

# Differences between shiite and sunni muslims



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The religion Islam was founded by Mohammed (peace be upon him) in the 7th century. In 622, he founded the first Islamic land, a theocracy in Medina, a city in western Saudi Arabia located in the north of Makkah. According to Huda, an Islamic scholar, " The word " Sunni" in Arabic comes from a word meaning " one who follows the traditions of the Prophet. ". Most Muslims believe that " leadership should have stayed within the Prophet's own family [the Quraish tribe], among those specifically appointed by him, or among Imams appointed by God Himself."

On the other hand, the Shiite group believes " that following the Prophet Muhammad's death, leadership should have passed straight away to his cousin/son-in-law, " Ali". " (Huda, pg. 1) Moreover, according to Blanchard, a Middle East foreign affairs analyst, " the majority of the world's Muslim population follows the Sunni branch of Islam and approximately 10-15% of all Muslims follow the Shiite (Shi'ite, Shi'a, Shia) branch". (Blanchard, P, 1) Shiite populations constitute a majority in, Azerbaijan, Bahrain Iraq, and Iran. Furthermore, Shiite populations constitute a minority in, Kuwait, Syria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Yemen and Afghanistan. Shiites and Sunnis share most fundamental religious tenets. Nevertheless, their dissimilarities sometimes have been the basis of political & religious fighting and sectarian violence.

## **Differences between Shiite and Sunni**

The differences between Sunni and Shiite are initially ideological, not political . Over the hundreds of decades; these ideological differences have spawned a number of deviating practices and positions which have come to carry an ideological significance.

A major difference between Shiite and Sunnis dates back to the death of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and the question arose who was to take over the leadership of the Muslim country. Sunnis agree with the position taken by almost all of the Prophet's companions that the new leader should be chosen from among those capable of the work. This is what was actually done, and (Hazrat) Abu Bakr, the Prophet's close friend and advisor became the first Caliph of the Islamic country.

The Shiite group says that caliphate should have been handed over to (Hazrat) Ali, the Prophet's cousin and close companion who later became the fourth Caliph. Another major difference between Shiites and Sunnis has to do with " Imam Mahdi", " the rightly-guided one" whose responsibility is to bring a just, worldwide caliphate into being. " The major difference is that for Shi`is he has already been here, and will return from hiding; for Sunnis he has yet to emerge into history: a comeback v. a coming out, if you will. " (HNN Staff, n. p. )

According to Shiites, Imam is sinless by nature, and that his authority is infallible as it comes directly from the God. Hence, those belonging to Shiite sect venerate the Imams as saints and perform pilgrimages on their graves and shrines in the hopes of divine intercession On the other hand, Sunni Muslims believe that there is no root in Islam for a hereditary honored class of spiritual leaders, and obviously, no basis for the veneration of saints. Sunni Muslims believe that leadership of the community is not a birthright, but a faith that is earned and which may be given or taken away by the individuals themselves.

Shiites also believe in animosity towards some of the companions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), based on their actions during the early years of discord about headship in the community. These companions include (Hazrat) Umar, (Hazrat) Aisha, (Hazrat) Abu Bakr, and so on. The first four caliphs as the rightful successors of Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) have taken place as the leaders of Muslim Ummah, which has been believed by the Sunni branch. Recognition of legitimate religious leaders has been given to the heirs of the four caliphs.

The Arab world has continuously been ruled by these heirs until the Ottoman Empire broke up after the end of the First World War. Shiites, on the other hand believe that only the heirs of the 4th caliph, (Hazrat) Ali, are the legitimate successors of Mohammed (peace be upon him). In 931, the 12th Imam disappeared. This was a seminal event in the history of Shiites. " According to Loeffler Shiite say that Amir al-Mu'minin is the viceregent and successor of the Prophet. The Sunni say that the successors to the Prophet are Abu Bakr, Umar, and 'Uthman". (Loeffler, P, 39).

The fourth caliph of the Prophet has been considered Ali by them. " Shiism has repeatedly split into smaller sects. The main branch, the " Twelvers," believe in 12 imams who linked God and man after Muhammad's death.

To Sunnis, he was the last of the prophets". (The War within Islam, p, 2) Similar beliefs of Shiite and Sunni It is significant to remember that in spite of all of these differences in belief and practice, Shiite and Sunni groups share the main articles of Islamic principle. Some say that some Muslims do not differentiate themselves by claiming membership in any particular group or sect.

However, they give preference to call themselves simply Muslims. According to Terrill “ Shi'ites, like other Muslims, believe in the Koran as well as the documented sayings and traditions of the Prophet Mohammad adhered to by Sunni Muslims.

Nevertheless, and despite some contrary Shi'ite claims, there are important differences in doctrine. ” (Terrill, p, 3) “ Shia's share same beliefs as Sunnis one God; Muhammad as prophet; day of judgment; and life after death”. (Divisions within Islam, p, 3) They also confess that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was the messenger of God “ Allah”.

In Islam, all Muslims are supposed to live in accordance with the 5 pillars of “ faith”: shahada (testimony), salat (prayers), saum (fasting), hajj (pilgrimage) and zakat (almsgiving). However, there are ideological differences regarding zakat in Sunnis and Shiites.

In addition, in between the two groups according to Knapp, Shiites and Sunnis “ agree, in terms of just cause, that jihad applies to the defense of territory, life, faith, and property; it is justified to repel invasion or its threat; it is necessary to guarantee freedom for the spread of Islam; and that difference in religion alone is not a sufficient cause” (Knapp, p, 82+)

According to Dekmejian, “ messianic notion-mahdism has received greater theological significance among the shittes , it is also a part of the Sunni belief system, as embedded in about fifty traditions (ahadith) in an unbroken chain of authority”. (Dekmejian, p, 64) Attacks of 9/11 and Difficulties for Muslims in New York According to Dr Shahid Sheikh, “ Muslim families in New York City face unique problems in addition to those driving up homelessness

citywide and beyond". (Sheikh, p, 4) There are over 600, 000 Muslims living in New York City, more than 7. 5% of the population.

About 12% of students attending New York City's public schools are Muslim. In New York City, a large percentage of the immigrant population is represented by Muslims. In the New York City, every third immigrant is the Muslim, and Muslims comprise of approximately sixteen percent of total foreign-born population of the New York City. Over forty different countries have been the destinations and origin countries of Muslim immigrants who are residing in New York City. In this regard, various social, cultural, and historical diversities have been brought in the city by these immigrants.

Some of the regions are West Africa, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Middle East, Central Asia, etc. Since the incident of 9/11, suffering has been confronted by 1. 2 billion Muslims in the world. The name of Islam has been used for carrying out the crimes by extremists;

Muslims have observed the prosecution of war by non-Muslim armies. It was pointed out by liberals that while terrorism has not been done by all Muslims, all terrorists are followers of Islam. On the other hand, it has been argued by terrorists that most of the victims are the Muslims. Extreme pressures on Muslim people are the result of this argument from different people.

In the result, injury to the Muslim people has been emphasized recently. However, the reason of the occurrence of these injuries has not been mentioned in the emphasis. " Sept. 11 altered the course of Muslim life in America. Mosques were vandalized. Hate crimes rose. Deportation proceedings began against thousands of men. Some Muslims changed their names to avoid job discrimination, making Mohammed " Moe," and Osama "

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Sam. " Scores of families left for Canada". (Elliott, n. p. ) " Within weeks of 9/11 and the al-Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Centre's Twin Towers, all talk turned to terrorists and their possible connections with Islam.

As a result, New York's 600, 000 Muslims found themselves suddenly under the eye of suspicion". (New York Muslims Cope with Life in a Changed Society, p, 2) At the sprawling Manhattan mosque, one of the several clerics, Imam Shamsi Ali, told that a lot of change has been observed in many things.

In this regard, two perspectives of Islam have been brought in the New York City, that is, the negative, and the positive perspective. People are being reached out by us for their better understanding regarding the Islam, and the variation in their perceived understanding of the religion, which might be different from the real one.

The Muslim community is now going through a kind of fear. However, self-confidence regarding Islam and community trust has also been learned through fear. In the Muslim work, political environment was changed by the incident of the 911. In this regard, dynamics driving changes have been examined by this study, which has considered the political-religious situations of the Muslim world.

Firstly, a typology of ideological tendencies in various regions has been developed by it. Religious views are not the only difference between the Muslims, but political and social orientation of the Muslims has also been responsible for the gap among them.

Secondly, the main cleavages, that is, the Sunni and Shi'a branches, have been explored by it. In addition, the difference between the Arab and non-Arab Muslim worlds has also been analyzed during the paper. It was also found in the study that the Sunni branch comprises most of the Muslims. Conclusion Conclusively, this paper has tried to define, examine, analyze, and differentiate between Shiites and Sunnis. In the introduction, the origin and history of Islam was studied that Mohammed (peace be upon him) founded Islam in the 7th century.

As already been discussed, it was indicated that majority of the Muslim population comprises of the Sunni Muslims. Over the hundreds of decades, these ideological differences have spawned a number of deviating practices and positions, which have come to carry an ideological significance.

The concept of Imam Mahdi was also studied and examined in the paper. On the other hand, the paper also examined similarities shared by Sunnis and Shiites. Oneness of the God, the Prophecy of Muhammad (peace be upon him), etc. are some of the similarities. In this regard, this study will help people in understanding Islam in a proper way.