

## Discourse 29: The Sincere Shi'a

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ جَعْفَرُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ الصَّادِقُ: إِنَّ شِيعَتَنَا هُمُ الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ آثَارَنَا وَ  
يُطِيعُونَا فِي جَمِيعِ أَوْامِرِنَا وَنَوَاهِينَا فَأَوْلِيكَ شِيعَتَنَا. فَأَمَّا مَنْ خَالَفَنَا فِي كَثِيرٍ  
مِمَّا فَرَضَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فَلَيْسُوا مِن شِيعَتِنَا.

Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has said: "Surely our Shi'a (true followers) are those who follow our virtues (those who follow all of the good and noble practices which we have established and left behind – our Sunnah) and who obey us in all of the things which we command towards and which we prohibit – surely these people are our Shi'a. However, as for those who go against us in most of the things which Allah has made obligatory upon him, they are not our Shi'a."1

The word "آثار" mentioned in this tradition refers to the customs that remain even after a person has left this world. Sometimes these are good customs and practices while other times, they are corrupt and immoral practices.

In this tradition, the Imam has said that, "Our Shi'a not only uphold and protect the obligatory and refrain from the prohibited, rather, they also protect the (good) customs and practices."

One of the established customs of the A`immah (as) is that they used to help people in need through direct means. Historical narrations mention that in the middle of the night, they would go to a needy person's house and give them whatever they needed.

Another custom of the A`immah (as) was the humility which they displayed.

Yet another of their habits was that when they came face to face with the anger and rage of another person, they restrained themselves and would repel evil with goodness – not with evil!

Therefore, according to the directives given in the tradition under review, the person who keeps their traditions (Sunnah) alive, acts according to all of the permissible things and refrains from the

impermissible, are the true Shi'a of the A`immah!

We should note that in this tradition, the Imam has used the term, 'all of the commandments and prohibitions'. Therefore, if a person was to go against even one of their commandments or perform even one prohibited act, he would no longer be classified as a Shi'a!

However at the end of the tradition, the Imam has said that if a person does not follow a great number of their commandments, then and only then is he classified as not being from amongst their Shi'a. Is there some discrepancy between the beginning and end of this tradition?

In our opinion, the meaning of "not following some of our commandments" is the same as "not following all of our commandments" and is similar to the phrase used in the Qur'an which states:

وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا

"And then they sell it (the communications of Allah) for a miserable and low price..."

This sort of phrase has been repeated in the Qur'an in many times. However, does this verse mean that if a person was to take a large amount of money as a bribe for the act of alteration and distortion of the verses of the Tawrat, then this would be permissible – thus relegating the meaning of this verse to be that it is no permissible to take a small amount of money? The answer is that obviously, a "large amount" is equal to a "small amount" and that even if a person was to give the entire transient world in exchange for the distortion of the verses of Allah (SwT), that would still be a little amount!

Therefore, sometimes we see that 'a little' is actually 'a lot'!

With this said, in the tradition under discussion and as it has been mentioned by the infallible A`immah (as), even one ounce or an atom's weight of opposition to their teachings is too much! If the meaning of this tradition was anything other than this, then we could definitely say that there is a disparity between the beginning and end of the tradition.

Therefore the correct meaning of the tradition is that if a person goes against the dictates of the A`immah (as) in even a small amount, it is the same as going against many of their commandments and thus, such a person would cease to be a Shi'a.

The tradition goes on to speak about a very frightful and moving event that was previously mentioned in two other traditions. In those other discussions we mentioned that once, a person was plagued with difficulties and was in need of help and thus, introduced himself (to the Imam) as a Shi'a of the Ahlu'l Bayt.

Another person asked the Imam if that person was truly a Shi'a and follower of the Ahlu'l Bayt to which

the Imam replied that he was not a Shi'a! Some time later, the person was relieved from his difficulties and asked the Imam why he said that he was not a Shi'a?

The Imam replied, "I did so since in this issue which you were engulfed in, you were not under a great deal of pressure and now that you are freed from your difficulties you should know that you are our lover, you are not our Shi'a – thus, this statement of yours is nothing more than a false claim. Therefore, you must say that you are a lover of the Ahlu'l Bayt."

However, we should not become discouraged from these sorts of traditions. Rather, they should instil a feeling of hope within us and we should realize that being a Shi'a is something extremely difficult! It is easy to love someone, however it is difficult to be a follower (Shi'a) of that person.

We are merely at the beginning of the journey of becoming true Shi'a, and therefore, we must seek assistance to complete this journey so that we can truly become and be counted as the Shi'a.

The tradition under review also shows us that if the claim of being a follower (Shi'a) is made, however there are no characteristics of being a Shi'a present within the person, then not only is this a false and void claim, rather, it also has retributions associated with it (as we mentioned in our previous two discussions).

We pray that through the divine blessings of the A`immah (as), we are able to stay on the path of being the true Shi'a!

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1. Ibid., vol. 65, pg. 162

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