

A Brief History of Shiite

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WE BELIEVE that the SHIITE SECT was founded in the lifetime of our prophet, and its name was taken out of HIS words and we have many clear reasons to prove that. As many commentators of QURAN believe the following verse refers to Imam Ali and his sectarians. (SHIITE) "Those who have faith and do righteous deeds, are the best of creatures."

THE HOLY QURAN _ S98: 7

Suyuti, the famous commentator has narrated in his Dorrol Mansoor that Jabir Ibn Abdullah Al- Ansari said, "We were in presence of the prophet, when Imam Ali arrived there. As soon as the prophet saw him he said, `UPON HIM, TO WHOSE HANDS LAYS MY LIFE, ALI AND HIS SHIITE (SECTARIANS) WILL HAVE SALVATION IN DOOMSDAY' Then the prophet; `added the narrator, `recited the above mentioned verse. After that, whenever Imam Ali came to a gathering of prophet, we used to say: `The best of God's creatures is come."

The above tradition with a little difference is also narrated by: IBN _ ABBASS. ABUBARZEH. IBNE _ MARDOOYED and also ATTIYEH _ OOFI. Therefore the name SHIITE was given to the lovers and followers of Imam Ali by the prophet himself and not by the SAFAVIES DYNASTY as some with very low knowledge have said'

We respect and esteem all the other Islamic sects, and stay in one line of prayer with them, and perform the rites of pilgrimage as they do, and cooperate with them in all common Islamic goals and fields. Yet as a SHIITE we do have some particularities which were noted by our prophet; and this is why we have chosen this school.

Some of our enemies insist to connect SHIITE, some how to ABDULLAH IBN SABA, as the founder of the sect.

IBN _ SABA is said to have been a Jew convert in the life of Imam Ali. This claim or suggestion seems very strange to us! If you study all the SHIITE'S BOOKS you find in them no least interest to have been shown to the said man; and rather in contrast, all have declared him a misled heretic, and in some traditions we read that Imam Ali himself has condemned the man to death! After all IBN SABA'S very existence is under question, and some of the scholars doubt if such a man did ever exist! Even if we don't take him as a fictitious and imaginary man, he is of sure misled and astray in religion and far out of the path of truth.

THE SHIITE'S GEOGRAPHY

Important to say that IRAN has not always been a central group of the SHIITE SECT. In the first century of Islam. they had different centers in KUFEH, YEMAN and even in Medina. Contrary to the poisonous propagandas of the Ommayids and BANI ABBASS dynasties;

SHIITE had several centers in Syria too, though not as extensive as that which was in IRAQ. In Egypt too, there has always been a big group of SHIITE, and for a relatively long period, the FATEME SHIITE ruled the country. At present big groups of SHIITE live throughout the Islamic world. A great many of them live in eastern area of Saudi Arabia with nice harmony and good relations with the other Islamic groups.

Islam's enemies have always agitated and tried to stir the good relations the groups have had, in order to turn their friendship and brotherhood into enmity and ill will, thus weakening both parties.

Now that MAN is wearied of; and eludes the material civilization, and finds Islam to have come on the carpet as a great international moral and spiritual power, our enemies do their best to destroy our unity and brotherhood, they create controversies and diversities of opinions in order to make the Muslims busy with each other.

Such a danger should have a sobering effect upon us all so as to make us cautious enough to frustrate our enemy's intentions and endeavors. It is remarkable to note that the SHIITE like the SONNIES are divided in different groups; but the main and majority consists of the sect of SHIITE who believe in 12 Imams. Although not exact, the number of Shiite through out the world counts from two to three HUNDRED millions, making a quarter of the whole lot of Muslims.

THE LEGACY OF THE PROPHET'S HOUSEHOLD

The followers of this school (SHIITE) have so many traditions from the prophet which are conveyed through Imam Ali or other Imams. These have all been collected and classified, and make the main source of SHIITE'S religious jurisprudence. The most important books among the collections are four, and are known as KOTOB ARBA_EH (THE FOUR BOOKS). These are as follows:

1 _ KAFI.

2 _ MAN LA YAHZARAOL FAGHIH,

3 _ TAHZIB.

4 _ ESTEBSAR.

Not that, all the traditions found in these four books, or elsewhere are indisputably correct or acceptable.

Each tradition as we said it, has a series of documents and narrators that are to be checked out and confirmed. If all the documents and narrators prove to be right and trustworthy, then the tradition may be considered true and accepted. Such investigations about the traditions are the task of religious experts and scholars. Therefore the SHIITE'S collected works in the field of tradition differs with that of the Sonnies. The way Bukhari and other Sunni scholars such as Muslim took in their collected works differ from that of our authors. Their criterion of right and wrong is only the author's distinction. So to understand the belief of a Sunni, it is enough to get access to their important tradition books, called SAHIH. Contrary to that, SHIITE has collected all the traditions that they could; narrated by the Imams just to be investigated, judged, approved, and then be accepted for action. And that is to be done by learned and trusted authorities and religious specialists.

THE TWO IMPORTANT BOOKS

Among the important sources of Shiite, there are two very important books: The first one is known as NAHJUL BALAGHA, a collected work of SHARIF RAZI, a thousand years past, consisting of the speeches, the letters, and some quotations of Imam Ali. The eloquence in the verses is so high, and the meanings so deep, that makes the work so strangely attractive to all sorts of minds! We wish not only the Muslims, but the non-Muslims too, could be acquainted with this amazing book, in order to know what is to be known in the fields of Monotheism, Resurrection, Ethics, Social and Political affairs.

The second important book is called SAHIFEH SAJJADIEH A collection of the bests and the most beautiful verses on prayers having the deepest meaning. It may teach us how to pray to the Lord and to purify our soul by that prayer. The whole book is the collection of many fervent prayers in the form of hymns, and narrated by our fourth Imam, Ali IBN Hussain, who is famed as SAJJAD (ONE WHO OFTEN PROSTRATE)

Most of the SHIITE traditions are narrated by the fifth and the sixth Imam, and these traditions we have received through Ali IBN MOOSA, ALREZA the eighth Imam of the SHIITHE. Those three Imams were under fewer pressures of the dynasties of Ommayids and Abbassids, and had a better opportunity of teaching the doctrine of the prophet as they had received it through their fathers. So they succeeded to convey to people a great deal of the knowledge they had obtained. This is why the sect of SHIITE is known also as the JAAFARI SECT of Islam. Imam JAAFAR SADIQ the sixth Imam, lived in a period of the history in which the Ommayids were getting weaker and weaker, and the ABBASSIDS were gaining power. The Imam is said to have trained more than four thousands of students in his school.

ABUHANIFEH the famous Sunni religious leader and scholar who was contemporary to Imam Sadiq has said, "I haven't seen any one deeper in religious knowledge than Imam Sadiq. (JAAFAR IBN MOHAMMAD)(1)

MALIK IBN ANAS, another leading man has said, "I used to go to JAAFAR IBN MUHAMMAD for some times. I always found him in one of the three conditions: He was either in prayer, N. 'I am of opinion, added ANAS, 'that no one can excel him in fasting or reciting QUR knowledge or worship of God.'(2) for brevity we leave aside the great many complements of the SONNI'S leading Men about Imam Sadiq.

THE ROLE OF SHIITE IN ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE

WE BELIEVE that SHIITE has played a vital role in the Islamic knowledge, and some scholars are of opinion that Islamic knowledge is founded by SHIITE.

This idea can easily be proved by the so many important books that Shiite scholars have written, in various subjects; such as jurisprudence, commentaries on QURAN, tenets, and commandments, all of which are references of our studies today. These books can be found in all the important libraries and book sellers through out the world.

One of the famous SHIITE scholars has indexed the names of the books made in 26 big volumes. This book is named, ALZARI-EH and the author's name is SHEIKH AGHA BOZORG TEHRANI. This book contains the names of the books that are written more than half a century past, and since then thousands of more books have been published which are not in the collection.

WE BELIEVE that honesty and truth are among the most important Islamic principles:_ "Allah will say: `This is the day which the truthful will profit from their truth. they shall forever live in Gardens with streams flowing beneath. Allah is pleased with them and they with Allah,

That is the greatest salvation. THE HOLY QURAN _ S5: 122 N show that in Doomsday Men will get the reward for his honesty. Some of the verses in QUR and truth. "..... That Allah may reward man of truth for their truth and punish the hypocrites if he wills, or turn to them in MERCY. for Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." THE HOLY QURAN _ S33: 24 And as we have already mentioned, Muslims are ordered to be always with those who are innocent and truthful. "O,Believers! Fear Allah and be with those who are truthful (in words and deeds) THE HOLY QURAN _ S9: 119

The commandment is so important that God orders his prophet to pray God for that:_ "Say: O,Lord! Let me enter the Gate of truth and let my exit be from the gate of truth." THE HOLY QURAN _ S17: 80

All the prophets have enjoined honesty and truthfulness. we read in a tradition:_ "No prophet was ever sent by God unless he was ordered to be truthful and to give back the trusts to its owners." (3) So did we, in this concise, our best, not to leave the least amount of truth, and we hope that we have done so with the speed of God.

THE LAST WORD

Whatever we wrote in this collection is a summary of the opinion and belief of the followers of our prophet's household; i.e. the SHIITE SECT OF ISLAM. This is without any change or deviation, confirmed by QURAN and to a less extent by traditions. We aimed to write the subjects in brief and this, we did. It may be concluded here that this work:_

1_ Is a trustworthy reference that clearly presents the SHIITE belief and ideas. Here by all the other Muslims and non Muslims many have access to first hand information about the SHIITE.

2_ This work can be reasoning for God, to those who judge us with inadequate information, or take their information about us, from doubtful persons or our enemies; or from books of no importance.

3_ To study this work will show the reader that the difference between SHIITE and other Islamic sects is not that much to prevent us a peaceful living together, and having cooperation in important fields and affairs. Common aspects of our belief are many; our common enemies are many too.

4_ We believe that some mysterious hands are working hard to separate us, and to create disputes and hatred among Muslims, to kindle the fire of enmities!

These mysterious hands do not want, Islam to play his vital role after the smash of communism, and to fill the vacancies of materialism. Muslims should not leave their enemies unattended and to have success in their goals. There now exists a good opportunity for us to present Islam to the world, as it really is.

5_ WE BELIEVE that if all the scholars and the leading men of all sects sit round a table to discuss the problems sincerely, with pure heart, and far from fanaticism, and obstinacy; they would of surety solve all the problems they have, and the differences would be reduced if not entirely erased.

Such a meeting was recently held in ZAHIDAN. SHIITE, and SONNIES sat round a table. They had several sincere meeting and as a result gave an end to most of their differences. To end, I pray to our Lord and say:_

NOTES

1.- TAZKARATOL HEFAZ ZAHABI vol.1 _ p.166

2.- ALTAHZIB VOL.2 _ P.104

3.- "OUR LORD! FORGIVE US AND OUR BROTHERS WHO EMBRACED THE FAITH BEFORE US, AND LEAVE NOT IN OUR HEARTS ANY MALICE (HATERED) TOWARDS THE FAITHFUL. YOU ARE COMPASSIONATE AND MERCIFUL." THE HOLY QURAN_ S59: 10