Interpreter of the inter-textual mysteries of the Qur'ān and the *Sharī'ah*.

The sayings of the Imāms are in many ways not only a continuation but also a kind of commentary and elucidation of the prophetic hadīth, often with the aim of bringing out the esoteric teachings of Islām.

The Imāms inherited from the Prophet a certain body of teaching concerning the interpretation of the Qur'ān, which they enriched as they transmitted it.

Who is most fit for Wilayah?

- 1) Who was the person who had the most merit and was most fit to assume the place of the Prophet in social and political leadership of the Muslims?
- 2) On whom does the authority for reference fall? And in which way has this person acquired his knowledge? And is this person incapable of erring as far as the commandments are concerned, or not?
- 3) Who can lead believers towards God and guide them to purify their souls and transcend towards the hereafter?

The social life which man spends in the observance of religious principles is a living event and a spiritual life, in which the blessings of the next world and its everlasting felicities originate.

Nubuwwah (prophethood) is a reality which gains access to the religious commandments and Divine precepts related to life, and imparts them to people.

Wilayah is a reality which comes into existence as the result of the putting into practice in man of what was caused to descend through the Prophet and the Divine precepts.

Wilayah, the Station of the Master, Shahid Murtada Mutahhari

<https://lib.imamhussain.org/uploads/library/2/16.pdf>

THE STATUS OF AHLUL BAYT AMONG MUSLIMS

	Sunnis	Sufis	Shi'as
Love of Ahlul Bayt	✓	✓	✓
Spiritual Guidance of the Ahlul Bayt	✗	✓	✓
Political Leadership of the Ahlul Bayt	✗	✗	✓
Universal Authority of the Ahlul Bayt	✗	✗	✓

From:

Shi'ism: Imamate and Wilayat

By Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi

وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا قُطْبُ الرَّحَا تَدُورُ عَلَيَّ وَأَنَا بِمَكَانِي
فَإِذَا فَارَقْتُهُ اسْتَحَارَ مَدَارُهَا وَاضْطَرَبَ ثِفَالُهَا

I am the axis of the mill. It rotates on me while I remain in my position. As soon as I leave it the centre of its rotation would be disturbed and its lower stone would also be disturbed.

Imam Ali (a), Nahjul Balagha, sermon #119

By Allah, the son of Abu Quhafah (Abu Bakr) dressed himself with it (the caliphate) and he certainly knew that my position in relation to it was the same as the position of the axis in relation to the hand-mill.

Nahjul Balagha, sermon no.3