

## **An Evaluation of the Requirements of the Receiver of *Mutawātir* Reports among Shi'ite Imamate**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article tends to evaluate the validity of the requirements of a receiver in mutawātir reports among the Shi'ite Imamate that has been used as an answer to the lack of any report regarding the Imamate. The evaluation is done by analyzing the logic behind the methods scientifically. The main hadīth on the Imamate, the hadīth of the two weighty things, is also being evaluated with regards to its degree of tawātur by using the terms of an authentic hadīth among the Shi'ite themselves. The results indicated that their methods are not scientifically valid and applicable in determining mutawātir reports, as they are contradicting each other. The result also suggests that the hadith of the two weighty things is not a mutawātir report among them, nor it is a valid narration from the Prophet (peace be upon him).

**Keyword:** Shi'ite, mutawātir, hadīth, conditions, weighty.

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Muslim world is being lived by billions of believers. B.A Robinson from the Religious Tolerance movement in America estimated that as of mid 2010, they are 1.57 billions of Muslims all around the world, quoted from Pew Forums (2012). From these billions of people, the Muslims are mainly divided into two main sects, namely the Sunni and the Shi'ite. While keeping the same faith in the same God, these two sects does not share a lot of common belief and creed. Almost all of their methods in debating the matters of faith, acts of worships, the interpretation of the Holy *Qurān*, as well as the jurisdiction methods in determining what is permissible and what is forbidden in their daily lives differs greatly. Included in these disagreements is the method of verifying and authenticating the reports from the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), thus resulted in a greater disagreement.

The differences among the school of thoughts, however, are not something uncommon in the academic world of Islamic debates. It is also common for a certain school of thought to accuse their opponent as infidels or anything alike. Ibnu Hajar (2001, 1/138) commented on the acceptance of narrations by some who were deemed as *kaḥfīr* (infidel): “The correct view is that the narrations from those who are deemed as *kaḥfīr* (infidel) for his heresy are not fully rejected, for every sect will deem their opposite sect’s view as heretical, so may they deem them as *kaḥfīr*. The approved view is that those whom their narration is rejected are those who refuted *mutawātir* (frequently reported matters, narrated by a vast number of trusted individuals that is it impossible for all of them to meet and agree on lying about the Prophet (pbuh) matters from the known *syar’ah* (Islamic ruling) of fundamental beliefs, as well as those who rejected them”.

From the quote given above, the main point that we can conclude is that these disagreements are all acceptable, as long as it does not, in any way, reject any *mutawātir* matters of fundamental beliefs in Islam. This is the main topic of discussion of this article. One of the main characteristic of the Shi’ite Imamate that differentiated them aside from the Sunni, is the belief in the Infallible *Imāms*, and that this belief is *mutawātir* among them. Therefore, in the author’s view, an analysis and evaluation of the method they used in determining what is *mutawātir* and what is not is essential, thus putting their method of classifying *mutawātir* report in a litmus test, whether they are well accepted and scientifically verified or falsified and proven as inapplicable.

In order to do this, it is best for us to evaluate reports that are considered as *mutawātir* among the Shi’ite. Out of all claims, the author picked the most famous *hadīth*, not only among the Shi’ite but among the Sunnis as well, and it is the *hadīth* of the Two Weighty Things. This *hadīth* is considered among the Shi’ite as an official declaration from the Prophet (pbuh) himself that ‘Alī B. Abī Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) is his successor. It is not hard to understand, that this *hadīth* is among the pillars of the Imamate creed.

## **2.0 THE DEFINITION OF *MUTAWĀTIR* FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE SHI’ITE**

In order for us to evaluate the method used by the Shi’ite in determining a *mutawātir* report, it is important for us to understand what *mutawātir* is according to them. Zainuddīn Al-‘Āmilī (1414H, p.5) defined *mutawātir* as: “A report that is narrated by a vast number of people, in which it is impossible for all of them to agree on lying upon the Prophet (pbuh). It is necessary for that number to be consistent throughout the levels of the chains of narrators, which means that the

end of the chain is as of the same as the beginning”. It is also defined by Mirdāmād (1414H, p.40) as: “A report with a vast number of narrators in each level of *sanad* (chain of narrators), be it in the end of the *sanad* or in the beginning, and that this number in every level is achieved, thus it became impossible for all of them to gather and agreed on lying (on the Prophet pbuh)”. The number itself is not being specified, for a number to achieve impossibility of lying should be a great number, hundreds of even thousands. This is proven from the words of Al-Shahīd Al-Tsānī (1414H, p.29): “And it is not an unknown thing that this difference in determining the number of narrators in *mutawātir* reports is something superstitious”.

As we may see, these definitions of *mutawātir* are not far from the definitions lay down by the Sunnis (Al-Sayūtī, 2/176).

### 3.0 THE IMPORTANCE OF *MUTAWĀTIR* REPORTS

A *mutawātir* report, thus, is the only report that is considered on the same foot as the *Qurān* itself (Hāshim Kamālī, 2003, p.80). It is also the only report that achieved universal continuous testimony (*tawātur*) and certainty (*yaqīn*), and the knowledge it transmitted is equivalent to the knowledge acquired through our own sensory perception (Muḥammad Zubayr, 1993, p.94), thus the person would verify this report as if he was among the listeners, and there is not even a slight possibility to disagree with this report (Maʿmūd Ūahhān, 1415H, p.14).

The belief on the Infallible *Imāms* is considered as *mutawātir* among the Shiʿite Imamate. This belief is on the same level with the belief in the Prophets and the Messengers (Muḥammad Taqī, p.16). Any *hadīth* that is narrated directly from the Prophet is on the same level with the narrations from the *Imāms* (Muḥammad Husayn, p.35). Thus, it is acceptable if a question is raised by the Sunnis against the Shiʿite Imamate: If the creed of believing in the infallibility of the *Imāms* is undeniable and *mutawātir*, why we did not receive any existing *mutawātir* report suggesting this belief? (Sardār Damīral, 2005, p.35) In answering this question, the Shiʿite had put forward two extra terms for a report to be *mutawātir*, besides the terms of informants (*mukhbīrīn*) for *mutawātir* reports. It is to be noted that the terms and requirements of the informants were both accepted by the Sunnis and Shiʿite alike as a valid term (Sardār, 2005, p. 35).

### 3.1 The Requirements of the Receiver of a *Mutawātir* Report

The first condition is that a receiver should not possess any knowledge about the *mutawātir* report that he/she receives. This is because a *mutawātir* report should be an ultimate mediation for one to acquire new knowledge, thus knowing the content of the report beforehand would not add any extra knowledge for that receiver (Al-Sayīd Hāshim, 1420H, p.64). Al-Shahīd Al-Tsānī (2004, p.29) said: “It is obligatory for the receiver to gain new knowledge from the report. It is impossible for one to gain new knowledge for what he/she already knows, as it is also impossible to just add to something he/she already knows, because it is impossible for a new knowledge to just strengthen to what he/she already knows”.

The second condition is it is not allowed for the creed and personal belief of the receiver to be compromised before he/she receive the report. If so, the receiver could easily deny the obligation of believing in the *mutawātir* report (Al-Māmaqāmī, 1/105). This is the Shi’ite’s main argument as to why there are no *mutawātir* reports that exists today suggesting the belief in the Imamate. Al-Shahīd Al-Tsānī (*op. cit.*) wrote: “With this term, Al-Sayīd had given an answer for those who deny the existence of *mutawātir* reports suggesting the mandate of ‘Alī (may Allah be pleased with him), as they had denied the reports since their faith had been compromised”. Mīrdāmād (1414H, p.40) wrote: “Al-Sayīd Al-Sharīf Al-Murtaḥā had answered the accusation of those who disagreed with the clear *tawatur* report on the mandate of ‘Alī, that (they say) if it is *mutawātir* than surely they benefited from it”. Ironically, these were the same arguments used by the Jews and Christians against the miracles (*mu’jizāt*) performed by the Prophet pbuh (Ashraf Al-Jauzānī, 2009, p.202).

They are those who categorized this conditions of the receiver only for the benefit and the nature of the knowledge itself, not real terms for a report to be considered as *mutawātir*. Al-Mādhandarānī (p.185) wrote: “Do note that some of the jurisprudence did not even mention these conditions and that they settled with just the three terms, verily these additional terms are just for the benefit of the knowledge itself, not to set a standard of what a *mutawātir* is”.

However, Al-Māmaqāmī (1/105) commented right after he mentioned about the non-existent of *mutawātir* report regarding the belief of the Imamate: “This is because their own sect had implanted in them firmly the beliefs contradicting the reports (on Imamate), and because of that the knowledge had only benefitted the early Muslims, not the later. If he/she was from the specific then it was because his/her faith had been compromised, and if he/she was from the public then it was because of blind following”.

These statements, if we may evaluate them carefully, are contradicting each other. The first statement from Mādhandarānī (p.185) states that it is not a term of *mutawātir* for a receiver benefitted from the report. However, in the statement of Al-Māmaqāmī clearly indicates that if a *mutawātir* report was not benefitted by a person, that will result in the banishment of the report itself, as he/she will not transmit the report, and the specific report would not reach the degree of *mutawātir*. In other words, they will be no transmitted *mutawātir* report if the knowledge was not benefitted by the receiver, thus it will not reach us.

In addition, the first term of the receiver stated that a *mutawātir* report should be of those the knowledge were well benefitted, and it is not accepted if the receiver had the knowledge beforehand, or at least already heard the report before. To state that the requirements of a receiver would not downgrade the very definition of *mutawātir* itself is a contradiction with the first requirements. More importantly, if these two contradicting terms weren't actually matter in the transmission of a *mutawātir* report, then they shouldn't be included in the terms of *mutawātir* in the first place, vis-à-vis, they are not an applicable terms.

Commenting on the second term of compromised state of belief, it was not an attitude of the early scholars to abandon a report from the Holy Prophet (pbuh), just because the report contradicts with his/her own personal belief. It was reported from Ibnu Wahab (Al-Albānī, 1/45): "I heard Mālik was asked about the act of inserting a finger hand between the fingers of the feet in performing ablution. He (Mālik) said: "That is not obligatory upon the people". Ibnu Wahab said: "Then I reprehend myself from giving any comment, until the people had left, and I said unto him: "Verily there is a report with us regarding that". He (Mālik) said: "And the report is?" I said: "It was narrated to us by Al-Laith B. Sa'ad, Ibnu Lahi'ah and 'Amru bin Al-Hārith, from Yāzid B. 'Amru Al-Ma'āfirī, from Abu Abdul Rahman Al-Hanbalī, from Al-Mustaurid, from Shaddād Al-Qurshī, he said: "I watched the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) inserted his pinky finger in between his feet fingers". He said: "This *hadīth* is *hasan* (good, acceptable and valid), but by Allah I never heard of it until this moment". Ibnu Wahab said: "From that moment I heard that he had been asked about the same matter, and he commended them to do as such" (Ibnu Abī Hātim, 1952, 1/31). It is clear, thus, that the idea of rejecting a report that contradicts personal belief is not acceptable nor it is valid. This narration was just one of hundreds of narrations suggesting the academic behavior of previous generations in accepting a *hadīth*.

Even if we accept the issue of compromised state of belief is a valid reason for the lack of *mutawātir* hadith on the Imamate, still in a direct way, it contradicts the definition of *tawātur*: “A report that is reported by a vast number of people, in which it is **impossible** for all of them to agree on lying upon the Prophet (pbuh)” (Al-Syahīd Al-Tsānī, *op.cit.*). It is not possible, thus, that this great number of people all agreed on rejecting the report nor it is logical for us to accuse that all of the receiver on the *mutawātir* report of Imamate agreed to disbelief the report and refused to narrate it to the next generation, to the point that not even a single narration had reached us. This ‘phenomena’ of mass disbelief should also happen on every stage of *sanad*, or else it will also contradict with another definition of *mutawātir*: “A report with a vast number of narrators in **each level of sanad** (chain of narrators), be it in the end of the *sanad* or in the beginning, and that this number in every level is achieved” (Mirdāmād, *op.cit.*).

## 4.0 HADĪTH OF THE TWO WEIGHTY THINGS

### 4.1 The Context of the *Hadīth*

This is one the most important, if not the most, report that is believed by the Shi’te to be a *mutawātir* report that commanded the Muslims to believe in the creed of Imamate. Numerous reports had been narrated mentioning the word *al-thaqalayn*, which means the two weighty things. One of them is as follow (Al-‘Iyāshī, 1/3):-

“The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) had given his sermon on Friday right after *Zuhr* prayer. He went to the people and say: “O people! Verily I have been told by the Most Gracious, the All-Knowing that He will not bestowed a prophet any longer than half a life of the prophets that came before him, and I really think or I really suspect that He’ll call me soon enough, I will answer. Verily I have been given a responsibility and all of you are my responsibility, did I’ve conveyed my message? What say you?” They (the companions) said: “Indeed! We bear witness that you had conveyed, advised and and gave your best, may Allah bless you with the best of reward”. He (the prophet pbuh) said: “O Allah our Lord, I bear witness”, then he continued: “O people, did you bear witness that there is no God but Allah, and that Muhammad is His servant and His messenger, and that the Heaven is true and the Hellfire is true and the Resurrection is true after your death?”. They said: “O Allah our Lord, yes”. He said: “O Allah our Lord, I bear witness”. Then he said: “O people! Verily Allah is my Guider, and I am the guider of the believers, behold that whoever that were lead by me, ‘Alī is also his leader. O Allah our Lord, He Leads those who ask for His guidance and He is

against those who were against Him”. Then he continued: “O people, seek out my Pond which is larger than the distance of Sana’a to Basrah, and in it are glasses made from silver stars, remember that I will ask you when the time came that you returned to me (life after death) about the two weighty things, so take this responsibility carefully until you are coming to see me (die)”. They asked: “And what are the two weighty things O Messenger of Allah?” He said: “The major weighty thing is the book of Allah (*Al-Qurān*), a part of it is in the Hands of Allah, and a part of it is in your hands, adhere to it and you shall never go astray. And the minor weighty thing is my bloodline, the people of my house. Verily I have been told by the Most Gracious that these two shall never go apart until they came back to me on the Day of Judgement, and I have asked Allah for them to stay together this way, and He had granted me my wish. So do not precede them or you will go astray, do not take them for granted or you will perish, and do not try to teach them, verily they are even more knowledgeable than you.

## 5.0 THE NARRATORS OF THE *HADĪTH* OF THE TWO WEIGHTY THINGS IN SHI’ITE BOOKS

After the hadith was extracted from all Shi’ite books of *tafsīr* and *hadīth* collections (Al-Jauzānī, 2009, p.9), it was found that this *hadīth* was narrated by only 25 companions of the prophet (pbuh). They were ‘Alī B. Abī Ūalib, his sons Hasan and Husayn, ‘Abdullah B. Abbas, ‘Umar Al-Khattab, Fā’imah, Zaid B. Tsābit, ‘Abū Dzar Al-Ghiffārī, Huzayfah B. Usaid, Zaid B. Arqām, Abu At-Ūfayl, Abu Sa’id Al-Khudrī, Jābir B. ‘Abdullah, Huzaifah B. Yamān, Abu Hurairah, Al-Barra’ B. ‘Āzib, Al-‘Abbās B. Abdul Mu’īlib, Al-Fa’lū B. ‘Abbās, Ummu Salāmah, Miqdād, ‘Ammār B. Yāsir, ‘Abdullah B. Mas’ūd, Abu Ayyūb Al-Ansārī, Anas B. Mālik and 70 people that participated in the battle of Badr, except that the Shi’ite did not specify who are them.

It is important to remember that the majority of the companions stated above were rejected by the Shi’te. It is reported by Al-Kulaynī (1388H, p.246) from Ja’far Al-Ūādiq: “All of the people (the companions) apostatized after the Prophet (pbuh) except for three persons”. I (Hannān) asked: “And who were the three?” He said: “Al-Miqdad B. Al-Aswad, Abū Dhar Al-Ghiffārī, and Salmān Al-Fāris”. What can we understand here, is that out of all 25 persons that narrated this hadith, only few of them met the Shi’te terms and conditions of an accepted *hadīth*, and they are: ‘Alī B. Abī Ūalib, Hasan, Husayn, Fā’imah, Abū Dhar and Al-Miqdad. The rest of the narrators were all deemed as apostatized, thus they are all rejected automatically without a need of further discussion.

We shall look at the chain of narrators from the above mentioned accepted six companions.

### 5.1 'Alī B. Abī Ūālib

They were sixteen (16) *sanad* narrated this *hadīth* from 'Alī B. Abī Tālib. From these sixteen (16), nine (9) of them were narrated through Abbān B. 'Iyāsh, and he was labeled as weak by Al-Khoei, Al-Tūsī and Ibnu Al-Ghadāiri (Al-Jauzānī, p.17). The tenth *sanad* contained Ahmad B. Al-Husayn Al-Qattān, Al-Hasan B. 'Alī and Ja'far B. Muhammad Al-Kindī, all of them were unknown (*majhūl*) (*Ibid*, p.29). The eleventh *sanad* contained 'Alī B. Ibrāhīm Al-Qummī, which was known as a liar, and also Muhammad bin Abī 'Umair who was unknown (*Ibid*, p.30). The twelfth and thirteenth *sanad* contained Al-Husayn B. 'Abdullah Al-Tamīmī and Daud B. Sulaymān Al-Farra' respectively, and both of them were also unknown (*Ibid*, p.32). The last three *sanad* on the other hand were narrated by Muhammad B. 'Umar B. Salīm, Al-Hasan B. 'Abdullah B. Sa'id, as well as Musa bin 'Uqbah respectively, and as above, all of them were unknown from being a trusty narrator or not (*Ibid*).

In short, none of the *sanad* that narrated this *hadīth* from 'Alī B. Abī Ūālib are acceptable.

### 5.2 Al-Hasan B. 'Alī B. Abī Ūālib

They were only two (2) *sanad* that narrated this *hadīth*. The first *sanad* were narrated through Muhammad B. 'Ukāshah, Ahmad B. Yūsūf Al-Hamsī, and 'Alī B. Mūsa Al-Ghatfānī. All of them were unknown (*Ibid*, p.32). The second *sanad* were narrated from Mu'āwiyah B. Hishām, who was also unknown (*Ibid*).

Thus none of this *hadīth* is valid.

### 5.3 Al-Husayn B. 'Alī B. Abī Ūālib

Only one (1) *sanad* narrated from him, and it went through Musa B. 'Uqbah mentioned above as unknown.

### 5.4 Fā'imah the daughter of the Messenger (pbuh)

Also only one (1) *sanad* was transmitted, and that was the *hadīth* of *Fadak*, which did not actually expressed the *hadīth* of the two weighty things.



### 5.5 Abū Dhar Al-Ghiffārī

Only one (1) *sanad* was reported from him, and this *sanad* were narrated through Al-Rabi' B. Yasār and Al-Hasan B. 'Alī B. Zakariya, both of them were unknown (*Ibid*, p.37). In addition, this *sanad* also went through 'a number of the companions', which was not been given the details, thus it is not testable.

### 5.6 Al-Miqdād B. Al-Aswad

He was also narrated by only one (1) *sanad* alongside 'Ammār B. Yāsir and 'Abdullah B. Mas'ūd. This *sanad* went through 'Ubaid B. Katsir B. Muhammad, which was deemed as weak by Al-Hilliyy (*Ibid*, p.43), and Al-Hasan B. Sa'id Al-Hasyimī, who was also unknown (*Ibid*, p.44).

As we can see, none of the *sanad* that were presented in the books of the Shi'ite supported their argument that this *hadīth* is *mutawātir* among them, for none of this *sanad* even reached the degree of a valid *hadīth* according to the Shi'ite (see: Al-'Āmilī, 20/260).

Furthermore, the terms of a receiver that had been discussed above clearly mentioned that the reason why there is no *mutawātir* report regarding the belief in Imamate, is because the majority of people had their creed compromised before they received the report on Imamate. Thus, they unanimously agree to reject the report, through each and every levels of generation. However, from their own point of view, this is not the case.

The *hadīth* of the two weighty things may not be *mutawātir* among them, as proven above, but it is *mutawātir* among the Sunni. Hundreds of reports on this *hadīth* on various occasions such as the event of *Ghadīr Khūm*, at the 'Arafat, in the mosque of the Prophet (pbuh) during his last days, as well as on his death bed. This *hadīth* is a claim from the Shi'ite that it was an official declaration that 'Alī B. Abī Ūālīb was his successor, as well as indicating the infallibility of the *Imāms*. They claim that no *mutawātir* reports exist on this, yet it do exist and moreover, *mutawātir* in the books of Sunni, not on theirs. It is safe for us to completely refute their argument that compromised state of belief banished the reports on Imamate.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

To conclude, the terms for the receiver of a *mutawātir* reports; the non-existent of knowledge regarding the report before one receive it, and the non-compromised state of belief, are nothing more than a single-angled argument, aimed to give an answer to a creed that never existed. Furthermore, their terms are contradicting each other, so do their comments on the usage of these terms. Their method is an unfalsifiable, untestable and unscientific method. A good argument and scientific method should be well-testable and debatable, proven by valid historical proofs, and backed by testable theories. If a fact cannot be proven scientifically, then its existence is denied. A stern belief in it, thus, is nothing more than fictional, not factual, as in this case, the belief in the infallibility of the *Imams*.

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