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Why do the Shia kiss the gates and the walls of the holy shrines

To seek refuge in the Divine guardians' monuments is not a heretical belief, but its origin goes back to the history of the Prophet's lifetime and his disciples'. Furthermore, not only the Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) and his disciples, but also the previous Divine prophets did practice it, and now, let us reason out the legality of seeking refuge in the Divine guardian's monuments through the holy Quran and the traditions:

1- As stated in the holy Quran, when Joseph, the prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants), introduced himself to his brothers and then forgave them, said,

اذهبوا بقميصي هذا فالقوه علي وجه ابي يات بصيراً¹

(Now go with this shirt of mine and cast it over the face of my father, and he will recover his sight)

And then goes on,

فلما ان جاء البشير القاؤه علي وجهه فارتد بصيراً²

(Then, when the bearer of good tidings came to him, and cast Joseph's shirt on Jacob's face, his eyesight returned to him.)

These verses not only signify the refuge of Jacob to the shirt of Joseph, but also proclaim how Joseph's shirt brought back eyesight to Jacob.

Hence, can one claim that the behavior of these two holy prophets is polytheism?

1- Yousof Sura, verse no. 93

2- Ibid, verse no. 98

2- The history has recorded that the holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his descendants) kissed and saluted the Black Stone (Hajar Ul-Asvad) while circumambulating the Kaba. In his book, ‘Sahih’, Bokhari writes, “one asked Abdollah Ibn Omar about kissing the Black Stone”, and he replied,

رايت رسول الله (ص) يستلمه و يقبله³

(I observed the Prophet (a.s) when kissing and touching it.)

Whereas if touching and kissing a stone was indeed polytheism, the Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) who proclaimed monotheism would never do it.

3- There exist an abundant number of traditions in the authentic books, specifying that the Prophet’s disciples sought refuge to his belongings, such as garments, water of ablution, water vessel, etc. Their deeds provide sufficient references for us on the legality and approval of such act. Here are some:

A. Bokhari in his ‘Sahih’ in a part of a lengthy hadith which presents some of the qualities of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) and his disciples says,

واذا توحا كادوا يقتتلون علي وضوءه⁴

(Whenever the Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) was performing ablution, the Muslims rushed to obtain the water of his ablution.)

B. Ibn Hijr narrates,

ان النبي صلي الله عليه و علي اله وسلم كان يوتي بالصبيان فيبرك عليهم⁵

3- Sahih, Bokhari, section 2, the book on Hajj, P. 151-152, Egypt edition.

4- Ibid, vol. 3, p. 195, the section on Jihad and Peace

5- Al-Isabah, vol. 1, p. 7, the book on sermon, Egypt edition.

6-Tabaruk Ul-Sahabeh, Mohammad Taher Maki, Chapter 1, P.29, Ansari translation

(The Muslims took their children to the holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants), and he prayed for their blessings.)

Mohammad Tahir Makki says, “Omme Sabet narrated me that once the Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) came round to my house and drank some water from the hanging water-skin; then, I stood up and cut the opening of the water-skin”.

Then added, “Tirmizi narrated this narrative and believed that its authenticity is beyond doubt. Also, the narrator in the book entitled ‘Riyaz Ul-Salehin’ goes on, “Omme Sabet cut the opening part of the water-skin in order to keep the place of the Prophet’s mouth and to be blessed with it. Also, the Prophet’s disciples always used to drink water from where the Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) had drunk”.⁶

كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه [و آله] وسلم اذا صلي الغداه جاء خدم المدينه بآوتيتهم فيها الماء فما
يوتي باناء الا غمس يده فيه فر بما جلوه في الغداه البارده فيغمس يده فيها⁷

(The Medina servants brought their water pots to the Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) at the time of the Morning Prayer, and the holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) immersed his hand in the pots. It happened that sometimes they came to him in the cold mornings, and he still immersed his hand in their pots.)⁸

7- Sahih, Moslim, section 7, the book on fazael, Chapter Ghorb Ul-Nabi, P.79

8- For further information, refer to the following documents:

- a) Sahih, Bokhari, the book Ashrabe.
- b) Mota Malik, vol. 1, P. 138.
- c) Asad Ul- Ghabah, vol. 5, P.90.
- d) Masnad Ahmad, vol.4, P. 32
- e) Fath Ul-Bari, vol.1, P. 281-82

Thus, the reasons for the legality of seeking refuge in the Divine guardians' monuments were presented, and it was revealed that those who charge the Shia with polytheism have not digested the real concepts of monotheism and polytheism, yet, because the latter is to regard another being as the Godhead or ascribe Godly attributes to him and regard him as independent or absolute in essence or existence.

On the contrary, the Shia count the Divine guardians as Allah's servants, who are dependent on Him for their existence and creation. It is worthy to mention that the Shia seeks refuge in his leaders as the promulgators of the Divine religion only for expressing their great affection and gratitude to them.

If the Shia kiss the shrines of the holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his descendants) and his Ahlul Bait (a.s) or touch their gates and walls when visiting them, it is only because of their affection and sentimental attachment towards them, which may manifest in the nature of every man.

A sweet-spoken man of letters in this regard wrote,

امر عَلي الديار ديار سلمي اقبل دَا الجدار و ذا الجدارا
وما حب الديار شغفن قلبي ولكن حب من سكن الديارا

(I pass Salmi's homeland and kiss this wall and that one; that homeland does not exhilarate, but the affection towards the homeland dweller does my heart good.)