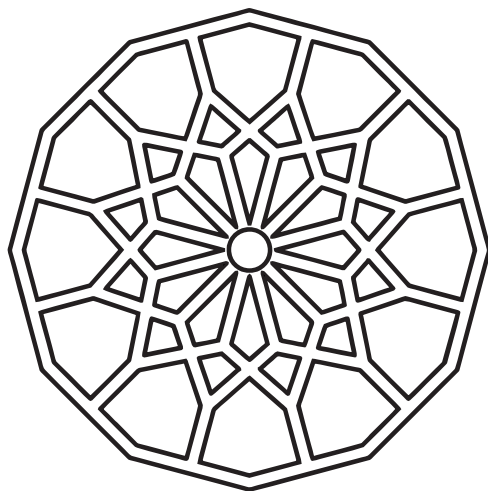# Shīʿism in the present era and solutions

POSITION PAPER

Jamiatul Ulama
south africa
COUNCIL OF MUSLIM THEOLOGIANS

PREAMBLE

All praise is due to Allah and may His choicest salutations continue to descend upon our Master and Leader Muhammad *ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam.*

The roots of Islam in South Africa go back to more than 300 years when Muslim slaves, political exiles from Dutch colonies and indentured labourers from the Indian subcontinent were brought to the Cape. The South African Muslim community has evolved over the years to become completely integrated into the broader populace and had in many ways influenced the politics, languages and cultures of the South African society. Although Muslims make up approximately two percent of the total population, they have peacefully coexisted with different faith communities in South Africa.

Discord and division **within** the Muslims was largely contained even though several different 'ideological strands' existed within the Muslim community, because the overwhelming majority of Muslims subscribed to the doctrinal creed of the **'Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah.'** Muslims enjoyed a measure of social cohesion despite cultural and intellectual dissections primarily because of the interrelationship of doctrinal creed. The influx of Muslims from around the globe post 1994 had changed the Muslim communal typography making it a more picturesque composition of different ethnicities.

The relatively small Shīʿah community in South Africa which emerged after the 1979 Iranian Revolution also grew post 1994. The spread of Shīʿism in South Africa may be attributed to several factors, among which are the unwavering support of the local Iranian embassy in propagation activities, regular financial support to 'converts', active media channels, and university outreach programmes. This has culminated in the establishment of several

Shīʿah centres in the country, sometimes situated in the heart of predominantly Sunnī communities.

Shīʿism has fermented an intractable divide between its adherents and the predominantly Sunnī community. It has also given rise to differences within the Sunni communities in terms of how best to respond to the divide. Whist some prefer a conciliatory approach having regard to aggressive clashes which have become characteristic of the Sunnī/Shīʿah divide in various other parts of the globe, others advocate a more brazen approach given the exponential growth of Shīʿism within a relatively short period of time. The problem of method and approach is further compounded by those who believe that all Shīʿah are kāfir (non-Muslim) as opposed to those who do not pass the fatwā of indiscriminate takfīr.

The need for well-coordinated and sustained educational programme aimed at inoculating the masses in general and the youth in particular against vituperative Shīʿah propaganda is critical if we are to respond to the challenge in any meaningful way. The ability to criticality interrogates and critique Shia indoctrination requires more than just passionate retort, it requires enlightened perception. "Are those who have knowledge and those who have no knowledge alike? Only the men of understanding are mindful." (39:9)

This Position Paper was prepared in consultation with the Maḥajjah Institute under the stewardship of Ml. Tāhā Karan. It is meant to provide an epistemological critique of Shīʿism and to provide general guidelines on how to manage the divide.

6 Muḥarram 1440 Hijrī
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Introduction

The division and splintering of the Ummah is among the most famous prophecies of our Beloved Master Muhammad ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam, and an inevitable occurrence which will continue until the Last Hour. The promise of our Master Muhammad ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam is equally well known of all these sub-divisions being destined for the Fire except one -those who adhere to the Sunnah and the way of the Ṣaḥābah. While a multitude of disparate heretical doctrines were born and perished over the years, one has managed to survive; evolving through the centuries from a political movement to a heretical sect with its own doctrines and beliefs.

Shīʿism was the first heterodoxy to emerge. What began as a purely political phenomenon under the patronage of the famous Munāfiq, Ibn Sabāʾ eventually transitioned into a deviant sect after the massacre of Karbalāʾ. It then diversified into multiple sects, with further divisions within those sects, each with irreconcilable differences. Their predominance has waxed and waned, but it is during periods of regression that they pose the greatest threat. The present being a prime example.

The Iranian revolution of 1979, has seen an unprecedented rise in the influence and propagation of Shīʿism, managing to find a foothold for itself in parts of the world where it had never had a presence before that time. In contrast to previous eras, efforts to counter its spread have been hamstrung by lack of coordination, expertise, funding and sustainability. In this Position Paper we seek to remedy this state of affairs by firstly identifying and understanding the problem, and thereafter present the solution, drawing from the legacy of our pious predecessors.

Understanding the Problem

Understanding the gravity and sensitivity of the problem at hand is the first step towards a lasting and effective solution, as the popular adage goes:

Understanding the problem is half the solution. To this end, cognisance of the following is imperative:

- Relentless propagation
- Complexity of the situation
- Widespread ignorance
- Tendency for violence

Relentless propagation

Twelver Shīʿism, in addition to presently being the most dominant sect of the Shīʿah, is also the most active and insidious in terms of its proselytization. In his book, *The Iranian Revolution,* Ml. Manẓūr Nuʿmānī states:

> … Apart from this, such a flood of publications in so many languages in the form of books, pamphlets, folders, journals and newspapers is being let loose that, at least, the present writer has not in the seventy years of his cognitive life, witnessed a propaganda of this dimension and intensity carried out with such skill and ingenuity by any government, organisation or political party.[1]

Nāṣir ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Qafārī, one of the most well-versed scholars on Shīʿism in present times, states the following in his magnum opus *Uṣūl Madhhab al-Shīʿah al-Ithnay ʿAshariyyah ʿArḍ wa Naqd:*

> I do not think that any heterodox sect will ever reach the levels of this sect in consistently working to propagate its dogma and conferring upon it great importance… The embassies of Iran have turned into centres of Daʿwah in order to convert the youth and the working class among the Muslims throughout the world…[2] As for the contemporary works of the Ahl al-Sunnah against the Shīʿah,

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[1] *The Iranian Revolution:* preface.

[2] *Uṣūl Madhhab al-Shīʿah al-Ithnay ʿAshariyyah ʿArḍ wa Naqd* p. 9.

they are very little in comparison to the works of the Shīʿah against the Ahl al-Sunnah.[3]

The Shīʿah employ every means at their disposal, utilising all mediums and platforms, to ensure their message reaches every class and division of society. Thus, a sustained and balanced academic initiative, in kind if not greater, is the only effective way of curbing the progress of Shīʿism if not eradicating it completely, as will be discussed ahead.

Complexity of the situation

The Twelver dogma is highly complex and profoundly intricate. The complexity has been compounded by the phenomenon - unique to Shīʿism only - of having the ability to evolve in every era, according to its demands, thus ensuring its survival for over a millennium. Shīʿah opinions on issues such as distorting the Qurʾān, the Ḥadīth, and history, etc.; continue to be transmutative, constantly assimilating ideas from an array of Shīʿī and non-Shīʿī denominations.

Further complicating matters is its excessive usage of *Taqiyyah* and *Kitmān,*[4] either by attributing forgeries to the scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah - in an attempt to portray them in harmony with the Shīʿah paradigm - or alternatively publishing books containing views harmonious with those of the Ahl al-Sunnah and distributing them amongst Muslims.

Spearheading the call for Shīʿah-Sunnī unity has further deluded many. With the Iranian Revolution of 1979 already successfully sold as a *purely Islamic revolution,* an impression has been caste upon the laymen, and at times even the erudite, that they are just another sect amongst the Muslims and that they are taking active measures in rescuing the plight of Islam and the Muslims.

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[3] *Uṣūl Madhhab al-Shīʿah al-Ithnay ʿAshariyyah ʿArḍ wa Naqd* p. 13.
[4] Operating clandestinely.

It would thus be unwise and counterproductive to embark on combatting Shīʿism by circulating overused platitudes, spreading inadequate information, and at times misinformation, which barely scrape the surface of the issues which divide us and them.

Widespread ignorance

Despite the calamitous threat Shīʿism poses to the Ummah both politically and ideologically, it is a sad reality that the laity and the erudite alike remain either completely ignorant of or poorly acquainted with its dogma and modus operandi. Al-Qafārī mentions:

> The weakness of the Ahl al-Sunnah served as a catalyst for increase in the vibrancy of the Shīʿah, and the proliferation of ignorance amongst them was the primary cause for the deviance of the Shīʿah impacting upon them.[5]

Ml. Nuʿmānī describes the situation in his era, which reflects our current state as well:

> … hence, we find that very few ʿUlamāʾ of our time have thorough knowledge of Shīʿism. When this is the case with the ʿUlamāʾ what can be said about the common people and the intellectuals…[6]

The complexity and the ever-changing nature of Shīʿism clearly indicate that a superficial reading of a few books or merely attending some overnight workshops will do little to remedy the situation. Ml. Manẓūr Nuʿmānī speaking of his own experience says:

> I, for one, in the course of my academic career, and later as a teacher, did not know about Shīʿism more than what a common man knew. In fact, I knew next to nothing about it. A time, however, came when I happened to study books of some Sunnī

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[5] *Uṣūl Madhhab al-Shīʿah* p. 1137.

[6] *Iranian Revolution:* preface.

scholars on the subject who had studied Shīʿism. I may mention, in particular, the book of Ml. Qāḍī Iḥtishām al-Dīn of Moradabad, which was the first I had read on the subject. I had, also, read some books of Ml. ʿAbd al-Shakūr of Lucknow on this subject. I, then, began to feel that I had acquired enough knowledge about Shīʿism and knew fully about it. However, when I learnt of the relentless propaganda being done I considered it a religious duty to write about it, and, for that purpose, I thought it necessary to acquire an adequate knowledge of Shīʿism through a study of its basic and standard books and the writings of Khomeini himself. I am over eighty years of age and ailments and handicaps peculiar to it had started setting in for some time. I am, also, a victim of high blood pressure and a serious and sustained literary effort is not easy for me. In spite of all this, I read thousands of pages of such books during a period of one year. It, then, dawned upon me that I did not know even one-fourth of the doctrines and beliefs of Shīʿism and that without a full knowledge of Shīʿah religion one could not know and appreciate the real nature and character of Khomeini's Iranian Revolution...[7]

Al-Qafārī too mentions, despite him being the author of an encyclopaedia on Shīʿism:

The topic at hand still requires that we continue on the path and exert ourselves in producing objective academic studies which will reveal the reality of the Shīʿah to those beguiled by them.[8]

Additionally, just as with other branches of knowledge, self-study for the uninitiated, without the guidance of a trained expert, can be disastrous and instead produce adverse effects.

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[7] *Iranian revolution:* preface.

[8] *Uṣūl Madhhab al-Shīʿah* 696.

Tendency for Violence

The Shī'ah Sunnī polemic is highly sensitive and potentially explosive. In as much as we would like to gloss over the differences between the Ahl al-Sunnah and the Shī'ah, the fact of the matter is that the differences do exist, and that by their very nature they make each group's claim to the Truth an exclusive one. As such history bears witness that wherever Shī'ah and Sunnīs have coexisted, their co-existence has in most cases led to violence and bloodshed. The fall of Baghdad at the hands of Nasīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and Ibn al-'Alqamī, the concentrated campaign carried out by the Safawids to forcibly convert the Sunnī majority of Iran to Shī'ism and their hostility toward the Ottoman empire, the constant constrains, suppression and oppression that Sunnis experience in present day Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria, and the minor skirmishes which break out between them in various parts of the world are but a few examples which attest to this.

While the history of co-existence between Sunnī and Shī'ah has been marred by inexcusable cycles of violence, a peaceful coexistence is not a fanciful dream but entirely possible, subject to the tone we take in countering the Shī'ah propaganda. Employing an approach which hinges more on emotion and impulse, accentuated with sarcastic and inflammatory language, rather than innocuous academic dialogue, will most certainly result in a devastating sectarian conflict, with the greatest casualty being Islam itself.

The Solution

Polemical arguments of this nature can only be effectively countered through objective and academic engagement. This has been the tried and tested approach employed by the 'Ulamā' throughout the ages. Having proven to be the most effective and enduring, it has always been employed in extirpating any Fitnah that threatened this Ummah and its core beliefs. One need only look at our own Deobandi legacy, which draws its inspiration from the ideologies of Mujaddid Alf Thānī, Shah Walī Allah al-Dehlawī, Ml. Qāsim

Nānotwī, and the other seniors of Dar al-ʿUlūm,[9] and their efforts in countering Shiism in particular:

1. In the era of Jahangir, due to his wife Nūr Jahan having Shīʿī leanings and her giving carte blanch authority to the Shīʿah, they had the upper-hand. Thus, Shīʿism began to exponentially gain popularity throughout the Mogul empire. Likewise, in an endeavour to replace Sunniism with Shīʿism, a book written by the Shīʿah scholars of Mashhad containing the Takfīr of the Three Khulafāʾ and ʿĀʾishah *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhum* was being widely circulated, especially amongst the cabinet of the king. Mujaddid Alf Thānī took it upon himself to debate with the Shīʿah clergy, publically debunk their distortions and misrepresentations, write the book *Radd Rawāfiḍ,* and write substantial letters to the courtiers of Jahangir[10]. His efforts had helped in considerably curbing the wave of Shīʿism and reinstating the true image of the Ahl al-Sunnah amongst the elite and the commonality.[11]

2. Shāh Walī Allah authored the book *Izālat al-Khafāʾ ʿan Khilāfah al-Khulafāʾ* in four volumes when the Shīʿah were raising allegations on the Khilāfah Rāshidah. He states the following in his preface:

    > The innovation of Shīʿism has become popular in these times, and the hearts of the ordinary men have become tainted with the misconceptions that they raise. Doubts have crept into the hearts of the majority of people in this vicinity regarding the Khilāfah of the Khulafāʾ Rāshidūn *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhum.* The reality is that Allah has instilled in the heart of this humble servant… that the Khilāfah of these

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[9] *Manhaj ʿUlamāʾ al-Deoband* p. 11.

[10] There are a dozen of such letters which can be read in his *Maktūbāt.* See a detailed letter in this regard in *Irshādāt Mujaddid Alf Thānī* (authored by Ml. Maḥmūd Ashraf ʿUthmānī): p. 230.

[11] Ml. Sayyid Zawwār Ḥusain Shāh Ṣāḥib: *Ḥaḍrat Mujaddid Alf Thānī* p. 448-449.

individuals is a principle from the principles of Dīn... Based on this I have written a few pages on this issue and named them *Izālat al-Khafāʾ...*[12]

3. His son, Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Dehlawī, wrote *Tuḥfah Ithnay ʿAshariyyah* (approx. 850 pages), not to defend the creed of the Ahl al-Sunnah but to expose Shīʿism in light of what appears in its classical books.[13] He says:

> This is a book which is aimed at exposing the Shīʿah, documenting the principles and primary sources of their dogma, revealing their missionary ploys and making mention of their scholars, the transmitters of their ḥadīth and some of their beliefs which they hold regarding *Ulūhiyyah, Nubuwwah* and *Imāmah...* The reason for authoring this book is that in the lands where we reside and in the times in which we live, Twelver Shīʿism has become very popular; to the extent that there are very few houses wherein one or two individuals have not converted to Shīʿism...[14]

4. Ml. Qāsim Nānotwī wrote *Hadiyyat al-Shīʿah*[15] (consisting of almost 500 pages) in response to a *letter* of a Shīʿī scholar named ʿAmmār ʿAlī making allegations against the Ṣaḥābah and the Khilāfah, amongst other issues.[16]

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[12] *Izālah al-Khafāʾ ʿan Khilāfah al-Khulafāʾ* (Arabic translation) vol. 1: p. 79-82.

[13] He was the first scholar in the history of Shīʿah-Sunnī polemics to embark on this enterprise and his work was widely accepted at the time and still remains an indispensable work up to the present day.

[14] *Tuḥfah Ithnay ʿAshariyyah:* introduction.

[15] Deliberate over the names *Tuḥfah* and *Hadiyyah* and you will realise that our scholars were not interested in a provocative and hate-bearing approach. Rather their goal was to create a climate of amiable academic discussion.

[16] *Hadiyyat al-Shīʿah:* introduction.

The methods adopted by our mentors make it clear that the solution to Shīʿism lies in an effective **Education Campaign**. This is a two-pronged approach:
1. Inoculation
2. Counteraction

1. Inoculation

Both ʿUlamāʾ and the commonality need to be acquainted with the lives of the Ṣaḥābah, Ahl al-Bayt, and other pious personalities who contributed to the preservation of Dīn, as well as important historical events from the Prophetic era until present. This will serve in creating conviction within the hearts of our community making them less susceptible to deviant ideologies. Hereunder we will very briefly analyse the various aspects which should be covered in the education campaign.

    a. History
    b. The Ṣaḥābah *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhum*
    c. The Ahl al-Bayt

a. History
Decades of Shīʿah propagandist literature have taught us that the most exploited avenue in misleading the public has been History. The book of Muḥammad Mūsawī Tijānī, *Then I Was Guided,* for example, has been one of the most powerful weapons in the Shīʿah propaganda arsenal; in the first two chapters of his book alone he sows enough doubt that could shake the faith of even the most devout.

It is thus our responsibility to ensure that these incidents are taught to our public in sufficient detail - clarifying the misconceptions in addition to relaying the positives - before they are ensnared by false portrayals. A person who hears

the distorted version of history first is bound to develop hatred for the Ṣaḥābah *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhum*, as the saying goes, *the first impression is the last impression.*

A few historical events which need to be addressed:

i. The battles fought during the lifetime of Nabī *ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam*, the contributions of the Ṣaḥābah, and their sacrifices, in light of the verses of the Qurʾān and authentic narrations. Any apparent mistakes committed by them need to be contextualised and explained in light of the Prophetic tradition.

ii. The Khilāfah of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhum*; with special attention to the election of Abū Bakr *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhu* as the Khalīfah, the Bayʿah of ʿAlī *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhu*, the issue of Fadak and inheritance of Nabī *ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam*, the administration of the *Fayʾ* of Banū al-Naḍīr, the allegations levelled at ʿUthmān *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhu*, the instrumental role ʿAlī *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhu* played in the Khilāfah of all three Khulafāʾ, and the amiable relationships that existed between them.

iii. The Khilāfah of ʿAlī *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhu*; with special attention to the battles of Jamal and Ṣiffīn, the incident of *Taḥkīm,* the rise of the Sabaʾiyyah, the relinquishing of the Khilāfah by Ḥasan *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhu* and his pact with Muʿāwiyah *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhu*, the amiable relationship which existed between Ḥasanayn and Muʿāwiyah *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhum*, the massacre of Karbalāʾ, the aftermath of Karbalāʾ.

b. Ṣaḥābah *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhum*

As we all know, one of the focal themes of Shiism is denigrating the Ṣaḥābah *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhum*. Denigrating the Ṣaḥābah *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhum* is destroying Dīn from its very basis. Therefore, defending their integrity and legacy is crucial in the preservation of our pristine Dīn.

The following aspects should be covered in the educational campaign:

i.   The virtues of the Ṣaḥābah *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhum* as expounded by Nabī *ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam* need to be common knowledge to one and all. The merits of the Ṣaḥābah, their sincerity in faith, their sacrifices for Dīn and their support of Rasūl Allah *ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam*, etc. need to be presented in light of the verses of the Qurʾān. The Qurʾān is replete with the virtues of the Ṣaḥābah *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhum*, which need to be brought to the fore.

ii.   The need for authentication cannot be overemphasised. The Shīʿah find ample ammunition for their denigration of the Ṣaḥābah *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhum* in the multitude of weak and fabricated narrations that have been invented through the centuries. While these forgeries can be quickly rebutted, thanks to the tireless efforts of our Muḥaddithīn, our position is severely undermined when we proceed thereafter to then ourselves rely on extremely weak and at times fabricated narrations in our public lectures. In doing so, we only accord them the opportunity to vindicate their falsehood. **The lofty status of the Ṣaḥābah is a matter of certainty, firmly rooted in the Noble Qurʾān and Authentic Sunnah, and they are not in need of weak and feeble narrations to exalt them.**

iii. While promoting the *Faḍāʾil* (virtues) of the Ṣaḥābah *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhum* is a matter of paramount importance, equally important is the need to pre-empt the various *Maṭāʿin* (demerits) which the Shīʿah lay against the Ṣaḥābah; mostly indirectly and directly if need be. Sufficing on the *Faḍāʾil* is not sufficient. People have to at least have a vague idea of what the Ṣaḥābah *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhum* are being accused of and why it is false. Failing to do so will leave our task half done with no guarantee that they will be saved from the propaganda of the Shīʿah. Those who have paltry knowledge on these issues are encouraged to concentrate on promoting their virtues only.

iv. Programmes and lectures to focus on the other Ṣaḥābah, in addition to the first three Khulafāʾ, who are often targeted by the Shīʿah. Such as Ṭalḥah, Zubair, Muʿāwiyah, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, Abū Hurayrah, ʿĀʾishah, Ḥafṣah *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhum*, etc.

Most often the importance of this effort is disregarded. However, one is urged to ask himself: Have we truly spoken about them in considerable detail or do we barely manage to touch on their lives at all? By not doing so, we are leaving the guidance of the masses to chance. A single lecture once or twice in a year in a few locations - while still praiseworthy - will not fulfil the obligation that rests upon our shoulders.

c. The Ahl al-Bayt

Loving the Ahl al-Bayt and venerating them is part of our Īmān, but seldom do we find ourselves talking about them. Any discussion on the Ahl al-Bayt has been ceremoniously avoided considering it to be a topic for the Shīʿah only. The Shīʿah have taken advantage of our hesitance to broach the subject and thereby paint us as enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt. It is imperative that we are the first to introduce our communities to the Ahl al-Bayt. A few pertinent points in this regard:

i. The correct perspective of the Ahl al-Bayt needs to be presented. The Ahl al-Bayt does not only comprise of ʿAlī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan, Ḥusain *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhum*, and the ʿImāms' from his progeny, but includes foremost the wives of Nabī *ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam* and his daughters. It likewise includes the siblings of ʿAlī *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhu*, i.e. Jaʿfar and ʿAqīl, their families, the other children of Ḥusain *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhu* besides the alleged Imāms and the progeny of Ḥasan *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhu*. The Banū Hāshim and the Banū al-Muṭṭalib are likewise part of the Ahl al-Bayt.

ii. We need to reclaim the Ahl al-Bayt. In other words, lectures need to be dedicated to the lives and merits of the Ahl al-Bayt as well in addition to dispelling the lies and fabrications which are attributed to them or advanced in their name. Just as it is our duty to preserve the integrity of the Ṣaḥābah, it is equally our duty to preserve the integrity of the Household of Nabī *ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam.*

iii. The amiable relationships and reciprocal respect which existed between the Ṣaḥābah *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhum* and the Ahl al-Bayt needs to be emphasised. The congenial relationships which existed between the three Khulafāʾ and ʿAlī *raḍiyallāhu ʿanhum*, their praise for one another, the role of ʿAlī as a prominent advisor and active member in the Khilāfah, his approbation of many of their institutions during his Khilāfah, his display of furore at anyone who maligned them, etc., are just some of the aspects that may be discussed in this light.

2. Counteraction

This would entail discussing the beliefs of the Shīʿah in light of what appears in their canonical works and the views of their scholars. It would also be pivotal to quote the views of their contemporaries to provide evidence of their current beliefs, thus preventing the argument being watered down by statements such as, "Judge us for who we are, not for what appears in our books."

The following aspects should be covered:

a) Imāmah, the belief that Allah *subḥānahu wa taʿālā* emphatically appointed twelve individuals to successively rule over the Ummah after the demise of Rasūl Allah *ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam.* It needs to be underlined that this is the most fundamental doctrine of their dogma, and the most grievous, due to which many other blasphemous beliefs sprout forth. Areas which ought to be covered include: Nature of their appointment, Nature of their office, Analyses of the textual

and logical proofs advanced to support it and establishing that it has no basis in the Qurʾān and the Sunnah.

b) Beliefs of the Shīʿah, such as the interpolation of the Qurʾān—in classical and contemporary works, the rejection of the Sunnī ḥadīth legacy, the forgery of a false legacy (based on the 'teachings of the Imāms'), impugning the Ahl al-Bayt, excommunication of the Ṣaḥābah, demerits of the Ṣaḥābah, etc.

Anyone who intends exploring this subject must be sufficiently trained in this regard, well versed in Sunni-Shīʿī polemics, and the counter arguments often produced.

c) The manner in which the Shīʿah paradigm tarnishes the reputation of the Ahl al-Bayt and impugns many of their acclaimed members - at times even completely excommunicating others - needs to be emphasised.

d) The inception, formation, and divisions within Shīʿism, with each sect claiming sole absolution and beliefs they ascribe to the Ahl al-Bayt in total contradiction with each other.

e) Explanation and contextualisation of historic events such as
i) The fall of Baghdad and the Shīʿah collaboration with the Mongols,
ii) The Safawid Dynasty of Iran and its role in entrenching Shīʿism in the region,
iii) The reality of the Iranian revolution and the change in Shīʿah thought.

❖ **Salient Features of the Education Campaign**

From the aforementioned points, a vague idea of what the ideal approach should be like might have emerged in our minds. Hereunder we discuss the salient features which collectively give shape to that ideal approach.

➢ **Sustained**

The issue of Shīʿism is not a fleeting one which can be solved overnight. It is a sect that has managed to cling on to existence for over a millennium, but has only managed to take root and destabilise Sunnī society during periods of inattention. Even the most beautiful gardens can be quickly overrun when its groundsman become negligent.

In Deoband where *Tafḍīlī* Shīʿism was entrenched in the hearts and minds of the Deobandis, it was only the concerted and self-less efforts of Ml. Qāsim Nānotwī which uprooted the problem.[17] If in doing away with the lightest form of Shīʿism, Ml. Nānotwī made such effort, how much more effort should we make in doing away with the most abhorrent form of Shīʿism?

➢ **Rigorously substantiated**

In line with our theme of *there is no quick fix* is ensuring that all discourses and dissertations are rigorously substantiated. The practice of our senior scholars in this regard speaks volumes, and continues to be appreciated to this day.

Ml. ʿAlī Mia mentions the following in his introduction to *Izālat al-Khafāʾ:*
> When this book came into hands of Ml. Faḍl Ḥaqq Khair Ābādī (a contemporary of Shāh Walī Allāh) he became obsessed with it. And after having read much of it he said to a group of people, "The person who has authored this book is a shoreless ocean flowing with immense knowledge."[18]

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[17] *Tadhkirah Shaikh al-Hind:* p. 97.

[18] *Izālat al-Khafāʾ* (Arabic translation) p. 38.

Similarly, *Tuḥfah Ithnay ʿAshariyyah* remains an indispensable work in refutation of Shīʿism. ʿAllāmah Maḥmūd Shukrī Ālūsī condensed it, named it *Mukhtaṣar al-Tuḥfah* and used it to curb the tide of Shīʿism in Iraq during the early 1900s.[19]

While Ml. Yūsuf Binnorī says about Hadiyyat *al-Shīʿah* that it is more informative than the *Tuḥfah* of Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz.[20]

> ### Balanced and Free from Virulent and Provocative language

By just deliberating over the names *Tuḥfah* and *Hadiyyah* one will realise that the approach of our seniors did not seek to induce provocation or hatred. On the contrary, they sought to use a balanced dialogue aimed at educating the Shīʿah together with the Sunnis. Further underlining this: when Dildār ʿAlī Khan wrote a response to *Tuḥfah* at the request of the Nawab of Lucknow and it was shown to Mirza Qatīl (another Shīʿī) he said:

> The truth is that *Qiblah wa Kaʿbah* (the title of Dildār ʿAlī) did not even know how to name his book appropriately; Shāh Ṣāḥib is presenting a *Tuḥfah* (gift) and he is responding with *Dhū al-Faqār* (sword, the name of his book).[21]

Similarly, Ml. Manāẓir Aḥsan Gīlānī writes that Ml. Qāsim Nānotwī's style in *Hadiyyah* was one brimming with concern for the Shīʿah. He terminates the book by requesting the Shīʿah to sincerely repent from their blasphemies.[22]

In the biography of Mf. Shafīʿ, Mf. Taqī ʿUthmānī writes that he said:

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[19] See: Maḥmūd Shukrī Ālūsī: *Mukhtaṣar al-Tuḥfah:* Introduction.

[20] *Hadiyyat al-Shīʿah:* introduction.

[21] Ml. Ashraf ʿAlī Thānwī: *Arwāḥ Thalāthah* p. 37.

[22] Ml. Manāẓir Aḥsan Gīlānī: *Sawāniḥ Qasimī* p. 64.

In my youth, my style in debating and refuting the claims of others was daring and inflammatory; it was filled with sarcasm. I had written *Khatm Nubuwwat* in this very time. But after its publication one such incident took place which made me change the style of my writing. A Qadiyani wrote a letter to me wherein he said, "After reading the proofs you have presented in your book *Khatm Nubuwwat* with impartiality, I found them to be very persuasive. This demanded that I forsake the creed of Mirza, but the style of your book prevents me from taking this step. My understanding is that the people of Ḥaqq suffice upon advancing *Dalāʾil* and do not go down the route of vituperation and maligning." To what extent was he speaking the truth or not, I am not sure. But I realised thereafter that the approach of vituperation is more harmful than beneficial.[23]

➤ The Issue of Takfīr (Excommunication)

It is without doubt that some of our ʿUlamāʾ did indeed make takfīr of the Shīʿah, but despite these rulings being present in their works, the thrust of the books that they authored against them still remained one aimed at education. They knew well that takfīr was merely a conclusion and not the ultimate objective, **the objective always remained preserving the beliefs of the Ahl al-Sunnah, in which the role of education is paramount and that of takfīr minuscule.**

In the concluding remarks of his book *Hadiyyah al-Shīʿah* Ml. Qāsim Nānotwī mentions:

> Now, by the grace of Allah, it has become established with the attestation of *Thaqalayn,* i.e. the book of Allah and the Sunnah of

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[23] Mf. Taqī ʿUthmānī: *Mere Wālid aur Mere Shaikh* p. 109.

Rasūl Allah *ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam* that Shīʿī dogma is flawed. **And this was the objective.**[24]

Resorting to takfīr without adequately schooling ourselves on Shīʿism and educating the masses is nothing less than eschewing our responsibility as ʿUlamāʾ to preserve the legacy of Ahl al-Sunnah. Takfīr - while relevant at times - does not form even part of the solution to Shīʿism.

In addition, like any community, the Shīʿī community consists of two classes: the learned and the ignorant.

Making takfir of the learned is not possible without doing an in-depth study of their views; because there is barely a doctrine in Shiism wherein they hold one view alone; rather in every doctrine they hold multiple views and give multiple interpretations: some in accordance with the beliefs of the Muslim-Majority and others in accordance with the classical and medieval Shīʿī traditions.

In the issue of *Taḥrīf,* for example, the early scholars held two disparate views; whilst the majority of them asserted that the Qurʾān is interpolated, some of their leading scholars, viz. Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī (d. 381 A.H.), Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436 A.H.), Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 450 A.H.) and Abū ʿAlī al-Ṭabarsī denied it altogether.

As for the contemporaries, they have four different approaches to the issue of *Taḥrīf*:
1) outright denial,
2) blatant acknowledgement,
3) acknowledgement coupled with vindication,
4) and overt denial coupled with covert acknowledgment.

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[24] *Hadiyyat al-Shīʿah* p. 191.

As you can see, there are many views in this regard, some in complete contradiction with others.

Hence making a blanket pronouncement of takfīr regarding the entire Shīʿī clergy due to the belief of Taḥrīf induces more harm than benefit. It is quickly refuted and undermined, thus diminishing the weight of our argument.

As for making a blanket pronouncement of takfīr regarding the ignorant, it is likewise not feasible. It is an undeniable fact that, just like the Sunnis, amongst the Shīʿah there is a substantive amount of people who know nothing about their dogma except the fact that they are Shīʿah.

It would thus be against prudence to continue promulgating takfīr of all the Shīʿah without qualifying our statements and without making any exceptions, especially when takfīr is a very grave issue.

It is for this reason that Ml. Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī classed them (the ignorant) as *'Fāsiq'*. Ml. Manāẓir Aḥsan Gīlānī writes in *Sawāniḥ Qāsimī:*

> ...Due to these types of beliefs, having more popularity amongst the scholars of the Shīʿah than amongst their laity, whilst maintaining the Fatwa of takfīr regarding the former, Ml. Gangohī would say the following regarding the latter, "Their ignorant are *Fāsiq."[25]*

Ml. Qāsim Nānotwī likewise considered them to be partially Muslim and gave preference to their Islam, thereby engaging with them hoping that they will repent.[26]

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[25] *Sawāniḥ Qāsimī* 2/62, 63. (With reference to *Tadhkirah al-Rashīd* p. 286).

[26] Ibid. p. 63, 64. (With reference of *Fuyūḍe Qāsimiyyah).*

And due to the aforementioned reasons, Mf. Taqī ʿUthmānī and the Dar al-Iftāʾ of Dār al-ʿUlūm Karachi also hold the same position.[27]

The general trend in the Fatāwā of the ʿUlamāʾ of Deoband was conditional Takfīr.[28] Therefore, whilst maintaining the same approach, we assert that whoever among the Shīʿah denies the categorically established aspects of Dīn is a Kāfir.

And hence those Shīʿah who believe in the following are definitely out of the fold of Islam:
1. The interpolation of the Qurʾān;
2. The takfīr (excommunication) of the Ṣaḥābah raḍiyallāhu ʿanhum;
3. The Imāms being more virtuous than the Ambiyāʾ ʿalayhis salām;
4. According to the Imāms the exclusive attributes of Allah taʿālā;
5. Denying the chastity of ʿĀʾishah raḍiyallāhu ʿanhā;
6. Denying the Ṣaḥābiyyah (companionship) of Abu Bakr raḍiyallāhu ʿanhu;
7. And, similarly denying any fundamental principle of Islam.

This does not imply that those Shīʿah who are not excommunicated are on the path of guidance and are part of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah. Their deviance is grave indeed and their innovative nature is undisputable.

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[27] Mf. Taqī ʿUthmānī: *Fatāwā ʿUthmānī* 1/97, 98.

[28] Pickup any of the Fatāwā works of our Akābir and you will barely find anyone who made blanket takfir of the Shīʿah. For example: *Fatāwā Dār al-ʿUlūm Deoband* 7/250, 7/272; *Kifāyat al-Muftī*: 1/289, 1/290; *Imdād al-Fatāwā* 2/279; *Fatāwā Maḥmūdiyyah* (Kutub Khana Maẓharī) 8/ 197; *Imdād al-Muftīn* p. 400; Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ: *Bayyināt* p. 1201, 1202, etc.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the ideal approach revolves entirely around education and a balanced and rigorously substantiated academic campaign; one which is free from sensationalised information, virulent and provocative language, and abuse of the element of Takfīr. This approach represents the practice of not just the scholars of Deoband but that of all the research scholars since time immemorial, and is the middle path between passivity and belligerency. It is an approach requiring schooling ourselves and educating others, in a sustained and balanced manner without vituperation and violence.

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