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Shi`as' Attitude Towards Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah

If we exclude some Shi`a fanatics who regard all "Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah" to be Nasibis, the vast majority of their scholars in the past and the present believe that their brethren "Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah" are the victims of Umayyad intrigues and cunning. This is so because they thought well of the "good predecessors," emulating them without researching or verifying their conduct.

The latter, hence, misled them from discerning al-Sirat al-Mustaqeem (the Straight Path) and distanced them from al-Thaqalain, i.e. the Book of Allah and the Purified Progeny that safeguard whoever upholds them from misguidance and guarantee for him sure guidance.

For this reason, we find them defending themselves and informing others about their beliefs, calling for justice and equity and for unity with their brethren "Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah." Some Shi`a scholars even toured various countries looking for means to establish Islamic organizations and institutions to close the gap between the sects and to bring about unity. Others went to al-Azhar al-Shareef, the lighthouse of knowledge and scholarship for "Ahlul Sunnah," and met with its scholars with whom they debated in the best manner, trying to remove the grudges.

One such scholar was Imam Sharafid-Din Sadr ad-Din al-Musawi who met Imam Saleem al-Din al-Bishri, and the outcome of that meeting and the correspondence between both great men was the birth of the precious book titled *Al-Muraja`at*, a book which has played a significant role in narrowing Muslims' ideological differences.

The efforts of those scholars were also crowned with success in Egypt where Imam Mahmud Shaltut, the then grand *mufti* of Egypt, issued his brave *fatwa* granting full legitimacy to adherence to the Shi`a Ja`fari sect, a sect the *fiqh* (jurisprudence) of which is now among the topics taught at al-Azhar al-Shareef.

Shi`as in general and Shi`a scholars in particular have been trying their best to introduce the Imams of the Purified Ahlul Bayt to others and to acquaint them with the Ja`fari sect which represents Islam in all

what this word implies, writing volumes of books and articles, holding sessions, especially after the victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran, conducting numerous conferences in Tehran under the banner of the Islamic unity and the bridging of the gap between the Islamic sects. All these are sincere calls for the renunciation of enmity and animosity, and to instill the spirit of Islamic brotherhood, so that Muslims may respect one another.

In every year, "Mutamar al-Wahdah al-Islamiyya" (Islamic Unity Conference) invites Shi`a and Sunni scholars and thinkers to live one week under the shade of a sincere fraternity, to eat and drink together, to pray, supplicate, and exchange views and ideas, to give and take.

Had the only achievement of these conferences been creating unity and narrowing the gaps between Muslims so that they may know one another and remove their grudges, their good would be great, and their benefit overwhelming. They will, by the Will of Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, in the end bear the anticipated fruits.

If you enter the house of any ordinary Shi`a family, let alone the houses of their scholars and the educated among them, you will find in it a library containing, besides Shi`a works, a large number of books written by "Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah," contrary to the case with the latter who very seldom keep a Shi`a book.

They, therefore, remain ignorant about the facts relevant to these Shi`as, not knowing anything but the lies written by the enemies of Shi`as. Even any ordinary Shi`a individual is most often familiar with the Islamic history in all its stages, and he may even celebrate some of its occasions.

As for the Sunni scholar, you will find him very seldom expressing interest in history which he regards among the tragedies he does not wish to dig up in order to be familiar with them; rather, he is of the view that neglecting them and not looking into them is a must because they will undermine the good impression held about the "good predecessors."

Since he has convinced, or misled, himself of the "justice" of all the *sahaba* and their integrity, he no longer accepts what history has recorded against them. For this reason, you find him unable to withstand any constructive discussion based on proof and argument. You will find him either running away from such a research due to his prior knowledge that he will be defeated, or he may overcome his feelings and emotions and force himself into researching; it is then that he rebels against all his beliefs, embracing, in the end, the faith of the Ahlul Bayt of the Prophet.

Shi`as are, indeed, the adherents to the Prophetic Sunnah because their first Imam after the Prophet is Ali ibn Abu Talib who lived and breathed the Prophetic Sunnah. Look at him and see how he reacted when they came to him seeking to swear the oath of allegiance to him as the new caliph on the condition that he should rule according to the "sunnah" of the *shaykhain* (the two shaykhs, namely Abu Bakr and Umar ibn al-Khattab), whereupon he said, "I shall not rule except according to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger."

Ali had no need for the caliphate if it was at the expense of the Prophetic Sunnah, for he is the one who had said, “Your caliphate to me is like a goat's sneeze except when I uphold one of the commandments of Allah.” His son, Imam al-Husayn, has made his famous statement which is still ringing in the ears of history: “If Muhammad's faith is to be straightened only if I am killed, then O swords! Take me!”

For this reason, Shi`as look at their brethren from “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah” with eyes of love and affection, desiring nothing for them except guidance and salvation. To them, the price of guidance is recorded by authentic traditions better than this life and everything in it.

The Messenger of Allah has said to Imam Ali upon sending him to conquer Khaybar, “Fight them till they testify that There is no god except Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; so if they utter it, their lives and wealth will be protected against your might, and Allah will judge them. If Allah guides through you even one single person, it is better for you than everything on which the sun shines (or better than all red camels).”[1]

Ali's main concern was, after all, to guide people and to bring them back to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger. For this reason, his Shi`as nowadays are mostly concerned about refuting all the charges and lies piled up against them, and about introducing to their brethren from “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama'ah” the truth about Ahlul Bayt and, hence, guide them to the Straight Path.

Surely in the tales there is a lesson for men of understanding. It is not a narrative that could be forged but a verification of what is before it and a distinct explanation of all things, and a guide and mercy to those who believe. (***Holy Qur'an, 12:111***)

1. Muslim, Sahih, Vol. 7, p. 122 “Kitab al-Fadail” (Book of Virtues), the chapter dealing with the merits of Ali ibn Abu Talib .

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