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Shi'a Positions with Respect to the Usurping Rulers

Question:

How were the stands of the Shi'a with respect to the rulers and on what basis were they taken?

Answer:

The positions of the Shi'a have always been on the basis of protecting Islam's interests, preserving the religion, and denying the legitimacy of oppressive and usurping governments, and they have always endeavored, in the form of an opposing front, to establish a powerful Islamic government on the foundation of religious rule.

In explaining the religious concepts, the Shi'a follow only the Qur'an and *sunnah* and conduct themselves in accordance with the Qur'anic injunction:

وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ

“And debate with them in the best manner.”¹

by honorable discussion and debate, and also, in instances, on the basis of *taqiyyah* (dissimulation) which becomes necessary in certain conditions in all times and places. They do this so that they can guide others to true Islam and the true concepts of the religion and remove society from under the yolk of oppressive and usurping rulers and merciless officials.

It is thus that we see that the Shi'a have throughout history always had uprisings against the armed powers.

The Shi'a believe in the *Imamah* of those whose names and infallibility were explicitly mentioned by the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) and in taking positions they always act on the basis of Islamic teachings and the conduct of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his family). In situations when the right conditions do not exist, such as a portion of the life of Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him), they give preference to silence and apparently sitting aside over rebellion, or conduct themselves like Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba (peace be upon him) to save Islam from the threat of splintering.

However, the event of Karbala' and refusal of Sayyid al-Shuhada' (peace be upon him) to pledge allegiance to Yazid was an uprising the like of which neither had precedence nor will be seen after it.

That movement was a model and path-opening agenda of struggle for Muslims.

That uprising, though apparently it was crushed and defeated, in reality was a successful uprising, since it revived the true Islam and brushed aside the factors of hopelessness and despair from the faces of the Shi'a and became a cause of their constancy of thought and strength of spirit. After that, no uprising or movement took place among the Shi'a that was crushed and changed hopes to despair, and the infallible leaders of the Shi'a knew, as per the traditions and through the (special) knowledge of the *Imamah* which they possessed, that belief and faith in the Ahl al-Bait (peace be upon them) must be propagated in the hearts of the people so that, through an increase in their awareness and by training capable powers in academic, political, and cultural arenas, they can prevent the usurping rulers from opposing them and in this way prepare the way for the rule of the true Islamic views.

1. Surah Naml (16), Verse 125

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