

An introduction to the hadith of tariq ibn shihab

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Abstract: Among important hadiths in which Imam Ali (PBUH) described the qualities of Imam is Hadith Tariq Ibn Shihab. In this hadith, Imam (PBUH) described his attributes and personality, and introduced all qualities of imam using his specific terms and expressions. Given the expressions Imam Ali (PBUH) used in this hadith to describe Imam, this hadith can be considered as a sa'b mustas'ab hadith.

Key words: *Imam; Hadith tariq; Introduction; Shiite; Sa'b mustas'ab (unbearable)*

1. Introduction

During the history of Islam, many scholars, researchers, writers, poets, etc. have wrote about the attributes, virtues, and rank of infallible imams (PBUTH). However, these writings have been based on the knowledge and love of writer with respect to Imams (PBUTH), rather than true knowledge of them, as prophets' knowledge of prophets is very little, compared with Imam's (PBUH) knowledge, as they say, "Rank of Ahl al-Bayt is beyond description", it is clear that no one can describe and put into words the true personality of infallible imam (PBUH).

According to Shiite system of thought, the discussion of knowledge of imam is one of the most important divine teachings, and every single Muslim is bound to acquire such knowledge as much as his rational and scientific ability allows him. Although Sunni's knowledge of imam is not rooted in their religious and ideological principles, but in social and historical requirements, Sunni scholars have unanimously held that principle of requirement of knowledge of Imam is a necessary principle. Generally, they believe that after appointment of imam by others, Islamic nation is required to know him because his holding of the government, whether by the involvement of people, or by the order of preceding ruler, or even by use of force, has been recognized. They do not consider imams (PBUTH) to be infallible, and do not believe that imam must be superior to other people in terms of knowledge or virtues. They consider imam to be a fallible person, who must repent his faults before the God, and who must asks for people's apology for his faults. However, according to Shiite system of thought, imam has a very high rank, and therefore, everyone is bound to obtain knowledge of imam so that they

could attain the real well-being by acting based on their knowledge of imamate.

It is clearly seen from hadiths of Ahl al-Bayt (PBUTH) that knowledge of imams (PBUTH) is very important. For instance, Zurarah said to Imam Sadiq (PBUH), "What deed is the second best deed after obtaining knowledge of the God", to which Imam replied, "The best deed after obtaining knowledge of the God is prayer, followed by zakat, fasting, and Hajj". Imam then added, "Knowledge of us, Ahl al-Bayt, stands at the beginning and end of all of these" (al-Amali, Tusi).

This is also evidenced by the precious words of Imam Ali (PBUH) who said, "The expression "There is no god but Allah" has conditions, among which are me and my progeny" (Qurar al-hikam wa durar al-kilam).

This noble hadith best elucidates the high rank of imam and imamate and the reason why people are unable to comprehend the real position of imam; according to interpretation of this hadith, acceptance of "There is no god but Allah" said by a person is subject to acceptance of imamate of Imam Ali (PBUH) and his progeny, therefore, whoever challenges such imamate is not accepted as a monotheist and is thus a polytheist (Commentary by Aga Jamal Khansari on Qurar al-Hikam wa durar al-kilam).

Given the above said, high rank of hadiths with subject of knowledge from infallibles (PBUTH) is clear, and the necessity to study such hadiths is quite clear. Hadith Tariq is one of such hadiths, which discusses the necessity of knowledge of imam, and his unique rank, as the most important function of the text and its content is nothing but to provide insight into rank of imam and imamate.

Sermon of Tariq Ibn Shihab

As said earlier, one of hadiths with subject of knowledge, which describes the qualities of imam is hadith narrated from Imam Ali (PBUH), known as

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"Hadith Tariq Ibn Shihab". In this hadith, Imam Ali (PBUH) addresses one of his companions named Tariq Ibn Shihab, describing qualities and ranks of imam.

Given the discussion of sa'b mustas'ab hadith (see paper titled "An introduction to sa'b mustas'ab hadith" published in WALIA Journal on 18/12/2014), it can be said that this hadith is among sa'b mustas'ab hadiths, in which Imam Ali (PBUH) described qualities of imam (PBUH).

2. Biography of Tariq Ibn Shihab

Tariq was son of Abd Shams, who was son of Salmah Ahmasi Bijli Kufi. He died at the age of 82 in 702 (Rijal Ibn Davud). Given this, his date of birth can be said to be one year after Hijra.

Also, Qais Ibn Muslim (a contemporary of Tariq) said, "I heard Tariq said, "I saw Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and took part in the battles during Abu Bakr and Umar.

According to some biographical books, he was from Kufa, and a close companion of Imam Ali (Rijal Sheikh Tusi) (Rijal Ibn Davud).

However, according to Barqi, he was from Yemen (Rijal al-Barqi).

Studied of historical and biographical books did not provide any further information about him.

3. Chain of narration

Given this is included as a mursal hadith in Mashariq al-Anwar al-Yaqin fi Haqayiq Asrar Amir al-Mu'mini, and other books like Bihar al-Anwar quoted hadiths from this book as authority, and also, the fact that Allamah Majlisi said he had narrated no mursal from Hafiz Rajab, therefore, when Allamah narrated this hadith in volume 25 of Bihar al-Anwar, this hadith cannot be mursal. Also, just because a hadith is narrated as mursal without chain of narration, it does not mean that that hadith is weak and unreliable, as many hadiths are found in books by scholars that are mursal, but have been accepted as reliable following some modifications. On the other hand, the criterion of acceptance of a hadith is its consistence with the Qur'an and well-established sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and imams (PBUTH); as evidenced by a hadith from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) saying, "If a hadith is inconsistent with the Qur'an, it is certainly not from me" (Bihar al-Anwar).

Another way to verify a hadith is to compare it with other relevant hadiths, and the relevant verses of the Qur'an, which is one of the best ways to verify mursal hadiths.

4. Study of the text of hadith Tariq

Exalted themes of this hadith are consistent with other hadiths from infallibles (PBUTH), and similar or even the same such themes are found in other hadiths.

Among such hadiths is a Hadith from Imam Reza (PBUH), which is known as hadith Marv (Uyun Imam Reza). This hadith also describes qualities of Imam, and share many themes of Hadith Tariq. There are many other such hadiths narrated in shiite hadith and exegetic books, which are mentioned here. It is only said here that in al-Kafi, there are many chapters on qualities of imams, which contain many hadiths.

Since this hadith is about knowledge of imam (PBUH), first the literal and technical meaning of the term imam is discussed here.

5. Literal meaning

The term "imam" is derived from "amm", which means intending (al-Tahqiq fi Kalamat al-Qur'an). According to dictionaries, this term refers to leader, guardian and authority (Lisan al-Arab). Raqib Isfahani wrote, "Imam is one who is followed by others, whether such imam is a human whose words and deeds are followed by others, or a book or other objects, whether such following is right or wrong" (Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an). Some other terminologists also provided the same definition of the term imam (see al-Sihah Taj al-Luqah wa Sihah al-Arabiyyah, 1865; al-Misbah al-Manbar).

It can be seen from what was said that the term "imam" conveys "leadership" on the one hand, and "obedience and following" on the other hand. However, this term does not specify the field in which imam must be followed, and it does not specify the scope of leadership and obedience. Further, this term in itself is a neutral term, and is not charged with either positive or negative meaning. Thus, the literal meaning of this word does not indicate whether imamate and leadership applies to religious aspect or worldly aspect of the life of people.

6. Technical meaning

A group of Shiite theologians defined imamate as "religious and worldly headship"; for example, Sheikh Mufid defined imams as follows: Imam is one who is the head of all people in religious and worldly issues as the succession of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (al-I'tiqadiyah, cited in Silsilah Mussannifat, al-Sheikh al-Mufid).

Tusi defined imamate as follows: "Imam is one who holds headship in terms of religious and worldly affairs; however such position is held by imam on behalf of another person rather than by himself" (Talkhis Naqd al-Muhassil).

Although these two statements are rather focused on describing imamate, they succeed in elucidating the concept of imamate, for which reason Tusi consider them to be more complete than other definitions, and consistent with literal meaning of "imamate". This definition explicitly provides that literal meaning of imamate includes both religious and worldly affairs; that, imam is the authority in

both religious and worldly issues (Place of Theologian Principles in Ijtihad).

The term "Imam" according to the Quran

Having provided the literal and technical meaning of this term, it is required to study it from perspective of the Qur'an and hadiths.

The God provides the features of imam in the Qur'an, some of which are discussed below:

1- Infallibility: Given verse 124 of sura al-Baqarah, in which the God says to Prophet Ibrahim, "And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled: He said: "I will make thee an Imam to the Nations." He pleaded: "And also (Imams) from my offspring!" He answered: "But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers.", It can be said that the person who is appointed to imam must be clean from injustice (injustice toward the God, himself, and others), because imamate is entrusted by the God and the holder of the trust of the God must be one who have not and committed and will not commit any injustice and sin (Tafsir Sharif Lahiji).

2- Patience: As verse 24 of sura Sajdah reads, "And We appointed, from among them, leaders, giving guidance under our command, so long as they persevered with patience and continued to have faith in Our Signs." According to interpretation of this verse, patience refers to patience with grievances (Tafsir al-Qummi).

3- Certitude: According to verse 24 of surah Sajdah, it can be said that imam must be certain as well, as the verse 75 of sura al-An'am reads, "So also did we show Abraham the power and the laws of the heavens and the earth, that he might (with understanding) have certitude."

4- Divine Position (Appointment by the God): On the strength of the following verses of the Qur'an, imamate is a divine position, and it is only the God that determines who will be the imam: verse 124 of sura al-Baqarah, verse 73 of sura Anbiya', and verse 5 of sura Qisas.

5- Guiding: The task of the true imam is to direct and lead the community toward divine objectives and ideals, and well-being. Imam receives commands from the "world of command", as noted by verse 24 of sura Sajdah, "And We appointed, from among them, leaders, giving guidance under our command".

6- Channel of God's blessing: Imam is the channel of the God's blessing in such deeds as performance of good deeds, holding prayer, payment of zakat, and worship:

"And we made them leaders, guiding (men) by Our Command, and we sent them inspiration to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers, and to practice regular charity; and they constantly served us (and us only)" (Anbiya').

Given the above said verses, it becomes clear that method of appointment of imam is only carried out by the God. Thus, imam has been designated by the God, and introduced by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). However, after identity of the first imam is established, the following imams are both introduced by prophet and previous imams.

In some verses of the Qur'an, the almighty God makes mention of false imams, and says:

"And if they break their oaths after their treaty and defame your religion, then fight the leaders of disbelief, for indeed, there are no oaths [sacred] to them; [fight them that] they might cease" (At-Tawbah).

Given hadiths from Ahl al-Bayt about this verse, this verse is about Talhah and Zubair and their companions, who were disobedient people during caliph of Imam Ali (PBUH) (Tafsir Sharif Lahiji).

"And we made them leaders inviting to the Fire, and on the Day of Resurrection they will not be helped" (Qasas).

The interpretation of this sura reads that the God say, "We made the misguiding leaders, and called them misguiding imams, and leaders of misguided people; we deprived them of our blessing so that the misguided people made them their leaders, and those imams led their followers to fire of the hell. They will not receive any help on the day of last judgment, and will be damned and deprived of blessing in this world (Tafsir Sharif Lahiji).

After having studied the qualities of imams from view of the Qur'an, we studied them from perspective of hadiths as well.

Imam has a high rank, as Imam Reza (PBUH) considered the acceptance and knowledge of imamate as the precondition of monotheism. He said, "The expression "There is no god but Allah" is a like stronghold which keeps safe from divine punishment those who enters it", and he also added that entering this stronghold and keeping safe from the punishment by the God is subject to conditions, one of which was acceptance of him (Tawhid, Saduq).

This means that monotheist may not be a real monotheist if he does not believe in imamate, and prophetic mission. The truth of pure Islam can only be driven from imamate. If position of imam is not recognized, then prophetic mission and monotheism will be challenged.

Hadiths have also referred to some instances of "imam". For example, in a passage of his letter to Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr, on the occasion of appointment of him to the ruler of Egypt, Imam Ali (PBUH) wrote, "Thus, the one who leads to well-being is not identical to one who leads to destruction and ruin, just as friend of prophet is not equal to one who is enemy of prophet" (Nahj al-Balagha, letter).

Study of above said verses of the Qur'an and hadiths show that the term "imam" refers to both guided believer and misguided and misguiding leader, and that this term has been used to refer to both humans and non-humans.

It can be concluded from above said that human needs a leader in his material and spiritual life, so that he could follow his leadership in the course of his life and in performing religious commandments.

5. Necessity of existence of Imam

Many arguments have been provided in support of the statement that the earth always needs the

presence of imam and proof of the God. For brevity, some of such arguments that are provided by imams (PBUH) themselves are provided here.

a) Necessity of existence of mediator between the God and human

Because the God is not in immediate contact with his creatures, he has ambassadors among the creatures, who express his will for his creatures, and direct the creatures towards their interests, and the cause of their destruction. They are the very prophets and select creatures, whose wisdom have been certified by the God. Such people who are proof of the God for people must always be present on the earth (Wafi, al-Hujjah, chapter titled Istirar ila al-hujjah, hadith No. 1).

5.1. Need of people for source of assurance

To remove all doubts, there always requires to be someone who is trusted by people, and who will remove doubts (Wafi, al-Hujjah, chapter of Istirar ila al-Hujja, hadith).

5.2. Distinguishing the right from the wrong

The God would not because if he does so, the right would not be distinguished from the wrong (Wafi, chapter on Inn al-ardh la tukhilu min al-hujjah, hadith).

5.3. Ruling out denial of the God

Among the things that make imamate necessary is to make it impossible for people to protest the God that the God left him without proof of God, as a hadith reads, "If there are only two persons on the earth, then one of them will be imam, so that nobody could protest that the God left him without proof (Wafi, al-Hujjah, chapter titled al-Arzu la tukhilu min al-hujjah, hadith).

According to sura al-Qadr, there is a night in every year, called Laylatul Qadr (the night of power) when angels and the Spirit come down on every errand (according to Shiite, interpretation and expression of all affairs descend in such night), such continuous descend of angels on Laylat al-Qadr of every year requires a person on whom the angels would descend (Usul Kafi, book of proof, chapter about the Inna Anzalnahu fi Laylatul Qadr).

Having discussed necessity of existence of imam, the most important issue is knowledge of imam, which ensures that the true imam is distinguished from the false imam. According to what was said about Hadith Tariq, this hadith can serve this purpose as it introduces the extraterrestrial qualities and attributes of imam.

Some of the Features of Imam according to Hadith Tariq

Imam Ali (PBUH) first described the extraterrestrial qualities of imam, describing imam as the light, veil, proof, aspect and sign of the God.

Elsewhere, Imam (PBUH) said, "A column has established for imam, spanning from the heaven to the earth, through which he can see the deeds of the servants. Imam knows the hidden things, and imam has been given absolute power to change the course of things. He can see whatever exists between the east and the west, and nothing in this world and angelic realm is hidden to him. He is the center of the universe and axis of galaxies, and the hidden secret of the future generations, and the beam of the magnificence of the God, and source of esteem and value of the earth and heaven.

Imam is a human with angelic temperament, with a heavenly body, his essence is like the essence of the angel, and his attributes are the attributes of the God. He is increasingly good, and knows the secrets.

(Imam) is raining cloud and continuous large-drop rain. (Imam) is the full moon, high ranked guide, shaded sky, a great blessing, never drying sea, magnanimity immeasurable, ever flowing spring, highly productive garden fragrant bosom, bright moon, bright light, clean and victorious, virtuous deeds, highly beneficial goods, clear way, benevolent physician, kind father, and refuge of people in hardships and disasters.

6. Imamate: a divine position

In a part of this hadith, Imam Ali (PBUH) said that the God authorized him, and vested in him all powers, knowledge, *etc.*; in another hadith, Imam Ali (PBUH) said, Imam is one who is authorized by the God to commend the servants.

Authorized by the God to be authority of the creatures, and vested by the God all truths; and he has authority over all creatures.

He is authorized by the God to enjoin and prohibit. He is unique.

The God create imam of his essence, and appointed imam to the guardian of world. Imam knows the secrets of the God, and is very close friends of the God, they are command of the almighty God between (two letters) kaf and nun, and even they are the very kaf and nun.

7. Obedience of Imam is obligatory

In a part of this sermon, Imam Ali (PBUH) introduces imam as the completer of the religious, and guide of people; he considers appointment of imam as the succession of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by the God as a divine act, stating that it is obligatory for all creatures to obey imam, and said, "The God authorizes him, and vests in him whatever he wants (including power, knowledge, *etc.*), therefore, the God made it obligatory for people to obey imam.

The God has placed his will in the heart of imam, and urged everybody to obey imam's rule, because

imamate is the heritage of prophets and the position of the select people and succession of prophets".

Imam Ali (PBUH) also said about guardianship and succession of imam, "Imam is the guardian and authority assigned by the God in the heavens and on the earth. The God have required all people to obey imam. Thus, he (imam) is the guardian and authority assigned by the God in heavens and on the earth. The God have pledged all of his servants to recognize the guardianship and authority of imam.

Imam's Knowledge

In this hadith, Imam Ali (PBUH) refers to imam's knowledge as well. Imam has knowledge of the hidden world, and imam is absolutely authorized to change the affairs of the world. Imam sees whatever exists between the east and the west, and there is nothing in this world and angelic realm that is hidden to him, as imam is endowed with knowledge of speech of the birds.

Prophets' knowledge is very little compared with knowledge, secrets held by prophets are very little compared with secrets held by them, and the rank of the friends of the God is very little compared with their rank.

Imam (PBUH) sees the heavens and the earth as clearly as he sees his palms. Imam distinguishes between the inner and outer sides, the good from the bad; because the God has endowed with his prophet and the heirs of the prophet the knowledge of everything that happened, happens and will happen. Imam Ali (PBUH) considered those denying such capabilities as miserable people, and said, "The person who denies the rank of imam is certainly miserable, and damned by the God. How the God would possibly requires his servants to obey someone to whom the truth of the heavens and the earth is hidden".

8. Conclusion

As said earlier, Hadith Tariq is hadith with subject of knowledge, in which Imam Ali (PBUH) describes the extraterrestrial attributes and ranks of imam, somehow providing the virtues and ranks of imam, therefore, this hadith is a sa'b mustas'ab hadith.

Therefore, it is required to study and explain individual instances of sa'b mustas'ab in this hadith, which will be provided in a separate paper.

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