

Introducing the Imams of the Shi`as

Shi`as have confined their loyalty to the twelve Imams from Ahlul Bayt, peace be upon them, the first of whom is Ali ibn Abu Talib followed by his son al-Hasan then his son al-Husayn then the nine infallible ones among al-Husayn's offspring, peace and blessings of Allah be upon all of them.

The Messenger of Allah had named all these Imams in many of his statements either explicitly or implicitly, and he had mentioned them by name according to some traditions transmitted by the Shi`as and others transmitted by "Sunni" scholars.

Some of Ahlul Sunnah may object to these traditions, expressing astonishment at how the Messenger could have talked about issues related to the unknown which were enshrouded with non-existence. The Holy Qur'an states:

"Had I known the unseen, I would have had much of good and no evil would have touched me"
(Holy Qur'an, 7: 188).

To counter this argument, we say that this sacred verse does not exclude the Messenger from knowing the unseen at all; rather, it was revealed in response to some polytheists who asked him to inform them when the Hour would come, and the time of the Hour is the sole knowledge of Allah, Glory to Him, which He shares with nobody. The Holy Qur'an, on the other hand, clearly states:

"The One Who knows the unseen! So He does not reveal His secrets to anyone except to whomsoever He chooses (such) as an apostle" (Holy Qur'an, 72:26-27).

The exception to which this verse refers indicates that He, Glory to Him, acquaints His messengers whom He chooses with the knowledge of the unseen. For example, read what Joseph (Yusuf), peace be upon him, said to his prison inmates:

"No food shall come to you except that I will inform you of it before it reaches you; surely this is of what my Lord has taught me" (Holy Qur'an, 12:37).

Another example is this verse:

“Then they found one of Our servants whom We had granted mercy and whom We had taught knowledge from Us” (Holy Qur'an, 18:65).

This is a reference to the story of al-Khidr who met Moses and whom he taught of the knowledge of the unseen, the knowledge which he could not wait to know in time.

Muslims, be they Shi`as or Sunnis, did not dispute the fact that the Messenger of Allah used to know the unseen, and many incidents have been recorded in this regard such as his statement to Ammar: “O Ammar! The oppressive party shall kill you,” and his statement to Ali: “The worst wretch among the generations to come is a man who will strike you (with the sword) on your head, so he will drench your beard (with your blood).”

He had also said to Ali, “My son al-Hasan will be the one through whom Allah will bring peace between two large parties.” Another is his statement to Abu Dharr al-Ghifari in which he told him that he would die alone in banishment, and the list of such numerous incidents goes on and on. Among them is the famous tradition which al-Bukhari and Muslim and all those who succeeded them states: “The Imams after me are twelve: all of them will belong to Quraysh,” and according to another narration, “all of them will be the offspring of Hashim.”

In both our previous books *With the Truthful [Ma`a al-Sadiqin]* and *Ask Those Who Know [Fas'aloo Ahlul Dhikr]*, we proved that Sunni scholars themselves have referred in their *Sahih* and *Musnad* books to the traditions relevant to the Imamate of the Twelve Imams, admitting their authenticity.

Someone may ask, “Why did they, then, set those traditions aside and followed the Imams of the four sects if they actually admitted the existence and the authenticity of those traditions?” The answer is: All the “good predecessors” were supporters of the three caliphs who reached caliphate through the *saqeefa* (the shed of Banu Sa`ida), namely Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman, so it was only natural that they should turn away from Ahlul Bayt and become enemies of Imam Ali and his offspring.

They, therefore, tried very hard to obliterate the Prophetic Sunnah and substitute it with their own *ijtihad*, personal viewpoints. This caused the division of the nation into two groups immediately following the death of the Messenger of Allah. Those among the “good predecessors” and those who followed them and adopted their attitudes represented “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah,” who are the vast majority of the Muslim *Ummah*. A small minority which included Ali and his Shi`as boycotted the allegiance (to Abu Bakr) and rejected it, becoming the outcasts and the condemned. They were called Rafidis, rejectionists.

Due to the fact that “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a” were the ones who controlled the destiny of the Ummah across the centuries, the rulers from Banu Umayyah as well as those from Banu al-Abbas were all supporters and followers of the school of caliphate founded by Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Mu`awiyah¹ and Yazid.

When that caliphate failed, its dignity was lost, ending in the hands of the Mamlukes and non-Arabs, and

there were those who were heard calling for the documenting of the Prophetic Sunnah..., it was only then that such traditions, which former generations tried very energetically to obliterate and hide but could not do so, in addition to those particular traditions persisted as puzzles mystifying them: they contradicted their beliefs at that time.

Some of them tried to reconcile those traditions with their beliefs, so they pretended to love Ahlul Bayt; therefore, whenever the name of Imam Ali is mentioned, they would say, "May Allah be pleased with him," or "Allah glorified his countenance," so that people might get the impression that they were not the enemies of the House of Prophethood.

None among the Muslims, not even the hypocrites among them, can demonstrate his enmity towards the Prophet's family because the enemies of Ahlul Bayt are the enemies of the Messenger of Allah, and such enmity will eject them from the Islamic fold altogether as is obvious.

What we can understand from all of this is that they, in reality, are, indeed, enemies of the Prophet's family, and by "they" we mean the "good predecessors" who adopted the label of, or who were labelled by their supporters as, "Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a." Another proof is that you can find all of them following the four sects which were created by the ruling authority (as we will soon prove), and they have nothing in their religious injunctions to which they can refer such as the *fiqh* of Ahlul Bayt, or of any of the Twelve Imams.

The truth mandates that Imamite Shi`as are actually the followers of the Sunnah of Muhammad because they upheld in all their juristic injunctions the teachings of the Imams of Ahlul Bayt who inherited the authentic Sunnah from their grandfather the Messenger of Allah without mixing it with their own personal views, opinions, or the statements of the caliphs.

Shi`as remained across the centuries upholding these texts and rejecting the concept of *ijtihad* in the presence of clear traditions, believing in the caliphate of Ali and his offspring because the Prophet had clearly indicated so.

They, therefore, call them the caliphs of the Messenger of Allah although only Ali had the chance to be the actual caliph. They reject and refuse to recognize the rulers who held the caliphate from the beginning to the end because such caliphate was [in the words of Umar ibn al-Khattab himself] based on "a grave mistake from the evil of which Allah protected us," and because it came as a rejection and a renunciation of the texts stated by Allah and His Messenger. All those who came after that made such caliphate hereditary; each caliph ruled only because he was nominated by his predecessor or by fighting and winning the battle.[2](#)

Because of all this, "Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a" were obligated to say that obedience was obligatory to both a good and a bad Imam; they accepted the caliphate of all their rulers, including the sinners among them.

Imamite Shi'as are characterized by preaching the necessity of the infallibility of the Imam; so, no major Imamate nor the leadership of the nation can be right except to an infallible Imam, and there is no human being in this nation who is infallible except those from whom Allah removed all abomination and whom He purified with a perfect purification [according to verse 33, Chapter 33, of the Holy Qur'an].

- [1.](#) We have deliberately made no reference to the caliphate of Ali ibn Abu Talib because “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a” did not recognize it except during the time of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, as we have already indicated above; so, refer to the chapter with the heading “Ahlul Sunnah Are Not Familiar with the Prophetic Sunnah” in this book.
- [2.](#) The only exception is the caliphate of Ali ibn Abu Talib . Only he was not appointed by his predecessor, nor did he achieve it by fighting others and subduing them. Rather, Muslims chose him out of their free will to be their caliph, and they insisted on it when they invited him to rule.

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