

All About The Shia

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“O people! Do not wonder at the small number of those who follow the right path, because people throng only round the table (of this world) whose edibles are few but whose hunger is insatiable.” (ibn Abi Talib, Sermon 201)

The above statement becomes very relevant to the present situation and the cause and purpose of this demonstration, if we consider the following facts:

1. In the larger Muslim world, the Shia are a minority - about 25-30% of the total world Muslim population.
2. Without adequate laws in place and enforcement of the same, a minority group can be easily oppressed by the extremists in the majority group in any society economically, physically and/or politically.
3. If law and order in that society deteriorates and the government becomes weak, extremists can turn that oppression into killing, looting and torture of the members of the minority group with silent complicity from the majority.
4. If the extremists in the majority group get sanctioned for their oppression from a religious ideology, that oppression also receives legitimacy in the less educated masses of the majority group.

This is exactly what has been happening in Pakistan for the last two decades. That is why this document has been prepared; so that everyone becomes aware of the situation with all its implications. It is important to note that a great majority of Sunni Muslims do not subscribe to anti-Shia feelings and violence identified in this document. It is a very small minority of extremists who have joined hands with terrorists and they are successful only because of monetary support they are receiving from their sponsors. The general population of Sunni Muslims would like to see a stable society with their Shia neighbors, as is apparent from the essay written by Dr. Shahid Athar in the last section of this article.

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Who Are The Shia

The purpose of this write-up is to give a brief background of the Shia Muslim identity and to clarify some misunderstandings.

One thing must be stated at the very outset. We live in a civilized society. The hallmark of a civilized society is the absolute unequivocal right of every individual in such a society to choose the system of his/her choice, have faith in it and be able to practice that faith as the individual thinks fit, without any let or hindrance from any quarter.

By the same token, every Muslim has the right to interpret his/her religion from the twin sources of the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's Sunnah, and practice it the best way that individual finds or chooses.

A very obvious question arises with that premise. If such is the case in a balanced society, then why do we need to talk and write about the Shia identity?

It is true that in countries such as the United States of America and many European countries, the right of the individual to choose and practice the religion of his/her choice is guaranteed by the constitution of those countries and religious ideologies cannot be threatened by the use of force.

The recent spate of anti-Shia violence in Pakistan has taken a new turn for the worst. Pakistan came into being for the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent. Both Shia and Sunni had struggled side-by-side to create the country. Now, the same country seems to have been taken over by a new breed of anti-Shia extremists who have joined hands with the terrorists such as the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

These extremist and terrorist organizations have killed nearly 10,000 Shia Muslims in cold blood in Pakistan in the last 25 years. Main targets of these cold blooded killings have been trained physicians and surgeons, and young men who are emerging as successful professionals in many other fields.

Apparently these terrorist forces are working to destroy the very fabric of the society. A civilized and democratic society is being reduced to tribal living and is actually being reduced to jungle law.

Why The Shia Are A Minority

Many of our youth as well as those who have joined the fold of Islam recently and are curious about the Shia-Sunni split in Islam, often ask the question: 'If the Shia faith is based on truth, justice and common sense, then why is it that its followers have always been a minority in Islam?

Let us quote Imam Ali at this point. In a part of a sermon recorded in Nahjul Balagha he said, "O people! Do not wonder at the small number of those who follow the right path, because people throng only round the table (of this world) whose edibles are few but whose hunger is insatiable." (ibn Abi Talib, Sermon 201)

Imam Ali goes on to explain that numbers do not necessarily determine right or wrong, rather,

groups are formed by people agreeing with each other or disagreeing.

Specifically, Tijani explains the reasons why the four “Sunni” schools gathered more followers over the centuries than did the Shia school:

“One who researches history books and what is recorded by the predecessors will discover beyond any doubt that the reason why the four Sunni sects prevailed during those times is that it was due to the will and the management of the ruling authorities; it is for this reason that their followers are numerous, for people follow the creed of their rulers. Such researchers will also find out that scores of sects came and disappeared because the rulers were not pleased with them, so they melted. Among them is the Awza'i sect, the sects founded by Hasan al-Basri, Abu Ayeenah and Ibn Abu Thuayb, Sufyan al-Thawri, Ibn Abu Dawood, L'ayth ibn S'ad, and many others.” (Tijani).

We also find out that the reason why Abu Haneefah's sect was propagated after its founder's death because Abu Yousuf and al-Shaybani, who were followers of Abu Haneefah and among his most faithful students, were at the same time very close to Haroun "al-Rasheed," the Abbasid caliph. They played a major role in strengthening the latter's government and supporting and helping it, hence Haroun of the concubines and promiscuity did not permit anyone to be appointed as the judge or mufti with the consent of both of these men who never appointed any judge except if he was a follower of Abu Haneefah's sect. Abu Haneefah, therefore came to be regarded as the greatest scholar, and his sect as the greatest sect or fiqh implemented, despite the fact that his contemporary scholars went as far as calling him kafir and atheist. Among such scholars were both Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal and Imam Abul-Hasan al-Ash'ari.

Likewise, the Shafi'i sect could not have spread nor gained any momentum had it not been for the support of the Abbasid authorities during the time of al-Mu'tasim when ibn Hanbal retracted his theory that the Holy Quran was created, so his star shone during the Nasibi caliph al-Mutawakkil. His sect gained strength and was disseminated when colonial authorities supported Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab during the past century, and when the latter cooperated with Al Saud who immediately lent him their support and assisted him and worked diligently to propagate his sect in Hijaz and the Arabian Peninsula.

The Hanbali sect, thus, became the sect attributed to three Imams the first of whom was Ahmed ibn Hanbal, who never claimed that he was a *faqih* but only a scholar of hadith, then to Ibn Taymiyyah, whom they called "Shaikh al-Islam", mentor of Islam and "Mujaddid al-Sunnah", the one who revived the Sunnah, and whom his contemporary scholars regarded as *kafir* because he decreed all Muslims who sought nearness to Allah through the Prophet were polytheists. Then came in the past century Mohammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, henchman of British colonialism in the Middle East, who also tried to "revive" the Hanbali sect through verdicts which he borrowed from Ibn Taymiyyah. Ahmed ibn Hanbal became a thing of the past because now they call their sect Wahhabism.

There is no room to doubt the fact the dissemination, fame and prominence of all these sects was through the support and with the blessing of various rulers. And there is also no room to doubt the fact that all those rulers, without any exception, were enemies of the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt due to their continuous fear that those Imams threatened their very existence and the abolishment of their authority. They, therefore, were always trying to isolate them from the nation, belittling them and killing anyone who followed their creed.

It goes without saying that those same rulers were always appointing the scholars who were flattering them and who were issuing verdicts conducive to their government and authority, since people always need solutions for their legislative problems.

Since the rulers in all times did not know anything about the *sharia*, nor did they comprehend anything about *fiqh*, it was only natural that they appointed scholars to issue verdicts on their behalf and to mislead the public into thinking that politics, whereas the *faqih* was always a theologian, as is the case with the president of any Muslim republic: you always find him appointing the scholars who are close to him, calling them the "republic's muftis," or any such title, who are asked to look into issues related to religious verdicts, tenets, and rituals. Yet in reality such a person does not issue any verdict or a ruling authority and in agreement with the ruler or, at least, not in opposition to the government's policy or the execution of its programs.

This phenomenon came to exist since the time of the first three caliphs, namely Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman, for although they did not make a distinction between religion and politics, they granted themselves the right to be the legislators in order to legislate whatever served the interests of their caliphate and whatever secured its prestige and continuation.

Since those three caliphs used to meet with the Prophet and be in his company, they learned from him some traditions which were not in contradiction with their policies.

Mu'awiyah, for example, did not embrace Islam until the 9 AH or 630 AD, according to the most famous and authentic narrative, so he did not accompany the Prophet except for a very short period of time and did not know anything worth mentioning about his Sunnah; therefore, he felt forced to appoint Abu Hurayra and Amr ibn al-As and some of the companions to issue verdicts according to his own liking.

The Umayyads and the Abbasids after him followed such "praiseworthy Sunnah," or what they labelled "*al-bid'a al-hasana*", "the good innovation". Each ruler, thus, seated the high judge beside him to appoint the judges whom he regarded as good for the state and who would strengthen and support its authority. You do not need to know, beyond that, except the nature of those judges who preferred to displease their God in order to please their masters and benefactors who had appointed them in their positions. Having come to know all that, you can understand the secret why the infallible imams from the progeny of the Prophet were deliberately excluded from public life, and why not even one of them, across the centuries, was appointed as judge or mufti.

If we wish to document more facts relevant to the methods whereby the four "Sunni" sects were promoted by the rulers, we need to cite only one example by removing the curtains from the sect established by Imam Malik, a sect which regarded as one of their greatest, most prestigious, and whose fiqh is the broadest. Malik gained fame particularly because of writing his book *Al-Mawta* which, according to 'Ahl al-Sunnah,' is the most authentic book after the Book of Allah, and there are many scholars who regard it as superior to, and they prefer it over, al-Bukhari's *Sahih*. Malik's fame was extraordinary, so much so that this query came to be a household word: "Can anyone dare to issue a verdict while Malik is in town?"

This quotation does not need any explanation. But, let us summarize the basic ideas in our own words. The Shia system of belief and law is inherently against tyranny, oppression and wrongdoing, while all the (so called) Islamic rulers had been holding on to the government by terror. The Shia never accepted their legitimacy to rule for two reasons:

- (1) They were not the rightful successors of the Prophet of Islam, and,
- (2) They violated the basic rights of every man and woman (Muslim or non-Muslim) by their oppression and tyranny.

For those reasons, it was not possible that those rulers and the Shia would ever come together. The majority of the population, on the other hand, were mainly interested in their own survival. It was therefore natural that they would side with the ruling party rather than sacrifice their own life, honor and property for the basic principles of Islam. That is how the mainstream Islamic party was always kept on the defensive and thus, was reduced in size.

The Achievements of the Shia

History has witnessed that the Shia, though they never coveted high positions in government, but instead dedicated their lives to pursue intellectual, scientific and technological achievements. However, whenever they did come into power, they always gave rise to a system of government that was pluralistic and allowed people of all religions and sects to live peacefully in their kingdom and thrive in whatever field they were experts in. There are many examples in history of this. Shah Abbas Safavi of Iran fostered an environment where Christians, Jews and Fire Worshippers all lived in peace within his kingdom. The largest Cathedral in Isfahan was built at his expense, despite his own faith in Shia Islam. Similarly, the Qutubshahi Kingdom in the Deccan allowed Hindus and all other religions to thrive in their Kingdom. The Nawabs of Avadh allowed Hindus, Sunnis and all others to live peacefully in their Kingdom in North India.

Some of the famous names in medieval history are those of the Shia. One of the most notable of them is that of Jabir bin Al-Hayyan, known in the West as Geber, the Father of modern chemistry. He is credited with the task of freeing chemistry from superstitious alchemy, bringing it closer to experimentation and rational analysis.

Other names are those of Ibn-e-Sina or Avicenna, for his work in medicine. Also, Ibn Tufail ("Aben Tofail" to the West), the author of Hayy ibn Yaqdhan; Ibn Zuhr ("Avenzoar" to the West), the great Muslim physician, who became Averroes's teacher and friend. Naseer-ud-Din Tusi (just Tusi to the West) was a polymath: an architect, astronomer, biologist, chemist, mathematician, philosopher, physician, physicist, scientist, theologian and Marja Taqleed, as well as a prolific writer. He was originally Ismaili, and subsequently adopted Twelver Shī'a Islamic belief. The Muslim scholar Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) considered Tusi to be the greatest of the later Persian scholars.

The Persecution Of The Shia – Historical Perspective

The threat to life, property, and honour, as well as the real physical torture and killing of the Shia began at the earliest times in the history of Muslims. Foremost among that are the atrocities committed by Mu'awiyya and his henchmen during the times of Imam Ali and that of Imam Hasan. That was in the first half of the first century of Hijra.

Among the very first events of this kind is the torture and killing of Hujr bin ^cUdayyi and his companions on orders from Mu'awiyyah. And then all the raids organized by Mu'awiyyah over the areas where the Shia lived in any substantial number (including the killing of Muhammad bin Abi Bakr). We can, however, include the torture and eventual death of the famous companion of the Prophet named Abu Zarr for which Uthman, the third Khaleefa, and Mu'awiyyah were jointly responsible. The event that tops them all is the tragedy of Karbala. As long as the Umayyads remained in power that practice continued as official policy of the government.

The time during which Hajjaj bin Yusuf became the governor of Hijaz, is filled with really dark tales of persecution, exploitation and extermination of the Shia.

When Abbasids took control of the Islamic Empire, they did even worse with the Shia. One after effect of all that persecution was the dispersion of the Shia into other foreign countries, which were within reach. Main areas in that respect were the Indian subcontinent, Iraq, Iran and parts of those areas, which came under Russian control in later times. However, as soon as a Muslim government came to power, even in those areas the Shia were not safe. The only exception to that rule was Iran, where in the early 1500s the official religion became the Shia religion and it has

stayed.

That, however, has always been accompanied by continuous persecution of the Shia Muslims at the hands of the governments who were usually Sunni. Salah ad-Din Ayyubi (Saladin) fought the Fatimids of Egypt in the name of retaking Jerusalem from the Christians and massacred hundreds of thousands of Shia in that area. The result is that although Shia traditions have survived in Egypt (like the devotion to the mausoleum of Zaynab bint Ali in the middle of Cairo), the Shia themselves are hard to find in that area today.

Even in a country like Iraq, which is mostly populated by Shia, they were persecuted at the hands of the government, be they a monarch appointed by the British, or the Ba'ath Party dominated by Saddam Hussein.

The persecution of the Shia Muslim community over the years, all across the world, has affected the community in two different ways. One, they have been forced to live a defensive life, having to counter the baseless accusations of their opponents and having to suffer both physically as well as economically. Second, because of the intense hatred of the opposing groups, their properties, their honour and their lives have been destroyed many times. In that process, much of the written record of their history and cultural heritage has been destroyed and their later generations have been deprived of the work bequeathed to them by their ancestors. As a consequence, western authors when writing about Shia Muslims have been negatively influenced.

Quoting Rizvi: The Shi'is were and are contemptuously called Rafiza, Rafizun or Rafizis. The word Rafiza is translated into English as deserters and was first applied by the Sunnis to those who renounced their allegiance to Zayd, a grandson of Imam Husayn who propounded the theory that the armed uprising was indispensable for the imam to assert his rights and that an inferior could supersede a superior in imamate. Gradually the word Rafizi came to be used for all the devotees (Shia) of Imam Ali and Ahl-i-Bayt, particularly the Ghulat (extremists). Some Sunni authorities condemn Shi'is as heretics and infidels; borrowing analogy from Christian Church the orientalist dub them as schismatics; Hardy follows the same line.¹

¹ Rizvi, Vol.I, p.3

Quoting Shah Abdul Azeez, Rizvi writes “In the region (*bilad*) where we live the Isna Ashariyya faith has become so popular that there could be no house where one or two men have not adopted this vicious faith or are not inclined to the Shia beliefs.”²

Then Rizvi quotes Qazi Sanaullah Panipati expressing similar sentiments:

“At this time the Isna Ashariyya faith is predominant. Because of stupidity and ignorance, a large number of people (Sunnis), especially some people of Panipat whose ancestors were Sunnis and good believers, have strayed from the right path. It came to my mind to write a book refuting the Rawafiz (Shi’is) in simple Persian in order to benefit the common people.”³

Giving an example of how the leaders of Sunnis have been out looking for any opportunity to kill and destroy the Shia Muslim community, Rizvi cites yet another example from the history of Deccan in India.

The Afaqis or immigrants, however, suffered a setback during the reign of Ala-ud-Din Ahmad II (839-862/1436-1458) as a result of the Sultan’s ambivalence. In 850/1446-7 Malikut-Tujjar Khalaf Hasan Basri perished in the trap prepared for him by Shankar Rao Shirke, the Marhatta chief of Chakan. The Dakhinis thereupon convinced the Sultan that the Afaqis were disloyal and obtained his consent to massacre them. A large number of innocent Sayyids were killed. When Ni’matullah’s relations convinced the Sultan of Afaqi innocence he killed the Dakhini leaders and restored the Afaqis to their previous senior posts.⁴

In 1802, a group of Wahhabi zealots from Najd, under the leadership of Shaykh Saud entered the city of Karbala in the middle of the night. They plundered and looted the shrines of Imam Husayn and Abbas, killed thousands of old men, women and children and made off with a lot of personal property and goods from the bazaar.

During the period of 1992-1995, Saddam Hussein tried his utmost to destroy the ecosystem in the Shatt Al-Arab area to dislodge the Shia from that area.

² Rizvi, Vol.II, p.68

³ Ibid.

⁴ Rizvi quoting Burhan-i-Ma’asir and Gulshan-e-Ibrahimi, Vol.I, p.256.

Present Day Persecution Of the Shia

The largest Muslim population today is in the contiguous area formed by three countries, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh in which some 500-600 million Muslims live. That area, therefore, deserves a more detailed study.

The most prominent Shia Muslim to be killed for his beliefs in India was Qadhi Noorullah Shoostari. The Mughal emperor of India, Jahangeer, had ordered his execution on the instigation by the Shia-hating Sunni Mullahs dominating the royal court. Noorullah Shoostari was killed by getting lashes from a metal-knotted whip (Durra-e-Khardar) on 7 September 1610 AD. We have already quoted this above.

In late 1930's countrywide Shia-Sunni riots erupted in Northern India. A large number of Shia young men were killed in India. It was after the intervention of the ruling British that the riots were stopped.

The hatreds have, however, continued in Pakistan. The founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, himself was a Shia (Wolpert). He never made a big thing about his own religious preferences, nor did he go out of his way to hide it in any way. His vision of the new country was that it would be a parliamentary democracy where people of all religious preferences would live. It was to be a new homeland for the Urdu-speaking population of India without the fear of a large unsympathetic majority trying to destroy their culture, language and religion. Things worked out for a while. Then the political climate began to change. In the 1950's the Qadiyanee's were targeted. There were riots in West Punjab. That disturbance was only stemmed by the intervention of the armed forces.

The first occurrence of mass killing of the Shia in Pakistan took place during a Muharram in the 1960's, only fifteen years after the creation of the country. In a small place called Thehri⁵. A T'aziyya procession was being led from one center to another. When the procession came over a bridge crossing an irrigation canal, suddenly, armed men belonging to a Sunni *madrasa* nearby appeared and blocked the passage of the procession. Hundreds of young men were killed in cold

⁵Near the Shia state of Khairpur in Sind.

blood and their bodies and body-parts were dumped in the canal. The Shia communities of Khairpur and the neighbouring areas were devastated. There was no Shia household in the area which had not lost at least one young man and many more. It was the period of Ayyub Khan's military rule. Authorities just hushed up the whole thing. Even the popular press shied away from reporting the details of the incident for fear of fanning sectarian hatreds in the country.

In the 1970's Bhutto established his People's Party and a unique brand of Islamic social democracy. But then, under tremendous pressure from the hard core Sunni institutions, he had to declare the Qadiyanees as a minority. Soon after, Bhutto was deposed and Zia-ul-Haq took charge of the country as a military dictator. The persecution of the Shia began in 1976 under the regime of the late Zia-ul-Haq. It became an official government policy in his government. First it was blatant propaganda on the television, radio, and in the newspapers. Then, it turned into open and wanton killings.

It was under Zia al-Haq's regime with American arms and dollars that the Taliban movement took shape and spread in neighbouring Afghanistan. Between 1992 and 1995, they killed some 20,000 Shia in the city of Mazar-e-Sharif in Afghanistan. The Taliban regime also killed nine Iranian diplomats who were all Shia.

Now a new generation of fanatics has been raised on the hatred of the Shia in Pakistan in Taliban supported *madrasas*. They come as a party of two, one driving a motorbike, the other carrying a gun as a pillion passenger. They shoot individuals at will then disappear in the sprawling city of Karachi. What is happening in Pakistan today is a completely new kind of barbarity which has no parallel in the past. Shia are now being killed in mosques as they stand in prayer lines. If by any chance, a murderer is caught and prosecuted, the judges shy away from signing the sentence for fear of their own lives and their family's safety and security.

Given below are the latest incidents of Shia killings:

On the 18th of November 2012, a bomb exploded in a narrow lane in Abbas Town, a Shia neighborhood. Three people died as a result of the explosion and at least 15 people were injured.

Before the blast in Abbas Town, death squads in Karachi and the western city of Quetta tracked down and shot doctors, lawyers and other professionals, the educated elite of the Shia community. As far afield as the normally serene mountainous region of Gilgit in the north-east, passengers have been pulled off buses, identified as Shias and then shot.

Reuters News Agency has reported on the 22nd of November 2012: Pakistani Shias, targeted in three explosions which killed at least 23 people on Wednesday, are now receiving death threat text messages on cellphones ahead of a key event in their religious calendar that has been tainted by violence in the past. “Kill, Kill, Shias,” say the text warnings to members of the minority sect.

Hardline militant groups linked to al Qaeda have in recent months stepped up attacks against Pakistan’s Shias, whom they regard as non-Muslims.

Pakistan’s Taliban claimed responsibility for Wednesday’s violence and said it would stage more attacks on Shias over the next few days.

More than 300 Shias have been killed in Pakistan so far this year in sectarian conflict, according to human rights groups.

This has been going on for the last several years in Pakistan.

Eight incidents of attacks against the Shia have taken place since 12th February 2002 when President Pervez Musharraf assured the world and the people of Pakistan that the writ of the State will not be allowed to be challenged. Four have been killed and eight were seriously injured.

Pakistan

The Economist has printed a full story under the title “Violence In Pakistan”, on Dec., 1, 2012. The article traces the history of anti-Shia violence, its causes and inner workings and what is in the future.

Reuters has reported about the members of the Shia community receiving threatening messages on their cell phones, as shown above. The report is available [here](#).

On the 10th of November 2012, Syed Saeed Zaidi, the trustee of Darus-Saqalain, a publishing house, was killed by gunmen in Karachi right in front of his wife. A large number of the victim's extended family live in New Jersey.

At least seven people including three children were killed, while eighteen others, including a policeman, were injured in a massive bomb blast that went off near a Muharram procession at Bannu Chungi in Dera Ismail Khan here on Saturday morning. According to Geo News, the bomb disposal squad says 8-10 kilograms of explosives were used in the locally made bomb, while police say the bomb was planted in a garbage dump.

A complete list of terrorist attacks on the Shia during the month of November in 2012 are listed below:

- 02-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: Sajjad Ali.
- 03-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: "Hammad Ali, son of Hussain Ali, age 30 years, embraced martyrdom. The incident occurred near anda mour, North Karachi, at a mobile shop."
- 04-Nov-12. FATA Kurram Agency: There was a firing on wood cutters. As a result of this one *momin* Dildar Hussain embraced martyrdom while 2 *momineen*, Qamar and Jawad, got injured and one *momin* was missing.
- 04-Nov-12. Balochistan, Quetta: Haseeb Raza killed on Sirki Road.
- 06-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: Shia scholar Alama Aftab Jafri and his colleague Mirza Shahid Ali killed near Parking Plaza. They were employees of a bank.
- 06-Nov-12. Balochistan, Quetta Firing on Spini Road: three *momineen* embraced martyrdom namely M.Essa, Zakir Hussain and M. Hussain. While 2 *momineen* got injured.
- 06-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: three Shia were killed by rangers firing on a funeral procession. The three martyrs were named Faraz, Qasim, and Waseem.
- 07-Nov-12. Khyber, Pakhtunkhwa: Peshawar Shia ASP Hilal Haider.
- 07-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: 40 year old Shaban.
- 07-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: KDA Chowrangi Sajjad Hussain killed.
- 08-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: Nisar Mehdi and Najam Abbas.

- 08-Nov-12. Balochistan, Quetta: M. Daud.
- 09-Nov-12. Balochistan, Quetta: Ghulam Rasool
- 09-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: Saeed Haider Zaidi, a scholar.
- 10-Nov-12. Balochistan, Quetta: Musa, two others killed.
- 11-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: Asad Raza son of martyred IB officer killed.
- 11-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: Mukhtar Zaidi killed.
- 12-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: a father and his two sons were killed.
- 12-Nov-12. Islamabad, Islamabad: four Shia students of Parachinar were injured.
- 12-Nov-12. Balochistan, Mach: four were martyred, one injured. Ghulam Ali, Ghulam Muhammad, M Ibrahim and Abdullah were all killed; one named Taqi was injured.
- 12-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: one individual named Hasan was injured in a knife attack near Incholi.
- 13-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: Jamal Raza killed in Orangi Town.
- 13-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: Shujaat Ali in Orangi Town.
- 17-Nov-12. Balochistan, Quetta: Hakim attacked in Hazar Ganji area.
- 18-Nov-12. Balochistan Khuzdar Hashim.
- 18-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: A bomb attack at an Abbas Town Imambargah killed two and injured eight.
- 21-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: Bomb attack at an Imambargah in Orangi Town killed three and injured fifteen.
- 21-Nov-12. Punjab, Rawalpindi: In Dhok Sayyadan, Saddar, a jaloos was attacked. 24 killed, 70 injured.
- 22-Nov-12. Punjab, Gujranwala: A child was killed in a bomb attack in Kamoke.
- 24-Nov-12. Punjab, Sargodha: Firing on Muharram Jaloos in Kot Momin, Halalpur. 30 killed.
- 24-Nov-12. Khyber, Pakhtunkhwa: D.I.Khan Attack on Shia jaloos. Seven people were killed, of which five were children, including Sunni children. 5 children died including Sunni kids. 18 were injured.
- 24-Nov-12. Khyber, Pakhtunkhwa, Bannun: 10 were killed in an attack on a Shia jaloos. 10 were killed and 20 injured.
- 25-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: Bomb in Kharadar Khadda Market. One killed.
- 25-Nov-12. Sindh, Gambat Khairpur: Firing on jaloos. Two killed, three injured.

- 25-Nov-12. Sindh, Sanghar: Six people injured in attack on Jaloos. Six killed.
- 25-Nov-12. Khyber, Pakhtunkhwa D.I.Khan: Attack on Jaloos in Commissioner Bazar.
- 26-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: Ali Haider killed in Gulbahar.
- 27-Nov-12. Punjab, Rahimyar Khan: Four Shias injured in Minawal area.
- 27-Nov-12. Sindh, Noshehro Feroze: Three Shias injured in attack on Jaloos.
- 28-Nov-12. Balochistan, Quetta: Haji Hussain killed on Circular Road.
- 28-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi Nazimabad: A trustee of Imambargah Hasan Mohsin was killed.
- 29-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: Dr. Iqbal Hussain and his wife, Dr. Kaniz Fatma, were killed at Abul Hasan Ispahani Road.
- 29-Nov-12. Khyber, Pakhtunkhwa: D.I. Khan Jamil injured in Ashura blast, one died in Islamabad.
- 30-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: Manzar Abbas Zaidi was killed, his 14 year old daughter Mazhar Zehra injured.
- 30-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: one Riaz Hussain of Jhang was killed in Shah Faisal Town in his shop, one Mahdi Shah injured.
- 30-Nov-12. Sindh, Karachi: Ghulam Qadir and Fazl Abbas (father and son) killed near Baldia Bakra Piri.

Other incidences of Shiaphobic hate-crimes are listed below:

- Karachi – 11th Feb 2002 (Monday): A Pakistan Steel Mills Security officer, Syed Adil Hussain was killed after being kidnapped. His corpse was thrown in Gulistan e Jauhar.
- Karachi – 10th Feb 2002 (Sunday): A scout leader and beetle leaf (Pan) shop owner, Syed Azad Hussain Zaidi, was shot dead in Sector F-E, New Karachi, by two motorbike riders.
- Karachi – 8th Feb 2002 (Friday): A bus carrying a pharmaceutical company's worker from its Korangi factory to a Karsaz Mosque was fired upon near Shaheed e Millat Expressway, injuring 3 Shias.
- Rawalpindi – 6th February 2002 (Wednesday): Prominent Educationist and a Central leader of Muslim League (Quaide Azam Group), Prof. Maqsood Jaffery injured in a terrorist attack.
- Karachi – 06 February 2002 (Wednesday): Superior College's principal Mr. Azhar Zaidi and his son Prof. Ashar Zaidi seriously injured in Jaffar e Tayyar Society, as they were going from home to the college.
- Larkana – 5th Feb 2002 (Tuesday): Mohammad Hassan, 60, Custodian of Jadal Shah Imambara was killed in a terrorist attack.
- Karachi – 03 February 2002 (Sunday): Two terrorists on a motorcycle killed Sadiq Ali Hamshahri in Kharadar in his Bakery. He was also a Trustee of Hussainia Iranian, Kharadar.
- Karachi - 30 January 2002: (Wednesday) Dr. Syed Mujawar Ali, 45, was seriously injured by 2 terrorists on a motorcycle in Model Colony.
- Karachi - 29 January 2002: (Tuesday) Mr. Jawwad Rizwi, 65, was shot dead and his friend seriously injured by 2 terrorists on motorcycles, near Sea View Apartments. Mr. Rizwi was a retired Insurance executive and a trustee of a Mosque/Imambara in Defense Housing Society.
- Islamabad, Feb 26, 2002: Gunmen shot dead nine people and wounded at least 10 in an attack on a Shi'ite mosque in Rawalpindi, today police and doctors said. It was the second attack on Shi'ites in less than a week in central Punjab province. Police said three gunmen opened fire on worshippers during evening prayers in the Shah-i-Najf mosque. A witness said there were up to 40 worshippers in the mosque at the time. Rawalpindi's Deputy Inspector-General of Police, Fareed Nawaz, told reporters it was an act of terrorism. Witnesses said three young men riding a motorcycle arrived at the mosque as evening prayers were being held. Police said two of the men went inside the mosque and sprayed worshippers with bullets, while the third stood guard outside. (Washington Times)
- Islamabad, April 26: At least 10 people were killed and 30 others injured when a

powerful bomb ripped through a minority Shiite community meeting in Punjab, officials said today. Local police officer Mohammad Altaf told AFP the bomb exploded around midnight (1800 GMT Thursday) in the Bhakkar district of central Punjab province in "what appears to be a terrorist attack". Bhakkar district hospital official Mohammad Javed said at least 10 people were killed in the attack. "We have received dead bodies of nine women and one male child so far," Javed said. "Around 30 women and children have been brought into the hospital with serious injuries."

“When the Shias of Pakistan are angry, the Pakistani Army and its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) tremble. Because they have not forgotten what happened in 1988. Faced with a revolt by the Shias of the Northern Areas (Gilgit and Baltistan) of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), under occupation by the Pakistan Army, for a separate Shia State called the Karakoram State, the Pakistan Army transported Osama bin Laden's tribal hordes into Gilgit and let them loose on the Shias. They went around massacring hundreds of Shias--innocent men, women and children.”

- Another incident of massacre of Shias took place in Karachi on October 3, 2003, when unidentified gunmen, suspected to be from the SSP, attacked a bus carrying employees of the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), killing at least six people and wounding eight. All the injured and four of the dead were Shias, while two – the bus driver Raza Ali and a Pakistan Army soldier Mohammad Rafiq – are Sunnis. The Shias of Karachi have viewed this incident as a continuation of the earlier massacres in Karachi and Balochistan and feel that the SSP has embarked upon the anti-Shia carnage in different parts of the country due to a suspicion that the officers of the USA's Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), now based in Pakistan, have been using the Shias as human agents in their hunt for bin Laden and the dregs of the Al Qaeda and the IIF.

- According to the BBC, a prominent teacher at a Shia seminary has been shot dead in the Pakistani city of Lahore. The scholar, Allama Ghulam Hussain Najafi, was killed and his daughter injured when unidentified gunmen opened fire on his car on Friday afternoon. The police say they believe the murder was sectarian. Angry crowds took to the streets to protest at the killing.

- April 19, 2006: Pakistan: Shia Muslim Cleric Immolated After Shooting. The Shia Cleric, Fazal Hussain Alvi, was being driven late on Tuesday night when two gunmen on a motorbike approached and shot at the car. A bullet hit the vehicle's fuel tank, causing the car to burst into flames. The ensuing conflagration was so fierce that the two bodies in the car were charred beyond recognition. The 50-year old cleric's family were only able to identify him due to his wooden leg and the car's number plate.

- Shia Scholar martyred in Quetta: A well-known religious scholar Moulana Mola Bux

Jaffri martyred in Mohammad Amin Village, District Kandh Khot, Quetta on Thursday, May 04, 2006. Two Terrorists riding motorcycles opened fire on the moulana when he was coming home from the mosque.

Indonesia

Shia persecution in Indonesia is new.

According to a report by Amnesty International, Indonesian authorities have cut off food and water supplies to the displaced Shia community in East Java. At least 190 displaced Shia followers in East Java, including 69 women and 61 children, are at risk after local government authorities halted supplies of food and water to the community, citing a lack of funds.

The Shia community, from Karang Gayam village in the Sampang district on Madura island, were displaced in August 2012 when an anti-Shia mob of around 500 people attacked the community with sharp weapons and stones. One person was killed and dozens were injured. The mob also set fire to thirty-five houses belonging to the Shia community. Four people have since been charged for the attack.

Following the attack, the community was moved to temporary shelter at a sports complex in Sampang - with minimal facilities - where they have been living for the last three months. No medicine or facilities specifically for children or women have been provided. On 18 November, the local authorities cut off water supply to the complex and on 22 November they halted food supplies. The displaced community have been forced to use their limited funds to purchase food and water.

According to credible sources, some of the Shia followers at the complex have been intimidated and harassed by local government officials who have urged them to convert to Sunni Islam if they want to return to their homes. Local and national authorities continue to put pressure on the community to relocate but they have rejected this option, preferring to return to their homes and livelihoods under conditions of safety. A group of volunteers have been assisting them with their daily needs and providing counselling, particularly to women and children.

Iraq

On the 20th March 2003, President G.W. Bush ordered an attack on Iraq. Baghdad fell to the coalition forces on the 9th of April 2003. Saddam Hussein was captured in the month of December 2003. For the period of 30 years of Saddam rule, the Shia, in spite of being a majority in the country, were oppressed and deprived of their legitimate human, social, and political rights. The Arab'een of the martyrs of Karbala fell in the last week of April 2003. Over a million Shia, who had lived for thirty years under the suffocating Saddam regime, swarmed to the city of Karbala from all other parts of Iraq. That actually exposed them to their enemies.

While the U.S. establishment is trying to bring about a democratic government in Iraq, the Sunni minority is afraid of losing their political clout and therefore, all the comfort and benefits associated with it. Open elections showed that the Shia majority will be able to form a government. The Sunnis began boycotting the process, and with some outside help, they also resorted to violence. Numerous Shia and Sunni both have been killed. However, the Shia leadership has shown great prudence by holding their followers back from any retaliatory action. That situation was held until the attack on the Samarra shrine in February 2006. After that event, both Shia and Sunni came out in the open killing each other. The city of Baghdad used to be 60% Sunni. It is now nearly 75% Shia. Clear lines have been drawn between the Shia and the Sunni neighbourhoods. Over a million people have had to move from their original homes to new areas. Over two million Iraqi refugees have been forced to move to neighbouring countries.

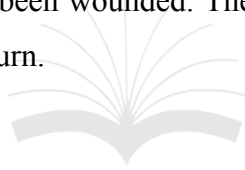
According to the Financial Times, on 28 February, 2005, a suicide bomber, suspected Jordanian Raed Al-Banna, blew himself up in the predominantly Shia town of Hilla south of Baghdad, killing at least 120 Iraqis. A story in a Jordanian newspaper reporting Al-Banna's family "celebrations" of his "martyrdom" unleashed widespread anti-Jordanian protests by angry Shia Iraqis across their country. They threw rocks at the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad, burned the Jordanian flag and cursed its king, who had in December already infuriated the Shia after warning of an Iranian-style "Shia crescent" that would extend from Iran, through Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.

Iraqi leaders reacted angrily to claims by Husni Mubarak, the Egyptian leader, that Iraq's Shia majority was loyal to Iran, a controversy that underlines how the Iraq conflict is heightening Sunni-Shia tensions across the Middle East: Hoshiyar Zebari, the Iraqi foreign minister, told the FT

the Shia community had been "infuriated" by the comments and that he had demanded an explanation from the Egyptian foreign ministry. "There has to be damage limitation," he said. (The Financial Times)

Thousands of Iraqis have gathered at the al-Askari shrine in Samarra, north of Baghdad, where two men blew up the famous golden dome in a dawn raid. Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the spiritual head of Iraq's Shia Muslims, has called for a week of mourning. Shias in Baghdad attacked at least five Sunni mosques in reprisal raids, with disturbances reported in other cities. The BBC's Jon Brain in Baghdad says the attack was almost certainly designed to raise the existing tensions between the majority Shia and minority Sunni populations. (BBC)

August 2007: Hundreds of thousands of Shia pilgrims converged on the city of Karbala on the 28th of August 2007 to celebrate the birth of the 12th Imam (15 Sh'abaa). Suddenly, firing broke out between a Shia militia and the Iraqi security forces. At least fifty pilgrims have died and many more have been wounded. The authorities imposed a curfew on the city and ordered thousands of pilgrims to return.



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Kuwait

Al-Jazeera reports, "Clerics and politicians in Kuwait and Lebanon have rebuked the Egyptian president for saying that Shia Muslims gave their primary loyalty to Iran. Ayatollah Mohammed Baqer al-Muhri told The Associated Press: 'We ask the Kuwaiti government to react in a suitable way to the Egyptian president and to explain the truth.'"

Egypt

The Tehran Times reports "Egyptian President Husni Mubarak has sought to defuse anger over remarks he made about Shia Muslims being more loyal to Iran than their own countries, saying he was referring only to religion. "My remarks about Shias dealt with their religious loyalties and sympathies, without putting into question the patriotism of Shias in Iraq or any other country,"

Mubarak said in an interview Saturday in the official daily Akhbar al-Youm.” Ironically, Iraq is considered the cradle of Shiism, not Iran, and is home to its two holiest sites, Najaf and Karbala. Moreover, the world’s Shias have traditionally looked to Iraq’s clerics as being preeminent. Both Iran and Iraq had condemned the statements made by Mubarak to Al- Arabiya television on April 8 in which he said “Shias are mostly always loyal to Iran and not the countries where they live.” In the same interview, Mubarak described Iraq as “in the throes of a civil war.” “Egypt does not linger on small details or on attempts to mask reality. What is important is the protection of the Iraqi people who have suffered a great deal,” he told Akhbar al-Youm. “Our efforts towards the Iraqi people do not differentiate among Sunnis, Shias or Kurds ... They are all Iraqis and our brothers.” Iraq, whose majority population is Shia, Wednesday boycotted a meeting of Arab foreign ministers at the Arab League’s headquarters in Cairo in protest.

There is a famous mosque in the center of the city of Cairo which is known as Masjid-e-Ras-al-Husayn. It is supposed to be the place where the severed head of Imam Husayn is buried. Every year, Egyptians (Shia as well as others) gather in that mosque on the Day of Ashura to mourn for Imam Husayn. This year on the Day of Ashura (24 November 2012) Egyptian police blocked the entrance to the mosque and prohibited the mourners from entering the mosque for their mourning gatherings.

Jordan

The King of Jordan had said that there is a danger that a new ‘Shia Crescent’ will emerge in the Middle East. Husni Mubarak, the President of Egypt, has recently accused the Shia living in various parts of the world, being more loyal to Iran than to their own countries. These are all ominous signs of a new anti-Shia rhetoric emerging in world politics. These things do not bode well for the world Shia community.

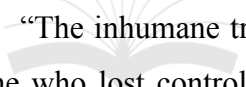
Saudi Arabia

“Taken without any crime, I, Sayed Mohammad Jawad Al-Qazwini, a citizen of the United States of America, was praying in the holy Grand Mosque in Mecca on August 5, 2007 at 12:45AM

when I realized that one of the appointed religious police was giving a lecture regarding Shia Muslims. He was attacking the belief system of the Shia, stating that they are considered infidels. Among his comments were that the Shia worship the dead, the Shia worship stones and rocks, the Shia are hypocrites, and that the Shia gave the Muslim land to the enemy (meaning Iraq's occupation by American troops). At this point a young man came with his old mother to perform prayer. He said to the religious police as he passed next to him that they should stop accusing the Shia and allow them to pray in peace. At this point I told the young man to ignore him and to continue with his prayers. The religious police looked at us and said in a solid tone, 'you are all cowards and we will purify the holy mosque from the Shia.' I told him we are the guests of Allah and that the king had given himself the title of 'the servant of the two mosques'. Thus, you are in no position to go against Allah and the government of your king. He then arrested me and began to push me and hit me in front of thousands of worshipers. He dragged me by the hand and took me to his headquarters located in the Grand Mosque. I specifically asked to be taken by the police so that I knew I was dealing with the government itself, keeping the fact in mind that I was completely innocent. A police man was asked to take me to the detention center inside the mosque. At this point some of the men in our group saw me and followed me to see what was going to happen to me. We were all peaceful, respectful, and obedient to all their orders. Until now we had not committed any crime. The police officer took me and threw me very roughly into a small room."

"Physical abuse without any crime. Inside the room were some individuals. The one sitting behind the desk asked why I was brought in. The religious police responded by telling him that I was 'an Iraqi Shia causing problems.' I realized immediately that the room and the prison cells were being emptied from true criminals such as pickpockets and thieves. I sensed that I was in danger, and sure enough, as soon as the door closed the man behind the desk threw his boot at me, which was launched directly at my head. I was then in pain due to the fact that the boot was very heavy, and that the distance between me and him was very short. He then threw a stapler and it missed me by an inch or so. Again, he managed to throw his other boot at my head and this time it landed right on my face. At this point I was in more pain and I could barely see. I had a severe headache. He then proceeded to beat me and he was laughing with amusement, telling the rest of the police in the room how good it felt to hit a Shia. I realized that the door slightly opened and the men from my group were still behind the door. I shouted for help, and they came in. As soon as they entered the man behind the desk called for back-up which resulted in an immediate dispatch of over 30 police into that small room."

“Torture of innocent American and British pilgrims. As they entered we told them we were all either American or British citizens, thinking that it would stop them from beating us. They responded by saying they hated us because we were Shia and from the land of the ‘infidels.’ They began to hit us with chairs, bats, radio communication devices, their fists, kicks, and punches continually for at least 30 minutes. All our clothes were ripped and some individuals were bleeding heavily; one from the nose, one from the head and another from the mouth. I was slapped many times in the face. At one point one of the members begged them to stop hitting him in English and they continued. I witnessed them banging some of the individuals’ heads to the wall. We were beaten harshly and brutally. We could not find mercy in any one of them. They handcuffed us all. We never fought back. When they realized we meant no harm, they calmed down. Moments later a long bearded policeman came in and went around the room hitting and punching us once again. He said, ‘I never got a chance’ and kicked many in the genitals and stomach. He punched me very hard in the chest and ruthlessly injured my chest and ribs. He said to me ‘take this message with you back to America.’ One of the group members was suffering from an asthma attack. He could not breathe, his face turned purple, and we told them he needed a doctor. They responded by saying we all deserved to die.”



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“The inhumane treatment of minors and children. We had two minors who were taken in with us; one who lost control of his bladder and wet himself. They began to mock and ridicule him. We informed them that the minors should not face the same treatment as adults. They said ‘not in this country.’”

“Humiliation based on religion and nationality. They took us from the prison in the Grand Mosque by force to another location outside the compounds of the mosque. We had to walk barefoot with our ripped clothes. They made it a point to humiliate us just because we were Shia and because we came from the lands of religious freedom, democracy and liberty. We walked through dirt on the hot rocks and sands. I asked them to allow us to wear our shoes and they said ‘you are worthless and valueless, you need no shoes.’ Once we arrived at the police station, we were placed in a dark and hot environment. We all suffered from emotional and physical abuse. We did not know what was going to happen next. For the entire time that we were taken, until we were released after 14 hours, we were refused food, drink, and use of the restrooms.”

“Contacting our embassies. We managed to sneak in two mobile phones and at times when we were alone we called our friends and relatives. They immediately called the American and British embassies. The embassies were very supportive and helpful. They made calls to the police station and spoke to them about releasing us. They also kept contacting us to make sure we weren’t beaten and physically harmed anymore.”

“Refusal of treatment and fake hospital reports. They took us to a governmental hospital near the police station; we asked to be taken to either an American or British hospital. We were transported in a dark and scary car with no windows; once again in our bloody clothes and without shoes. They did not give us any treatment; not even a pain killer. The only thing they did was that they removed the blood off of some of the victims’ bodies. They gave us fake reports saying we were all in perfect condition. When we wanted to speak to the physician he told us ‘I would prefer not to hear your story.’”

“The crime investigation official. Once we arrived back at the police station around 1:00PM we met an individual who told us he was from the Saudi crime investigation institute and a representative of the prince of Mecca . He took a copy of our passports and the Arabic reports and told us to leave at about 2PM. He said that he was going to let the Saudi government know we were treated poorly and that they will try to make our experience better. We ended up leaving the police station at approximately 3PM. Our experience didn’t change and no Saudi official ever did anything.”

“Continuous suffering. Until now all the members of the group suffer from various problems, including sleep disorders, post-traumatic stress, and physical pain. The treatment of the Saudi officials has caused us a tremendous amount of distress. However the emotional scars will remain forever in our hearts and minds. Our family members, our friends and our loved ones are frequently reminded by others about the incident, which results in unending anxiety and stress. The Saudi officials took from us the comfort, peace and tranquility of our homes. I believe that the entire world is suffering from the Wahabi mentality which teaches hate, killing, terror and violence. The Saudi government has long allowed such individuals and groups to operate and empower their systems. Emotionally, I do not only suffer from the fact that I became a victim of the extremist Wahabis, but I suffer more when I know that such events take place on a daily basis in the holy land.”

“The Al-Khoei Foundation in New York has taken up the case on behalf of the victims with US authorities as well as has been in contact with Zalmay Khalilzad, the US Ambassador at the UN. No action has ensued until the time of this writing from any quarter.”

The view of a Friendly Sunni Brother

Various groups within the Sunni Muslim community look at the Shia with very diverse views. Not all Sunni Muslim are anti-Shia. In fact many of them have been working on bringing the two communities together and reduce the tension in the community. The opinions that we present below are a cross-section of those varying sentiments and views.

The essay presented below was written by a personal friend of this writer who is a Sunni Muslim. He has been working relentlessly on creating unity and understanding between the Shia and the Sunni Muslims in the US.



Mohsena Memorial Foundation
 Some Common Misconceptions about Shi'ism
 by Shahid Athar M.D.

Shahid Athar M.D. is a physician who lives and works in Indianapolis, USA. He is also a writer on Islam. He speaks at conferences and has written various articles and books on Islam and Muslims. We chose this article for inclusion in this work for its sincerity of purpose and purity of thought. Dr. Athar writes with a passion. Readers would appreciate his unity of purpose and his good intentions. Most of his writings can be found [here](#).

Dr. Athar is a good friend. Even then, I slightly disagree with some of the comments he makes below. However, my personal honesty and integrity as an objective editor and his sincerity of purpose in writing have inhibited me from changing anything in his writing. I would like the readers, both Shia and Sunni to read his discourse in its original form.

I have, though, inserted some footnotes for clarification. His article below was reviewed and approved by Dr. Laleh Bakhtiar, a Shia scholar and a writer of Iranian origin, based in Chicago and

taken from his book “Reflections of an American Muslim” (Kazi-1996)

The centuries-old Shia-Sunni differences are the major obstacle to Muslim unity. These differences have always been fanned by the enemies of Islam to their benefit. Unfortunately, some so-called Muslim scholars on their payroll have also played a key role in keeping these differences alive. Although I was born into a Sayyid Sunni family, I did not know of many differences while growing up as a child. Our families always respected Imam Hussain and his parents and participated in ceremonies marking the anniversary of his martyrdom (Ashura) by reciting the first chapter of the Qur'an (al-Fateha) and other chapters and verses of the Qur'an and fasted on the ninth and tenth days of that month. Now when I give lectures on Islam to non-Muslims, one of the questions they always ask me is if I am Shia or Sunni. I ask them if they know the difference. They have no knowledge, other than what has been given to them by the media. So they say Shias are the ones who are the bad guys, the militant version of Islam, and cause all the trouble in the Middle East these days. These non-Muslim American audiences of mine are surprised to learn that some of the known tyrants such as Saddam Hussain were Sunnis and troublemakers like the PLO and Hamas are all Sunnis, just as they are surprised to learn that Tariq Aziz (Iraq's former Foreign Minister and vice president) was a Christian and not a Muslim. This is what I say to them about Shiites. “If Ali Ibn Talib (cousin of Prophet Muhammad) was a Shia, then I am a Shia. If he was a Sunni, then I am a Sunni (i.e., a follower of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)). In Islam there are five recognized schools of Divine Law: (1) Hanafi; (2) Shafi; (3) Maliki; (4) Hanbali and (5) Jafari.

The first four are called Sunni, and the fifth one, who in addition to following sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), also follow those of Ali and consider him as the rightful successor of the Prophet, are called Shia. The first four have many major theological differences among themselves and according to a Christian friend of mine, "The only time Sunnis are united is when they are fighting Shias." Shi'ism started as a political movement⁶ (Shia means follower or partisan) to help Ali become successor of Muhammad (pbuh). Around every successful popular figure, there are some admirers whose own future interests rest with the rise of their leader. Thus in Indiana, we have "Friends of Lugar Club", who are hoping that someday Senator Richard Lugar will become a US President. Nationally, we now have a "Hillary Rodham Clinton Fan Club" with 4,000 members! Thus, there were the Followers of Ali Club which later on became a political movement.

⁶ This is one of the instances where I disagree with my friend. Shi'ism is based on the love of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam and that of his Ahl-e-Bayt, It is purely a matter of faith not politics. This concept has been the topic of a Ph.D. thesis, which has now been published in book form. Please see, Vernon Schubel, *Religious Performance: Shi'i Devotional Rituals in South Asia*, University of South Carolina Press, 1993

During the initial battles with unbelievers, Ali, the Sword of Islam, was in the forefront and defeated and killed many of their leaders whose children and grandchildren, even when they became Muslims, always remembered who killed their father (animosity).

Ali was raised by Prophet Muhammad like his own son, so he knew Islam very well. Thus, when he became a judge, his judgments were based on strict Islamic principles, much to the disappointment of many who expected him to be lenient to the rich and powerful. He was so well respected and trusted by both Caliph Abu Bakr and Umar, that in difficult cases they asked his opinion. Nevertheless, I tell my non-Muslim audience that both Shia and Sunni have many things in common. They both believe in one god (Allah), follow the same Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as the last prophet, offer five daily prescribed prayers, perform the prescribed fast in the month of Ramadan, go to Mecca for the pilgrimage (hajj), read the same Qur'an, and pay the poor-due. However, my answers can only satisfy my uninformed non-Muslim audience. The Sunni brothers, misguided by Western propaganda, who are ready to embrace non-Muslims (especially the white ones), in the pretext of invitation to Islam, will not do so for Shia. They are ignorant Sunnis. Our job as a missionary should be to invite both groups to the true Islam and not chase them out. There is a movement in the Sunni world to have Shias labeled as disbelievers. I have been told that Shaykh Bin Baz of Saudi Arabia has declared an edict that the meat slaughtered by the People of Book (Jews and Christians) is permissible for Sunni Muslims to eat but not the meat slaughtered by Shias. There are scholars on both sides, such as Imam Khomeini and Shaykh Shaltut of al-Azhar who have done their best to minimize these differences and bring unity, but it is not working due to the misinformation prevailing in the common masses of Sunnis about Shi'ism. Thus I am listing their misconceptions of Shia belief and practices. For answers, I have consulted two Shia scholars in America., Dr. A. S. Hashim of Washington and Imam Muhammad Ali Elahi of Detroit. Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr wrote to me "to ignore and not waste time in responding to such wrong allegations." He also mentioned that "a great deal of money and effort is being spent in the last few years to fan the fire of hatred between Shia and Sunni in the Persian Gulf region with obvious political and economical fruits for powers-to-be." However, in the interest of Islamic unity, I must deal with the questions rather than shun them. Please note that Imam Jafar (pbuh), founder of the Shia school of law, was the teacher of Imam Abu-Hanifa (r.a.).

Misconception #1: Shias have a different Qur'an. They add another 10 chapters to the original Qur'an.

Response: Not true. I have checked many times Qur'an kept in Shia homes and mosques. I still find it the same as the original Qur'an. More recently, I took care of an Iranian lady patient hospitalized here. I saw a copy of the Qur'an by her side. I borrowed it from her and browsed through cover to cover. In Arabic it was the same as our Qur'an. Of course, since I did not know the Persian language, I can't say much about the translation. It is a sin to even say that the Qur'an can be changed or added to by Shia when it is protected by God.

Misconception #2: Some Shia consider Ali as God.

Response: Not true. It is disbelief to even think of such a thing. During the time of Ali, some pagan groups called Ghulat did consider Ali as Lord. When he found out, they were burned to death⁷.

Misconception #3: Shias have different declarations of faith and they add to the call to prescribed prayer.

Response: The declaration to become a Muslim, as administered to non-Muslims, is the same. Some Shia add to themselves, "Ali is a *wali* (friend of God) or Ali is a spiritual leader⁸ appointed by God," after the call to prescribed prayer, but not as part of the call to prescribed prayer.

Misconception #4: Shias do not perform Sunnah prayers⁹. Sunnah prayers are non obligatory prayers performed by Prophet Muhammad.

Response: Shias do perform non-obligatory prayers, 36 cycles per day in total, but call it *nawafil* and not Sunnah.

Misconception #5: Some Shia believe the Angel Gabriel made a mistake¹⁰ and prophethood was meant for Ali and not Muhammad (pbuh).

Response: Not true. No Shia thinks of such false claims. "Only demented minds think of such

⁷There is no documented evidence of Imam Ali burning anyone for any crime. However, Imam Ali definitely denounced those who placed him at a higher station than he really held. The exaggerators still exist today who would consider Ali possessing of divine attributes, but the Shia themselves dissociate themselves from all such people.

⁸This is taken from the holy Qur'an 5:55. All Shia ulema have ruled the statement ALI-UN WALI ALLAH is not part of Azan. It is said for blessings only.

⁹According to fiqh-e-Jafari, only Wajib (obligatory) Salat can be performed in congregation. Nafl or supererogatory Salat are to be done individually.

¹⁰There was a dialogue between Dr. Tijani and the late grand Ayatollah Abul Qasim al-Khoie, in which Tijani brings this up with the Ayatullah. The Ayatullah explains to Tijani that that is a totally impossible proposition using rational arguments and strong reasons. The dialogue has been documented by Shaykh Abdul-Hasan in his book *Munaaziraat fil-Aqa'id wal-Ahkam*, published from Tehran, Iran, 1420 AH

questions."

Misconception #6: Shias slander and ridicule the first three caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman) and Prophet Muhammad's wife, Ayisha.

Response: Shia consider the first three caliphs as great companions and good Muslim administrators, but not spiritual leaders (imams). Imam Jafar Sadiq, whose mother and grand-mother came from the line of Abu Bakr, said of Abu Bakr, "He gave me birth twice." Ayisha is respected by Shias as the "Mother of Believers," as Ali respected her when he sent her back from Basra to Madinah after the Battle of the Camel. If some Shia do slander the three caliphs and Ayisha, they do it out of ignorance and should ask God's forgiveness.

Misconception #7: Shias combine all five prayers into one prayer in the evening.

Response: Not true. In Shia mosques, whether in Iran or the USA, all five daily prayers are performed. Some working Shia do combine noon and afternoon and evening and night, but Shia scholars recommend performing them separately. Such combinations may not be ideal, but better than not praying at all.

Misconception #8: Shias do not pay zakat (poor-due).

Response: Not true. They not only pay 2.5% left over from savings as zakat, but also an additional 20% as khums or general charity. However, they prefer to pay directly to the needy rather than corrupt Sunni government¹¹.

Misconception #9: Shias practice temporary marriages (*mutah*).

Response: *Mutah* (temporary marriages) was allowed during the time of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Later on Caliph Umar prohibited it due to social reasons as the Islamic world was rapidly expanding. Shias discourage¹² *mutah* but do not consider it prohibited. Some do abuse this.

Misconception #10: They consider Imams infallible and above the prophets.

¹¹Actually, according to the fiqh-e-Jafari, every Shia has to choose and follow a Mujtahid in all matters worldly as well as religious. All Shia pay their Zakat and Khums money to the Mujtahid they follow, who, in turn, distributes it according to the *sharia* law.

¹²*Mutah* is a section in the Islamic Law, approved by the holy Qur'an. It is there to resolve certain issues in an emergency situation. It is neither encouraged nor discouraged but it is on the books in case a situation arises for it to be used. But it is not a sport for fun.

Response: Not true. All prophets are born Prophet but as mentioned in Qur'an (2:124) about Abraham that after passing the test, a prophet becomes a leader (Imam). Imams are carriers of the message of Islam. Shias consider Ali only as an Imam¹³, but Muhammad (pbuh) is the prophet (*nabi*), Messenger (*rasul*) and leader (*imam*). With the little knowledge I have, I have tried to do my best as a Sunni in defending my Shia brothers in Islam with the hope and prayer to God Almighty that He will "instill love in the heart of the believers" and bring us closer to each other so that we jointly can fight our common enemy, Satan and his followers.

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¹³Actually, the Shia believe in 12 Imams. After Imam Ali as the first Imam, there are Hasan and Husayn, the two sons of Ali and Fatima, and then Imam Husayn's son Ali, then his son Muhammad, then his son J'afar then his son Musa al-Kazim, then his son Ali ar-Rida, then his son Muhammad Taqi, then his son Ali an-Naqi, then his son Hasan al-Askari, then his son Muhammad al-Mehdi. All Imams are considered infallible by their followers.

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