

In the Name of the Most High

Objections and Questions Regarding the Reality of Shiism

Presentation of the Objection: This doubt is generally presented in two forms: as a normal question or as an aggressive insinuation.

*** First Form: Normal Question: What is Shiism?**

What is the difference between Shi'a and Sunni?

*** Second Form: Aggressive Insinuation: Shiism is a deviant sect and is not part of Islam.**

Shiism was fabricated by Jews. The founder of Shiism was a Jew named Abdullah ibn Saba'.

Gauging the Addressee: During this phase, one must discern whether the interlocutor's mind has been poisoned against Shiism, or if they are merely asking a normal question without prejudice, simply seeking some information.

Answer to the Normal Question

Key Point: In introducing Shiism, there is a common response in our religious literature that is a very incorrect and even dangerous answer to present to a Sunni discussant. First, this inappropriate answer will be mentioned and critiqued. Subsequently, the answer that has been tested in practice and is also the definition of Aban ibn Taghlib¹ regarding the term "Shi'a" in contrast to Ahl al-Sunnah will be presented.

Inappropriate Answer: "Shi'a and Sunni are similar in the fundamental principles of Islamic belief, but they differ on the issue of succession (caliphate) after the Prophet. Shi'ites believe the immediate successor after the Prophet was exclusively Imam Ali: ibn Abi: Talib."

Two main flaws in this conventional way of introducing Shiism to Sunnis are:
1. Rejecting the status of the Caliphs and emphasizing the belief in the error of their actions will create aversion, repulsion, and even hatred towards Shiism in the addressee.

¹. Aban ibn Taghlib was a top-tier companion of Imam al-Sajjad (as) and Imam al-Sadiq (as).

2. Even if an addressee is not affected by this problem (which is very unlikely), they will still face this question: How is such a difference supposed to affect our lives today?! What does it matter to our lives as Muslims today who should have ruled the Islamic community 1400 years ago after the Prophet?!

Useful and Effective Answer:

Stage One: Shiism is one of the Islamic denominations that, in most Islamic teachings, is similar to the other schools of thought. As you can see, Muslims from all denominations come for Hajj, and we, as Shi'ites, have also come for Hajj alongside our other brothers.

Stage Two: The difference between Shi'ism and other schools of thought is similar to the differences among the Sunni schools themselves. The jurisprudence (fiqh) of each school differs from another because the method of ijtiḥād (legal reasoning) of the founders of these schools differed. For example, Shafi'is, during Tawaf, act according to the fatwa of Abu: Hani:fiḥ so that their ablution (wudhu:) is not invalidated by the potential contact of their hand with a woman. The reason for this difference in fatwa goes back to Abu: Hani:fiḥ's method of ijtiḥād, which differed from Shafi'i's method.

Stage Three: The school of Shiism has another name, and taking heed of this name can clarify the characteristics of Shiism. The other name for the Shi'a school is the School of the Ahl al-Biṭt (the Prophet's Household). The most important characteristic of Shiism is the nature of this school's relationship with the Ahl al-Biṭt. We have two duties towards the Ahl al-Biṭt: affection and obedience.

Throughout history, enmity towards the Ahl al-Biṭt has been immense. Affection for the Ahl al-Biṭt, for many years, was considered tantamount to disbelief and apostasy, and in many cases, led to the killing of the lovers of the Ahl al-Biṭt. This is why Imam Shafi'i, in his famous poem, courageously says:

"لو كان رفضاً حب محمد و آل محمد / فليشهد الثقلان اني رافض"

"If affection for the family of Muhammad is heresy, then let the two weighty beings bear witness that I am a heretic (rafidhi:)"

The root of why some people label Shi'ites as "Rafidhi:" becomes clear in this poem.

Praise be to God, now most Muslims have affection for the Ahl al-Biyt and have not abandoned this Quranic duty. Imam Shafi'i: beautifully expressed the meaning of the "Mawaddah" verse in his poem. In the Quran, we read:

قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَمَن يَقْتَرِفْ حَسَنَةً نَّزِدْ لَهُ فِيهَا حُسْنًا (الشورى- ٢٣)

"Say, 'I do not ask you any reward for it except the love of [my] relatives.'"
(Shura: 23)

The meaning of this verse is found in this poem by Imam Shafi'i:

يا آل بيت رسول الله حبكم/ فرض من الله في القرآن انزله

"O family of the Messenger of Allah, your love is an obligation from Allah in the Quran He revealed."

Stage Four: In the fundamental beliefs and rulings of Islam, Shi'a and Sunni are completely similar. All Muslims believe that the source for receiving Islamic teachings is the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family). Given that, to understand the interpretation of the Quran and the Prophet's Sunnah one must refer to hadiths, all Muslims refer to the Companions of the Prophet to understand religious teachings.

If there is no difference among the narrations from the Companions on a subject, such as the number of Rak'ahs in the Fajr prayer or the obligation of fasting in the month of Ramadan, naturally, there will be no difference of opinion among the various Islamic denominations. This is why the similarities among Islamic denominations are numerous, and the differences are very few.

However, if on a subject there is a difference among the opinions of the Companions, here the Sunnis say that in this case, one can refer to any of the Companions. That is, among the different opinions narrated from the Companions, one can accept whichever is more desirable. But the Shi'ites believe that among the different Companions, if contradictory opinions exist, one must refer to the opinion of the Ahl al-Biyt.

No Sunni scholar believes that for understanding the meanings of the Quran or the Prophetic Sunnah, one cannot refer to the Ahl al-Biyt, because the Ahl al-Biyt were among the most important Companions. Based on this, the Shi'ite practice, in the view of Sunni scholars, is a defensible and correct action, but they say that in

the case of differing opinions among the Companions, one can also refer to others. (This answer is the same statement of Aban ibn Taghlib.)²

The reason for the Shi'ites' belief that the opinion of the Ahl al-Biyyt is the most reliable and precise is verse 33 from Surah Al-Ahzab:

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا» (الأحزاب- ٣٣)

"Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification." (Al-Ahzab: 33)

(If the addressee happens to have high education and knowledge in exegesis and narrations, depending on the situation, one can delve into the exegetical discussions of this verse and the hadiths related to its occasion of revelation, or one can refer this discussant to a Scholarly Council. However, in most cases, the addressee does not have such an inclination.)

Stage Five: (If the interlocutor is informed about issues related to the caliphate, this stage should also be mentioned.)

The political discussions of early Islam do not have a particular impact on the lives of Muslims today. We cannot change the course of history. However, what method we use in acquiring religious teachings has an impact even today.

Answer to the Aggressive Insinuation

Stage One: Do you consider Shi'ites non-Muslim? Then how do the Saudi Government and other Muslims allow us to come for Hajj? Have you not seen that Shi'ite scholars, alongside Sunni scholars, wash the Ka'bah with Iranian rosewater every year?! Would these Sunni scholars allow the Ka'bah to be defiled by the entry of some non-Muslims?

Stage Two: Have you not seen the explicit fatwa of Sheikh Shaltut, which, alongside the four famous Sunni schools, permits Muslims to follow Shi'ite jurisprudence if they wish? Have you not seen that the current head of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmad al-Tayyib, has described Shi'a and Sunni as the two wings of the bird of Islam?

². The Shi'a are those who, when people differ regarding a narration from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family), take the saying of Ali: (peace be upon him); and when people differ regarding a narration from Ali:, they take the saying of Ja'far ibn Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Stage Three: The root of sowing discord between Shi'a and Sunni lies in political matters. If Shi'a and Sunni were enemies, it would be impossible for Shi'ites in Lebanon and Yemen to support Sunni Palestinians.

Stage Four: What is the meaning of being Muslim? How can one understand if a denomination is among the Islamic school of thoughts? If the criterion for being Muslim is belief in Allah, the prophethood of the Seal of the Prophets (peace be upon him), and the Day of Judgment, then Shi'ites are also Muslims.

Stage Five: Unfortunately, the accusation of apostasy has been leveled against the lovers of the Ahl al-Biyyat for centuries. Due to enmity towards the Prophet's Household, such a heavy atmosphere was created against Shi'ites and the lovers of the Ahl al-Biyyat that when someone in the position of Imam Shafi'i spoke of love for the Ahl al-Biyyat, even he was accused of being a Rafidhi: and irreligious. But he courageously proclaimed this love and said: "If love for the family of Muhammad is heresy, then let Jinn and human being bear witness that I am a heretic!"

(لو كان رفضاً حب محمد و آل محمد/ فليشهد الثقلان اني رافض) !

Stage Six: Introduce Shiism based on the previous five-stage answer presented in response to the question about the reality of Shiism.

Stage Seven: (This stage should only be mentioned if the addressee is familiar with the story of Abdullah ibn Saba'.)

Regarding Abdullah ibn Saba' and his influence on Shiism:

- a) Given his alleged role in founding Shiism, Shi'ite scholars should logically hold him in very high esteem. Please bring one text from a Shi'ite scholar that praises him. It is impossible for someone to be the founder of a sect unless he and his views are mentioned in numerous texts of that sect. But in Shi'ite texts, whenever this individual's name is mentioned, it is accompanied by curses and insults.
- b) In which book of the important Sunni books is this person mentioned? He is only introduced in Tabari's book, and the narrators of that report are individuals known to be liars. If such a person had this deep and dangerous influence, it should have been mentioned in various books, which it has not.
- c) The root and foundation of Shiism are in the verses of the Quran and the narrations of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). Shiism, due to the Purification Verse (Ayah al-Tathir), considers the opinion of the Ahl al-Biyyat to be infallible, and due to the Hadith al-Thaqaliyn, sees the Ahl al-Biyyat always

alongside the Quran. (At this stage, depending on the conditions of each dialogue, one can go into more detail regarding the relevant verses and hadiths or pass over these texts more quickly.)

d) There are numerous narrations indicating that the term "Shi'a" was used during the time of the Noble Messenger (peace be upon him) himself, and the companions and followers of Ali: ibn Abi: Talib were known as "Shi'at Ali:" (the Shi'a of Ali:). Among these narrations are:

Hadith 1:

حدثني أبي عن ميناء بن أبي ميناء مولى عبد الرحمن بن عوف قال خذوا عني قبل أن تشاب الأحاديث بالباطيل سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله يقول أنا الشجرة وفاطمة فرعها وعلي لقاحها والحسن والحسين ثمرتها وشيعتنا ورقها واصل الشجرة في جنة عدن وسائر ذلك في سائر الجنة. (المستدرک للحاکم النیشابوری الجزء ٣ ، الصفحة ١٦٠)

"I am the tree, Fatimah is its branch, Ali is its pollen, Hasan and Husayn are its fruit, and our Shi'a are its leaves. The root of the tree is in the Garden of Eden, and the rest of that is in the rest of Paradise."

Hadith 2:

قال تعالى (ان الذين آمنوا و عملوا الصالحات اولئك هم خير البرية). لما نزلت هذه الآية قال الرسول لعلي يا علي (عليها السلام) هم انت و شيعتك. (حاكم حسكاني، عبيدالله بن عبدالله، شواهد التنزيل، ج ٢، ص ٤٦٥/ خوارزمي، موفق بن احمد، المناقب، ص ١١١/ سيوطي، جلالدين، الدر المنثور، ج ٨، ص ٥٨٩/ طبري، محمد بن جرير، تفسير الطبري، ج ٣، ص ٢٩٠)

When the verse "Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds – those are the best of creatures." (Al-Bayyinah: 7) was revealed, the Messenger said to Ali: "O Ali:, they are you and your Shi'a."

Hadith 3:

عن الشعبي عن علي قال: قال رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وسلم): " انت وشيعتك في الجنة" (خطيب بغدادی، احمد بن علي، تاريخ بغداد، ج ١٢، ص ٢٨٤، ذيل ترجمه عصام بن الحكم بن عيسى بن زياد بن عبد الرحمن، رقم ٤٧٣١).

From al-Sha'bi, from Ali, who said: The Messenger of God (peace be upon him) said: "You and your Shi'a will be in Paradise."

Hadith 4:

ان رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وسلم) قال لعلى انت وشيعتك تردون على الحوض رواة مرويين بيضة وجوهكم وان عدوك يردون على الحوض ظما مقمحين. (ان رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وسلم) قال لعلى انت وشيعتك تردون على الحوض رواة مرويين بيضة وجوهكم وان عدوك يردون على الحوض ظما مقمحين. (طبرانى، سليمان بن احمد، المعجم الكبير، ج ١، ص ٣١٩، حديث ٩٤٨، باب عبيد الله بن ابي رافع عن ابيه)

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said to Ali: "You and your Shi'a will come to me at the Pond (al-Hawdh) quenched, with bright faces, while your enemy will come to the Pond thirsty and parched."

Given these hadiths, it is clear that the term "Shi'at Ali" existed from the time of the Noble Messenger (peace be upon him), and Shiism is not a sect that was created during the time of Uthman.