

Dissimulation (Taqiyyah)

Taqiyyah is the practice of hiding one's belief under duress and it is mentioned in the Noble Qur'an in three places:

Let not the believers take the disbelievers as guardians instead of the believers, and whoever does this will never be helped by Allah in any way, unless you indeed fear a danger from them (*illa an tattaqu minhum tuqat*).¹

Whoever disbelieved in Allah after his belief—except him who is forced thereto and whose heart is at rest with faith.²

And a believing man from Pharaoh's family who hid his faith....³

These three verses clearly point to the permissibility of concealing one's ideology and opinion whenever in danger. Those living in countries with zero tolerance for the followers of the Ahlul Bayt, where democracy is absent and tyranny, oppression, and abuse of human rights are rampant, and people are subjected to persecution, torture, and killing on account of their beliefs should according to the Qur'anic teachings, practice taqiyyah – to conceal their lives, wealth, properties, families, and friends. Taqiyyah should only be practiced whenever there is fear of danger or harm.

If there is no fear of danger or harm, such as for the Muslims in the United States of America and Europe, then taqiyyah should not be practiced. Surah 16:106 illustrates this point, as it was revealed to allow some of the companions of the Prophet in Makkah to express disbelief with their tongues and hide their true faith in their hearts when they were being tortured by Abu Sufyan. Even the most prominent companion of the Prophet, 'Ammar ibn Yassir declared disbelief when the infidels were torturing him in Makkah. People came to the Prophet and complained that 'Ammar had become a disbeliever, a *kafir*. The Prophet replied, "No, indeed 'Ammar is full of faith (*iman*) from head to toe," and he told 'Ammar that if the disbelievers were to torture him again, then he should again deny his faith in public. This story is also mentioned in the explanation of verse 106 of Surah 16.

The first person in Islam to practice taqiyyah was the Messenger of Allah himself; when he concealed his

mission in the beginning of Islam. For three years,⁴ his mission was very secret, and in order to protect the message and the ideas he was carrying, he did not reveal them to the Quraysh until Allah commanded him to speak openly. **“Therefore, proclaim openly the message of Allah—that which you are commanded—and turn away from the idolaters,”** as Allah instructed the Prophet.⁵ Afterwards, the Prophet began openly inviting people to Islam after this period of taqiyyah.

Moreover, Islamic history shows that many prominent leaders, of all schools of thought, from various recorded traditions practiced taqiyyah on different occasions. For example, Imam Abu Hanifah when he gave verdicts to abandon prayers and break fast during the month of Ramadan for the person who was being coerced. Similarly, Imam Malik was obliged to use high levels of diplomacy with the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid dynasties by using Surah 3, verse 28 as justification. Imam Shafi‘i also used taqiyyah in his verdict regarding a man who swore falsely by the name of Allah under coercion that he will not have to pay the *kaffarah* (expiation).⁶ Imam al-Ghazzali narrates that protecting the Muslim blood is obligatory thus lying is obligatory, if it means preventing the shedding the blood of a Muslim.⁷

Some people associate taqiyyah with *nifaq* (hypocrisy). However, hypocrisy is defined as falsely displaying faith (*iman*) while hiding disbelief (*kufr*), whereas taqiyyah is showing agreement, while in the heart there is disagreement in order to protect one’s self, family, money, or religion.

1. Noble Qur’an, 3:28

2. Noble Qur’an, 16: 106

3. Noble Qur’an, 40:28

4. Sirat ibn Hisham, Vol. 1, 274. Tarikh al-Tabari, Vol. 2, 216 and 218; Ibn Sa‘ad, al-Tabaqat al-Kubra, 200

5. Noble Qur’an, 15:94

6. Al-Amidi, Difa ‘an al-Kafi, Vol. 1, 627

7. al-Ghazzali, Ihya ‘Ulum al-Din

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