

What Did They Miss?

The Family of Ali: Intellectuals vs. the People

Is it that this family is without effect, or is it that our young generation and intellectuals are in error? Or have our mothers and fathers failed in their responsibilities?

Ali is the most manifest of truths and represents the most progressive school of thought which has ever taken human form. It is not a myth. It is a human reality or should be from that which it could be and isn't.

And his wife, Fatima, is a perfect example of an ideal woman; of what a woman could be and no one has become. Husayn and Zaynab, the sister and the brother, who brought such a deep revolution in the history of mankind, give a sense of honor to freedom and disgrace to despotism and oppression.

The house of Ali is like the Kaaba in which children and the inheritors of Abraham reside. The Kaaba is a sign, a symbol and it is real. It is made of stone whereas they are human beings. The Kaaba is the place of circumambulation for Moslems only whereas the house of Ali is the destination of every heart which understands beauty, knows the majesty of humanity, freedom, justice, love, sincerity, strength, encourages jihad and sacrifices to preserve the lives and freedom of the people.

From another point of view, in the difficult and confused space of history, among the palaces, with the Caesars, as history always breathes from them; culture, civilization, religion, thought, discipline and art are turned around. Our intelligent, loyal, lovers of virtue who have known this household, luckless and quiet, have always been sacrificed through oppression and deceitfulness. Our people have tied eternal links to them. All their faith, longing, thought and feelings have been devoted to them. Now, even their language admires them and their means of proof say this. Their hearts beat for them. Their eyes cry with their sorrow. They sacrifice themselves and their possessions upon the way. They withhold nothing.

Look at these poverty stricken, starving people who show their feelings and the faith which they have in each individual member of this beloved family. What things have they not done and what things will they still not do for them?

The spending of money often shows with more clarity the power of faith and sincerity. Let us account for all the time, endowments, and money which people have spent for this family. Even today, where materiality has gained strength, religion has been weakened and economic attractions have pulled hearts to themselves, and we see that the poverty among people is so advanced that the problems of their bread and water, children's milk and medicine for the hospitals are the most important things in their life, still, any time and under any circumstances which relate to this family, we see that over one million ceremonies are held in their honor.

Over 150,000 clergy exist for reciting the congregational ritual prayers along with speakers of that prayer. There are more than 700,000 seyyids [descendants of the Prophet's family] who speak at the lamentation ceremonies along with eulogists and lamenters whose task it is to restore the memory of this family. How much is spent on the building of the *Husayniyyehs* [buildings for the ceremonies related to Imam Husayn], *tekiyehs* [places where the passion plays are performed], *heyats* [neighborhood clubs where young men meet to form a group which participates in religious ceremonies], *dastehs* [the generic name of the groups], that which is endowed for lamentation ceremonies and food, that which is held in the name of taxes (*khums*), the religious leaders' share, that spent in good works and feeding poor people, is above and beyond counting. It is particularly important when we consider that this country is one of the economically backward countries. Income, according to head count, is minimal.

If we pay attention, in particular, to the great differences in classes which exist in Islamic societies, we see that half of the capital of the country is in the hands of a few thousand people. We see that two thirds of whatever there is, is at the disposal of only 10% of the population. We see that, as opposed to the past, capital has been taken from the former landlords and the former merchants of the bazaar and has been put into the hands of new capitalists, new industrialists, modern bourgeois companies and middle men who sell foreign goods or produce new products themselves.

We see that the money has escaped from their hands and has changed its place from village storage areas, from the shops of the old merchants under the old roofs of the bazaar, from the hands of local handicrafts and traditional jobs and workers, from the hands of money exchangers and indigenous professional guilds, from traditional industries and classical professions to the banks, stock exchange, foreign companies, agencies, distributors, contractors and factories. This new class, a newly created group– are characterized by foreignness and modernization. They breathe at the door of the West. They are not religious. If any of them had a memory of or inclination towards religion, it has long since been ironed out. Luxury, ceremony, seasonal things, pretentiousness and foreignness prevail in their work. All of this plus their Islam, in the words of Seyyid Qutb, is an American Islam.

People who follow religion without responsibility, without expending, without effort, most often give their opinions and present their objections without acting or investing anything. Intellectuals are brought into being who expend no money. Young girls and boys have for years had 'plage' parties, dancing parties in Switzerland, Paris, England, America and Austria upon their lips. They have been most generous to

these things.

They and their wives go abroad once or twice a year with their money bags overflowing with money. In the stores and Moulin Rouges, they put money into the pockets of the capitalists, clever people, and milkers of money. They are no more than domesticated cows, seen by deceiving dealers as donkeys with money, coming out of the backward countries. They place their wealth into the cleft of expensive dancers. The wealthy go slumming, and then they return to their country, until once again they gather up enough money to go there once again and be milked. They do all this very naturally and without any mistake or error, even holding their heads high. With lies, they turn people in circles. They also put people under obligation. They call this progress, modern living and a sign of civilization.

At the same time, a small merchant or villager gets ready for his pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca or Karbala after a lifetime of work and anguish and production. He goes on the principle that this is the only thing in his life which will be both a time of rest as well as pleasure, a journey, a 'tour', traveling abroad and coming to know other countries. He will be seeing the world and renewing his faith, his beliefs and his union with his history. He unites with his culture. He makes the pilgrimage to his beloved people. He comes to know the remains of his civilization. He sees art which relates to him. Because of the truth of his love, his desires and the longing of his spirit, his feelings and needs and finally, the duty of his religious faith, once in a lifetime, he intends to make the pilgrimage. He takes \$ 700. He has to pay \$ 400 for his plane ticket and the rest he uses for his expenses there and to buy gifts which he takes back home. That which he spends there is the money and he pays to rent a tent or a bus and buy a few days of food supplies. The total of all this does not reach the cost of one night of Mr. and Mrs. Champagne in the Lido or one of their caviar breakfasts in the George V Hotel. It is even cheaper.

When the memory of this pseudo intellectual, he who supposedly understands the subtle points of things, this most recently reborn (financially), open minded man, with a brand new wallet, recalls a little merchant or a villager, who lacks splendor and sophistication, all of the human feelings of this 'gentleman', his worthwhile knowledge, class perception, the sense he has for his country, the sympathy he feels towards society, his national pride, his economic information, his progressive ideas and the remains of his being an intellectual, spills out at one time with such venom that even Che Guevara could not stop him.

We see with the changes in this particular class, side by side with general economic poverty, that town dwellers and village dwellers have become poorer, entangled with affliction and hunger and the class of minor landowners and merchants has become weak and dispersed in face of the growth of new classes. The majority of them have remained in the same class and minority of people change classes and move to a new one.

We see only two groups, modern types and traditional types, those loyal to their beliefs and religious rights –in a sense are part of these two groups. Because of these identical and perceptible socio-economic changes, the loyal ones remain quietly in the same class with few economic changes,

or else they are forced into weakness. The strength of religion which they participated in, and the great expenses which are incurred in respect to rites and the inaugurating of places for gatherings or buildings for religious purposes, all are a sign that the binding of our peoples' spirit with the Prophet and Ali's family is unbelievably deep and strong. It shows to what extent their faith and sincerity is strong and pure.

It is after considering these things that the question, 'Who is Responsible?' suddenly drops upon your head like a sledge hammer. A person who has until now followed the problem and with precise study, logically and clearly uncovered all sides of the issue, studied it .and phase by phase has seen that all is correct, takes a good look at Islam and Shi'ism.

Islam

Islam, the last historical, religious school of thought and the most perfect, Muhammad, the Qur'an, the Companions and their histories are models of life, chastity and civilization. They bring law, progress, strength and culture to society.

Shi'ism

The religion of imamate and justice, followers of Ali and his children, Shi'ism has had a history full of jihad. Its believers show perseverance. They are inspired by freedom and justice. They are an unacceptable fire for despots and for the prejudiced. They have submitted to the way. Linked to the anger of Truth, its followers are enemies of anything which conceals the Truth. They are enemies of a politics which reduces one to slavery. They are enemies of economic exploitation and spiritual despotism.

To see the issue from another point of view, our people, warm with faith, melting with love, with more than a religious belief, with truth in thought, give their love to this family. Their name raises their spirits. The mere mention of them makes blood boil in their veins. In their longing for sacrifice, pure blood flows to their. They are ready to be martyred out of their love for them. They cry in pain from their sorrow. They are full of sorrow because they were not present on that bloody day of 'Ashura. Then bloodied tears run. Sometimes, insane like, they draw their daggers and strike it upon their heads. They lament all year long. Their sorrow is real. All year they think. about those who went before them then full. Full of praise for their positions and the description of their titles, united as lovers, head to toe dressed in black, from one end to the other, drowned in tears and pain. They long with their whole being to play with their lives. Their love brings on thirst, restlessness, anguish and it finally consumes them.

From yet another point of view, our enlightened thinkers are sensitive people, awakened, aware of the fate of the world and the fate of their society. They are familiar with the spirit and movement of time. Their timely demands are in need of a boiling faith. They seek out revolutionary thought. They think about freedom, equality and awareness of people. They attempt to bring about feelings, movement,

responsibility and self-awareness among their people. They see their people and the religion of Husayn, Zaynab, justice, imamate, strength, theology, jihad, torture, martyrdom, Karbala ...and they wonder...

Why are there no vestiges when each one of these could give life, awareness, enthusiasm and encouragement to those who are faithful to these ideas which overflow with life and liberty? Why do these loyal forms, whose origins lie in the majesty of humanity, not bear fruit?

Then, who is responsible? In one word: scholars. It is they who should have made Ali understandable. It is they who should have taught the thoughts of Ali.

In Islam, the scholars are not wise people who guarantee nothing. They do not have a handful or a bucketful or a truck full of knowledge. Science does not consist of hundreds of pieces of information and knowledge. In their hearts, there is a ray of light, the Light of God. It is not a question of a Divine science, illumination or Gnosticism. It is also not chemistry, physics, history, geography, jurisprudence, principles, philosophy or logic. These are all types of scientific knowledge.

A science becomes illuminated with light when the knowing of it brings about a responsibility, a guiding knowledge, a science of ideas. In the Qur'an, this is called jurisprudence, but today it is known as 'the science of rules of the Divine Law and things related to it'. This science should not remain in or with darkness. Rather, it lightens space and breaks the night apart. It shows the way.

It is not the normal teacher of students, the selected sage. It is the teacher of people. Its knowledge is not Platonic, academic knowledge; it is the knowledge of the mandate of the Prophet. It is these learned people who will be the inheritors of the Prophets. The 'knowledge of known's' is a kind of power and the 'Knowledge of light' is guidance. The enlightened sage is an intellectual with clear vision. Intellectuals should be thinkers who sense a responsibility when expressing their thoughts in relationship to their own beliefs or the beliefs of their people.

The responsibility of the Shi'ite sage is even more important and clear. He is the vice-gerent of the Imam. With his knowledge, he accepts the responsibility of the imamate and the imamate brings with it the responsibility of prophecy.

The learned Shiite is the vice-gerent of the Imam. He takes the religious taxes on behalf of the 12th Imam. The most evident of his responsibilities is to have people come to know who the Imam is. Who were the Imams and what did they think? What did they say? What did they do? How did they live? What role did they play in history? What was their school of thought? Against what thought, what crime, what order and what regime did they live and did they resist?

And if we see that these thoughts are not made available to people, not written in their tongue, if we see that the extent of books that there are about a European film star, there are not books about all of the Shiite saints, the scholars are, then responsible.

If an educated Shiite today knows the desires and playful games of Bilitis, the ancient Greek whore, through a beautiful Persian translation of her most enchanting songs and poems, whereas a good translation of Ali's words cannot be found, if our people only know a few names of some of the ancient Shiite leaders and they know a few miracles, good deeds, phrases of praise, and virtues of each of their Imams and, from their whole lives, they only know the day of their birth and the night of their death and nothing more, then, the scholars are responsible.

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