

Identifying the Shi`as

If we wish to discuss the Shi`as without fanaticism or affectation, we would say that they are the adherents of the Islamic School of Thought which respects and follows the twelve Imams from the family (Ahlul Bayt) of the Prophet. They are Ali and eleven of his offspring. The Shi`as refer to the Prophet and the Twelve Imams regarding all *fiqh* (jurisprudence) issues and public dealings.

They do not prefer anyone over the Twelve Imams with the exception of their grandfather, the bearer of the Message, Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah. This is briefly the true definition of the Shi`as. Disregard the allegations circulated by scandal mongers and fanatics who claim that the Shi`as are the enemies of Islam, that they believe in the “prophethood” of Ali, and that he is the one who bears the prophetic Message, or that they belong to Abdullah ibn Saba, the Jew, and that they are this and that...

I have read many books and articles written by those who try very hard to “prove” that the Shi`as are *kafirs* (apostates), trying to excommunicate them from the Islamic creed altogether. Yet their statements are no more than sheer calumnies and obvious lies which they cannot prove or document except by quoting what their predecessors among the enemies of Ahlul Bayt have said, in addition to the statements of the Nasibis who forced their authority on the Islamic world and ruled it by force and intimidation, pursuing the Prophet's progeny as well as those who follow them, killing and expelling them, calling them by all bad names.

Among such bad names, which are often repeated in books written by the enemies of the Shi`as, is the misnomer “Rafidis,” rejectionists. Any uninformed reader will instantly consider the possibility that they are the ones who rejected the Islamic principles and who did not act upon them, or that they rejected the Message of Prophet Muhammad. But the truth of the matter is quite different.

They were called “Rafidis” simply because early Umayyad and Abbaside rulers, as well as evil scholars who always tried to please them, wanted to misrepresent them by attaching such a misnomer to them. Early Shi`as preferred to remain loyal to Ali, rejecting the caliphate of Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman, and they rejected the caliphate of all other Umayyad and Abbaside rulers.

Such folks may have misled the Islamic *Ummah* through the help of a number of fabricators from the

sahaba (companions of the Holy Prophet), claiming that their caliphate was legitimate because it was mandated by Allah, Praise be to Him. Thus did they promote the allegation that the verse saying:

“O you who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger and those charged with authority among you” (Holy Qur'an, 4:59)

was revealed in their regard, especially since they were the ones charged with the authority of government and obedience to them, hence, was the obligation of all Muslims. They hired those who attributed to the Messenger of Allah the following tradition: “None abandons the authority of the ruler even in as little as an inch then dies except that he dies the death of *jahiliyya* (pre-Islamic period of ignorance).”

We thus come to realize that the Shi`as were oppressed by the rulers because they refused to pay allegiance to them and rejected their authority, regarding it as the usurpation of the right which belonged to Ahlul Bayt. Hence, rulers across many centuries duped their commoners into believing that the Shi`as rejected Islam and desired no less than its annihilation and demise, as stated by some past and present writers and historians who claim to be men of knowledge.

If we return to the game of making wrong look right, we will realize that there is a difference between those who wished to annihilate Islam and those who tried to put an end to the oppressive and corrupt governments whose norm of conduct is anti-Islamic. Shi`as never abandoned Islam; rather, they opposed unjust rulers, and their objective has always been the returning of the trust to its rightful people and thus erect the foundations of the type of Islam that rules with justice and equity.

Anyway, the conclusion we reached in our past researches, as outlined in *Then I was Guided, With the Truthful*, and *Ask Those Who Know*, is that Shi`as are the ones who will attain salvation because they are the ones who have always upheld the Two Weighty Things: the Book of Allah, and the Progeny of His Messenger.

For the sake of fairness, some scholars from those referred to as “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah” (followers of the Sunnah and consensus) admit this same fact. For example, Ibn Manzur says the following in his lexicon *Lisan al-Arab* where he defines the Shi`as:

The Shi`as are the people who love what the Prophet's Progeny loves, and they are loyal to such Progeny.^{[1](#)}

Commenting on this statement, Dr. Sa`id Abd al-Fattah `Ashoor says, “If the Shi`as love whatever the Prophet's Progeny loves and are loyal to such Progeny, who among the Muslims would refuse to be a Shi`a?!”

The age of fanaticism and hereditary enmity has gone by, and the age of enlightenment and intellectual freedom has dawned; therefore, the educated youths have to open their eyes and read the literature

published by the Shi`as. They ought to contact them and talk to their scholars in order to know the truth first-hand, for how often have we been deceived by honey sweet talk and by calumnies which do not withstand any proof or argument?

The world nowadays is accessible to everyone, and Shi`as are present in all parts of the world. It is not fair that a researchers studying the Shi`as should ask their enemies and opponents, those who hold different religious views from the Shi`as, about them. And what does an inquirer expect other than being told by such opponents what has always been said since the beginning of the Islamic history?

Shi`as are not a secretive cult that does not reveal its beliefs except to its members; rather, their books and beliefs are published throughout the world, their schools and religious circles are open to all seekers of knowledge, their scholars hold public discussions, lectures, debates, and conferences, and they call for common grounds and try to unite the Islamic *Ummah*.

I am convinced that fair-minded individuals in the Islamic nation who seriously research this subject will find out the truth beyond which there is nothing but falsehood. Nothing stops them from reaching such truth except biased propaganda media, false rumors circulated by the enemies of the Shi`as, or a particular erroneous practice by some Shi`a commoners.² Sometimes it suffices an enemy of the Shi`as to remove one false claim, or wipe out one erroneous myth, to join their ranks.³

I recollect in this regard the incident of a Syrian man who was misled by the propaganda machine of that time. Having entered Medina to visit the grave site of the greatest Messenger of Allah, he happened to see a rider on horseback whose dignity and awe were captivating, and who was accompanied by some of his followers surrounding him from all directions, eagerly awaiting his commands. The Syrian man was quite astonished to find a man besides Mu`awiyah surrounded with such a halo of reverence. He was told that the rider was al-Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib. "Is he the son of Abu Turab, the Kharijite?!" asked he.

Then he went to extremes in cursing and taunting al-Hasan, his father, and his Ahlul Bayt. Al-Hasan's companions took their swords out of their scabbards and rushed to kill that Syrian, but they were stopped by Imam al-Hasan who alighted from his horse, welcomed the Syrian, and with noble manners asked him, "It seems to me that you are a stranger in these quarters, O brother of the Arabs, are you?" "Yes," the Syrian answered, "I am from Syria, and I am a follower of the commander of the faithful and the master of the Muslims Mu`awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan." Al-Hasan again welcomed him and said to him, "You are my guest," but the Syrian rejected the invitation, yet al-Hasan kept insisting to host him till he agreed.

The Imam, and for the entire (three-day customary) hospitality period, kept serving him in person and being extremely nice to him. On the fourth day, the Syrian showed signs of regret and repentance on account of his past conduct towards al-Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib; he remembered how he had cursed and taunted him, while here he was so kind to him and so generous. He asked al-Hasan and pleaded to

him to forgive his past conduct, and the following dialogue resulted in the presence of some of al-Hasan's companions:

AL-HASAN: "Have you recited the Qur'an, O brother of the Arabs?"

SYRIAN: "I have memorized the entire text of the Qur'an."

AL-HASAN: "Do you know who Ahlul Bayt from whom Allah removed all abomination and whom He purified with a perfect purification are?"

SYRIAN: "They are Mu`awiyah and the family of Abu Sufyan." Those present there were very surprised to hear such an answer.

Al-Hasan smiled and said to the man, "I am al-Hasan ibn Ali; my father is the cousin and brother of the Messenger of Allah; my mother is Fatima, Mistress of the ladies of all mankind; my grandfather is the Messenger of Allah and the master of all prophets and messengers. My uncle is al-Hamza, master of martyrs, and so is Ja`far al-Tayyar.

We are Ahlul Bayt whom Allah, Praise to Him, has purified and kindness to whom He required of the Muslims. We are the ones whom Allah and His angels blessed, ordering the Muslims to bless us. I and my brother al-Husayn are the masters of the youths of Paradise."

Then Imam al-Hasan enumerated some virtues of Ahlul Bayt, acquainting him with the truth, whereupon the Syrian could see the light, so he wept and kept kissing al-Hasan's hands and face, profusely apologizing to him for his misconduct, saying, "By Allah Who is the One and Only God! I entered Medina and none on the face of earth I hated more than you, while now I seek nearness to Allah, Praise to Him, through loving you, obedience to you, and dissociation from those who antagonize you."

It was then that Imam al-Hasan turned to his companions and said, "And you wanted to kill him though he was innocent! Had he known the truth, he would not have been our opponent. Most Muslims in Syria are like him. Were they to know the truth, they would follow it." Then he recited the verse saying,

"The good deeds and the bad deeds are not alike; repel (evil) with what is best, so one between whom and you there is enmity will be as if he were a warm friend" (Holy Qur'an, 41:34).

Yes, this is the reality with which most people, unfortunately, are not familiar. How many are those who oppose the truth and reject it for a good portion of their lives till one day they find out that they were wrong, so they rush to repent and seek forgiveness? Everyone is obligated to seek the truth: it is said that reverting to the truth is a virtue.

The problem is with those who see the truth with their very eyes and who touch it with their very hands, yet they still stand in its face and fight it for the achievement of low ends, for the sake of a fleeting life, and because of hidden grudges. About such people has the Lord of Honors and Dignity said,

“It is the same whether you warn them or not; they will never believe” (Holy Qur’an, 36: 10).

So there is no sense in wasting time with them; rather, it is our obligation to sacrifice everything for those who are fair-minded and who truly seek the truth and exert a genuine effort to reach it. Such are the ones about whom the Lord of Honor and Dignity has said,

“You can only warn one who follows the Reminder and fears the Beneficent God in secret; so announce to him forgiveness and an honorable reward” (Holy Qur’an, 36: 11).

Those endowed with awareness from the Shi`as everywhere are obligated to spend their time and wealth to introduce the truth to all members of the Islamic Ummah. The Imams from Ahlul Bayt are not the exclusive privilege of the Shi`as; rather, they are the Imams of guidance of everybody.

They are the light that shatter for all Muslims the darkness of ignorance. If the Imams from Ahlul Bayt remain unknown to most Muslims, especially the educated among the “followers of the Sunnah and consensus,” the Shi`as will bear the burden of such a responsibility before Allah.

If there are still among people those who are apostates or atheists who are not familiar with the straight religion of Allah as brought by Muhammad, the master of all messengers, the responsibility falls upon the shoulders of all Muslims.

1. Refer to p. 189, Vol. 8, of Lisan al-Arab lexicon by Abul-Fadl Jamal ad-Din Muhammad Ibn Manzur (630 – 711 A.H./1233 – 1311 A.D.).

2. We will conclude, when we come to the end of this book, that the conduct of some Shi`a commoners discourages educated Sunni youths from continuing their research to discover the truth.

3. As did, indeed, happen to the author of this book and to many others. __ Tr.

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