

A study on various types of Sa'b Mustas'ab Hadiths and identification of their bearers

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Abstract: Among hadiths narrated from Shiite Imams (PBUH) in hadith sources are sa'b mustas'ab hadiths. Such hadiths usually cover extra-terrestrial attributes of infallible Imams, and may not be borne by anyone but special ones who were introduced by Imams (PBUTH) as the bearers of such hadiths. This paper tried first to study the meaning of hadith sa'b mustas'ab, and then to identify such hadiths, and their carried.

Key words: Hadith; Sa'b, mustas'ab; Clarification; Bearers

1. Introduction

According to some Muslims, the Quran, as the constitution of Islam, has clarified most generalities, but it has been left to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Ahl al-Bayt (PBUTH) to clarify details and particular points. Therefore, after the Quran, hadiths narrated from them are the most important source from which to obtain knowledge of Islam. And, some hadiths that introduce some specific attributes of the infallibles are categorized as "sa'b mustas'ab" hadiths, which may not be borne by anyone but companions of Ahl al-Bayt.

Since most verses of the Quran are brief discussions, clarification of such brief discussions was in the first place the duty of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), as the Quran says, "(We sent them) with Clear Signs and Books of dark prophecies; and We have sent down unto thee (also) the Message; that thou mayest explain clearly to men what is sent for them, and that they may give thought" (The Holy Quran, 16: 44).

Given clarification means making clear, describing, and explaining, the said verse indicates that the words of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) constitute authority as regards clarification and interpretation of the Quran, because clarification of divine commandments was one of the duties of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and on a higher level, is the right of him, and suits his position. And, as Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, on next levels, such position has been considered for Imam Ali (PBUH) as well.

As stated in Qadir Sermon,

"O people! Reflect on the Quran and comprehend its verses. Look into its muhkam (clear) verses and do not follow its mutashabih (ambiguous) parts, for

by Allah, none shall be able to explain to you its warnings and its mysteries, nor shall anyone clarify its interpretation, other than the one that I have grasped his hand, brought up beside myself (and lifted his arm), the one about whom I inform you that whomever I am his master, this Ali is his master (Mawla); and he is Ali Ibn Abi Talib, my brother, the executor of my will (Wasiyyi), whose appointment as your guardian and leader has been sent down to me from Allah, the mighty and the majestic" (Ihtijaj, 1982).

However, such position has been considered for other Imams (PBUTH) as well. Examples include:

Imam Ali (PBUH) said, "Imam is the head of Islam, the perfect believer, has knowledge of divine commandments, separates what is prohibited from what is allowed. Such position may not be attained unless by one who is chosen and prioritized by the God for such position, one who has been granted authority to do so by the God" (Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 1982).

As one addresses Imam Zaman (PBUH) in ziyarat Al-Yasin,

"Hail to thee who read and interpret (the verses of the God)".

Then, hadiths from Ahl al-Bayt (PBUTH) inherited by Shiite communities in fact constitute one of the two weighty things that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) left for Islamic community, so that they could resort to them for seeking guidance.

And, given audience of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and infallible Imams (PBUTH) had different levels of knowledge, they spoke to them based on such different understanding, as a hadith from Imam Sadiq (PBUH) reads, "Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) never said his deepest thoughts to people. He used to say, "We, messenger prophets, are commissioned to say to people only as much as they can understand" (Usul Kafi, 1986).

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Among many hadiths from infallibles (PBUTH), they are hadiths in which specific attributes of Imams and Imam's knowledge of the God are discussed. Such hadiths, according to infallibles (PBUTH), are composed of sa'b mustas'ab words.

Such hadiths, which usually concern introduction of Imams (PBUTH) as proof of the God, try to go beyond apparent attributes to inner attributes of Imam (PBUH), and so, they lead the audience to the hidden aspects, which are impossible to understand thoroughly. For this reason, it can be said that such hadiths fall within "sa'b mustas'ab" hadiths. One of such hadiths is hadith Tariq Bin Shihab, in which Imam Ali (PBUH) describes attributes of Imam, and to some extent, reveals the inner and esoteric attributes of Imam. This hadith is found on page 169 of volume 25 of Bihar al-Anwar, and also on page 209 of Anwar al-Yaqin fi Haqayiq Asrar Amir al-Mu'minin.

Before proceeding to examples of "sa'b mustas'ab hadith", literal and technical meanings of hadith, sa'b and mustas'ab are discussed here.

2. Hadith

2.1. Literal meaning

First, the literal and technical meaning of the term "hadith" is discussed, and then, a brief explanation about clarifiers and audience of hadith is provided.

"Hadith" is derived from "hadatha" or "huduth", which means occurrence and emergence (Mu'jam al-Wasit, 1993). According to Majma' al-Bahrain, hadith is synonymous with kalaam (words) and it is called hadith because it is being renewed and created anew on an ongoing basis (Majma' al-Bahrain, 1996).

2.2. Technical meaning

Sunni and Shiite scholars define hadith in two different ways. According to Shiites, as Allama Mamaqani said, hadith refers to "Words narrating qawl (words), fi'l (action) or taqrir (inaction) of Prophet Muhammad and Imams" (Miqbas al-hidayah, Mamaqani).

According to such definition, a piece of words is not hadith unless it covers qawl, fi'l or taqrir of Prophet Muhammad and Ahl al-Bayt.

However, according to Sunnis, hadith refers to "A piece of words that covers qawl, fi'l or taqrir of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and/or one of his companions or tabi'in. And, for the purpose of distinguishing between these two types, they call the words that narrate qawl, fi'l or taqrir of companions and tabi'in as athar" (Usul al-hadith wa ahkamih, 2004).

Literal Meaning

"sa'b" as a verb means to become abstinent, or to become extreme and unbearable (Al-Ayn, 1988); and as a noun, is the opposite of domestic animal, and refers to everything that is unbearable (Mu'jam

maqayis al-luqah, 1983). It is used in the same sense in Lisan al-Arab as well (Lisan al-Arab, 1993).

Mustas'ab as an intransitive verb means to become hard and to become unbearable (Al-Masabih al-Munir, 1993); and as a noun, refers to everything that is unsuitable; and therefore, it has the same meaning as sa'b (Al-Ayn, 1988). However, in some references, it is considered to be intensive form of sa'b, and another group of references has considered sa'b as referring to what is unbearable in itself, and mustas'ab as what people consider to be unbearable (Mir'at al-uqul, 1993).

Instances of the use of mustas'ab by infallibles (PBUTH)

2.3. Hadiths from prophet Muhammad (PBUTH)

Among instances of the use of "sa'b mustas'ab" in the words from infallibles (PBUTH), which is known as "Hadith Aal-e Muhammad", is the hadith from Imam Muhammad Baqir (PBUH), who quoted Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as:

"Hadith Aal-e Muhammad is sa'b mustas'ab, and nobody comes to believe it but the heavenly angles, Prophet or the servant whose has successfully passed the God's test of faith. Then, accept every hadith from Ahl al-Bayt, which gives you peace of mind, and looks familiar; and return to the God, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Aal-e Muhammad (PBUTH) every hadiths that your hearts denied and found unfamiliar; indeed, ruined is one who denies a hadith, and who says, "by the God, it is not true", when he cannot bear it, and [certainly] denial amounts to disbelief" (Usul Kafi, 1986).

Above hadith states that one of instances of "sa'b mustas'ab" is "hadith" Aal-e Muhammad. Now, given the literal and technical meaning of hadith provided above, two conclusions can be drawn:

1 - Some hadiths from Ahl al-Bayt fall within category of "sa'b mustas'ab hadiths", as Imam Ali (PBUH) considered his words as being "sa'b mustas'ab".

When Imam Ali (PBUH) was sitting among a number of his companions in a mosque, his companions asked him, "Speak to us". Imam Ali said, "Woe to you, my words are indeed mustas'ab, and nobody but ulama' can understand them" (Bihar al-anwar, 1982).

"Kalaam (words) is the plural form of kalamah (word), and refers to the words arranged in sequence, and are perceived by a faculty, that is, the faculty of hearing" (Mufradat, 1991).

2 - It is "sa'b mustas'ab" to speak about infallibles (PBUTH).

2.4. Amr Aal-e Muhammad (PBUTH)

Another instance of "sa'b mustas'ab", as referred to in the words from infallibles (PBUTH) is the term "amr" (order, command, instruction).

There are hadiths from Imam Ali (PBUH) in this regard included in Bihar al-Anwar, the likes of which

are also narrated from Imam Sadiq (PBUH) in Basa'ir al-darajaat, as follows:

"Our (Ahl al-Bayt's) amr is sa'b mustas'ab" (Bihar al-anwar, 1982).

Amr literally means order, command and instruction (Qamus al-Quran,); and is opposite of enjoinder (Al-Ayn, 1988); also, "amr" is defined as an affair of people's affairs (Mu'jam al-maqayis, 1983). In Majma' al-bahrain, amr is used to rank and position" (Majma' al-bahrain, 1996).

Given the above said meanings of the term "amr",

1) Orders and commands of Ahl al-Bayt (PBUTH) are instances of "sa'b mustas'ab", because in many cases, the audience must give up his opinions, and do as they say, and this is a very hard task. An instance of it is hadith from Imam Sadiq (PBUH) included in Usul Kafi, in which Imam said to Aban Bin Taqlib, "You owe your Muslim brother half of your property", and later in the hadith, Imam said that the God has referred to people who prefer others to themselves, "but give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot)" (the Holy Quran, 59: 9); Imam also said, "If you give half of your property to your Muslim brother, you have still not preferred him over yourself, you prefer him over yourself only when you give him another half of your property as well" (Usul Kafi, 1986).

There are many hadiths covering religious orders and commandments from Ahl al-Bayt. However, among such commandments, some are so hard to perform, which can be fulfilled only by few believers who have learned the levels of purification of soul and abandonment of earthly attachments and desires in the school of Ahl al-Bayt, and applied such learning in practice. Thus, such orders and commandments are "sa'b mustas'ab" orders for many believers.

2) Rank and position of Imam (PBUH) is an instance of "sa'b mustas'ab", that is, position of imamate and guardianship is that Imam (PBUH). According to a hadith from Imam Reza (PBUH), position of Imam is that imamate and guardianship (Tuhfa al-Uqul, 1984); also, Imam Ali (PBUH) said in Hadith Nuraniyah, "My position of guardianship is very a very hard and difficult one".

2.5. Knowledge of Ulama

In many hadiths from Imams (PBUTH), they are called the treasury of divine knowledge and secrets, treasury of Quranic knowledge, the source of wisdom, reviver of knowledge, killer of ignorance, inheritor of messenger prophets, and the like. Some of such hadiths are provided below:

Imam Sadiq (PBUH) said, "We, Ahl al-Bayt (PBUTH), are the authority of the God, treasury of the God's knowledge, and treasury of divine revelation" (Al-Kafi, 1986).

In another hadith, Imam Ali (PBUH) said, "Indeed, the whole knowledge is held by all Imams, and is not held by anyone but them" (Kitab Salim Bin Qays al-Hilali, 1984).

Also, Imam Sadiq said, "I swear by the God that we hold the knowledge of the Quran" (Majma' al-bayan fi tafsir al-Quran, 1993).

Infallible Imams (PBUTH) favored some of their companions, teaching them their knowledge based on their qualifications. Such companions obtained part of the knowledge of Imams (PBUTH), as Imam Baqir said, "Salman indeed became one of Ulama" (Basa'ir al-darajaat, 1983).

Since not everyone is capable of comprehending and understanding such knowledge, and since Salman obtained part of such knowledge within his limits, therefore, it can be said that receiving such knowledge for other people like Abudhar was also hard. Therefore, Imams (PBUTH) are instances of sa'b mustas'ab.

Imam Sadiq (PBUH) said, "One day when I was with Ali (PBUH), Imam Ali (PBUH) said regarding taqiyya, "If Abudhar had known what was in the heart of Salman, Salman would have been killed by him, let what would other people have done if they know what was on Salman's mind; yet, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had established a relationship of brotherhood between them (Salman and Abudhar). Indeed, knowledge of ulama is sa'b mustas'ab, and nobody but heavenly archangels, messenger prophets or believer servants whose faith has successfully passed the God's test of faith may not bear such knowledge". He then added, "Salman thus became one of ulama, he is one of us and for this reason I mentioned him as one of ulama" (Usul Kafi, 1996).

Allama Majlisi wrote in explanation of the above hadith, "What is in the hear of Salman refers to high levels of the God's and Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) knowledge; issues of qadha and qadar and the like are so complex that if Salman shared them with Abudhar, Abudhar would accuse him of making false statements and irtidad, and so would sentence him to death, or he would tell them to other people, and then, other people would kill Salman" (Mir'at al-uqul, 1983).

As Salman said in his sermon, "A large amount of knowledge has been endowed to me, if I shared with you all what I know, a group will call me insane and another will say, "May the God bless the murderer of Salman".

It can be seen from hadith regarding knowledge of ulama that such knowledge is very much different from knowledge as we know it, and since such knowledge is merely held by special people, as evidenced by hadith that reads, "Salman is one of us Ahl al-Bayt".

3. Bearers of Sa'b Mustas'ab

As said earlier, not all people are capable of (tahammul) bearing "sa'b mustas'ab" hadiths, therefore, before proceeding to discussion of hamils of "sa'b mustas'ab", literal and technical meaning of the term "tahammul" must be provided.

3.1. Literal meaning

The term tahammul is derived from the term haml, which refers to bear load on one's back. However, metaphorically, it is used in case of pregnant women, in the sense that I put that load on her, and then she bore it, was patient with respect to it, and carried it (Mufradat al-fazl Quran, 1991).

3.2. Technical meaning

For the purpose of defining the technical meaning of tahammul, reference can be made to a hadith from Imam Sadiq (PBUH), which reads,

"Bearing our command is not limited to acceptance thereof, but it also includes hiding it, protecting it from those who cannot bear it, God bless the servant who makes people love us, who explains to people what he understands, and hides from them what he denies" (Masabih al-anwar, 1993).

Having described literal and technical meaning of the term "tahammul", now the term "bearers of sa'b mustas'ab" must be defined according to Imams (PBUTH). A hadith from Imam Sadiq reads, "Our hadith is hard to bear, and no body can bear it except archangels, messenger prophets, the servant who has successfully passed the God's test of faith, or is "medina hassinah", one whose heart is inscribed with faith by the God, one whose heart is illuminated or pure, and one who has good morals" (Kafi, 1986).

According to above hadith, there are eight groups of creatures who can bear sa'b mustas'ab hadiths:

1 - Heavenly archangels. According to hadiths, Gabriel was one of archangels (Thawab al-a'mal wa iqab al-a'mal, 1995).

2 - Messenger prophets, which refers to all prophets sent by the God to people.

3 - Believer who has successfully passed the God's test of faith and his heart is pure (Hadith Nuraniyat, Bihar al-anwar, 1982).

4 - People who are called by Imam (PBUH) as Medina Hasinah. Imam was asked about the meaning of this expression, to which he replied, "It refers to a heart that is not distract, the heart that is concentrated, and focused on the words of the God and Ahl al-Bayt" (Khisal, 1983).

5 - People whose heart is inscribed with faith by the God.

6 - Hearts illuminated with the light of guidance.

7 - Pure hearts, that is, hearts that are free from doubt, polytheism, and dissension.

8 - People who have good morals.

In another hadith, Imam Sadiq (PBUH) particularly referred to a group of people who are bearers of "sa'b mustas'ab".

Imam Sadiq (PBUH) said, "Indeed, our hadith is hard, difficult, honorable, noble, and burning, it cannot be carried by heavenly archangels, messenger prophets, or believers who successfully passed the God's test of faith", the narrator then said, "Who can receive it then?", to which Imam replied, "Only those who we want to be able to do so"; narrator of the hadith then said, I thought there are

servants to the God, who are better than these three groups" (Bihar al-anwar, 1982).

Given the above hadith, it can be said that such group comprises people who are specially favored by Imams (PBUTH), and so are privileged over other groups.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, "sa'b mustas'ab" hadith was studied literally and technically; and given Imams (PBUTH) have referred to instances of "sa'b mustas'ab", such instances were generally discussed. Also, bearers of such hadiths were discussed based on hadiths. In the end, it can be said that "sa'b mustas'ab" hadith" are hadiths that usually cover extra-terrestrial attributes of Imam (PBUH), and take the form of hadith, commandment, or even Imam's knowledge. However, nobody can bear such commands except ones who are introduced by Imams (PBUTH) to have such ability.

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