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Deconstructing Imagined Lines: Babism

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ABSTRACT

The islamic faith has been known to be divided into numerous sectors within themselves, so much so that it has traversed into the realm of the imagined. In our study of how the effects of supernaturalism linger on the ordinary as well as best of minds, we came across a sect that walked on the thick line of contradictions and had to be hammered down with the method of deconstruction. The aim of the paper is to align the canonical islamic texts and thoughts with that of the Babism sect, and with deconstructive methods find out why this sector had such a short run and it's claims which took inspiration from the imagined made its way yet to the Iranian tribunal meetings.

The deconstructive method inspired by Jacques Derrida shall allow us to do a close reading and analysis of this faith without ourselves divulging into biases. By the end of the paper, we will have established the effect that the unseen may have on our minds, that divinity will always be sought even in mortality and that sectarianism may hold on its values of finding the real interpretive truth but all divisions are not enlightened ideas but claims of heretics and the influenced.

Keywords: Islam, Babism, Deconstruction, Imagination, Iran, Verses.

Babism is a faith that originated from the Shi'ite counterpart of the Islamic religion. We have for our purposes, chose to expound on this subject to reveal the power of the prophecy branch of supernaturalism, the unseen world and how one can alter established notions when diverted by shaky beliefs, influenced by vague interpretations of texts, grounded on the fact that one cannot question as they are based on just prophecies and not substantiating proofs.

The word Babism comes from the root word, 'Bab' meaning gate. The two Islamic beliefs that is shared by all branches of the faith that we shall be focusing on are: that the Quran remains unaltered, and is supported by even prominent Shi'ite leaders such as 'Muhammad Babawayh' and 'Abū Ja'far Muḥammad Ibn Ḥasan Tūsī' and the other being, that there shall come an imam by the name Mahdi who shall lead forces from the Khorosan region, "*When you see them, pledge your allegiance to them, even if you have to crawl over snow, for that is the caliph of Allah, Mahdi.*" (Ibn Majah Vol.5 Book 36, 4084) to eradicate the false messiah along with

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those who use Islam to suit their wrongful means, agendas and spread propagandas.

The Prophet Muhammad said: The Mahdi will be of my stock, and will have a broad forehead a prominent nose. He will fill the earth with equity and justice as it was filled with oppression and tyranny, and he will rule for seven years. (Abi Dawud Hadith 4285)

The Shi'ite belief differs on the fact that they believe that Imam Mahdi existed in the world and disappeared in around 874 A.D and therefore is titled as 'The Hidden Imam'. Therein begins the concept of the twelve imams (twelfth being Mahdi) and the thought that after the fourth imam who died in 940, gave rise to the period of occultation (ghayba), meaning that the imams to come shall only appear now in dire times of need. Here lies the many ways to bring out contradictions from the ideas that are to emerge such as Babism. Babism used this power of occultation to derive different means. Babism began with 'The Shaykhi movement' which is a link between Shi'ism and Babism. The Shaykhi belief originates through 'Shaykh Ahmad', and the major difference in idea he proposes is that God, or here, Allah may be the best of creators but is just one of the creators, to back the claim that the Caliph Ali is also the creator of heavens and earth. This claim contradicts the Quran very clearly as it states: "*Indeed I am Allah. There is no God except Me, so worship Me and establish prayer for my remembrance*" (Quran 20:14). Secondly, the Shaykhis believe in the concept of religious innovation, while it is clearly stated in the Hadiths "*Muhammad says: Every innovation is misguidance and going astray*" (Sunan Abi Dawud Hadith 4607). Now, how does Babism come into play? On the death of Shaykh Ahmad, 'Sayyid Kazim' became the leader of the community, and he along with his disciple, 'Mulla Husayn Bushruyih' began to spread their new doctrines. The Shias had always respected the Hidden Imams and some even went on to search for them, one such person was Mulla Husayn, who during his travels had come across Shiraz in 1844 and met a certain figure reported to have been wearing a green turban and provided hospitality to him. His name was 'Ali Muhammad' and when he was described the features of who the Bab, the gate to the twelfth imam may look like, he claimed to be the one, and was accepted by Mulla Husayn merely on the basis that he could write the commentary on the Surah Joseph or Yusuf, nonchalantly. But there again lies two very distinct contradictions. The Islamic faith promotes the study of religion to the point that many scholars and even students have throughout time been capable of writing commentaries and detailed analysis of the Quran and Hadiths, and yet they claim no such heretic views. The other contradiction lies in the claim itself by Ali Muhammad, who first says that he is the deputy or the gateway to the imam Mahdi (*Hidayat 1960, X*) and then later in a government tribunal, which generally is set up for corporations and

matter of supercedding powers, sat in 1847, where it is told to the *ulamas* or scholars sitting in the tribunal committee that he is Imam Mahdi himself (*Browne 1891, 20*) and is ironically accepted by a whole state. Lastly, the point that needs to be asserted is that the coming of Imam Mahdi in the Islamic religion is the onset of the Doomsday or the end of the world, and it should have been followed by a reign of around seven years and battles that should have ended evil and treachery alongside the second coming of Jesus or Isa, but none of these things have taken place in the last 170 years since the faith of Babism originated and slowly dissipated.

The traditions of al-Mustafa (S) on the rising of al-Mahdi has been transmitted via numerous authorities and is more than the level of (being sufficient for) Mutawatir, describing that he is of his Ahlul-Bayt, and will fill the earth with justice, and that Jesus (as) will come at the same time and he will assist Jesus for killing al-Dajjal in the land of Palestine, and that he will lead this nation and Jesus will pray behind him. (Al-Haytami 1875, 254)

After bringing forth numerous contradictions and facts, the question remains why such a faith still exists, be it among just a few followers. The answer lies in the realm that needs no support, whose effects can clearly be seen upon Ali Muhammad, who neglected or rejected the grounding doctrines of the faith he was born in and focused on the aspects of prophecies which cannot be logically questioned or doubted. He influenced people by simple straightforward claims, fulfilling the desire of Mulla Hasayn and his quest of finding the Hidden Imam (*Browne 1891, 241*). The people in their ignorance or one may call it as rigidity, refused to view things from a clearer perspective, for the realm of supernaturalism has the power to sway minds, impacting generations, such that the scientific temperament and clear doctrines or religious mindsets can be influenced heavily by prophecies and other such elements.

The paper has established the impact of supernaturalism on religion, to finally provide foundations on how this world of the unseen needs no support or backing and shall continue to impact no matter the advancement of technology or the evolution of logical and rational thought in times to come. The deconstructive method has helped us to closely analyse and lay clearly the facts of texts that had been clearly not only neglected but diverted to a point that it went towards the imaginary than what remains as real.

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