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15. Hadith Saluni, Investigating Its Authenticity

Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H) states:

> أما قول علي سلوني فإنما كان يخاطب بهذا أهل الكوفة ليعلمهم العلم والدين فإن غالبهم كانوا جهالا لم يدركوا النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم وأما أبو بكر فكان الذين حول منبره هم أكابر أصحاب النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم الذين تعلموا من رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم العلم والدين فكانت رعية أبي بكر أعلم الأمة وأدينها وأما الذين كان علي يخاطبهم فهم من جملة عوام الناس التابعين وكان كثير منهم من شرار التابعين ولهذا كان علي رضي الله عنه يذمهم ويدعو عليهم وكان التابعون بمكة والمدينة والشام والبصرة خيرا منهم

As for the statement of ‘Ali “Ask me”, he only addressed this to the people of Kufah to teach them knowledge and the religion, **because most of them were ignorant people** who never met the Prophet, peace be upon him. As for Abu Bakr, those who were around his pulpit were the most senior of the Sahabah of the Prophet, peace be upon him, who learnt knowledge and the religion from the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him. So, the subjects of Abu Bakr were the most knowledgeable of the *Ummah* and the best in religious practice. **However, those whom ‘Ali was addressing, they were commoners among the Tabi’in, and a lot of them were the evil ones among the Tabi’in**. This was why ‘Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, criticized and cursed them, **and the Tabi’in in Makkah, Madinah, Syria and Basra were better than them**.[1]

He equally adds:

> فقول علي لمن عنده بالكوفة سلوني هو من هذا الباب لم يقل هذا لابن مسعود ومعاذ وأبي بن كعب وأبي الدرداء وسلمان وأمثالهم فضلا عن أن يقول ذلك لعمر وعثمان ولهذا لم يكن هؤلاء ممن يسأله فلم يسأله قط لا معاذ ولا أبي ولا ابن مسعود ولا من هو دونهم من الصحابة

The statement of ‘Ali “Ask me” to those with him in Kufah was in this regard. **He never said this to Ibn Mas’ud, Mu’adh, Ubayy b. Ka’b, Abu Darda, Salman or others like them**, much less saying that to ‘Umar and ‘Uthman. This is why these people were not among those who asked him. **They never asked**

him (anything) – not Mu'adh, not Ubayy, not Ibn Mas'ud and not others from the Sahabah.[2]

It is obvious from the words of our dear Shaykh that he accepts the authenticity of *Hadith Saluni*. He is not calling it "a lie" or "a fabrication", or *dha'if* or similar terms. Rather, he conceded that the event did happen. However, he attempts to downplay the unmatched significance of the *hadith*. To him, there is nothing special in it. After all, Amir al-Muminin 'Ali, *'alaihi al-salam*, was – according to our Shaykh – only offering that challenge to ignorant, evil people. He never dared present it to *any* of the Sahabah! By contrast, Abu Bakr displayed his knowledge in the blessed presence of the most knowledgeable and the best of this entire *Ummah*.

In order to weigh the positives and negatives of Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah's submissions, we must first understand the context of *Hadith Saluni*. Al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir (d. 774 H) helps on this:

> قال شعبة بن الحجاج ، عن سِمَاك ، عن خالد بن عَرْعَرَة أنه سمع عليا وشعبة أيضًا ، عن القاسم بن أبي بزَّة ، عن أبي الطُّفَيْل ، سمع عليًا. وثبت أيضًا من غير وجه ، عن أمير المؤمنين علي بن أبي طالب : أنه صعد منبر الكوفة فقال : لا تسألوني عن آية في كتاب الله ، ولا عن سنة عن رسول الله ، إلا أنبأتكم بذلك.

Shu'bah b. al-Hajjaj, from Simak, from Khalid b. 'Ar'arah that he heard 'Ali; and Shu'bah again narrated from al-Qasim b. Abi Barrah from Abu al-Tufayl that he heard 'Ali; and IT IS ALSO AUTHENTICALLY TRANSMITTED through many chains that Amir al-Muminin 'Ali b. Abi Talib climbed the pulpit of Kufah and said, "**You will not ask me about *ANY* verse in the Book of Allah, or about *ANY* Sunnah from the Messenger of Allah, except that I will inform you of that.**"[3]

Imam al-Hakim (d. 403 H) also records:

> أخبرنا أبو الحسن علي بن محمد بن عقبة ثنا الحسن بن علي بن عفان ثنا محمد بن عبيد الطنافسي ثنا بسام بن عبد الرحمن الصيرفي ثنا أبو الطفيل قال رأيت أمير المؤمنين علي بن أبي طالب رضي الله عنه قال على المنبر فقال : سلوني قبل أن لا تسألوني ولن تسألوا بعدي مثلي

Abu al-Hasan 'Ali b. Muhammad b. 'Uqbah – al-Hasan b. 'Ali b. 'Affan – Muhammad b. 'Ubayd al-Tanafasi – Bassam b. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sayarfi – Abu al-Tufayl:

I saw Amir al-Muminin 'Ali b. Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him, saying on the pulpit, "Ask me before you are no longer able to ask me, **and you will NEVER be able to ask ANYONE like me after me.**[4]

Al-Hakim says:

حديث صحيح الإسناد

A *hadith* with a *sahih* chain

Al-Dhahabi (d. 748 H) agrees:

> صحيح

Sahih[5]

Imam Ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 310 H) further documents:

> حدثنا ابن المثنى، قال: ثنا محمد بن جعفر، قال: ثنا شعبة، عن القاسم بن أبي بزة، قال: سمعت أبا الطفيل، قال: سمعت عليا رضي الله عنه عنه يقول: لا تسألوني عن كتاب ناطق، ولا سنة ماضية، إلا حدثتكم، فسأله ابن الكواء عن الذاريات، فقال: هي الرياح.

Ibn al-Muthanna – Muhammad b. Ja'far – Shu'bah – al-Qasim b. Abi Bazzah – Abu al-Tufayl:

I heard 'Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, saying, "**You will not ask me about *ANY* articulate Book or *ANY* bygone Sunnah, except that I will tell you**." So, Ibn al-Kawa asked him about *al-Zariyat*, and he replied, "It is the winds".[6]

This same *sanad* is relied upon by Imam Muslim in his *Sahih*:

> حدثنا محمد بن المثنى ومحمد بن بشار (واللفظ لابن المثنى) قالا حدثنا محمد بن جعفر حدثنا شعبة قال سمعت القاسم بن أبي بزة يحدث عن أبي الطفيل

Muhammad b. al-Muthanna and Muhammad b. Bashar – **Muhammad b. Ja'far** – **Shu'bah** – **al-Qasim b. Abi Bazzah** – **Abu al-Tufayl**[7]

This should be sufficient to establish the status of the above report as *sahih*. However, the *athar* proves a very heavy fact – that 'Ali knew *everything* in all revealed scriptures as well as everything in the *Sunnah* of every single prophet and messenger till the Seal of them. This naturally includes the *Suhuf*, the *Tawrah*, the *Zabur*, the *Injil*, and the Qur'an. Amir al-Muminin had perfect knowledge of them all. He also had complete knowledge of the Sunnah of every single one of the 124,000 prophets sent by Allah. Due to the significance of this *athar*, we will *further* confirm its authenticity to remove any possible doubts about it.

Al-Hafiz (d. 852 H) says about its first narrator:

> محمد بن المثنى بن عبيد العنزي بفتح النون والزاي أبو موسى البصري ....ثقة ثبت

Muhammad b. al-Muthanna b. 'Ubayd al-'Unaza, Abu Musa al-Basri.... ***Thiqah*** **(trustworthy),** ***thabt*** **(accurate)**.[8]

Al-Hafiz also has these comments about the second narrator:

> محمد بن جعفر الهذلي البصري المعروف بغندر ثقة صحيح الكتاب إلا أن فيه غفلة

Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Hazali al-Basri, better known as Ghandar: ***Thiqah*** **(trustworthy)**, *sahih al-kitab* (i.e. *ahadith* from his books are *sahih*) except that there was some negligence in him.[9]

Whatever negligence he had does not affect his *ahadith* from Shu'bah, the third narrator, at all. He used to accurately record the latter's reports. So, he narrated them from his books with perfect precision. Al-Hafiz provides further information in this respect:

> وقال ابن مهدي كنا نستفيد من كتب غندر في شعبة وكان وكيع يسميه الصحيح الكتاب .وقال أبو حاتم عن محمد بن ابان البلخي قال ابن مهدي غندر أثبت في شعبة مني وقال ابن المبارك إذا اختلف الناس في حديث شعبة فكتاب غندر حكم بينهم وقال ابن أبي حاتم سألت أبي عن غندر فقال كان صدوقا وكان مؤدبا وفي حديث شعبة ثقة

Ibn Mahdi said: "**We used to benefit from the books of Ghandar on Shu'bah**. Waki' named him *sahih al-kitab*." Abu Hatim narrated from Muhammad b. Aban al-Balakhi that Ibn Mahdi said: "**Ghandar is more accurate than me as far as Shu'bah is concerned**." Ibn al-Mubarak said, "**When the people disagree about the *hadith* of Shu'bah, the book of Ghandar used to judge between them**." Ibn Abi Hatim said: "I asked my father about Ghandar and he replied, 'He was *saduq* (very truthful), and was a teacher and **in the *hadith* of Shu'bah, he is *thiqah* (trustworthy)**.'"[10]

The third narrator, Shu'bah, is a pillar of Sunni *ahadith*. Al-Hafiz gives the catch-phrases about him:

> شعبة بن الحجاج بن الورد العتكي مولاهم أبو بسطام الواسطي ثم البصري ثقة حافظ متقن كان الثوري يقول هو أمير المؤمنين في الحديث

Shu'bah b. al-Hajjaj b. al-Ward al-'Atki, their freed slave, Abu Bus□am al-Wasi□i, al-Basri: ***Thiqah*** **(trustworthy),** ***hafiz*** **(*a hadith scientist*), extremely precise**. Al-Thawri used to say: "**He was the *amir al-muminin* (the supreme leader) in *al-Hadith***."[11]

This is what al-Hafiz establishes about the fourth narrator as well:

> القاسم بن أبي بزة بفتح الموحدة وتشديد الزاي المكي مولى بني مخزوم القارئ ثقة

Al-Qasim b. Abi Bazzah al-Makki, free slave of Banu Makhzum, the Qari (the Qur'an reciter): ***Thiqah*** **(trustworthy)**.[12]

The last narrator, Abu al-Tufayl, was a Sahabi. So, normally, he was absolutely *thiqah* (trustworthy) by Sunni standards. Al-Hafiz affirms his status:

> عامر بن واثلة بن عبد الله بن عمرو بن جحش الليثي أبو الطفيل وربما سمي عمرا ولد عام أحد ورأى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم وروى عن أبي بكر فمن بعده وعمر إلى أن مات سنة عشر ومائة على الصحيح وهو آخر من مات من الصحابة قاله مسلم وغيره.

'Amir b. Wathilah b. 'Abd Allah b. 'Amr b. Jahsh al-Laythi, Abu al-Tufayl. Perhaps, he was named Amr. **He was born during the year of Uhud, and he saw the Prophet, peace be upon him**. He narrated from Abu Bakr and all those after him. He lived till 110 H, based upon the correct opinion, **and was the last of the Sahabah to die, according to (Imam) Muslim and others**.[13]

This last fact reveals the fallacy of Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah's claim that Amir al-Muminin never presented the challenge to any of the Sahabah! Abu al-Tufayl was in the mosque when Imam 'Ali made his declaration, and none was excluded from it. We will further investigate this particular unfounded submission of our dear Shaykh, in greater detail, later.

Let us now examine the fourth *sahih* report of *Hadith Saluni* from the Sunni books. Imam 'Abd al-Razzaq records:

> عبد الرزاق عن معمر عن وهب بن عبد الله عن أبي الطفيل قال شهدت عليا وهو يخطب وهو يقول سلوني فوالله لا تسألوني عن شئ يكون إلى يوم القيامة إلا حدثتكم به وسلوني عن كتاب الله فوالله ما من آية إلا وأنا أعلم بليل نزلت أم بنهار أم في سهل أم في جبل

'Abd al-Razzaq – Ma'mar – Wahb b. 'Abd Allah – Abu al-Tufayl:

I witnessed 'Ali while he was delivering a sermon and saying, "**Ask me! I swear by Allah, you will not ask me about *ANYTHING* that will occur up till the Day of Resurrection except that I will inform you of it**. Ask me about the Book of Allah. I swear by Allah, there is NOT a single verse except that I know whether it was revealed during the night or during the day, or on a level land or on a mountain.[14]

Al-Hafiz states about the first narrator:

> عبد الرزاق بن همام بن نافع الحميري مولاهم أبو بكر الصنعاني ثقة حافظ

'Abd al-Razzaq b. Hammam b. Nafi' al-Humayri, their freed slave, Abu Bakr al-San'ani: ***Thiqah***

(**trustworthy**), ***hafiz*** (**a *hadith* scientist**).[15]

He also says about the second narrator:

معمر بن راشد الأزدي مولاهم أبو عروة البصري نزيل اليمن ثقة ثبت فاضل

Ma'mar b. Rashid al-Azdi, their freed slave, Abu 'Urwah al-Basri, he lived in Yemen: ***Thiqah*** (**trustworthy**), ***thabt*** (**accurate**), ***fadhil*** (**meritorious**).[16]

What about the third narrator? This is his verdict:

وهب بن عبد الله بن أبي دبي بموحدة مصغرا الهنائي بضم الهاء ونون ومد الكوفي وقد ينسب لجده ثقة

Wahb b. 'Abd Allah b. Abi Dubayy al-Hunai al-Kufi, he has been attributed to his grandfather: ***Thiqah*** (**trustworthy**).[17]

We already know about Abu al-Tufayl. So, this fourth *riwayah* too is *sahih*.

A simple summary of the *athar* is this:

1. 'Ali challenged the people to ask him about *anything*. He never limited the challenge. Rather, he left it open: "Ask me!"

3. He claimed *perfect* knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as of all the revealed scriptures of the past prophets and their respective Sunnahs.

5. He also encouraged them to ask him about *anything* that would occur till the Hour. He had complete knowledge of that too.

7. He specifically warned the people after once he died, there would *never* be anyone like him again till the Day of Resurrection.

Apparently, this goes beyond merely scaring some ignorant, evil fellows with some limited knowledge. Rather, the question is: was/is anyone else *ever* capable of making similar claims?

1. Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad b. 'Abd al-Halim b. Taymiyyah al-Harrani, Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah (Muasassat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 5, p. 507-508
2. Ibid, vol. 8, p. 57
3. Abu al-Fida Isma'il b. 'Umar b. Kathir al-Qurshi al-Dimashqi, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim (Dar al-□aybah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi'; 2nd edition, 1420 H) [annotator: Sami b. Muhammad Salamah], vol. 7, p. 413
4. Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, al-Mustadrak 'ala al-□ahihayn (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1411 H) [annotator: Mustafa 'Abd al-Qadir 'Ata], vol. 2, p. 506, # 3736
5. Ibid

6. Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarir b. Yazid b. Kathir b. Ghalib al-□muli al-□abari, Jami al-Bayan fi Tawil al-Qur'an (Dar al-Fikr; 1415 H) [annotator: □adafi Jamil al-'Attar], vol. 26, p. 240

7. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, □ahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad 'Abd al-Baqi], vol. 3, p. 1567, #1978 (45)

8. Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Hajar al-'Asqalani, Taqrib al-Tahdhib (Beirut: Dar al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Mustafa 'Abd al-Qadir 'Ata], vol. 2, p. 129, # 6283

9. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 63, # 5805

10. Shihab al-Din Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Hajar al-'Asqalani, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib (Dar al-Fikr; 1st edition, 1404 H), vol. 9, p. 85, # 129

11. Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Hajar al-'Asqalani, Taqrib al-Tahdhib (Beirut: Dar al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Mustafa 'Abd al-Qadir 'Ata], vol. 1, p. 418, # 2798

12. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 18, # 5469

13. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 464, # 3122

14. 'Abd al-Razzaq b. Hamam al-□ana'ani, Tafsir al-Qur'an (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Rushd; 1st edition, 1410 H) [annotator: Dr. Mustafa Muslim Muhammad], vol. 3, p. 241

15. Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Hajar al-'Asqalani, Taqrib al-Tahdhib (Beirut: Dar al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah; 2nd edition, 1415 H) [annotator: Mustafa 'Abd al-Qadir 'Ata], vol. 1, p. 599, # 4078

16. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 202, # 6833

17. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 292, # 7505

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