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Second Session, Friday night, 20th Rajab, 1345 A.H.

Hafiz: I was greatly impressed by your instructive conversation concerning your ancestral lineage. I admit that you are a descendant of the Holy Prophet but, I wonder how a man of your learning could be under the degrading influence of the enemies.

Having left the ways of your illustrious ancestors, you have adopted the ways of the unbelievers of Iran. What I mean by the foolish ways of the enemies are those innovations which have entered Islam through the Israelites.

Well-Wisher: Kindly explain what you mean.

Misconception about origin of the 'Shi'as' sect

Hafiz: The Israelites' whole history is stained with deceit. Abdullah Ibn Saba' San'a'i, Ka'abu'l-Ahbar, Wahhab Ibn Munabba, and others professed Islam, and pretended to accept the 'hadith' of the Holy Prophet and thus, created confusion among the Muslims.

The third caliph, Uthman Ibn Affan, pursued them, and they fled to Egypt, where they established a sect known as the 'Shi'as'. They spread false reports about Caliph Uthman, and fabricated 'hadith' to the effect that the Holy Prophet had appointed 'Ali as caliph, and Imam. With the formation of this sect, there was widespread violence, which led to the murder of Caliph Uthman, and the assumption of the caliphate by 'Ali.

A group inimical to Uthman stood high in 'Ali's favor. During the caliphate of the Umayyads, when the people of the family of 'Ali and his adherents were being killed, this group went into hiding.

Still, some people, like Salman al-Farsi, Abu Dharr Ghifari, and Ammar Yasir, supported the cause of 'Ali. This struggle continued until the time of Harun ar-Rashid, and especially his son, Ma'mun ar-Rashid

Abbasi, who subdued his brother with the help of the Iranians, and they then spread the idea that ‘Ali was preferable to other caliphs.

The Iranians, hostile to the Arabs who had conquered them, found an opportunity to challenge the Arabs in the name of religion.

The ‘Shi’as’ became powerful during the period of the Dailamites and the Safavid Kings, and were finally recognized. They were then formally known as the ‘Shi’as’ sect. Iranian ‘Zoroastrians still call themselves Shi’as.

In short, the ‘Shi’as’ sect was founded by a Jew, Abdullah Ibn Saba. Otherwise, there would have been no such word as ‘Shi’as’ in Islam. Your grandfather, the Holy Prophet, hated the word. In fact, the ‘Shi’as’ sect is a part of the Jewish faith.

I wonder why you left the just ways of your ancestors and followed the path of your predecessors, who adopted Jewish ways. You should have followed the Holy Qur'an and the example of your grandfather, the Prophet.

Absurd to associate Abdullah Ibn Saba with Shi’as

Well-Wisher: It is unusual for a learned man like you to base his arguments on utterly false grounds. There is no sense in your associating the name of Abdullah Ibn Saba with the Shi’as. Abdullah Ibn Saba was a Jew, and, according to ‘Shi’as’ sources, a hypocrite and is harshly condemned. If for some time he appeared to be a friend of ‘Ali, what connection did he have with the Shi’as?

If a thief puts on the attire of a learned man, mounts the pulpit, and injures the cause of Islam, should you be averse to learning and call learned men thieves?

In fact, ‘Shi’as’ Muslims have never been merely a political party. They have always comprised a religious sect, which was not founded, as you say, in the time of Caliph Uthman, but was propagated through the words and commands of the Prophet during his own time. While you argue on the basis of the concocted evidence of enemies, I will cite for you verses from the Holy Qur'an, and records of your own authors to establish the true position.

Meaning of Shi’as

Well-Wisher: ‘Shi’as’, as you know, literally means "follower." One of your greatest ‘ulama’, Firuzabadi, in his ‘Qamusu'l-Lughat’, says, "The name 'Shi’as' commonly means every person who is a friend of ‘Ali and his ‘Ahlul Bayt’.

This name is peculiar to them." Exactly the same meaning is given by Ibn Athir in Nihayatu'l-Lughat. According to your own commentaries, the word Shi’as means "follower of ‘Ali Ibn Abu Talib" and was

used in this way during the time of the Prophet. In fact, it was the Prophet himself who introduced the word Shi'as' as meaning "follower of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib."

And, this word was used by the Holy Prophet about whom Allah says: "Nor, does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed." (53:3-4) The Prophet called the followers of 'Ali "The Shi'as", "the delivered", and "the rescued."

Hafiz: Where is such a thing? We have never seen it.

Well-Wisher: We have seen it, and we do not think it proper to conceal facts. Allah condemned concealers and called them companions of Hell. Allah says,

"Surely those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance that We revealed after We made it clear in the Book for men, those it is whom Allah shall curse, and those who curse shall curse them (too)." (***2:159***)

"Surely those who conceal any part of the Book that Allah has revealed and take for it a small price, they eat nothing but fire into their bellies, and Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor, will He purify them, and they shall have a painful chastisement." (***2:170***)

Hafiz: If we know the truth and conceal it, I agree we deserve condemnation as revealed in these Holy verses.

Well-Wisher: I hope you keep these two verses in mind so that habit or, intolerance may not overpower you. Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Ispahani is one of the most distinguished of your narrators of 'hadith'. Ibn Khallikan has praised him in his 'Wafayatu'l-A'ayan" as one of the great Huffaz (men of wisdom), and one of the most learned narrators of 'hadith'.

He also states that the ten volumes of his 'Hilyatu'l-Auliya' are among the most instructive of books. Salahu'd-din Khalil ibn Aibak Safdi writes in his 'Wafiy bi'l-Wafiyat' about him, "The crown of narrators of hadith, Hafiz Abu Nu'aim, was the foremost in knowledge, piety, and honesty.

He enjoyed a high position in the narration and understanding of 'hadith'. His best work is Hilyatu'l-Auliya in 10 volumes, consisting of derivations from the two Sahihs." Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Khatib praises him in Rijali'l-Mishkati'l-Masabih, saying that he is among the leading narrators of 'hadith' whose narrations are whollyutterly reliable.

In short, this respected scholar and traditionist, the pride of your 'ulama', relates from Abdullah ibn Abbas through his own chain of narrators in his book 'Hilyatu'l-Auliya' relates: "When the following verse of the Holy Qur'an was revealed:

'(As for) those who believe and do good, surely they are the best of men. Their reward with their Lord is gardens of perpetuity beneath which rivers flow, abiding there-in for ever. Allah is well

pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him; that is for him who fears his Lord.' (***98:7-8***)**,**

the Holy Prophet, addressing ‘Ali, said: 'O ‘Ali, the best of creatures (Khairu'l-bariyya) in this Holy verse refers to you, and your followers (‘Shi’as’). On the Day of Resurrection, you and your followers (‘Shi’as’) shall attain such a position that Allah will be pleased with you, and you will be pleased with Him.'"

Further merits of Shi’as

Similarly, Abu'l-Muwayyid Muwafiq Ibn Ahmad Khawarizmi in the 17th chapter of his ‘Manaqib’; Hakim Abu'l-Qasim Abdullah Ibn Abdullahi'l-Haskani, in ‘Shawahidu't-tanzil’; Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in ‘Kifayatu't-Talib’, p. 119, Sibt Ibn Jauzi in ‘Tadhkira’, p. 31, Munzir Ibn Muhammad Ibn Munzir, and particularly Hakim, have related that Hakim Abu Abdullah Hafiz (one of the greatest of your ‘ulama’) said:

Based on the testimony of narrators reaching back to Yazid Ibn Sharafi'l-Ansari, the scribe of the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali Ibn Abu Talib, that ‘Ali said that at the time of the Prophet's death, the Prophet rested on ‘Ali's chest and said:

"You have heard the Holy verse:

'Those who believe and do good deeds, it is they who are the best of creatures.' (***98:7***)

These are your ‘Shi’as’. My and your meeting place shall be at the fountain of Kauthar (in Paradise). When all created beings assemble for reckoning, your face will be bright, and you will be identified on that day as the leader of the bright-faced people."

Jalalu'd-din Suyuti, in his ‘Durru'l-Mansur’ quotes Abu'l-Qasim ‘Ali Ibn Hasan (commonly known as Ibn Asakir Damishqi), who quotes Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari, one of the greatest companions of the Prophet, as saying that he, and others were sitting with the Holy Prophet when ‘Ali Ibn Abu Talib came in. The Holy Prophet said: "I swear by Him Who controls my life that this man (‘Ali) and his ‘Shi’as’ shall secure deliverance on the Day of Resurrection."

At that time the verse cited above was revealed. In the same commentary, Ibn Adi quotes Ibn Abbas as saying that when the above verse was revealed, the Prophet said to the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali, "You and your followers (‘Shi’as’) will come on the Day of Resurrection in such a condition that all of you will be pleased with Allah, and Allah will be pleased with you."

In the ‘Manaqib’ of Khawarizmi, the following is related from Jabir ibn Abdullah Ansari: "I was in the presence of the Holy Prophet when ‘Ali joined us, and there upon the Holy Prophet said: 'It is my brother that has come to you.' Then, facing towards the Ka'ba, the Prophet took hold of ‘Ali's hand and said: 'By Him Who controls my life, this ‘Ali and his ‘Shi’as’ will be delivered on the Day of Judgement.'

Then he said: ‘Ali is the foremost of you all in belief, the most regardful about Allah's pledges, the most just of you all in deciding matters of the people, the most equitable of you in distributing allowances among the people, and the highest of you all in rank before Allah.'" On that occasion, the verse cited above was revealed.

In Chapter II of his ‘Sawa'iq’, Ibn Hajar quotes Hafiz Jamalu'd-Din Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Zarandi Madani (a great scholar of your sect) as saying that when the above verse was revealed, the Holy Prophet said: "O ‘Ali, you and your ‘Shi’as’ are the best of created beings.

You and your Shi’as will come on the Day of Judgement in such a condition that all of you will be pleased with Allah, and Allah will be pleased with you. Your enemies will be resentful, and their hands shall be tied round their necks." Then ‘Ali asked who his enemy was. The Holy Prophet replied, "One who is hostile to you, and who reviles you."

Allama Samhudi, in ‘Jawahiru'l-Iqdain’, on the authority of Hafiz Jamalu'd-Din Zarandi Madani and Nuru'd-din ‘Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad Maliki Makki, known as Ibn Sabbagh, who is regarded as one of your distinguished scholars and eminent theologians, in his ‘Fusulu'l-Muhimma’ relates from Abdullah ibn Abbas that when the verse under discussion was revealed, the Prophet said to ‘Ali:

"It is you and your Shi’as. You and they will come on the Day of Judgement fully pleased and satisfied, while your enemies will come in grief, with bound hands."

Mir Sayyid ‘Ali Hamadani Shafi'i, one of your eminent scholars, in his ‘Mawaddatu'l-Qurba’, and the well known anti-‘Shi’as’ scholar, Ibn Hajar, in his ‘Sawa'iq-e Muhriqa’ narrate from ‘Ummu'l-Mu'minin’ Umm Salma, the wife of the Prophet that the Holy Prophet said:

"O ‘Ali, you and your Shi’as will abide in Paradise; you and your Shi’as will abide in Paradise." The well known scholar of Khawarizm, Muwaffaq ibn Ahmad, in his ‘Manaqib’, Chapter 19, relates on reliable authority that the Prophet said to ‘Ali:

"In my community you are like the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary." This statement implies that as the followers of the Prophet Jesus were divided into three groups: “the true believers”, known as ‘hawari'in’, the Jews, and “the exaggerators”, who associated him with Allah. In the same way Muslims would become divided into three groups. One of them would be the Shi’as, “the true believers”. The other group would be ‘Ali's enemies, and the third group would be “the exaggerators” of his position.

Shi’as merits proven from Sunni books

The people then dispersed in response to the call for the Isha prayer. After the prayer, Mulla Abdu'l-Hayy returned with a commentary by Suyuti, ‘Mawaddatu'l-Qurba’, the ‘Musnad’ of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, and the ‘Manaqib’ of Khawarizmi.

He read from them the ‘hadith’ Well-Wisher had quoted in his discussions by way of verification. Since his references had been accurate, the expressions of all those in the opposite camp changed.

In the meantime, in the ‘Mawaddatu'l-Qurba’, they came across another ‘hadith’. The Prophet said: "O ‘Ali, on the Day of Judgement, you and your Shi’as will come before Allah fully satisfied and pleased, while your enemy will come in grief and with hands bound."

Well-Wisher: These are clear arguments supported by the Book of Allah, by authentic ‘hadith’, and by history. Support for my position comes from the books of your own eminent scholars. These are in addition to the numerous narrations that exist in the books, and commentaries of Shi’as.

Using the books now before you, I could go on presenting arguments in support of the point under consideration until tomorrow morning, by the grace of Allah; but, I think that what I have presented should be enough to dispel your doubts about Shi’as. Respected audience, we Shi’as are not Jews, we are followers of the Prophet Muhammad.

The originator of the word "Shi’as” as meaning "the followers of ‘Ali", was not the accursed Abdullah ibn Saba, but the Prophet himself. We never follow any individual without authoritative arguments in his favor. You said that it was after Uthman that the word "Shi’as" came to be used referring to the followers of ‘Ali. In fact, even in the Prophet's day, several noted companions were called Shi’as.

Hafiz Abu Hatim Razi, in his ‘Az-Zainat’, which he compiled for clarifying the meanings of certain words, and phrases current among scholars, says that the first new word that came into general acceptance in Islam in the days of the Prophet was "Shi’as". The word was applied to four prominent companions: Abu Dharr Ghifari, Salman al-Farsi, Miqdad ibn Aswad Kindi, and Ammar Yasir. Many more ‘hadith’ were quoted in support of the same point.

Now it is for you to consider how it was possible that during the time of the Prophet four of his chief companions were called Shi’as. If the Prophet thought it was innovation, why didn't he forbid the people to use it? The fact is that people had heard from the Prophet himself that the followers (Shi’as) of ‘Ali were the inhabitants of Heaven. They were proud of it, and openly called themselves Shi’as.

Rank of Salman, Abu Dharr, Miqdad, and Ammar

You related a ‘hadith’ from the Prophet saying: "Verily, my companions are like stars; whomever of them you follow, you will be properly guided." Abu'l-Fida writes in his history that these four men, who were companions of the Prophet, abstained, along with ‘Ali, from paying allegiance to Abu Bakr, on the ‘Saqifa day.

Why don't you consider their refusal to pay allegiance to be worthy of emulation? Your own ‘ulama’ have written that they were loved by Allah and His Prophet. We follow them, as they followed ‘Ali. Hence, according to your own hadith, we are on the path of guidance.

With your permission, and keeping in view the shortness of time, I present to you a few narrations in support of my contention that these men were loved by Allah and the Prophet. Both Abu Nu'aim Isfahani in 'Hilyatu'l-Auliya', Vol. I, p. 172, and Ibn Hajar Makki in the fifth 'hadith' of the forty 'hadith' narrated in 'Sawa'iq-e Muhriqa' in praise of 'Ali narrated from Tirmidhi, and Hakim from Buraida, that the Prophet said:

"Verily, Allah has commanded me to love four persons and has told me that He loves them." When the people asked who these four persons were, he said: "'Ali ibn Abu Talib, Abu Dharr, Miqdad, and Salman."

Again, Ibn Hajar in Hadith No. 39 has narrated from Tirmidhi and Hakim from Anas ibn Malik that the Prophet said: "Paradise is eager for three individuals, 'Ali, Ammar, and Salman." Isn't the action of these eminent companions of the Holy Prophet a model for other Muslims?

Isn't it shameful that in your view the companions are restricted to those persons who played the game of 'Saqifa', or, who acquiesced in it, while the others who opposed the strategy behind 'Saqifa' are seen as being unreliable? And, if that be so, then the 'hadith' you have quoted should have been: "Verily, a few of my companions are like stars, etc."

Causes of Iranian's Receptivity to Shi'as'ism

You have been unkind in saying that 'Shi'as'ism' is a political religion, and that Iranian 'Zoroastrians' accepted it in order to save themselves from Arab domination. You have said so in blind conformity to your predecessors.

I have already proved that it is an Islamic religion, one which was commended by the Prophet to his followers. In fact, those who, without any sanction from the Prophet, laid the foundation of a 'Saqifa', were themselves politicians, and not the followers of the Holy family of the Prophet. It is characteristic of Iranians that they look into things.

When they are convinced of their truth, they accept them, as they accepted Islam when Iran was conquered by the Arabs. They were not forced to do it. They gave up 'Zoroastrianism' and sincerely embraced Islam. Similarly, when they were convinced by logic and by 'Ali's invaluable services, they accepted 'Shi'as'ism'. Contrary to the assertion of many of your writers, the Iranians did not accept 'Ali during the caliphate of Harunu'r-Rashid, or, Mamunu'r-Rashid.

They accepted 'Ali during the time of the Holy Prophet. Salman al-Farsi was one of the most sincere followers of 'Ali. He reached the highest rank of faith. The 'ulama' of both sects have unanimously written that the Prophet said: "Salman is from our 'Ahlul Bayt' (i.e., he is one of the people of my house)." For this reason he was called "Salman Muhammadi" and he was admittedly the staunchest supporter of 'Ali, and a bitter opponent of 'Saqifa'.

If, according to your own books, we follow him, we are on the straight way. He heard the verses of the Qur'an, and the sayings of the Prophet about ‘Ali and clearly understood that obedience to ‘Ali was obedience to the Prophet and to Allah. He repeatedly heard the Prophet say:

"One who obeys ‘Ali obeys me; and one who obeys me obeys Allah; one who is hostile to ‘Ali is hostile to me; and one who is hostile to me is hostile to Allah."

Every Iranian, however, who went to Medina and embraced Islam, whether during the time of the Holy Prophet or afterward, obeyed the orders of the Prophet. For this reason, the second caliph became intolerant, and imposed several restrictions on Iranians. These hardships and sufferings bred enmity in their hearts. They questioned why the caliph denied them Islamic rights against the injunctions laid down by the Prophet.

Iranians grateful for ‘Ali's compassion

Apart from these conditions, Iranians were grateful to ‘Ali for his compassion regarding the treatment of Iranian princesses taken prisoner by the Arabs. When the prisoners of Mada'in (Taisfun) were brought to Medina, the second caliph ordered that all the female prisoners be made slaves of the Muslims.

‘Ali forbade this, and said that the princesses were exceptions, and were to be honored. Two of the prisoners were the daughters of King Yazdigerd of Iran, and could not be made slaves. The caliph asked what should be done.

‘Ali said that each of them should be allowed to select a husband from the Muslims. Accordingly, Shahzanan selected Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr (who had been brought up by ‘Ali), while the other princess, Shahbanu, selected Imam Husain, the Prophet's grandson. Both went to the homes of these men after a lawful wedding.

Shahzanan gave birth to a son, Qasim Faqih, father of Umm Farwa, who was the mother of our Sixth Imam, Ja'far as-Sadiq. Imam Zainu'l-Abidin, our fourth Imam, was born of Shahbanu.

So, the establishment of ‘Shi’as'ism’ had no connection with the time of Harun and Ma'mun, or, with the rule of the Safavid Dynasty in Iran, as you said earlier. It was openly propagated seven centuries before the Safavid Kingdom (i.e., in the 4th century Hijri), when the Dailamites (the Buwayyids) were rulers.

In 694 A.H. the Iranian Kingdom was ruled by Ghazan Khan Mughul (whose Islamic name was Mahmud). Since at that time, belief in the Prophet's Ahlul Bayt’ was commonly expressed, ‘Shi’as'ism’ grew steadily.

After the death of Ghazan Khan Mughul in 707 A.H., his brother, Muhammad Shah Khuda Bandeh became the ruler of Iran. He arranged a religious debate between Allama Hilli, a learned ‘Shi’as’ scholar, and Khwaja Nizamu'd-Din Abdu'l-Malik Maraghe'i, the chief justice of the ‘Shafi'ites’ and the greatest

‘Sunni’ scholar of that time.

Debates between Allama Hilli and the Chief Justice concerning the imamate

The subject of this debate was the Imamate. The Allama put forward such cogent arguments to prove that ‘Ali was the immediate successor of the Prophet, and so convincingly refuted the claims of the other side, that all those present were completely satisfied with the reasoning of the Allama.

Khwaja Nizamu'd-Din acknowledged that the Allama's arguments could not be refuted. But, he said that, since he was following the path of his predecessors, it was not proper to leave it. He felt that it was important to maintain solidarity among the Muslims.

Iranian king accepted Shi’as belief

The King listened to the arguments with keen interest, accepted the ‘Shi’as’ position himself, and announced the legitimacy of ‘Shi’as'ism’ in Iran. He subsequently proclaimed to the governors of the regions that the weekly ‘Khutba's (sermons given in the Mosques) should proclaim ‘Ali's right as the successor of the Prophet. He also ordered that the Kalima be inscribed on the dinars (gold coins) in this way:

"La ilaha ill'allah; Muhammadan Rasulullah; Aliyyan Waliullah," meaning, "There is no God except Allah; Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah, and ‘Ali is Allah's Wali (vicegerent or divinely appointed guardian of the people)”.

In this way the roots of ‘Shi’as'ism’ were firmly established. Seven centuries later, when the Safavid kings came to power, the clouds of ignorance and fanaticism were further removed, ‘Shi’as'ism’ flourished everywhere in Iran. Yes, there are ‘Zoroastrians’ in Iran and those who exaggerate the position of ‘Ali and consider him Allah.

But, they should not be associated with the common Iranian people, who believe in Allah and the Prophet Muhammad as the last of the prophets. These follow ‘Ali and his eleven descendants as commanded by the Prophet.

Hafiz: It is strange that although you originally came from the Hijaz (Arabia) and have been living in Iran for a short time, still you support the Iranians, and call them the followers of ‘Ali, who was himself obedient to Allah. But, Iranian Shi’as, to a man, regard ‘Ali as Allah. Here are some couplets from the works of Iranian poets indicating this view, while ‘Ali himself condemned such beliefs.

The last of these couplets shows ‘Ali saying: "Who helps at the time of difficulties? It is I, who am Allah! It is I." A couplet of another poet says: "According to the belief of those who are intelligent and recognize

Allah, Allah is ‘Ali, and ‘Ali is Allah."

Well-Wisher: I wonder why, without making inquiries, you should accuse all Iranians of regarding ‘Ali as Allah. Your own ‘ulama’ have made fanatical claims of this sort. They have said that the Shi’as are the worshipers of ‘Ali and as such they are infidels. Therefore, murdering them is obligatory.

As a result, Muslims of Uzbekistan and Turkestan have recklessly shed the blood of Iranian Muslims. The common people among the ‘Sunnis’ are often misguided by some of your ‘ulama’, and your people consider the Iranians infidels.

In the past, your people, the Turkomans, have attacked Iranian caravans near Khorasan, plundered and murdered the people, and said that whoever killed seven Rafizis (Shi’as), would certainly go to Paradise. You should bear in mind that the responsibility of such murders rests squarely on your leaders, who tell ignorant ‘Sunnis’ that Shi’as worship ‘Ali.

Islam forbids boasting about ancestors

Referring to your first point that, since I was originally connected with Arabia, Mecca, and Medina, why should I support the Iranians, I tell you that I have no partisan spirit. Our Prophet said: "The Arabs should not boast that they are superior to non-Arabs and vice versa; and the whites should not boast of their superiority to the blacks and vice versa. Superiority lies only in knowledge and piety. In the Holy Qur'an, Allah says:

'O men! Surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty).'" (***49:13***)

Also, in the same chapter in the Qur'an, He says:

"The believers are brethren; therefore, make peace between your brethren and be careful of (your duty to) Allah that mercy may be had on you." (***49:10***)

Accordingly, all Asians, Africans, Europeans, Americans of white, black, red, or, yellow races who are Muslims are brothers, and no one can claim superiority to another. The greatest leader of Islam, the last of the Prophets, acted on this principle.

He showed his special affection for Salman al-Farsi of Iran, Suhaib of Asia Minor, and Bilal of Abyssinia. On the other hand, he rejected Abu Lahab (whose name means 'Father of Flame'), his own uncle who was condemned by a chapter of the Holy Qur'an which said:

"Perish the hands of the Father of Flame! Perish he!" (***111:1***)

Islam also forbids racism

The world has witnessed disturbances of the worst order in Western countries which were the result of racial discrimination. In those countries black people are not allowed in hotels, restaurants, churches, and other congregations meant for white people. Islam banned such cruel practices 1,300 years ago and proclaimed that all Muslims, regardless of race, color, or, nationality are brothers. So, if the Arabs go astray, I will condemn them, and I will be the friend of the Iranian Shi'as.

Second, you have associated Iranian extremists with the Shi'as, who are steadfast monotheists, and follow 'Ali according to the commands of the Prophet. We regard 'Ali as a pious servant of Allah and the divinely appointed successor of the Holy Prophet.

Condemnation of the extremists

Moreover, we reject those whose beliefs are contrary to ours, like the Saba'iyya, the Khitabiyya, the Gharabiyya, the Alawiyya, the Mukhammasa, the Bazighiyya, the Nussairiyya, who are scattered throughout Iran, Mosul, and Syria. We Shi'as are distinct from them and consider them infidels. In all the books written by 'Shi'as' 'ulama', and legal scholars, the Ghalis (extremists) are included among the disbelievers, since their belief is against the tenets of 'Shi'as'ism'.

For instance, they argue that, since the infusion of the soul into a material body is possible (as Gabriel could appear before the Holy Prophet in the form of Dahiyya al-Kalbi), it was Allah's will that His Holy Self appear in human form in 'Ali's body.

For this reason they consider the position of 'Ali higher than that of the Prophet. Such a faction emerged during 'Ali's own time. Some people of India and the Sudan came to him and professed that he was Allah.

'Ali repeatedly forbade them to hold this view, but to no effect. Finally, as is recorded in many histories, 'Ali ordered them to be killed in wells of smoke. The details of this case have been given in 'Baharu'l-Anwar', Volume VII, by the great Alim, Agha Muhammad Baqir Majlisi.

The Commander of the Faithful, and other Imams bitterly condemned such people. 'Ali said: "O Allah, I scorn the group of Ghullat (extremists), just as Jesus scorned the Christians. May you forsake them forever."

On another occasion he said: "There are two groups who will suffer humiliating death, and I am not responsible for them (since I disdain their deeds): those who exceed the lawful limits of love for me, and are 'Ghullat' (extremists), and those who, for no reason whatsoever, are hostile to me. I hate those who extol my position beyond its proper limit, just as Christ hated the Christians."

He also said: "There are two groups associated with me who will suffer ignoble death: one is composed

of those people who say they are friends and praise me beyond lawful limit; the other is composed of the enemies who degrade my rank."

The Shi'as condemn those who praised 'Ali and his Ahlul Bayt beyond the limit ordained by Allah and the Prophet. Our ulama' have unanimously held that they are all disbelievers. It is not permitted to attend their funerals, or, to marry them. They are also deprived of inheriting Muslim property; charity and religious taxes may not be given to them. The Holy Qur'an condemns them in these words:

"Say: O followers of the Book, be not immoderate in your religion, and do not follow the low desires of people who went astray before, and led many astray and went astray from the right path." (***5:80***)

Allama Majlisi, in his 'Baharu'l-Anwar' Volume III, which is the encyclopedia of the 'Shi'as' faith, has recorded many 'hadith' condemning the 'Ghullat' (extremists). Imam Ja'far-as-Sadiq is quoted as saying, "We are servants of Allah, Who created us and made us superior to the others of His creation. Certainly we shall die and shall stand before Allah for reckoning. He who is a friend of the 'Ghalis' is our enemy; and he who is their enemy, is our friend. The 'Ghalis' are infidels and polytheists; curse be upon them."

A great religious head of the Shi'as has also quoted the same Imam as saying, "Allah's curse be upon those who claim divinity and godhood for 'Ali. By Allah, 'Ali was an obedient servant of Allah. Curse be upon those who have slandered us; some people say things about us that we do not say ourselves. We declare that we have no connection with them."

Sheikh Saduq (Abu Ja'far Muhammad Ibn 'Ali), a highly respected 'Faqih' (legal scholar) of the Shi'as, quotes Zarara Ibn A'yun, a reliable 'Shi'as' writer, who was a 'hafiz and companion of Imam Muhammad Baqir and Imam Ja'far-as-Sadiq, as saying: "I told Imam Ja'far Sadiq that one of the persons known to him believes in 'Tufwiz' (delegation of Divine authority).

The Imam said: 'What is meant by Tufwiz?' I replied, 'The man says that Allah created Muhammad and 'Ali and then delegated to them His authority over the affairs of the people. So, they are the creators, the givers of food; they are the animators, and they are the killers.'

The Holy Imam said: 'The enemy of Allah lies. When you go back to him, read him this verse from the Holy Qur'an:

"....or have they set up with Allah associates who have created creation like His, so that what is created became confused to them? Say: 'Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Supreme.'" (***13:16***)

Shi'as separate from Ghalis

We Shi'as are separate from the 'Ghali's (extremists). Let them claim that they are Shi'as. Allah, the Holy Prophet, 'Ali, and their descendants hate them. 'Ali kept the chief of the 'Ghullat' in prison for three days, and ordered him to repent for his wickedness.

When he refused, 'Ali had him burned to death. If you cannot produce a single book in which the 'Ghali's have been praised, you should at least condemn the intolerant 'ulama' who misguide the 'Sunni's about the Shi'as.

Clarification about reverence towards Imams

Hafiz: Your brotherly advice is worth the consideration. But, would you please clarify some other points? You have all along said that you do not unduly praise your Imams. You regard the 'Ghullat' as contemptible and fit for hell, but you use inappropriate expressions regarding your Imams. You have said "Blessings of Allah be upon them," although you know that, according to the Holy Qur'an, this expression is reserved only for the Holy Prophet.

The Qur'an says:

"Surely Allah and His angels bless the Prophet; O you who believe, call for (Divine) blessings on him and salute him with a (becoming) salutation." (33:56)

Your practice clearly violates the injunction of the Holy Qur'an. Your expression is an innovation.

Well-Wisher: This verse does not forbid us to bless any other person. We are enjoined to bless the Prophet. In another verse of the Holy Qur'an, Allah says: "Peace be on the people of Ya Sin (Ahlul Ya Sin)," a reference to the descendants of the Prophet.

As for the other Prophets of Allah, blessings have not been given to their descendants anywhere in the Holy Qur'an. Blessings have been given only to the prophets of Allah.

"Peace and Salutation to Noah among the nations." (37:79):

"Peace and salutation to Abraham." (37:109):

"Peace and salutation to Moses and Aaron." (37:120).

The people of Ya Sin refers to the people of Muhammad

All commentators and scholars of your own sect admit that Allah has addressed the Prophet as 'Ya Sin'. Hence, Ahlul (the people of) 'Ya Sin' means the people of Muhammad. Among others, Ibn Hajar Makki,

a very intolerant ‘Sunni’ scholar, says in ‘Sawa'iq Muhriqa’, under the verses quoted in commendation of the ‘Ahlul Bayt’, that a group of commentators quoted Ibn Abbas (commentator, and the chief of the believers) as saying that ‘Ahlul Ya Sin’ means ‘Ahle’ Muhammad.

Therefore, ‘salaam’, the greeting of peace, for ‘Ahlul Ya Sin’ means ‘salaam’ for ‘Ahle’ Muhammad. Imam Fakhru'd-Din Razi writes: "The ‘Ahlul Bayt’ of the Prophet are equal to him in five matters:

1) The ‘salaam’: ‘salaam’ for the Prophet and ‘salaam’ for ‘Ahlul Ya Sin’ (‘Ahle’ Muhammad) are the same thing.

2) The ‘salawat’ (blessings) in ritual prayers for the Prophet and his ‘Ahlul Bayt’, which is compulsory.

3) Purity: Allah says in the ‘sura of "Ta Ha" (20:1): ***"(O Prophet) Clean and Pure:"*** The verse of purity was revealed in praise of the ‘Ahlul Bayt’.

4) Unlawfulness of charity: Charity may not be accepted either by the Prophet or, by his ‘Ahlul Bayt’.

5) Love: Love for the Prophet means love for his ‘Ahlul Bayt’. Allah Almighty says, "Say: if you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you..." (3:31) And about the ‘Ahlul Bayt’ Allah says, "...Say: I do not ask of you any reward for it but love for my near relatives..." (42:23)

‘Salawat’ (blessings) on Muhammad and ‘Ahle-Muhammad’ is the ‘sunna’

(commendable), and in ritual prayer it is compulsory

Many of those relating ‘hadith’, particularly Bukhari in his ‘Sahih’, Volume III, and Muslim in his ‘Sahih’, Volume I, Sulayman Balkhi in his ‘Yanabiu'l Mawadda’, and even Hajar in his ‘Sawa'iq’ quotes Ka'b Ibn Ajza as saying:

"When the verse: 'Verily, Allah and His angels bless the Prophet...' (33:56) was revealed, we asked the Holy Prophet, 'How should we pray for our blessings for you, Apostle of Allah?' The Prophet replied, 'Pray for your blessings in this way: "O Allah, bless (the Prophet) Muhammad and ‘Ahlul Muhammad’.'"

Imam Fakhru'd-Din Razi, in Volume VI of his ‘Tafsir al-Kabir’, also narrates a similar ‘hadith’. Ibn Hajar, commenting on the tradition, indicates that it is clear from the ‘hadith’ that praying for blessings for the Holy Prophet is equal to praying for blessings on his descendants as well.

He also quotes the Holy Prophet as saying: "Don't be incomplete in praying for blessings for me." When asked what he meant by 'incomplete' blessings, he said: "Do not say, 'O Allah, bless Muhammad,' but say, 'O Allah, bless Muhammad, and his descendants.'"

Dailami writes that the Prophet said: "Our prayer remains obstructed unless we pray for blessings upon the Prophet, and his people." Shafi'i says, "O Ahlul Bayt! In the Holy Qur'an Allah has made love for you compulsory for us. Regarding the loftiness of your rank and position, it is sufficient to know that if a man does not pray for divine blessings for you, his prayer is not accepted."

If the prayer for blessings for the Prophet and his descendants is deliberately omitted, the ritual prayer is rejected. And, the Prophet said: "The ritual prayer is the pillar of faith; if the prayer is accepted, all other deeds are accepted; if it is rejected, all other deeds are rejected."

To pray for divine blessings for the 'Ahlul Bayt' is the 'sunna' (commendable practice), and a mode of worship which was performed by the Holy Prophet himself. We are proud to do what the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet have enjoined us to do.

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