

The Concept of Shia

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We live in a world in which electronic prefectures, globalization, information explosion and technology are the dominant topics. With the latest technology we have discovered scientific aspects very fast, knowing that without this technology, it would take us years to discover the same. But it seems that these scientific progresses and their consequent comforts have not answered what mankind is looking for and even his simplest needs, and probably the most important of all, technology has not able to provide peace. Statistics show that the rate of mental illnesses, such as depression, is increasing rapidly and the surprising thing is that these problems are more common in modern countries... What could be the reason?

Maybe the reason is that the humans, who have to manage a daily program for enjoyment of their bodies, have not taken any notice of the other aspect of their natures, their spirits. We all are looking for something that calms our anxious mind, a peace and comfort which makes our lives enjoyable, but we are unaware of the fact that we would be comfortable only by satisfying our innate needs, those which have been with us since the time we were created. Mankind needs a great support, an infinite power to depend on, and no one has competence except Allah (SWT). People have forgotten Allah (SWT) or they have used to believe in a God who can do nothing... But if we look carefully to the people who are searching a refuge, we find a group who have found their refuge and become comfortable under the protection of this refuge.

Shiites have confidence in Allah (SWT) and His alights, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and his Family (Ahl al-Bayt) (A.S.). Allah (SWT) has all the possible accomplishments, power and knowledge; He has assigned them as His representatives on earth. Shiites also believe in a person who is their live Leader and Master, he has divine power beyond being their intimate friend and helping them in strained circumstances. He has the ability to do anything. Yes, he is their Imam, Mahdi (A.S.). Anyone, who has confidence in him, never becomes anxious, depressed or hopeless.

Other than Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and Imam Mahdi (A.S.), Shiites consider having divine power and knowledge for 12 persons, the Prophet's family (A.S.). Although they have passed this world, their spiritual presence is permanent and they are aware of what we do and they favor with us. Seeking prosperity we should try to know these persons and ask them for help and open our hearts to them, because they are assigned by Allah (SWT) and they possess

.all the keys to help us

Shia and its History

To understand the concept of Shia, it is necessary to first know Islam, and then define Shia based on Islam. The basics of Islam start from the belief in Allah (SWT) and the belief in all the prophets up to the last of them (Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.)). As a Muslim we must act upon the Islamic orders, which are obtained from the Holy Quran and the Prophet's (S.A.W.) Sunnah. We must believe in resurrection, the day of judgment, and rewards versus punishments that will be to the people. Shiites believe that after the departure of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.), the true knowledge of Islamic orders, teachings, and revelations are with the true interpreters of the Holy Quran, the family of the Prophet (Ahl al-Bayt) (A.S.). A Shiite is a person who follows the Prophet and his family (A.S.) in all affairs. A Shiite accepts the Prophet and his family (A.S.) according to his wisdom and divine nature. When he accepted them, he traces them in all affairs.

According to Shiite doctrines, a true Shiite is one who follows Amir al-Mu'minin (Commander of the believers) Ali, Fatimah al-Zahra, and the rest of the Infallibles (A.S.). In other words, Shiites follow the lights of guidance who are the successors of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and are free of error and mistake. Shia literally means follower. By the order of Allah (SWT) Imam Ali ibn Abitalib (A.S.) was introduced as the leader after the Prophet (S.A.W.). So the followers of Imam Ali (A.S.) have become known as Shia of Imam Ali (A.S.). But what is the origin of this belief and its perspectives? Where can we find the first appearance of this school in history? On different occasions such as Youm al-Indhar(1) to the day of Ghadir al-Khum(2), Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) would constantly remind, introduce, and preach people about his family, Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.).

Ordered by Allah (SWT), the Prophet (S.A.W.) had declared Wilayat and Succession of Imam Ali and his sons (A.S.) after him. Even Sunnis believe that the first person who used the word "Shia" was the Prophet (S.A.W.) himself. He used this word in different cases about the followers of Ali (A.S.). We will briefly mention few of these cases here. (3)

Jabir ibn Abdullah al-Ansari (companion of the Prophet (S.A.W.)) says: "we were sitting beside the Prophet, Ali entered and then Prophet said : "to the one who my life is in His hands (Allah) I swear that this person and his Shia (followers) are saved in resurrection day". Then this verse descended: (98:7) (4) "(5) Umm Salameh narrates from the Prophet (S.A.W.) that he said: " O'

Ali you and your friends are in heaven. You and your Shia (followers) are in heaven."(6)

Let it be stated that some people believe that Shia originated from the time of Uthman (the third successor of Sunnis) by the Iranians. The Prophet (S.A.W.) was completely aware of the

disputes and differences the Ummah (community) was going to face after his demise. He constantly reviewed the characteristics and signs of the true path and persons, so even future generations would learn truth through his Sunnah. In fact an example can be seen when the Prophet (S.A.W.) mentioned a narration of the future happenings, "My community will be dispersed to 73 sects, and only one of them is true."

Some other revengeful people say that Shia is originated from the thoughts of a Jew, Abdullah ibn Saba. According to what was mentioned the establishment of Shia was by the Prophet (S.A.W.) on behalf of Allah (SWT). (Because according to the Holy Quran (53:3) he does not say anything on behalf of Himself). In tradition books of Shia this man is accursed and disfavored by Allah (SWT). Some of the Shia learned people have definitely proved that he is a forged person. Also mal-existence of such a person has been decisively proved. Finally let us conclude that in every stage of life, we Shiites ask Allah to show us the straight path, free us from all bigotry, and flourish the luminosity of wisdom within our hearts.

("Praise be on those who follow rightness." (The Holy Quran, 20:47

Footnotes:

1- Day that the Prophet (S.A.W.) invited his close relatives to Islam

2- Announcement of the Wilayat (Mastership) of Imam Ali (A.S.)

3- These narratives are mentioned here just as samples and there are many traditions found in different Sunnite tradition books in this respect.

5- "(As for) those who believe and do good works are the best of created beings." (The Holy Quran, 98:7)

6- Al-Durr al-Manthur, under commentary of verse 98:7

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