

What the Shiites Say

About

the Companions

of the Prophet (peace be upon him)

Dr. Umar Labdo

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Chapter One

The Sunni View of the Companions

Who Are the Companions?

Muslim scholars have given the definition of a *Sahabi* (plural: *Sahabah* or *As'hab*), that is a Companion, as “Any person, male or female, who met the Prophet (peace be upon him) while a Muslim and died as a Muslim.”¹

They used the word “met” instead of “seen” to include the blind who met the Prophet, believed in him but never saw him. They also qualified meeting him with “being a Muslim” to exclude those who met him but did not believe in him. The last qualification, “died as a Muslim”, is meant to exclude those who met him, believed in him but committed apostasy afterwards and died as unbelievers. However, those who committed apostasy after meeting him but reverted to Islam are considered Companions, as consideration is given only to the state in which one dies.

Technically speaking, therefore, a Companion is any person, male or female, who was favoured by divine providence to have met the Prophet and believed in him. Such a meeting may be long or short, repeated or once. This includes those who had association or relationship with him, such as his family, including his wives, his relatives or friends. It also includes all those who met him in whatever capacity, circumstance or occasion, provided they were Muslims, however short the meeting was.

¹ Ahmad bin Ali bin Hajar, *al-Isabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahabah*, Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut, n.d., vol. 1 p. 10.

Some scholars have stipulated that the individual must be an adult at the time of the meeting, implying that underaged children who met the Prophet did not qualify as Companions. The widely accepted opinion, however, is that being of age is not a condition and that attaining the age of discretion is sufficient. Therefore, children who met him at the age of seven and above are considered as Companions.

The Merits of the Companions

The Contemporaries of the Prophet, who believed in him, did not live with him by chance. They were especially chosen by Allah to help the Messenger in conveying his message. They have distinguishing merits above all men except the prophets and messengers of Allah. Confirming this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

Surely, Allah has chosen my Companions above all humans and the jinns except the prophets and messengers.¹

In a corroborative statement, the renown Companion, Abdullah bin Mas'ud, said:

Allah examined the hearts of mankind and he found Muhammad's heart as the best of hearts; so he chose him and sent him with his Message. Then he examined the hearts of men and he found the hearts of the Companions as the best of hearts; so he appointed them as the lieutenants of his Prophet and defenders of his religion.²

Below are some of the merits:

1. Allah has confirmed their faith. He said, "*Those who have believed and emigrated and fought in the cause of Allah and those who gave shelter and*

¹ Ibn Hajar, *ibid.*, vol. 1 p. 21. He attributed the Hadith to al-Bazzar and said its narrators are authenticated.

² Abu Umar Yusuf bin Abdullah bin Abdulbarr, *al-Isti'ab fi Ma'rifah al-As'hab*, al-Maktabah al-Asriyyah, Beirut, 1431/2010, vol. 1 p. 25.

aided, it is they who are the believers truly. For them is forgiveness and noble provision.” (8: 74) The reference in this verse is to **Muhajirun** (who emigrated) and the **Ansar** (who gave shelter and aided).

2. He has confirmed their sincerity and honesty: “*Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating [in prayer], seeking bounty from Allah and [His] pleasure.*” (48: 29) In another verse, he said: “*For the poor emigrants who were expelled from their homes and their properties, seeking bounty from Allah and [His] approval and supporting Allah and His Messenger. Those are the truthful.*” (59: 8)

3. Because of their true faith and sincere devotion, Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with him: “*And the first forerunners [in the faith] among the Muhajireen and the Ansar and those who followed them with good conduct – Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. That is the great attainment.*” (9: 100)

4. They are the best of mankind: “*You are the best community that has been raised up for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah.*” (3: 110)

Commenting on the above verse, Ibn Kathir said, “This verse addresses the whole Ummah, but the best generation of the Ummah is the generation of the Prophet.”¹ This is confirmed in Hadith. Ibn Mas’ud narrates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) has said, “The best of all generations is my generation, then those who followed them, then those who followed them.”²

Companions Not Infallible

Despite their merits, the Companions of the Prophet were not infallible. They were not holy in the sense of being above ordinary mortals. They possessed no supernatural abilities or qualities, nor did they lay claim

¹ Abul Fida’ Isma’il bin Kathir, **Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim**, Maktabah al-Safah, Cairo, 1423/2002 vol. 2 p. 55.

² **Al-Bukhari** and **Muslim**.

to any. They were just ordinary men and women destined to attain high moral altitude for their deep belief and sincere devotion to Allah. They accepted Allah's message, the Qur'an, internalized it and practiced it with utmost sincerity and honesty. They loved the Prophet deeply, followed him faithfully and renounced worldly desires, cravings and greed. Their ultimate goal was Allah's pleasure for which they lived and died. The Almighty rewarded their devotion and sincerity, and was pleased with them.

In whatever they did, the Companions always strived towards the ideal. Therefore, they set standards which were hard for the subsequent generations to meet. But being human, their lives were not without travails and tribulations, nor their actions unblemished. Individually, they were capable of committing mistakes, and some of them did actually commit mistakes, but collectively they were the most impeccable and faultless community.

Because of divine favour, and for having the advantage of living at the time of revelation, the Companions' mistakes were always instantly righted and their sins forgiven or met with expiation and atonement. For example, when a section of the Companions fled the battle during the encounter of Uhud, an act that amounted to a great sin, or *kabirah*, a verse was immediately revealed, which diagnosed the problem, prescribed a cure and declared Allah's forgiveness: "*Indeed, those of you who turned back on the day the two armies met [at Uhud] – it was Satan who caused them to slip because of some [blame] they had earned. Now Allah has forgiven them. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Forbearing.*" (3: 155)

Another example is when a man named Ta'mah stole an item and conspired with his clan, the Banu Ubairiq, to blame it on a Jew. The stolen item was found with the Jew after it was thrown into his house without his knowledge. The man was taken to the Prophet and he was about to sentence him in error. Allah revealed a total of nine verses in defense of the Jew and exposed the conspirators:

*Indeed, we have revealed to you, [O Muhammad],
the Book in truth so you may judge between men*

by that which Allah has shown you. And do not be for the deceitful an advocate...But whoever earns an offence or a sin and then blames it on an innocent [person] has taken upon himself a slander and manifest sin..." (4: 105-113)

Thus, the impending miscarriage of justice was averted. The Jew was exonerated, the conspiring clan repented and the Prophet (peace be upon him) was saved from punishing the innocent person.¹

After the death of the Prophet, the Companions faced tremendous challenges. In addition to consolidating the young Islamic state, they were the bearers of a new message that was destined to change the world. They stood at the threshold of a tremendous transformation unknown in the history of mankind. This means that heavy responsibilities involving momentous decisions and actions were thrust upon them.

In the decisions and actions that the Companions took unanimously, they were always right. However, in those that they disagreed upon, naturally some of them were right and others wrong. For instance, they were unanimous in electing Abubakar as the first Caliph and the ensuing developments proved them right. They were unanimous in fighting the apostates and subsequent events proved them right. They were also unanimous in compiling the Qur'an during the caliphateship of Abubakar, and later standardizing it during Uthman's time. In all this, history proved them right. This is a confirmation of the Prophetic saying: "My Ummah shall never agree on error."²

When the Companions disagreed in the time of *Fitnah* (political turmoil), their actions and utterances showed that their motives were noble and sincere. First, at the outbreak of the *Fitnah*, the greatest majority of them remained neutral and did not become involved. They supported neither side, nor did they take part in the actual fighting.

¹ See the story in Ibn Kathir, *op. cit.*, vol. 2 pp. 245-249.

² **Tirmizi, Ibn Majah and Ahmad** 3/445.

Contrary to popular perception, in the fight between the fourth Caliph, Ali bin Abu Talib, and Talha, Zubair and A’isha on the one hand, and between him and Mu’awiyyah on the other, not up to ten per cent of the Companions who were then alive took part. Muhammad bin Sirin, a great Tabi’ and an eye-witness to the events, had this to say about the issue, “The *Fitnah* arose when there were ten thousand Companions alive, but those who became involved were not up to a hundred.”¹

In another testimony by ‘Amir bin Shurahil al-Sha’bi, another eye-witness, no one from among the Muhajirun attended the battle of Jamal except the following: Ali, Ammar bin Yasir, Talha and Zubair. In yet another account by Shu’bah, also an eye-witness, only one *Badri* (a Companion who attended the battle of Badr) was present at the battle of Jamal.² We may add here that, of the nine wives of the Prophet who survived him, only A’isha got involved in the *Fitnah*.

The civil war that took place between the Companions was the most humane and civilized ever seen in the history of mankind. It was not motivated by primordial interests or feelings, but was fought purely on principles. The rules of engagement, the actual conduct of the war and the treatment of war captives – all point to the sublime motives and noble objectives of the war. Each side was fighting for a cause they believed to be just and dear to their hearts, but did not make them for a moment forget that they were all brothers in Islam.

The details of the encounters sound fantastic to the modern ear used to the destructive and hate-filled warfare of the twenty-first century. In between battles, each side went to fetch water from the same source, overcrowding the place and often helping one another. When it was time for prayer, they stopped to pray. After each battle, each side entered the camp of the other, mixing freely and mourning their dead together. When Ammar bin Yasir,

¹ Ahmad bin Taimiyyah, **Minhaj al-Sunnah**, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut, n.d., vol. 3 p. 186.

² **Ibid.**, vol. 3 pp. 186-7.

from Ali's camp, was martyred, both sides performed the funeral prayers on him!¹

Thus, the civil war between the Companions of the Prophet did not sever the bond of brotherhood between them, nor did it make them condemn each other as unbelievers, contrary to false accusations of their detractors.

Passing Judgment on the Companions

Sunni scholars are unanimous that Ali bin Abu Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) who was the legitimate Caliph at the time of the *Fitnah*, was right and that his opponents, including A'isha, Talha, Zubair and Mu'awiyyah (may Allah be pleased with them all), were wrong, even though they were blameless because they were fighting what they honestly believed to be a just cause and their motives were sound. According to them, both sides were searching for the truth: Ali found it and the others missed it. So, Ali had two rewards for searching and finding the truth, while the others had one for the honest and sincere effort of searching.²

The position of the followers of Sunnah, therefore, is that Muslims should not sit in judgment on the Companions of the Prophet or apportion blame to any party. Instead, they should have respect, loyalty and high opinion for all of them without any discrimination. They should also pray for all as Allah has instructed:

For the poor emigrants who were expelled from their homes and their properties, seeking bounty from Allah and [His] approval and supporting Allah and His Messenger, those are the truthful.

And those who were settled in the Home [i.e., al-Madinah] and [adopted] the faith before them, they love those who emigrated to them and find no any want in their heart of what they [i.e., the emigrants] were given but give [them] preference

¹ Ali Muhammad Sallabi, **Haqiqat al-Khilaf bain al-Sahabah**, al-Maktabah al-Asriyyah, Beirut, 1429/2008, pp. 123-4.

² **Ibid.**, p. 153.

over themselves, even though they were in privation. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul – it is those who will be successful.

And those who came after them, saying “Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith and put not in our hearts [any] resentment toward those who have believed. Our Lord, indeed You are Kind and Merciful.” (59: 8-10)

The above three verses have classified the *Ummah* into three groups: The emigrants who were the truthful, those who gave shelter to them who were the successful and finally those who came after them. The first two refer to the Companions of the Prophet, the ***Muhajirun*** and the ***Ansaar***. They have been given the stamp of approval: *truth and success*. The third refers to all the subsequent generations of Muslims until the end of time. They are waiting for theirs. Those to receive it are the ones who pray for the former and have no resentment against them.

Chapter Two

The Shiite View of the Companions

In chapter one, we have seen the Sunni creed on the Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). In this chapter, we are going to study the Shiites' view on the first generation of Muslims. We shall depend entirely on Shi'ah sources in writing this section, and will be *quoting directly* from their authorities whom they *recognize* and *accept*.

A Definition of the Companions

The renowned Shiite scholar, Abdullah al-Mamiqani, defines a Companion of the Prophet (*Sahabi*) as “Any person who met the Prophet (peace be upon him), while believing in him, and died a believer even if he [or she] committed apostasy in-between.”¹ This means that the Shiites, like the Sunnis, consider as Companions those who committed apostasy after meeting the Prophet and believing in him, but reverted to Islam before their death.

It will be noted that there is no difference in the definitions of the Sunnis and the Shiites. In fact, Shi'ah scholars adopted the Sunni definition, as admitted by the editor of *Miqbas al-Hidayah*.²

But when we come to their views on the Companions, we find a world of difference. Unlike the Sunnah followers, the Shiites maintain a very negative, aggressive and contemptuous attitude toward this exemplary generation of men and women who supported the Prophet and aided him in conveying the message of Islam. The views, very harsh and extreme, are scattered in books written by their ancient as well as modern and contemporary scholars. Below, we shall outline some of these views, *quoting directly* from their *bona fide* religious authorities.

¹ Abdullah al-Mamiqani, **Miqbas al-Hidayah fi Ilm al-Dirayah**, Mu'assasah Aal al-Bait li Ihya' al-Turath, 1411/1991, vol. 3 p. 301.

² See **ibid.**, vol. 3 p. 300, footnote No. 2.

Companions Commit Apostasy!

Shiites believe that majority of the Companions committed apostasy after the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The foremost Shi'ah authority on Hadith, Muhammad bin Ya'qub al-Kulaini, reports that Abu Ja'afar, the fifth Shi'ah Imam, has said: "People became apostates after the death of the Prophet, except three. I said: Who are the three? He replied: Miqdad bin al-Aswad, Abu Zarr al-Ghifari and Salman al-Farisi."¹

Another Shi'ah authority, Nurullah Tustari, wrote: "Muhammad (peace be upon him), came and guided many people but, after his death, they turned on their heels."² [Meaning: they reverted to unbelief].

The belief that majority of the Companions of the Prophet committed apostasy immediately after his death, is very popular among Shiite scholars and religious authorities. Some even believe that most of the Companions never accepted Islam in the first place, but they were acting hypocritically and deceiving the Prophet. A noted Shi'ah scholar and jurist, Faid al-Kashani, wrote: "Most of them [the Companions] were hiding their hypocrisy."³ Imam Khumaini, leader of the Iranian revolution, also shared this opinion. He wrote in his famous book, *al-Hukumah al-Islamiyyah*, "The Companions were [all] hypocrites."⁴

Shiite scholars are particularly harsh in their accusations against the most prominent Companions of the Prophet, namely Abubakar and Umar. They mention them by name and accuse them of abominable acts of hypocrisy and unbelief. Notable Shi'ah scholar and prolific writer, Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi, said this about them, "Surely, Abubakar and Umar were unbelievers."⁵ Another Shi'ah scholar of note, Abdul Hussain al-

¹ Muhammad bin Ya'qub al-Kulaini, *al-Raudah min al-Kafi*, Dar al-Murtadi, Beirut, 1428 A.H., vol. 8 p. 2084.

² Nur Allah al-Hussaini al-Tustari, *Ihqaq al-Haqq wa Izhaq al-Batil*, al-Matba'ah al-Islamiyyah, Tehran, n.d., p. 316.

³ Faid al-Kashani, *Tafsir al-Safi*, Maktabah al-Sadr, Tehran, 1374 A.H., vol. 1 p. 9.

⁴ Ayatullah Ruhullah Khumaini, *al-Hukumah al-Islamiyyah*, published by the Ministry of Guidance, Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., p. 69.

⁵ Ayatullah Ruhullah Khumaini, *Kashf al-Asrar*, Tehran, 1363 A.H., p. 112. After quoting al-Majlisi, Khumaini concurred with him.

Rashti, wrote, “Abubakar and Umar were the major cause for misguiding this Ummah.”¹

But why do the Shiites regard the Companions as unbelievers? The reason is simple. The Companions, according to them, conspired against Ali and denied him his legitimate right to be the Caliph, or Imam, after the death of the Prophet. By this act, they willfully disobeyed the Prophet’s explicit instruction and will that Ali should inherit him in the leadership of the *Ummah*. It is by this purported usurpation of Ali’s right and disobedience to the Prophet that the Companions committed apostasy.

The foremost Shi’ah authority on Hadith, al-Kulaini, reports that Abu Abdullah, the sixth Shi’ah Imam, has said: “There are three people whom Allah will not speak to on the Day of Judgment, nor will he purify them, and for them will be hellfire: The one who claims *Imamah* that is not due to him, the one who denies a true Imam and the one who regards the former two as Muslims.”² Thus, Abubakar, Umar and Usman, who were Caliphs before Ali and who, in the Shiite view, usurped the imamate from him, as well as the rest of the Companions who recognized them as Caliphs and supported them, are all apostates and unbelievers. This means that virtually all Muslims, except those who reject the first three Caliphs, are unbelievers. And that precisely is the essence of the dogma of denunciation.

The Doctrine of Denunciation (*Bara’ah*)

Shiites renounce the generality of the Companions. This denunciation, known as ***Bara’ah***, is a cardinal principle of their faith and includes all those who pay allegiance to the Companions, love them or are devoted to them. It also includes all those who recognize the Caliphateship of the first three Caliphs.

Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi, the great Shi’ah authority and influential scholar, writes: “Our doctrine of ***Bara’ah*** is that we denounce the four idols: Abubakar, Umar, Uthman and Mu’awiyyah; and the four women: A’isha, Hafsah, Hind and Umm al-Hakam. We also denounce all their followers and

¹ Abdul Hussain al-Rashti, **Kashf al-Ishtibah**, al-Matba’ah al-Askariyyah, Tehran, 1468 A.H., p. 98.

² Muhammad bin Ya’qub al-Kulaini, **Usul al-Kafi**, Dar al-Murtadi, Beirut, 1426 A.H., vol. 1 p. 279.

supporters. We consider them the most evil of Allah's creation on the face of the earth; and that belief in Allah, his Messenger and the Imams will not be valid until after denouncing them.”¹

The four men mentioned in the above quote are well known. Of the women, however, the first two are well known, but the rest may not be known to some. Hind was Mu'awiyya's mother and she accepted Islam before her death and died as a Muslim. Umm al-Hakam, perhaps, was the grandmother of Marwan bin al-Hakam, a pillar in the much-hated, much-maligned Umayyad clan. The crime of the first three men, Abubakar, Umar and Usman, is that they usurped Ali's right to the Caliphateship, and Mu'awiyyah fought Ali at the battle of Siffain. For these serious ‘culpabilities’, they are condemned as the most evil of Allah's creatures in the world!! As for the women, it seems that their association with the men made them culpable also, although the Shiites accuse A'isha and Hafsa of a variety of crimes of their own into which we shall not delve here.

Cursing the Companions is *Ibadah*

According to the Shiites, cursing the Companions of the Prophet is a form of worship by which one can gain Allah's favour and win multitudes of rewards. Therefore, followers of the sect repeat curses, especially on the two Caliphs Abubakar and Umar (may Allah be pleased with both), a specific number of times in the morning and evening just as Muslims recite glorifications of God, **Tasbih**, or benedictions for the Prophet, **Salatun Nabiyy**, at daybreak and at sunset. And they are doing this, according to them, on the instructions of their Imams whose words are akin to a Prophetic command!

A well-known Shi'ah scholar and religious authority, Mullah Kazim, reports, attributing same to Ali Zain al-Abidin, the fourth Imam, that he said: “Whoever curses **Jibt** and **Tagut** once Allah will award him a million

¹ **Haqq al-Yaqin** by al-Majlisi trans. from the Persian by Abdussatar al-Tunisi, Maktabah al-Ghuraba, al-Madinah al-Munawwarah, 1419/1999, p. 53.

rewards, erase a million of his sins and raise him to seventy million ranks.”¹ *Jibt* and *Tagut* are Shiite slang names for Abubakar and Umar.

Kazim also reports from Muhammad al-Baqir, the fifth Shi’ah Imam, that he said: “Whoever curses them [Abubakar and Umar] once in the morning, no sin shall be recorded against him for the day and whoever curses them in the evening no sin shall be recorded against him until the next morning.”²

Important Notice:

Sunni Muslims consider the twelve Shi’ah Imams and other members of the Prophet’s household as belonging to the rank of the leadership of Ahlus Sunnah. They also believe that statements attributed to them by the Shiites that are contrary to the teachings of the Qur’an and Hadith, such as the ones above, are mere lies and the Imams are innocent of them.

The Reaction Theory

What we have seen of the Shiite belief and attitude towards the Companions of the Prophet is hardly believable, but unfortunately it is true. The average Muslim reader will find it difficult to comprehend how anyone who claims to be a Muslim would condemn Abubakar and Umar (may Allah be pleased with both), as apostates, denounce them and regard cursing them as *ibadah*. He will find himself compelled to ask: What kind of Islam is this? And what is the rationale behind this strange belief and bizarre attitude?

Many researchers have investigated these questions. They tried to offer explanations one of which is the reaction theory.

The essence of the theory is that Shiism was founded by Jews and the Persians as a reaction to Islam’s destruction of their civilizations and effectively wiping them off the map of the world.³ The Prophet fought the

¹ Mullah Kazim **Ajma’ al-Fada’ih**, p 513 as quoted by Ihsan Ilahi Zahir, **al-Shi’ah wa Ahl al-Bait**, Idarah Turjuman al-Sunnah, Lahore-Pakistan, n.d., p. 157.

² **Ibid.**

³ See the following sources by Shiite scholars who admit that the first to teach the doctrines of Shiism were the Jewish and Persian converts to Islam: Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Hassan al-Mamiqani, **Tanqih**

Jews at Madina and Khaybar and dislodged them from the Arabian Peninsula. The Companions of the Prophet, under the leadership of the second Caliph Umar bin al-Khattab, fought the Persian Empire in a series of battles, dispossessing it of territories until they destroyed it completely. All this was accomplished in 25 years.

It is understandable if these great peoples, the Jews and the Persians, were angry at having their millennia old civilizations destroyed in just 25 years, something unprecedented in history. But it was a reality in the face of which they could do little. They had been vanquished at the battlefield.

But would they give up? No. They changed tactics. They embraced Islam en masse with the intention of fighting the faith from within. The result was the founding and development of the Shi'ah sect, which took as a cover the love of the family of the Prophet, *Ahlul Bait*.

Shiism was founded as a secret movement with the avowed objective of destroying Islam. This is why their teachings and beliefs contradict the basic tenets of Islam, as contained in the Qur'an and Sunnah. They made secrecy a cardinal principle of the movement in what they call *Taqiyyah* (dissimulation or hidden identity). The earliest activities of the movement led to the assassination of the second and third Caliphs, Umar bin al-Khattab and Uthman bin Affan. They also precipitated the first internal disagreement between the Muslims which culminated in the two civil wars of *Jamal* and *Siffain*. This constituted the first crack in the wall of Islam which has never quite been mended till today.

Important Notices:

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al-Maqal, al-Matba'ah al-Murtadawiyyah, Najaf-Iraq, 1348 A.H., vol. 2 p. 184; Sa'ad bin Abdillah al-Ash'ari al-Qummi, **al-Maqalat wa al-Firaq**, Matba'ah Haidari, Tehran-Iran, 1963, p. 61.

2. Shiite sources consulted in preparing this booklet are available at the library of **Markazus Sahabah** in Sokoto. The library is open to the public.