

Zurārah ibn A‘yan

For centuries the Shī‘ah have claimed to be adherents to the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt and in particular the ‘school’ of the venerable Imām Ja‘far al-Şādiq. It is often postulated that the teachings of these Twelve Imāms are more worthy of adherence than any of the schools of the Ahl al-Sunnah; as these noble personalities in addition to being infallible and divinely appointed by the Almighty Rabb of the worlds are the direct decedents of the Beloved Prophet ﷺ, and were therefore more knowledgeable of his blessed Sunnah.

While this hypothesis might seem logically sound, its accuracy can only be ascertained after scrutinizing those who transmitted this sacred knowledge from the ‘infallible’ Imāms, because even though the knowledge and piety of the Imāms may be beyond question, the credibility of the transmitters are not. A fact which even the Shī‘ah cannot deny since none but the Imāms are deemed infallible, an integral tenet of Shī‘ī law.

We will in this series examine the status of these transmitters, which will be sufficient in proving the fallacy of the Shī‘ī hypothesis.

We begin with Zurārah ibn A‘yan.

Zurārah ibn A‘yan is one of the most famous and prolific Shī‘ī narrators. He is considered to be amongst the closest companions of Imām al-Bāqir and Imām Ja‘far al-Şādiq, and the Shī‘ah deem him to be amongst those regarding who consensus was reached to unquestioningly accept all they narrate.

They insist upon verifying this individual and grading all of his narrations as authentic, above any form of criticism. Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Najāshī states:

Zurārah ibn A‘yan is the leader of his companions in his era, their forerunner. He was a Qārī, Faqīh, and theologian.¹

He is one of the chief narrators of the Shī‘ī tradition and—more aptly—one of its chief architects. Abū al-Qāsim al-Khū‘ī states in his *Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*:

He narrated from Abu Ja‘far and the narrations he reported from him reach 1236. The number of narrations reported from him amount to 2094.²

‘Abd al-Ḥusayn al-Musawī quotes a narration, in his *al-Murāja‘āt*, ascribed to Imām Ja‘far al-Şādiq:

My father entrusted them with the lawful and the unlawful, and they were the carriers of his knowledge. Similarly, to me—today—they are the protectors of my secrets. The companions of my father are upon the truth and they are the stars of my Shī‘ah in life and death. Through them Allah exposes all *bid‘ah* (innovation); they rebut all devious plots of the schemers from this din and interpretations of the extremists...³

One would imagine that those showered with such high praise would be the ultimate paragons of virtue and honesty. The true custodians of the heavenly religion, who managed to achieve that which even those divinely appointed by the Almighty were unable to achieve, “*rebut all previous plots of the schemers from this din and interpretations of the extremists.*”

¹ *Rijāl al-Najāshī*, p. 165.

² *Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 7 p. 449.

³ *Al-Murāja‘āt*, p. 727.

A task which the formidable and brave *Asad Allāh al-Ghālib* ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib too was unable to achieve, and instead of correcting the wrongs of his predecessors and justly purifying dīn from their unwanted anomalies, sadly, he too was *forced* to follow the path of his predecessors and maintain the practices of the pious khulafā’ before him. Ni‘mat Allāh al-Jazā’irī writes in his *Anwar al-Nu‘māniyyah*:

When Amīr al-Mu‘minīn took the post of khalīfah he was unable to reveal the Qur’ān and to hide the other one, because in so doing there is an exposure of ugliness to those before him, like how he was unable to prevent Salāt al-Ḍuhā’. He was also unable to establish the kinds of Mut‘ah: Mut‘ah of Ḥajj and Mut‘ah of women...⁴

Nonetheless, the exaggeration in the statement of ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn is quite evident, an obvious ploy by the fabricators to lend credibility to their spurious fabrications. ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn goes on to state:

Verily we do not find any narrations supporting that which they ascribe to each of them: Zurārah ibn A‘yan, Muḥammad ibn Muslim, Mu‘min al-Ṭāq [better known as Shayṭān al-Ṭāq] and others like them, **despite extensive research and study**. It is but defiance, enmity, slander, and defamation.⁵

This is a shrewd tactic of the Shī‘ah, left with no escape they always resort to denial, even if the evidence be glaring before their eyes. Let us now assist ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn and his ilk of self-proclaimed scholars who were unable to find *any narrations supporting that which they ascribe to each of them*; namely that they were frauds, liars, and fabricators, **who were openly condemned by the infallible Imāms**.

Imām Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq asked **one of his Shī‘ah**, “When last did you see Zurārah?” “I haven’t seen him for a few days,” came the reply.

Imām Ja‘far then said, “Do not concern yourself with him, if he falls ill do not visit him, and if he dies do not attend his Janāzah.”

The narrator astonished by the Imāms harsh words asks, “Zurārah?” utterly amazed that the Imām would announce such condemnation for Zurārah, who had portrayed himself to be a close confidant of the Imām. Imām Ja‘far responded, “Yes! Zurārah:

زُرَّارَةٌ شَرٌّ مِّنَ الْيَهُودِ وَالنَّصَارَا وَمَنْ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ ثَلَاثُ الثَّلَاثَةِ

Zurārah is worse than the Jews and the Christians, and those who say that Allah is but one of a trinity.⁶

Compare the disparaging remarks of the infallible Imām against the hyperbole of ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn and his ilk, who attempt to do away with these narrations.

The Ahl al-Sunnah have always rejected the absurdities and fabrications of these falsifiers; far-fetched is it that the Noble Family would have uttered such profanities, as has been ascribed to them by these imposters. The Ahl al-Bayt made public their disgust in the strongest terms, absolving themselves from the likes of these liars:

⁴ *Anwar al-Nu‘māniyyah*, vol. 2 pg. 360.

⁵ *Al-Murāja‘āt*, p. 731.

⁶ *Al-Kashshī* p. 160; *Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl*, 1/443.

لَعَنَ اللهُ زُرَّارَةَ

May the curse of Allah be upon Zurārah!⁷

Imām Ja‘far would say, repeating it three times, signalling him out for fabricating against him, saying:

كَذَّبَ عَلَيَّ وَاللهُ

By Allah, he has lied upon me.⁸

Imām Ja‘far also said, “No one has brought innovation into Islam as Zurārah has, may Allah curse him.”⁹

It is a fundamental tenet of Shī‘ah faith that the Imām is infallible and the sole source of guidance in all matters of life. Whether it be religious, political, or social; no one has the authority to render his own opinion, let alone belie the Imām. This tenet of the Shī‘ah was obviously lost on Zurārah, yet another sign of his impudence.

It has been reported that once a group of the Shī‘ah were discussing aspects pertaining to Ḥalāl and Ḥarām, Zurārah amongst them. He then forwarded his own personal opinion regarding a matter on which he was asked, “Is this based on your own opinion or from narration?”

He haughtily replied, “I know better! Are not some opinions better than narration?”¹⁰

Today the Shī‘ah badger us over the necessity to follow the Ja‘farī faith—which is the legacy of individuals such as Zurārah—claiming that no other opinion has validity before that of the Imām. It is obvious that Zurārah did not hold the same view as they do.

The next narration puts things into greater perspective and will illustrate the degree to which Zurārah regarded his own opinion as better than others. ‘Īsā ibn Manṣūr, Abū Usāmah al-Shihām and Ya‘qūb al-Aḥmar all narrate:

We were sitting in the company of Imām Ja‘far when Zurārah entered and asked, “Ḥakam ibn ‘Uyaynah has reported from your father that he said, ‘One should read Maghrib other than in Muzdalifah [during Ḥajj].’”

Imām Ja‘far answered, “My father never said this, Ḥakam has lied upon my father.”

Zurārah then left while he was saying, “**I do not think that Hakam lied upon his father.**”¹¹

One of the architects of the Shī‘ah faith, whose opinion is so weighty, so much better, that it even surpasses that of the Imām!

⁷ *Al-Kashshī*, p. 147; *Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*, 7/141; *Tanqīh*, 1/443.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Al-Kashshī*, p. 149.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

We believe the Ahl al-Bayt to be pious and devout men of Allah, who were true in action and speech. They never uttered anything contrary to the noble Qur'ān or the true din followed by the majority of the Ummah, known as the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah.

The honourable Imāms of the Ahl al-Bayt tried their best to admonish these deviants but sadly their pleas fell upon deaf ears. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Qasīr narrates:

Imām Ja'far said to me, "Go to Zurārah and Burayd and ask them, 'What is this bid'ah you have innovated? Do you not know that Nabī ﷺ said every innovation is deviation?'"

When this message reached Zurārah he replied nonchalantly:

"He has granted me ability and he does not know," as for Burayd he said, "I will never retract what I have said ever."¹²

The lack of remorse shown by Zurārah even after having been exposed by the Imām hints to a much **sinister agenda**, one whose sole purpose was the destruction of dīn, sentiments which were echoed by the words of the Imām when the progeny of A'yan was mentioned in his presence. He said:

By Allah! The progeny of A'yan does not intend except to gain supremacy.¹³

The repeated disparagement and unmasking by Imām Ja'far left its mark on Zurārah and he began to voice his *dislike* for the venerable Imām. Ibn Maskan relates that once Zurārah said in a small gathering, "May Allah have mercy upon Abu Ja'far [al-Bāqir, the father of Imām Ja'far]! As for Ja'far verily my heart has turned away from him." Ibn Maskan relates that he enquired what had led Zurārah to make such a statement and he was told, "Ja'far has exposed his lies, this is what has prompted him to say this."¹⁴

Zurārah in turn resorted to disparaging Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq and would say:

I used to regard Ja'far to be more knowledgeable than what he actually is.¹⁵

However, the lies continued and the fabrication factory was not shut down. The unwary, unscrupulous, and foolish continued to swallow these deceits. And if ever any intelligent person questioned this legacy or confronted Zurārah with the damning statements of the Imām, *Taqiyyah* was always there as a life line. The renowned Muḥaddith Abū 'Abd Allāh Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī relates the narration of Ibn Sammāk in his *Mizān*:

I set out to perform Ḥajj and Zurārah ran into me at Qādisiyah. He told me he had a favour to ask and when I asked what it was, he said, "When you meet Ja'far ibn Muḥammad then pass on my greetings and ask him if I am of the dwellers of Jahannam or residents of Jannah."

I refused to do this favour for him but he insisted, "He has knowledge of this," he said and continued to urge me until I submitted.

When I met Ja'far ibn Muḥammad and conveyed the message of Zurārah, he replied, "He is from the dwellers of Jahannam!"

This alarmed me [as how could he have knowledge of this] so I asked, "How do you know this?"

¹² *Al-Kashshī*, p. 148; *Tanqīh*, 1/444.

¹³ *Al-Kashshī* p. 149.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

He replied, “Whoever claims that another has such knowledge, such a person is from the dwellers of Jahannam.”

When I returned home and informed him that Imām Ja‘far had said he is from the dwellers of Jahannam, he replied, “He practiced Taqiyyah with you.”¹⁶

These narrations establish the unreliability of Zurārah and the range of his deceptions, and it is the narrations of this individual as well as the other fabricators—such as Jābir al-Ju‘fī, Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam, Abū Baṣīr, etc.—that is now called the “Madh-hab of the Ahl al-Bayt”, which the Shī‘ah so desire that we follow. The reality, however, is that they have taken their faith from known liars, fabricators and heretics, who were condemned by the Ahl al-Bayt.

Most certainly Imām Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq has spoken the truth:

We the Ahl al-Bayt are truthful, and have not been spared from liars who fabricate against us and tarnish our honesty with their falsehood.¹⁷

¹⁶ *Mizān al-Itidāl*, 2/69.

¹⁷ *Al-Kashshī*, p. 100; *Tanqīh*, 2/183; *Qāmūs al-Rijāl*, 5/462.