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Dissimulation (Taqayyah)

The dictionary meaning of Tagayyah (dissimulation) is to save oneself from

some harmful matter. Terminologically, it denotes those things that Shias consider lawful for the safety of their life and property; whereas their opponents, Ahlul Sunnat consider them unlawful. Although in all their practical actions, Ahlul Sunnat are not less guilty of it than the Shias. Their daily actions prove that dissimulation is a natural matter, and no person or group in any period of time had been able to dispense with it and neither will it be possible for them to dispense with it in future.

Since it is a natural thing, not only the rulers and monarchs were bound to it, even prophets could not avoid it. According to Taurat when Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) traveled to Egypt, in order to escape the king's harm, he had to call his wife, sister. In the same way, Prophet Yusuf (a.s.) recognized his brothers in Egypt but concealed this matter from them and was bound to the procedures that all readers of Quran are aware of. Similarly, Prophet Isa (a.s.) knew about the evil nature of Yahuda, but in his friendship, had made him as the treasurer.

The Holy Prophet's migration from Mecca and hiding in the cave and instructing His Eminence, Ali (a.s.) to sleep in his bed; if all these actions are not dissimulation, what are they? I can quote hundreds of such examples from the life histories of the prophets, which can prove that dissimulation is not only having a natural and religious sanction; it is also acceptable from the aspect of society and civilization. The following statement of Almighty Allah:

"And cast not yourselves to perdition with your own hands..."1

...shows the legality of dissimulation and why it should not be so, when it is needed in every time and in every situation? It was on the basis of this demand of Nature that the Holy Prophet (S) has said according to the report of Miqdad that, "If a believer hides his faith with infidelity, this deed of his is the best part of his faith. Remember that you were also concealing your faith (Islam) at Mecca before."

This traditional report is present in Sahih Bukhari and it proves that dissimulation is a perfectly valid act. Ahlul Sunnat use the word 'Toriya' (concealment of real feelings) instead of dissimulation and consider it

lawful. The fact is that dissimulation and concealment of real feelings are not two different things. The thing is same and the only difference is that Toriya is restricted to spoken words and Taqayyah is concerned with both, words and actions. But since Taqayyah is a Shia word, propagated by Shias, Ahlul Sunnat find it despicable.

Generally, Ahlul Sunnat consider Taqayyah to mean lying, although practically, dissimulation has no connection with lying and both are different. If they were same (Allah forbid) all prophets would be called liars. Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) introduced his wife as his own sister. This action was of dissimulation and not falsehood.

Not only the Imams of the family of the Holy Prophet (S) have resorted to dissimulation, on the contrary, Sunni leaders have also used it. Here I give you an example of Abu Hanifah's use of dissimulation, although it is not good example, but the necessity of dissimulation is proved through it.

Ibn Jauzi writes in Al Zakia that a man came to Abu Hanifah and said: "I have fallen in love with a beautiful woman, but since I am very poor, her relatives will not allow her to marry me, so please do something so that I can marry her." Abu Hanifah said: "Would you sell a particular thing of yours in 12000 dirhams to me?" He said: "No." Then Abu Hanifah said: "Go to the relatives of that woman and tell them: 'Abu Hanifah knows my condition very well, you can ask him." So he did as Abu Hanifah had said. Her relatives came to Abu Hanifah to learn the facts. Abu Hanifah said: "That man had come to sell a particular thing to me for his marriage purpose and I was giving him 12000 dirhams, but he was not prepared to sell it in that price."

The relatives were satisfied with this explanation and married the girl to that man. It is clear that Abu Hanifah's action constitutes practical dissimulation. Though his dissimulation, due to its uncommendable style, lowers his status to a great degree and was not suitable for an imam.

Moreover there was hardly any need of it. It was such a dissimulation that next time it proved very harmful for Abu Hanifah and that is why people do not respect Abu Hanifah's dissimulation till today. The consequences of his dissimulation are full of regret. The case of that woman was that when she came to know that the man she had married was a pauper and that her marriage was arranged by Abu Hanifah's plan, she adorned herself with ornaments etc. and came to Abu Hanifah and said: "My father does not allow anyone to marry me and those who come with proposals are told: 'My daughter is blind and cripple. Do not marry her.'" She knew that Abu Hanifah had not seen her before, so she also added that she was the daughter of so and so green grocer. She requested Abu Hanifah to marry her and also exposed her face, head, hands and legs for him. Since beauty is luring, it was enough for Abu Hanifah.

After she left, Abu Hanifah called the green grocer and stated his intention. He said: "My daughter is blind and cripple. She is not suitable for you." But Abu Hanifah said: "It is none of your concern, I will marry her." So Abu Hanifah married the green grocer's daughter that same day.

In the evening, the green grocer placed his daughter in a big basket and with the help of servants,

carried her to Abu Hanifah. When Abu Hanifah saw his bride, he at once recited the divorce thrice and became free.

A month later, that first woman came to Abu Hanifah. Abu Hanifah asked her what she has done? She replied: "Tit for tat! You married me to a pauper and I compelled you to marry a blind and cripple." It is clear that the woman cheated Abu Hanifah but her dissimulation was not good. Such dissimulation is unlawful in the religion of Imamiyah.

Dissimulation is sanctioned only if it concerns security of life, property and honor. It is not lawful without any reason. At present, there is no reign of Bani Umayyah or Bani Abbas and there is no fear of life, property or respect. Therefore, generally the Imamites are not in need of dissimulation.

1. Surah Baqarah 2:195

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