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Shari'ah, Tariqah and Haqiqah

One of the important points of contention between the *'urafa'* and the non-*'urafa'*, especially the jurisprudents, is the particular teaching of *'irfan* regarding the Shari'ah, the Tariqah (the Way) and the Haqiqah (the Reality). Both agree in saying that the Shari'ah, the body of Islamic laws, is based upon a series of realities and beneficial objectives. The jurisprudents generally interpret these goals to consist of certain things that lead the human being to felicity, that is, to the highest possible level of benefit from God's material and spiritual favors to man. The *'urafa'*, on the other hand, believe that all the paths end in God, and that all goals and realities are merely the means, causes and agencies that impel the human being towards God.

The jurisprudents say only that underlying the laws of the Shariah is a series of benign objectives, that these objectives constitute the cause and spirit of the Shari'ah, and that the only way of attaining these objectives is to act in accordance with the Shari'ah. But the *'urafa'* believe that the realities and objectives underlying the laws of the Shari'ah are of the nature of stations and stages on the human being's ascent towards God and in the process of man's access to the ultimate reality.

The *'urafa'* believe that the esoteric aspect of the Shari'ah is the Way, the Tariqah, at whose end is the Reality (al-Haqiqah), that is *tawhid* (in the sense mentioned earlier), which is a stage acquired after the obliteration of the *'arif's* self and his egoism. Thus the gnostic believes in three things: the Shari'ah, the Tariqah, and the Haqiqah, and that the Shari'ah is the means to, or the shell of the Tariqah, and the Tariqah again is the means to or the shell of the kernel of Haqiqah.

We have explained how the jurisprudents view Islam in the lectures on *kalam*.[1] They believe that the Islamic teachings can be grouped into three branches. The first of these is *kalam*, which deals with the principal doctrines (*usul al-'aqa'id*). In matters related to the doctrines it is necessary for the human being to acquire, through reason, shakeless belief and faith.

The second branch is ethics (*akhlaq*). It sets forth the instructions about one's duty in regard to ethical virtues and vices.

The third branch, *fiqh*, deals with the laws (*ahkam*), which relate to our external actions and behavior.

These three branches of Islamic teachings are separate from each other. The branch of *kalam* is related to thought and reason; the branch of *akhlaq* is related to the self, its faculties and habits; and the branch of *fiqh* is related to the organs and limbs of the body.

However, on the subject of doctrines, the *'urafa'* do not consider merely mental and rational belief to be sufficient. They claim that whatever is to be believed in must be arrived at; one must strive to remove the veils between oneself and those realities.

Similarly, with respect to the second branch they do not consider ethics to be adequate on account of its being static and limited. In place of a philosophical ethics, they suggest a spiritual methodology (*sayr wa suluk*) with its particular composition.

Finally, in the third branch, they have no criticisms; only in specific instances do they express opinions that could, possibly, be taken as being opposed to the laws of *fiqh*.

These three branches are, therefore, termed by the *'urafa'* as Shari'ah, Tariqah, and Haqiqah. Yet they believe that in exactly the same way as the human being cannot be divided into three sections, that is, the body, the self, and reason, which are not separate from each other and form an indivisible whole of which they constitute inward and outward aspects, so it is with the Shari'ah, the Tariqah, and the Haqiqah. One is outward shell, another is inward kernel, and the third is the kernel of the kernel. There is a difference, however, in that the *'urafa'* consider the stages of human existence to be more than three; that is, they believe in a stage that transcends the domain of reason. God willing, this shall be explained later.

1. Murtada Mutahhari, An Introduction to Ilm al Kalam, transl. By Ali Quli Qarai, Al-Tawhid, vol II No. 2

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