

The Origin of Shiism¹

Occasioned by Imam Husain's Birthday (AS)

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On this very Eid, one of our eyes is happy to see a new light (Ali ibn Husain Zayn al-Abidin, son of Imam Husain, the Shias recognize him as the 4th Imam), and the other one is crying because now we remember what our ancients did to His Holiness; Imam Husain. He; who had been raised on his loving mother's lap, and had been educated by his honorable father and grandfather, was killed by his grandfather's sword, as the famous sociologist and historian Ibn Khaldun allegorically asserts. It means that his grandfather's sword was usurped by others and then they killed him by the same sword, announcing that Husain had abandoned his grandfather's religion. But His Holiness's family's both eyes were happy on such a day because of his birth. We are following that family, therefore, we are happy now and we first say "happy birthday" to them as we believe their spirits are present so that they can hear everyone and they leave no greetings unanswered. God willing (In Shaa Allah), they will answer us, the answer we need, but, we do not deserve an answer. We deserve what we are dealing with now, but the answer those who really loved them deserve, such as the martyrs of Karbala. I hope they will consider us that way and answer us. I shall give welcome to those who have come here today to be happy together, and then, I also show regards to all the Shiites and Muslims around the world. By the way, it has been a good idea to name such a very day; His Holiness's birthday, the day of "Pasdaar" (sentry). It is a good name but I would say that this naming used to be very good and more suitable for the first days of the Revolution² that I was involved in some affairs to some extent, and those days, I saw young people with my own eyes who risked their lives with good intention, but these days, I am not sure about that. Anyway, let us shut the crying eyes today. God willing (In Shaa Allah), God almighty will forgive our ancients' sins doing that mistake, and also our sins, all together.

After Ali and Fatima (AS) had gotten married and the Prophet (PBUH) had been told that his daughter had been pregnant, Muhammad His Holiness said: "As soon as the baby is born, do not breastfeed him, do not feed him, and let me know first." When the baby was born, he cried a lot. Therefore, they gave him milk to comfort him. And then when the Prophet was told, he did not say anything. He gave the same order when Fatima (AS) was pregnant for the second time. But this time, although the baby cried a lot, it was paid no attention according to the Prophet's order until he traveled back and put his tongue into the baby's mouth and he became comforted and quiet.³ This quotation from the Prophet: "I am of Husain and Husain is of me" would seemingly point it out that Husain's words were from the Prophet's tongue; the same tongue that was in the Prophet's mouth was in Husain's mouth, too. Thus, from the very

¹ This paper is the transcription of the speech made by His Excellency Dr. Haj Nour Ali Tabandeh (Majzoub Ali Shah) on Tuesday, August 5, 2008 (Shaban 3, 1429 Lunar Hijri).

² Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979

³ Bihar-al-Anwar, written by Majlesi, Vol. 43, P 254

beginning of Husain's birth, the Muslims thought that the Prophet had foreseen a special role for the baby because he had said: "Do not feed him until I have come back".

In the happening of Karbala, number of the fallen was only about seventy two and as a critic once said: Why on earth has this tragic event affected the world so greatly, while millions of people are being killed in wars? It means, there are not as many books about the other wars in the history of Islam and also all the wars altogether as there have been about the event of Karbala and yet, the tragedy of Karbala among the Shiites is talked about as the story that will never be old.

Although the grief of love is not but a single story
When I hear it from every tongue, it sounds innovatory⁴

That disaster happened in a special epoch of history of Islam. In the history of Iran, it is talked a lot about the fall and rise of dynasties and kings. These changes have always taken place in turning points but after a while the same routine would get back, but after the event of Karbala and what happened to Imam Husain, a new era began in the history of Islam so that many orientalists believe this event and turning point to be the beginning of Shiism history. The reason is that they pay attention to Islam only on its exterior, and they judge like this because they have not seen the word "Shiism" in the early Islamic books. Although it is true that the main reason of demonstrating Shiism was Imam Husain's life and activities after the Umayyad had risen and fought against Islam, it is a mistake to assume Shiism as a political party just because today's world has become like everything is thought to be political. Today, as we can see, it has become like when someone smiles at someone else, it will have a political interpretation, but in fact, someone might have tingled the smiling person at that moment. Or, if someone frowns at someone else, it may mean that the political situation will change; in fact, the frowning person might have had a bodily pain at that moment. Unfortunately, everything has become politics and has found a political interpretation and it is especially dangerous in cultural and opinion affairs. Also, about the Shiism, those who research consider it as a political party or group and are investigating to find when this party formed.

As a matter of fact, Shiism has been an intellectual group inside the Islam and is basically the real Islam. Shiism has stood like a strong man against a devastating flood which ruins and annihilates everything and has offered his hand to those who can reach him to be saved and in order not to let them be lost. This is Shiism. This Shiism has stood against crises and revolutions in today's world and saves whatever God has determined to save. According to the descent verse "**Then as for the scum, it will fade away as a worthless thing**"⁵ and "**What benefits people stays and lasts.**"⁶.

When the holy Prophet was appointed, his invitation seemed strange and unusual for some people at first. A man, who had been known as an honest, trustworthy and caring together with other transcendental codes of ethics, who all people, even idolaters would want such a

⁴ Khwāja Shams-ud-Dīn Muhammad Hāfez-e Shīrāzī, known by his pen name Hāfez, was a Persian poet:

یک قصه بیش نیست غم عشق وین عجب کز هر زبان که میشنوم نا مکرر است

⁵ The Quran, Al-Rad (The Thunder), 17: فَأَمَّا الرِّبْدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً

⁶ The Quran, Al-Rad (The Thunder), 17: وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ

person to rule, appeared and spoke such words, just like a piece of jewelry which is fallen down on a dirty ground and God picked it with his hand, washed it and showed it to Arabs, and said: “This is the jewelry you asked for, one who is among you and belongs to you.” This way, a new era began. In the last twenty three years of the Prophet’s life, people were in comfort and knew God. After the Prophet passed away, at the time of Abu Bakr and Omar, those Muslims who paid attention only to the exterior of Islam did not see any problem with it and therefore, imagined that they were definitely following the true way, whereas, we know at the moment that problems emerged from those very days. Since Ali (AS) saw that the Islamic laws were applied outwardly, he did not protest, because most people did not deserve to go through the inward of Islam. Omar made an effort to assign a successor in the last days of his life. He realized that most of “The Promised Ten” (those who were promised the heaven by the Prophet, according to the Sunnite’s narrative) were alive, such as Ali, Othman, Talhah, Zubayr, Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf, Sa’id (ibn Zayd) and Abu 'Ubaidah. Of course, the Shiites do not believe this narrative to be valid and they think it was not like the Prophet promised them the heaven. Even if it had been true and the Prophet had said such a thing, by the time that he said such a thing, surely those men would have been heavenly-mannered, they were like heavens when the Prophet spoke those words, but after that, only God knows. Omar thought about those who were alive like: Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf is rich and wealthy, Talhah and Zubayr are so interested in ruling. He misunderstood two characteristics in Ali: First, Ali is witty and uses a lot of humor, thus he will be misjudged- as Omar was very strict and serious, and it has never been said that he ever made fun- second, Ali is too greedy toward the caliphate. This latter opinion of his was incorrect. To reject this accusation and to defend Ali (AS), at the end of Masnavi Manavi, Book 1, Mevlana wrote the following poems in Farsi which are probably of the most beautiful poems in admiration of His Holiness:

He who ignores the needs of his body like that
 How can he be so greedy toward caliphate and kingdom?
 To guide the kings into reaching the right verdict,
 To inspire the king from time to time,
 To grow the tree of caliphate to bear fruit,
 Uninterestedly but sincerely he devotes efforts to the governing body⁷

Ali (AS) always said: “I deserve the caliphate”, but he never said: “elect me as the caliph”. He said: “The Prophet assigned a caliph, whoever he elected shall be the caliph”. And it was not because he had been interested in the caliphate. It was because he said to Ibn Abbass sometime later when he was the caliph: “These worn-out shoes of mine are worth more than ruling over you”.⁸ During his caliphate, he wished to die many times, it means he begged God to bring him death and said: “My keenness to death is more than that of a baby to the mother’s

⁷ Masnavi-I Ma'navi, Book I, P 158, 3960-3962, corrected by Towfiq Sobhani, Rozaneh Publishing, 1999:

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| آنک او تن را بدین سان پی کند | حرص میری و خلافت کی کند؟ |
| زان به ظاهر کوشد اندر جاه و حکم | تا امیران را نماید راه و حکم |
| تا امیری را دهد جانی دگر | تا دهد نخل خلافت را ثمر |

⁸ Nahj al-Balagha, collected by Sharif Razi, corrected by Sobhi al-Salih, Beirut, 1980, sermon 33:

والله لهی (التعل) احب الی من امارتکم

breast”.⁹

Anyway, the Muslims made a big mistake (misjudging Ali), but at least the exterior of Islam was being observed in that period. At the Prophet’s period, the inner and the outer parts of Islam were ruling. At the time of the first two caliphs, the outer side of Islam had been protected but after that period, it was faded away. And at the time of Othman, and then of the Umayyad, it gradually disappeared. Before that period, the Shiite had been called Shiite of Ali. The Shiites were those who said that the Prophet had said: “He whose master is I, so this Ali shall be his master”. We, too, are the followers- literally, the Shiite of Ali. But this saying was not based on a political thought. It was not like our time that there are four or five parties, and one says this party deserves more to take the office and others say that another does. Some orientalist believe the Shiites to be those who believed Ali deserved the office more. This is a political-party kind of thought. Because they think Shiism and also Sufism are basically separated from Islam and they are looking for the origin of these two in the history of Islam. Berje Vachon; my professor of Islamic law when I was studying in France, clearly said: “Since we believe Shiism is different from Islam and it belongs to the Orientalism Department, thus, we look at it that way if we want to research into the Shiism”.

The Shiism is a divine affair and a divine thought which has existed as the inner of Islam at the very beginning. But the very core of the Shiism started after the Prophet’s passing, when a group headed by Ali (AS) believed that: “the Prophet allocated the caliphate to Ali and the divine caliphate is not something we decide upon, only God does. Thus, God has made Ali as the caliph via His Prophet”. That is why the preceding caliphs; Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman, called themselves the caliphs of the Prophet of Allah. But in our opinion, Ali (AS) had acknowledged himself as the caliph of Allah since the very beginning. God had said: “We always make a caliph on the earth”¹⁰ and He made Ali the caliph. But, the caliphate allocation had been announced by the Prophet; and Ali never proclaimed his independence because he repeatedly said: “I am a servant among the other servants of Muhammad”¹¹, but after the Prophet’s passing, he acknowledged himself as the caliph of Allah. There was also another group who believed that God had not allocated the caliphate to anybody but He had sent a prophet and now He has nothing to do with anything else, thus it is our responsibility to decide who to be the ruler, hence, they elected a person other than Ali, and he did not even attend the election, otherwise he would not let this happen. In fact, such people’s assumption about religion is limited to the propheticness and they appreciate the Prophet as a person who is assigned to announce some laws to the people, therefore, the Prophet’s successor’s duty is solely to maintain those laws. Whereas, the Shiism believes that the Islam has an innermost named Wilayah and the Prophet owns the positions of propheticness and guardianship. The guardianship (Wilayah) is the divine and spiritual side of Islam, and this side of religion is not something people, counting on their intelligence and acuity, can decide who should inherit from the Prophet.

This is the basis of Shiism that comes from the two different viewpoints of Islam (on the

⁹ Nahj al-Balagha, collected by Sharif Razi, corrected by Sobhi al-Salih, Beirut, 1980, sermon 4:

ابْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ آتَسُّ بِالْمَوْتِ مِنَ الطِّفْلِ بِتَدْيِ أُمِّهِ

¹⁰ The Quran, Al-Baqara (The Cow), 30: إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً

¹¹ Al-Tawhid, written by Ali ibn Babawaih al-Qummi Al-Shaykh al-Saduq, corrected by Husaini Tehrani, Qom, 2008, P 174: انا عبد من عبيد محمد

one hand) and the religion (on the other hand), thus, its history traces back to Islam (itself) and also the religion in general. Those who say that God assigns any prophet's successor and God assigned Ali as the Prophet's successor via the Prophet, they are considered to be Shiites as the origin of Shiism, but those who say that they can elect the successor are not Shiites. This is the basis of Shiism but later on, different schools of language, jurisprudence and principle appeared in Shiism and caused disagreements. Therefore, the basis of Shiism existed from the very beginning, at least when the Prophet was alive but there was not anybody called Shiite (Follower) of Ali, there were Ali's partisans but no one particularly named them Ali's Shiite. After the Prophet's passing, Ali's Shiite drew attention.

Based on this misunderstanding, some people think Ali fights to gain the caliphate, no matter he is the real caliph or not, and Ali's Shiite definitely helps him take the office and the caliphate, the same way the three preceding caliphs gained the caliphate. Such people, too, did not pay attention to Ali's wilayah and his spiritual position, and did not recognize him as Allah's Caliph. They said to Ali (AS): "Now that Uthman has died and we do not have a caliph, then you shall be the caliph". Therefore, based on this, they allowed themselves to fight against Ali, many people fought him. Some of them knew who really Ali was, but betrayed him. For example, Talhah and Zubayr were of the close companions of the Prophet and of the Promised Ten wanted the reign of Basrah and Kufah. So they came to Ali when he became the caliph, but since Ali knew them well, he did not assign them to any governmental position, so they triggered the Battle of the Camel (Jamal). No doubt that Aisha; Om-ol-Momenin (Mother of the Believers), was a considerable influence on this happening and since she was the Prophet's wife and had no children, but the Prophet had children born to Khadija and he always talked about Khadija, she was unhappy due to the female jealousy. On the other hand, Fatima (the Prophet's daughter and Ali's wife AS) had children and she and her children always received a lot of attention and kindness from the Prophet. All these acted as stimuli to provoking Aisha into fighting against Ali (AS). It is said that when some people asked her about that event later on, because she always talked about Ali's magnanimity, she answered: "I wish I had not been there and those things had never happened".

Anyway, when Ali became the caliph, some began the Battle of Basra (Camel) against Ali (AS). Not all of them were hostile but they were so dumb and ignorant that when the leg of the camel Aisha was riding on was injured, two or three of them supported that leg in a way that the camel was on their shoulders (in order to show respect). They had such ignorant beliefs. When the battle ended and the dead bodies were on the ground, Talhah saw someone and asked him while he was lying injured: "Do you belong to Ali's army or do you belong to the opposing army?" He said: "I am with Ali". Talhah said: "Since my hand cannot reach Ali's now, give me your hand so that I can redo bayaat with Ali by taking your hand as a representative of Ali". It is obvious that he had admitted his fault and was regretting it, thus, he, at the slightest excuse, wanted to reaffirm his commitment at the last moment. Talhah was one of the well-known disciples and so was Zubair. Zubair was Ali's cousin. Ali called Zubair over from the opposing line (in the battlefield). He came to Ali and Ali asked him: "Do you remember the day we were with the Prophet and then he looked at me while you were complimenting me excessively? You said: I will never leave Ali. And the Prophet said to you: Beware of the day you will thrust your sword into this very Ali". Zubair thought shortly and said: "Yes I do" and continued: "If I remembered what I had said, I would never dare to do so". Then he left the battlefield toward the desert, shedding tears, and never went back to his army. Some people regret like this- but they

did damage anyway.

Then, there came Muawiah's turn, who was a trickster. He knew that his son was no less stubborn than he was, therefore he advised Yazid not to disturb Husain and not to ask him for doing bayaat, as he would never do so. Muawiah realized that he had to behave politically but Yazid, his son, did not, and a new page in the history of Islam came to existence. After the event of Ashura and especially the imamate of Sajjad, people found out that Ali's Shi'ite; Hassan and Husain were never interested in the caliphate¹², as Ali (AS) declared. To them, the value of caliphate was less than that of Ali's shabby shoes.¹³ Otherwise, Sajjad, son of Husain, would have gathered an army and fought fiercely in revenge for his family members killed in that massacre. What those honorable men wanted to prove was that that was not the real Islam, as Ibn Khaldun asserted, those ignorant people abused the Islam to murder the grandson of the Prophet by the Prophet's sword. That is not the Islam that caliph of which; Muawiah, says the Friday Prayers on Wednesday¹⁴, those who followed him are neither the real Muslims, saying Friday Prayers on Wednesday, nor they are interested in understanding the truth of Shiism. Since then, Shiism became known as a school of religion or faith, and finally as Ali's Shiism. That is why Imam Husain said: "If Islam is reinforced by shedding my blood, you swords come to me, come to me faster." Then swords were thrust into him, shed his blood, so the tree of Islam became stronger.

Now, history shows that His Holiness and his disciples were martyrs. On the day His Holiness was born, we say "Happy Birthday" to his grandfather who said: "I am of Husain and Husain is of me", to his honorable parents and to his brother; Hassan (AS). About these two honorable brothers said the Prophet: "Hassan and Husain are both Imams, whether reticent or assertive"¹⁵. But what do we learn from this? We neither learn from our own life nor from our ancestors'. This is the world's way that no one has been able to take advantage of his experience. As it is said "Sages and artists should have double lifespans so that the former can offer experience and the latter can use it". Anyway, birthdays of all Imams are holy days for us but some of them like Husain (AS) opened a new chapter in the history of Islam and were also a new chapter in the divine book.

¹² Nahj al-Balagha, collected by Sharif Razi, corrected by Sobhi al-Salih, Beirut, 1980, sermon 205, P 322

¹³ Nahj al-Balagha, collected by Sharif Razi, corrected by Sobhi al-Salih, Beirut, 1980, sermon 33, P 76

¹⁴ Muruj al-dhahab, written by Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Ali al-Mas'udi, Qom, 1989, Vol. 3, P 32

¹⁵ Al-Irshad, written by Al-Shaykh Al-Mufid, Vol. 2, Al-Al Bait (AS) Publishing, P 30