

Shiism Today – Moderate or Modified? (A brief account on Tabarah)

“When the earth is shaken with a mighty shaking, and earth brings forth her burdens, and man says, 'What ails her?' Upon that day she shall tell her tidings for that her Lord has inspired her.” (99: 1 5)

As a Shiite, I wasted a long time not acknowledging my identity. For someone who has lived in Pakistan, it is clear what initiates religious sectarianism – schools. Kids discuss everything from sex to sects. What builds up then is a bias of the majority, a bully against those belonging to the minority. I spent my school days listening to the biases and more so, the stereotypes – Shiites beat themselves, Shiites don't believe in Allah, Shiites have their own god in Ali (A.S.), Shiites prostrate to clay, and the most ridiculous one – Shiites eat food after spitting in it. I don't think I was the only one listening to such things. Many of my age have been bullied the same way.

As a natural response, we refrained from such dialogues and gradually dissociated from the whole concept of being a Shiite. This, I think, has largely reasoned the concept of Moderate Shiism, or should I say Modified Shiism?

A young Shiite today is moderate – “I know it was wrong what some people did towards the house of Muhammad (PBUH), but cursing them will only lead to fights within the Muslim community” – this is a sample statement I heard from my Shiite friends. If we look at the grounds which base the curse for the wrongdoers (which I will try to explain later), the said statement will only turn out as a false justification, a self denial of one's own identity – something that develops out of “guilt” of being a member of minority.

According to veteran psychologists like Sigmund Freud and Eric Erikson, human personality develops in the early years of their life and the behaviour that comes later is a manifestation of the same personality developed already.

"It is human to have a long childhood; it is civilized to have an even longer childhood. Long childhood makes a technical and mental

virtuoso out of man, but it also leaves a life-long residue of emotional immaturity in him," said Erik Homburger Erikson. Let's now look at the personality of a typical Shiite youth today. As a kid, the biases against Shiism were ingrained in their personality. The guilt of a Shiite kid developed into "moderation" as they grew up.

This marks a phenomenon, which I term "Shiite's Self Denial" for the sake of simplicity. A grown up Shiite thinks he is a Shiite but a moderate one, when actually it is only a modification of and divergence from the actual philosophy of Shiism – unlimited love for Ali (A.S.).

The Modified Shiism features a variety of traits, but I will be confined to only one element this time. I will focus on cursing the enemies of the Prophet (PBUH) and his family. In theological terminology, we refer to it as Tabarah – (one of the Duties towards religion). Tabarah or Curse/Hatred for the enemies is essential to complete the faith of a Shiite.

When a modern Shiite understands that the some so-called-nobles in Islamic history wronged Prophet's (PBUH) family but does not curse them, to me the understanding doesn't count here. Let me explain how.

There are numerous instances where Prophet(PBUH) and his family openly criticized and opposed the wrongdoers, but to make it unquestionable, I will concentrate on specific instances where the members of Prophet's family cursed the enemies (all being so-called Muslims of that time).

Lady Fatima (A.S.) was denied the right of inheritance (the land of Fiddak) by the early caliphs. The two later regretted their decision and went to her house where they were denied the permission to enter. Upon seeking Ali (A.S.), they were allowed to enter. All that Fatima (A.S.) had to say to them was that she would curse them in every prayer till her departure from the world [14 Infallibles: Page 100]. Hence, she cursed the two proving the validity of Tabarah in Shiism.

As a second instance I will present the case of Lady Zainab (A.S.) in the court of Yazid. Mentioned numerous times, Zainab (A.S.) cursed Yazid to his face.

10th Imam Naqi (A.S.) cursed the ruler of his era – Mutawaqal. It is reported that Mutawaqal was murdered within three days after Imam (A.S.) cursed him. Sir Baqir Majlisi has also reported that Imam (A.S.) cursed Mutawaqal after referring to one of the notes left by his Holy ancestors. The note was titled “Curse of the oppressed against the oppressor” [Biharul Anwar: Volume 9: Page 200]. The note is a precedent of Tabarah.

Having proved the validity and importance of Tabarah in Shiism, I will move to a suggested remedy. How to get away with “Shiite Self Denial”? Through faith! Through confidence! Give your child confidence in their faith. Free them of all insecurities that may burgeon into modification/alteration of Shiite faith at some point in future. Make a habit of practicing Tabarah in your life. Make a list of people who wronged the Prophet (PBUH) and his family. It would hardly take a few seconds to curse them every day, but the repercussions are certainly eternal.

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