# How I Found the Right Path

*In the Name of Allah, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful*

How did I, a Sunni following Hanafi fiqh, come to find and embrace the Right Path of Ahl ul-Bayt? All Praise and all Thanks are for Allah (Subhana wa ta'la) who in His Mercy and Compassion guided me toward the truth.

My journey began when, on starting a new job, I first met a follower of Ahl ul-Bayt. Up until that time, I knew little about those who were called Shi'as - except what I had heard from Sunni brothers, which to say the least was not very complimentary.

I had read nothing about them, for I had never found anything to read: all the books on Islam I came across over a period of many years were about Sunni Islam, written by Sunni Muslims. All the Muslims I had met, in my country of residence and in places like Egypt, were Sunni, and even on that modern medium of communication, the Internet, I had not come across any Shi'a sites, probably because I had not looked for them specifically and just followed links from one Sunni site to another Sunni site. I also knew very little about the early history of Islam, except of course what I had read in Sunni books about how wonderful the 'pious Caliphs' were.

And yet I had already begun to think seriously about certain questions, such as predestination, and begun to be a little concerned about some Hadith which I read in Bukhari and Muslim which seemed to me in my innocence and with my lack of knowledge to contradict the words of the Holy Quran.

I had concerns also about following scholars, for I was always being told that I could choose which Madhhab to follow, and that if I personally was not happy with something, I could follow another school in certain matters just as I could take advice from, and follow the advice of, any scholar of any School. This just did not seem to be right.

Perhaps I should add that at this time I was a relatively recent convert to Islam, having over a period of some years come to discover the truth about Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammadin wa Ali Muhammad) and having become convinced that not only was Allah the one and only God, but also that Muhammad (Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammadin wa Ali Muhammad) was his Messenger and Prophet. [I had previously been a Christian, and indeed, a Catholic monk for a while.]

The Shi'a brother and I were the only Muslims in our place of work so it was natural that we prayed Zuhr and Asr together. He was kind, considerate and well-mannered - in fact, an

example of what Muslims should be - and it did not matter that he prayed in a slightly different way from me. I just assumed in my naivety that he was simply following a different Madhhab. Then I mentioned that I was praying with a Shi'a to a brother at the local Masjid. His negative reaction just made me interested in finding out more about them. So I asked some questions of my Shi'a brother. He answered simply, always stressing that I must make my own judgement and use reason as a guide.

One incident I remember vividly. I had been sent several articles by a group, who were influenced by the Wahhabi, which were vehemently anti-Shi'a, and which made all sort of allegations about the followers of Ahl ul-Bayt. I mentioned this group to my Shi'a brother, and he said, calmly and simply: "What do you think about them?"

I replied that I could not see the Prophet Muhammad (Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammadin wa Ali Muhammad) acting in such an intolerant way, for I remembered the Hadith about how the Prophet treated the man who was ill-mannered enough to urinate in a Mosque while the Prophet himself (Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammadin wa Ali Muhammad) was there.

My Shi'a brother said nothing, but a few days later (as I remember it) he leant me a copy of an English translation of Nahj al-Balagha containing some of the wisdom of Imam 'Ali (Alayhi salaam). I read it, and marveled at his wisdom, and decided to try and find out more about these Shi'a's - at this time, I still knew so little I did not even know that Shi'a meant follower, and that the Shi'as were followers of Ahl ul-Bayt, a term which again meant nothing to me.

Then, not long after, I left my job to take up new employment and so lost contact with my Shia brother, although I did try to contact him, once, but my E-mail was returned as I obviously had not remembered the right address. Several months went by before I began a more serious study, prompted by reading about the sermon of Ghadeer Khumm as related in Tirmidhi and Muslim: Sunni sources which I still implicitly accepted. For were they not Sahih - second only to the Holy Qur'an itself?

Here was the Prophet (Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammadin wa Ali Muhammad) stating that we should follow and hold onto his Ahl ul-Bayt, just as I had read how he had many times praised Imam 'Ali (Alayhi salaam) in such terms that surely meant he saw or wanted Ali (Alayhi salaam) to be his successor.

I discovered some of the basic beliefs of the followers of Ahl ul-Bayt, such as Taqlid and the Fourteen Infallibles and the more I considered these, the more rational and logical they seemed. They were natural, logical consequences of the Holy Quran itself. This really enlightened me about the Shia: it was as if I had come across a fundamental truth for the first time, something simple and yet profound.

A few days later, on an Internet site, I read about Karbala. I admit I cried. How could those who called themselves Muslims treat fellow Muslims as they did - and in particular how could they fight, and kill, the grandson of the Holy Prophet himself? I found this fact quite astonishing. How did this tragedy come about? And then, I read some of the words spoken by the fourth Imam (Alayhi salaam) about this tragedy, and what it meant and would always mean.

I then spent several days reading about the early history of Islam - about the Umayyads and Abbasids and how they viciously persecuted the followers of Ahl ul-Bayt. I read Muhammad Tijani's Then I Was Guided and his Shi'a are the Real Ahl al-Sunna, several other books and many, many articles written by followers of Ahl ul-Bayt. I read the sermon of Imam Husain (Alayhi salaam) at Mina which described the appalling state of Arabia only fifty years after Muhammad's death (Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammadin wa Ali Muhammad) - the corruption of Yazid, and the corruption of the scholars of that time. And I remembered a saying I had read somewhere: "Every day is Ashura and every land is Karbala."

I thought deeply about the issues my reading had raised, and became convinced that it was my duty, as a Muslim, to follow Ahl ul-Bayt - for that was clearly the wish of the Holy Prophet (Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammadin wa Ali Muhammad) who was revealing the will of Allah, which as a Muslim I must submit to.

There were simply no rational arguments against the beliefs of the followers of Ahl ul-Bayt, since it seemed to me that these beliefs not only expressed what was reasonable, and logical, but were also based on the teachings of the Holy Prophet himself (Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammadin wa Ali Muhammad).

So it was that I tried to find my Shi'a brother. I found a name similar to his in the telephone directory of the city where I knew he lived, and telephoned. A fax machine answered, so I sent a brief fax, asking him to contact me, not knowing whether he would ever receive it.

Alhamdulillah, the fax machine belonged to his Uncle and less than a week later I was with him, and the Imam, at his local Masjid, affirming that 'Ali (Alayhi salaam) was the rightful successor of the Prophet (Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammadin wa Ali Muhammad).

By Brother Muhammad Yusuf

19 Jumaada al-Thaani 1420