

## **Shia Shahadah (Declaration of Faith) is as follows.**

"There is no god but Allah (SWT), Mohammad (SAWS) is the Messenger of Allah, Ali (RU) is the Friend of Allah. The Successor of the Messenger of Allah And his first Caliph."

If you are already familiar with standard Sunni beliefs, you will immediately notice the addition to the Shahadah regarding Imam Ali (RU), cousin of the Prophet (SAWS), husband of his daughter Fatima (RU), father of Hassan (RU) and Hussein (RU) and the second person ever to embrace Islam. The term Shia or Shi'ite derives from a shortening of Shiat Ali (RU) or partisans of Ali (RU).

### **History**

Shias feel that Ali (RU) should have been the first Caliph and that the Caliphate should pass down only to direct descendants of Mohammed (SAWS) via Ali (RU) and Fatima (RU), They often refer to themselves as 'people of the house' (Ahl al Bayt) (of the Prophet – SAWS).

Sunnis regard Ali (RU) as the fourth of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (successors of Prophet Mohammed (SAWS) as leader of the Muslims following on from Abu Bakr (RU) (632-634), Omar (RU) (634-644) and Osman (644-656).

When Hazrat Osman (RU) was martyred during prayer at his home, Hazrat Ali (RU) finally succeeded to the caliphate. In 661 AD, Hazrat Ali (RU) was martyred.

The main Shia sect believe in 12 Imams, the last of whom was presumably disappeared in 873 AD. At the age of 4. Shias refused, however, to accept that he had died, preferring to believe that he was merely "hidden" and would return. They still think that he will return back. When after several centuries this did not happen, spiritual power passed to the Ulema, a council of twelve scholars who elected a supreme Imam. The best known modern example of the Shia supreme Imam is the late Ayyatollah Khomeini, whose portrait hangs in many Shia homes.

Shias believe that their supreme Imam is a fully spiritual guide, inheriting some of Prophet's (SAWS) inspiration. Their Imams are believed to be inerrant interpreters of law and tradition. Shia theology is distinguished by its glorification of Ali (RU). In Shias there is a strong theme of martyrdom and suffering, focusing on deaths of Ali (RU) and, particularly, Imam

Hussein (RU) plus other important figures in the Shia succession.

Shias seem to take the fundamentals of Islam very much for granted, shunting them into the background and dwelling on the martyrdoms. This is best illustrated at Ashura when each evening over a period of ten days the Shias commemorate the Battle of Karbala, with a wailing Imam whipping the congregation up into a frenzy of tears and chest beating.

It looks Shia harbor a deep rooted disdain towards Sunni Islam and prefer to devote their attention to winning over other Muslims to their group. There is ongoing violent strife between Sunnis and Shias in Iraq and Pakistan. On the other hand, in recent years there has been significant co-operation between the two groups in the Lebanon.

## **Differences**

On a practical daily level, Shias have a different call to prayer, they perform ablution (wudu) and Salah differently including placing the forehead onto a piece of hardened clay from Karbala, not directly onto the prayer mat when prostrating. They also tend to combine prayers, sometimes worshipping three times per day instead of five. The Shias also have some different Ahadith and prefer those narrated by Hazrat Ali (RU) and Fatima (RA) to those related by other companions of the Prophet (SAWS). Because of her opposition to Ali (RU), those narrated by Aisha (RA) count among the least favored. Shias also permits 'Muttah' (fixed-term temporary marriage) which is banned by the Sunnis.

## **Shias**

## **Today**

About 90% of the population of Iran is predominantly Shia. They are also in majority in Yemen, Azerbaijan, Bahrain and Iraq. There are also predominant Shia communities along the East coast of Saudi Arabia and in Lebanon. Worldwide, Shias constitute ten to fifteen percent of the overall Muslim population.

Within Shias there are different sects. Most Shias are 'Twelvers', i.e. they recognize 12 Imams. There are also Sevener and Fiver Shias who don't recognize the later Imams.

The phrase 'Al-Shia al-Imamiyyah al-Ithna Ashariyyah' means the Twelver Imami Shi'ite School of thought which comprises the overwhelming majority of Shias today. The phrase 'Twelver Shi'ites' is used interchangeably with 'Ja'fari Shi'ites' and 'Imami Shi'ites' in various literature. These are different names for the same school of thought.

Al-Shia al-Zaidiyah' are a minority among the Shias, concentrated mainly in Yemen located in the Eastern part of Arabian peninsula. The book, 'Shi'ite Islam' written by the Shi'ite scholar, Allamah Tabataba'i, translated by Sayyed Hossein Nasr, and published by the State University of New York Press is a good book for detailed descriptions of Zaidis verses Twelver Shias.

Panjatan (The five holy ones) are (i) Prophet Mohammad (SAWS), (ii) Fatima Az-Zahra (RA), (iii) Ali (RU), Hassan (RU) and Husain (RU).

**The fourteen (14) 'Rightly Guided (Ma'sumin) are the above 5 plus the twelve Imams, as follows.**

- Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib Al-Murtaza (RU) (the satisfied one) (600-661)
- Imam Hasan ibn Ali Al-Mujtabah (RU) (The Chosen One) (625-669)
- Imam Husain Ibn Ali Sayyid al-Shuhudah (RU) (The Chief of Martyrs) (626-680)
- Imam Ali Ibn Husain Zayn Al-Abidin (RU) (The Jewel of the Believers) - (658-713)
- Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (RU) (The Spreader of Knowledge) (676-743)
- Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq (RU) (The Truthful One) (703-765)
- Imam Musa al-Kazim (RU) (The Patient One) (745-799)
- Imam Ali Al-Ridha (RU) (The Accepted One) (765-818)
- Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (RU) (The Pious One) (810-835)
- Imam Ali Al-Naqi (RU) (The Pure One) (827-868)
- Imam Hasan al-Askari (RU) (The One with an Army) (846-874)
- Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi ((RU) (The Rightly-Guided One) (868 - --- )

Shias believe that the Twelfth Imam Mohammad Al-Mahdi (RU) who disappeared at the age of 4 is still alive. The believe that he is occult (in a state of occultation). He will reappear at a moment determined by Allah (SWT). He is the Awaited One who will spread justice throughout the world.