

## The Blasphemy by Death of Ignorance, Based on Acknowledgement Hadith

Seyyed Hossein, Seyyed Mousavi and Hassan Shojae' Bahar  
Department of Islamic Studies, Faculty of Technology and Islamic Studies,  
University of Ferdowsi of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran

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**Abstract:** Imam's acknowledgement Hadith is one of the continuous valid Hadiths between Shiites and Sunnis. This has been focused by the researchers due to a multidimensional issue. But, a significant question is that what is meant by "death of ignorance"? Responding the question, two perspectives have been raised by researchers; some believe that the "death of ignorance" means dying while being infidel, hypocrite and unbeliever; others say it means dying while being in the state of sin and rebellion but not blasphemy. Researcher believes that, we can't excommunicate someone due to his/her ignorance toward the present Imam.

**Key words:** Acknowledgement Hadith, ignorance death, knowledge of Imam (knowing the present Imam), excommunication, death

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### INTRODUCTION

According to Shiites acknowledgement geometry, knowing the present Imam is of particular importance. Because, the Shiite knows Imam as the perfect man who is the means of divine grace and through communicates with him, a correct understanding of God and other principles of belief fundamentals is possible in the acknowledgement Hadith, we read the Holy Prophet (PBUH) saying: "If someone dies while not knowing his present Imam, s/he has been died ignorant". After death of Holy Prophet, we see a large group of Muslims ignored the statement while are believers to the principles of Islam and have fulfilled their obligations and abide to them. But, what about these people? Is it possible to excommunicate them based on the surface structure of Hadith and define them as outsider of Islam explanation and examination of this issue is of the objectives of this study.

**Statement of the problem:** Imam's acknowledgement Hadith is one of the agreed hadiths by Shiite and Sunni, different aspects of it has been studied carefully. Articles written on this subject are as follows:

- The validity of the hadith "Who died not knowing his present Imam has been died ignorant" from religious sect's perspective, author: Abdul Majid Zahadat
- The comparative examination and semantics of the Hadith "Who died not knowing his present Imam has been died ignorant", author: Mohammadreza Kashefi

- The reasons of the Hadith "who died not knowing his present Imam, has been died ignorant" from religious sect's perspective, author: Abdul Majid Zahadat
- The origins of the Hadith "who died not knowing his present Imam has been died ignorant" extracted from "knowing the present Imam or rescuing from ignorant death", author: a group of Hawza scholars and university professors

Two books have been written on this field including:

- "The recognition of Imam or being freed from ignorant death", author: Mehdi Faghieh Imani
- "Exploring the acknowledgement Hadith from the perspective of religious sect", author: Abdul Majid Zahadat

In the Hadith of acknowledgement, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) resembles the death of someone who does not know his present Imam as death of ignorance. Therefore, this could be happened in all ages, i.e., until the Day of Judgment, whenever someone does not know his present Imam, his death would be considered as death of ignorance. The main question of this research is that what is ignorance meant in this hadith is it infidelity is it rebellion. The issue will be explained in this study.

### THE VALUE AND CREDIBILITY OF THE HADITH OF IMAM ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The first important point which should be considered is the validity of Hadith. It is known as a successive

Hadith by Shia and Sunni perspectives, however, the scholars have discussed this issue with different interpretations that can ultimately pose the concept of frequency. Views of some scholars have been pointed out in the following as an example:

- Sheikh Mufid (413 AD) calls this Hadith as successive as he states “Hadith of Imam’s acknowledgement is successive”
- Sheikh Abul-FathRazi (the early of 6th century) mentions the Hadith as one of principles of Islam and one of the rules of Faith and writes, “Who accepts that God has left the Universe without an Imam! Every time needs an Imam as subjects requires a ruler, sheep requires shepherd and you should understand that hadith of Imam’s knowledge is an Islamic principle and a rule of Faith”
- Tavoos and Musa (1997) calls the citation of the Hadith as concerted
- Ameli, Nabati believes that, it is the consensus of the Muslims
- And a number of scholars also agreed upon it
- Allama Majlisi, the second (nd) believes that such hadith are enormous and stipulates the frequency of the narrative between particular and common people (Allama Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir Ibn Mohammed Taqi, nd; ibid, nd)
- And the late Seyed Mohammad Tabatabai Karbalayi in 1850 has considered the Hadith as acceptable by All (Tabatabai Karbalayi, Seyed Mohammad, nd)

#### **VARIOUS CITATIONS OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT HADITH AT PUBLIC RESOURCES**

In addition to various citations in Shia hadith sources, the Hadith of Acknowledgment had been cited in Sunni resources with different phrases, such as:

- “Who died not knowing his present Imam has been died ignorant” Tarigh and Hasan (1986), the exact term as “who died not knowing his Imam”
- “The one who dies without obeying Imam, he has been died as ignorant people”. Zaid Ibn Ali, Nd, Abu Ja’far Al-skafy in 1981, the exact term as “who died not knowing his Imam” Abu Ali Almoseli, Nd: 13, 366 (Habban, 1993; Hadid, 2000), the exact term as “Who died not knowing his Imam”, Heisami)
- “Who died not knowing his present Imam has been died ignorant: everyone who dies without obeying the present Imam, he has died by the death of ignorance” Hadid (2000)

#### **THE FEATURES OF THE AGE OF IGNORANCE**

To understand the concept of Acknowledgement Hadith, it is better to be aware of the features and characteristics of the Age of Ignorance. So, some of the features and characteristics of people at the Age of Ignorance are as follows.

#### **FEATURES OF THE AGE OF IGNORANCE IN THE QUR’AN**

Some of the features of the age of ignorance in the Holy Quran are as:

Neglecting the promises and threats of God and denying them based on the verse “after (the excitement) of the distress, he sent down calm on a band of you overcome with slumber while another band was stirred to anxiety by their own feelings, moved by wrong suspicions of Allah-suspicions due to ignorance” (Al-E-Imran, 154)”

Making judgments based on lust based on the verse:

“And this (he commands): judge thou between them by what Allah hath revealed and follow not their vain desires but beware of them lest they beguile thee from any of that (teaching) which Allah hath sent down to thee and if they turn away be assured that for some of their crime, it is Allah’s purpose to punish them and truly most men are rebellious. Do they then, seek after a judgment of (the days of) ignorance? But, who for a people whose faith is assured can give better judgment than Allah? “Maedeh, 50”

Recklessness and Shamelessness of women, based on the verse:

“And stay quietly in your houses and make not a dazzling display, like that of the former times of ignorance” (Aa-Ahzab, 33)”

Zeal and prejudice and insist on little information and unfounded demands based on the verse:

“While the unbelievers got up in their hearts heat and cant-the heat and cant of ignorance” (Al-Fath, 26)”

On other verses of the Quran, another features have been cited as hatred among tribes and ethnic groups (Al-Imran, 103), depriving women from inheritance (Al-Fajr, 17 and 19), maintaining spouses in spite of personal displeasure because of benefiting inheritance

(Al-Nesa, 19), considering spouses as legacy (ibid), the exploitation and profiteering from slave girls by forcing them into prostitution and corruption (Al-Noor, 33), exploitation of women (Al-Nesa, 19), expanding idolatry (Al-Maedeh, 90), scarifying for idols (Al-Maedeh, 3) and take refuge to elves to avoid problems and disease.

#### **FEATURES OF THE AGE OF IGNORANCE IN THE WORDS OF IMAM ALI (AS)**

Imam Ali (AS) describes features and characteristics of age of ignorance in several sermon of Nahj Al-Balagha including:

**Sermon 1:** In those days, the people of earth are scattered nations some likened God to the creature and some worship other than Him.

**Sermon 26:** God sent the Prophet when You, the Arab Nation had the worst religion, your residence was among hard rocks and venomous snakes, you drunk dark (dirty) water, eat violent food, kill each other and cut relationships; the idols had been installed in your population and you had been tied up to sins (ibid., nd).

**Sermon 94:** God sent the Holy Prophet when people were astray, obeying intrigue lust grabbed the wisdom and arrogance and selfishness made them stumble (Ibid., nd).

**Sermons 191, 196 and 198:** I testify that Muhammad is His servant and messenger. The God sent him while the proofs of the guidance was old and the clear way of religion had been destroyed (Ibid., nd).

Generally, we can conclude that: above-mentioned characteristics are of the most basic cultural and ideological features of people at the age of ignorance by Imam Ali (AS); these features have been mentioned in the Holy Quran and they may happen in all ages and times.

#### **THE FEATURES OF IGNORANCE AGE FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF SCHOLARS**

Scientists have considered the characteristics of the pre-Islamic era/age of ignorance as follows: At the age of ignorance, the people had neither the knowledge of God nor His Messenger and the religion's principles (Allama Majlesi, Mohammad Baqir Ibn Mohammed Taqi (c) nd). Features like polytheism and disbelief to monotheism and prophecy (Professor Shahid Motahari, nd) being honored to ancestors, feeling arrogance and all kinds of other evil were existed between them. The best interpretation of their situation had been described by Jafar Ibn Abi Talib

said to the Negus: "O' king, we were ignorant, we worshiped idols, ate dead, did ugly acts, cut relations; our powerful people abuses weak ones. According to a sacred source, pre-Islamic Arabs had various religions and beliefs: Zindiq and Moataleh at Quraysh, Mazdak and Zoroastrianism at Tamim, Judaism and Christianity at Ghassan and worshiping idols in other tribes and groups.

#### **THE INTERPRETATION OF IGNORANCE BY LINGUISTS**

Most linguists have described ignorance as opposed to science, the age of ignorance as the age of essence, ignorance as an attribute and the state of Arab people before Islam like.

Farahidi has considered ignorance as against science, idiotism as doing something out of ignorance and the ignorance of foolish people before Islam. Sahib Ibn Abbad interprets ignorance as the opposite of knowing and idiotism as the time of essence.

Ibn Faris says that ignorance has two meanings; one is opposite to science and the other is equal to foolishness and unrest. Azdi also knows ignorance as the opposite of science.

Ragheb interprets ignorance as asininity of three kinds: first-emptiness of soul and mind from science; secondly-believing in something contrary to what it is; third-doing something contrary to what should be done.

Jazri and Mohammad (1988) interprets ignorance as avarice, fear and zeal and teaching what is not required; he also describes idiotism as an attribute and the state of pre-Islam Arabs.

Describing "ignorance", Ibn Manzur interprets ignorance as the opposite of science, "idiotism" equal to "patience" and in one case, he implicitly interprets idiotism against "reason" as describes Ignorance as the time of essence, i.e., the Arab's state before Islam. Tarihi describes ignorance as opposed to knowledge, idiotism as an attribute and the state of Arabs before Islam.

Bostani translates ignorant as uneducated and stupid and ignorance as the state of ignorance and idolatry that existed among pre-Islam Arabs. Qarashi (contemporary) knows ignorance as asininity and ignorant as stupid and oblivious about affairs.

Concluding the views of linguistics shows that the literal, famous and popular meaning of ignorance is anti-science but, there are other things such as cerebral style and unrest, ignorant and uneducated, stupid and fool, indifferent to matters of faith, believing in counter-fact, doing anything against reality, patience and reason. And, the prevalent meaning of ignorance is the state of pre-Islamic Arabs.

## THE OPINIONS OF THE SCHOLARS INTERPRETING THE DEATH OF IGNORANCE

Pondering linguists' opinions shows that there are two broad views toward the "death of ignorance". The first view describes death of ignorance as death of disbelief, polytheism and idolatry. The second view describes it as dying ignorant.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF TWO VIEWS

**First vision:** Those who interpret "death of ignorance" as the death of disbelief, polytheism and idolatry. This group of scientists has used different interpretations for "death of ignorance" including: infidelity, hypocrisy, denying Islam and entering hell. In this study, we explain the views in details. Some commentators describe "the death of ignorance" as "death of infidelity" such as:

In Al-Shafi Abstract, Sheikh Toosi writes in the commentary of "the death of ignorance": "it is not other than death on blasphemy". After narrating hadith of Imam's acknowledgement, Ibn Shahr Ashoob follows Sheikh Toosi and states that the death of ignorance is nothing but, death on blasphemy.

Allama Majlisi (nd) also, states after mentioning hadith of Imam's acknowledgement that the death of ignorance is nothing but death on blasphemy.

Other commentators have taken this view including: Kahlany San'ani, Muhammad Ibn Ismail in 1960, Hashemi Khoi and Mirza Habibollah in 1979; Milani, Seyed Ali in 1992; Ibn Adim, Omar Ibn Ahmad Al-Halabi Aqeeli, nd; Bahrani, Sheikh Ali in 1984; Haghi Brorsavi Esmaeel, Nd; Sadr-O-Lmotealehin, Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim in 1987; Molla Saleh Mazandarani in 2009; Allama Amini in 1977.

Some commentators interpreting "the death of ignorance" as denying Islam say: "ignorance about present Imam is equal with denying Islam". Such as: Sheikh Mufid (413) in "Al-Afsah" states that hadith of Imam's acknowledgement asserts that not knowing the present Imam is just like denying Islam.

In his book Al-Ahkam, Imam Yahya Ibn Hussein interprets and explains that hadith of Imam's acknowledgement; he notes, "I a man live at an age with a risen, pure, pious and wise Imam but, he does not know him and help him but to leave and humiliate him and dies in this condition, he will die outside Islam nations and in death of ignorance" (Imam Yahya Ibn Hussein, nd).

Other commentators have taken this view including: Ibn Batrigh, Yahya Ibn Hasan in 1986; Abolfath Razi, Hussein Ibn Ali in 1987; Mar'ashi Seyed Noor-allah in 1988; Mozafar Najafi and Mohammad Hassan in 2001 (Tavoos and Musa, 1997; Hussin, 2007).

Some commentators have interpreted "death of ignorance" as going to the hell and experiencing an inevitable loss including: Bahrani (1983) writes, "the known hadith of Imam's acknowledgement indicates to the fact that denying the Imams requires death in ignorance condition that leads to going into hell".

While mentioning the discussion between Alavi and Abbasi, the contemporary thinker and author of Mawafiq al-Shia, Ahmad Miyanji, notes that according to hadith of Imam's acknowledgement every body who knows his age Imam and dies, he has died as Muslims but every body who does not know him and dies, he has died as death in ignorance and he will be risen in hell with the people lived in ignorance.

Other commentators have chosen this perspective: Sadeghi Tehrani Mohammad in 1986; Milani and Seyed Mohammad Hadi (Muharram, 1987).

Although, there are different interpretations, but all commentators have one thing in common: excommunicating someone who is ignorant to the present Imam. To prove their claim, they refer to "acknowledgement Hadith" and similar quotes.

**The second vision:** Those who resembled "die of ignorance" as dying out of foolishness. Some commentators have interpreted "the death of ignorance" as the death of sinful and rebellious people saying: "death of ignorance means the death of guilty people of Islamic nation and resembling the death of someone who has not known his present Imam to death of ignorance is because of his confusion and lack of obeyed Imam. For example:

Ibn Hajar (ad) Fath Al-Bari says: "By the death of ignorance, it means dying like astray people who hadn't have obeyed Imam.

Since, they were not informed about this subject. The hadith does not aim to imply that one who does not know Imam will die as an infidel. Nevertheless, he dies as he is knows sinner. He continues, "of course, it is likely that analogizing death of one who does not know Imam to the death in ignorance is apparent in this case, it means he will die like ignorance-death although, he has not been ignorant (Ibn Hajar, AD).

Al-Eini (855) also writes, "the meaning of death is ignorance or the death of ignorant nation is noted because people did not know Imam and did not follow an Imam in ignorance age. It does not mean that he dies as an infidel but, he dies as he is sinner and guilty".

Other commentators have chosen this perspective: Shokany, Alnovy, Jalal al-Din, Manavi, Moghineh and Mohammad Javad, Sheikh Seyed Sabegh Nd, Darvish, Ahmed Ibn Abdul Razzaq Nd.

## **REVIEW OF BLASPHEMY-RESEMBLING PERSPECTIVE**

Tradition, knowledge and various similar narratives clearly emphasize on the importance and necessity of obeying Imam and accepting his authority on Islamic world but regarding its effects on excommunication ignorant people many more consideration is needed because.

First, if it is possible to excommunicate ignorant people based on “acknowledgement Hadith”, so, it must be possible to condemn another Muslims based on other hadiths; just like someone who dies without having a will based on “who died not having a will has been died ignorant by Sheikh Mufid, Muhammad ibn Muhammad in 1992 and someone who is ignorant to Hojjat al-Islam based on “who died not knowing Hojjat al-Islam has been died as Jewish or Christians and some scholars in 1984 and someone who deliberately leave the prayer based on: “who deliberately leave the prayer, so is disbeliever” (Jomhoor and Mohammad, 1984).

Second, sometimes “blasphemy” is used against “Islam” and sometimes against “faith” and they are different. The meaning of blasphemy is such Hadiths is equal with faith not Islam because, the relation between Islam and faith is general and absolute; meaning every faithful person is Muslim but, every Muslim isn’t necessarily faithful. Some scholars have noted it, including Saheb Javaher that says: “the news about the blasphemy of deniers of Imam Ali (AS) refers to blasphemy against faith.

Sheikh Ansari in 1902 also, says that concluding narratives and quotes about this issue refers to blasphemy against faith but not blasphemy against Islam.

Seyed Mohsen Hakim in 2011, Pretext in 1983 and Imam Khomeini in 1989 had similar views with Sheikh Ansari (Imam Khomeini).

Third, there are various credible hadiths that accept opponents’ Islam if they don’t insist on their wrong belief and don’t mean to show malice reactions including: there is a detailed narrative in Kafi Principle summarized as follows: “three companions of Imam Sadiq namely Hashim Saheb Al-Barid, Abu Khattab, Muhammad ibn Muslim disagree about the opponents of Imam’s position in Islam. Hashim believes that the ignorant and deniers of Imam are infidel but, Abu-Khattab insists on having a proof to call deniers as infidel and Muhammad Ibn Muslim did insist on the realization of denial and its repetition. During Hajj, the confrontation of these three was referred to Imam Sadeq (AS). Focusing on opponents’ belief in monotheism, prophecy, Islamic religious traditions, Imam

repeatedly expressed his surprise by this view and said *allahuia* then, warned them not to excommunicate ignorant people to the issue of present Imam and implicitly confirmed the view of Muhammad ibn Muslim.

In Bihar al-Anwar, there is a detailed dialogue between Imam Ali (AS) and Ash’ath Ibn Qaysin which Imam answers Ash’ath saying: “the one who believes in unity of God and the Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) but is doubtful about Islam, not knowing the caliphate and denies the present Imam, he is recognized as oppressed Muslim, may God guide him (Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir Ibn Mohammed Taqi (A) in 1983).

Fourth, due to the deficiency of knowledge among Muslims, we can’t confirm the issue of “believe in present Imam” as the principle of religion and excommunicate a large number of ignoring Muslims. But, we can distinguish between the principles of Islam and principles of Shiite as some scholars have distinguished justice and pontificate as principles of Shiite and believe that the Pontificate ignorant isn’t denier of Islam:

Mohammad Hossein Kashef Al-Ghata in 1994 says: The one, who believe in Pontificate in the sense of Shiite, is considered as a complete believer (Shiite) by Muslims; it doesn’t mean that the denier of Pontificate is also the denier of Islam.

Imam Khomeini in 1989 says: the nature of Islam is nothing more than testifying the oneness of God, believe in the mission of the Prophet and also, the resurrection. Other issue including belief in the authority of the Imams don’t interfere in the nature of Islam.

Ayatollah Khomeini in 1992, one of the largest Shiite scholars, says: if someone believes in the principles of Islam but, rejects the principles of Shiism, isn’t infidel; he is only is not considered Shiite.

## **CONCLUSION**

The acknowledgement Hadith is a successive Hadith accepted by sects, repeated in Hadith sources by different words and quotes. All commentators are agreed on the purpose and meaning of the ignorance time (pre-Islam period) and there is no disagreement in this matter.

Responding to the question that “what is the purpose and meaning of the death of ignorance”, there are disagreements; some analogize infidelity as death of ignorance and others resemble the death of ignorance as rebel and aren’t agreed to excommunication of these group of Muslims.

Researcher believes that the purpose of “ignorance” in the Hadith of acknowledgement is defined as an assimilation and punishment for ignoring the significance of knowing the present Imam. Unfortunately, due to lack

of knowledge of the majority of Muslims about the status and position of present Imam and also lack of necessity of belief in Imam as a principle for being Muslim by a large number of Muslims as well as many quotations, it is not possible to interpret the Hadith of acknowledgement as exact sample of infidelity and excommunicate ignorant propel to the present Imam.

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