

**Mu`āwīyah ibn Abī Sufyān  
and  
The tradition of cursing**

*-from Sunni Hadith Literature-*

*Syed Hasnain Bukahri  
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## The tradition of cursing by Mu`awīyah

The tradition of cursing by Mu`awīyah ibn Abī Sufyān requires a separate study, *in-shā`-Allah*, but in this limited space, we will only utilize sufficient material to support a particular point. It is reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that mu`awīyah **ordered** Sa`d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ to revile Imam Alī. The Ḥadīth as reported by various sources including Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim states the following:

أَمَرَ مُعَاوِيَةَ ابْنُ أَبِي سُفْيَانَ سَعْدًا، فَقَالَ: مَا مَنَعَكَ أَنْ  
تَسُبَّ أَبَا التُّرَابِ؟<sup>(1)</sup> فَقَالَ: أَمَا مَا ذَكَرْتُ ثَلَاثًا قَالَهُنَّ لَهُ رَسُولُ  
اللَّهِ ﷺ، فَلَنْ أَسُبَّهُ، لَأَنْ تَكُونَ لِي وَاحِدَةً مِنْهُنَّ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ  
حُمْرِ النَّعَمِ.

Mu`awīyah ibn Abī Sufyān **ordered** Sa`d Then Mu`awīyah said: what prevents you from cursing Abū al-Turāb? He replied: Due to three things Rasūl Allah ﷺ said about him hence *I will never curse him....*

Mu`awīyah **ordered** and then after Sa`d's refusal Mu`awīyah asks why Sa`d does not curse Alī. It is obvious that the practice of cursing was instituted in Mu`awīyah's reign otherwise why would he be surprised that Sa`d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ does not curse? It was the norm in his reign to curse and abuse Imam Alī. In grammar, there is a mechanism of ḥadhf and maḥdhūf (Ellipsis) and textually it is frequently used in the Qur`ān and Sunnah. The context is so obvious that the ellipsis is utilized. The context here is about cursing and its refusal by Sa`d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ is obvious that the order is related to cursing. Furthermore, of the tradition of cursing in Umayyad times as initiated by Mu`awīyah ibn Abī Sufyān, permeated their state organs. Consider another report from Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, where another Ṣaḥābī Sahl ibn Sa`d is **ordered** to curse Imam Alī

عَنْ سَهْلِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ، قَالَ: اسْتَعْمَلَ عَلِيَّ الْمَدِينَةَ رَجُلٌ مِنْ  
أَهْلِ مَرْوَانَ، قَالَ فَدَعَا سَهْلَ بْنَ سَعْدٍ، فَأَمَرَهُ أَنْ يَسْتَمَّ عَلَيْهِ،  
قَالَ فَأَبَى سَهْلٌ، فَقَالَ لَهُ: أَمَا إِذْ آتَيْتَ فَقُلْ: لَعَنَ اللَّهُ أَبَا

Medinan governor of Marwanids called Sahl ibn Sa`d and ordered him to abuse Alī but Sahl refused. To which the Marwanid said that just send la`nah upon him by his name Abū al-Turāb.....

The Umayyad practice of cursing Imam Ali was very much an institutionalised practice and a fuller study of the tens of aḥādīth and unanimous agreement of classical historians will be presented at a time in future. However, we are here just concerned with the single report in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim in which Mu`awīyah ibn Abī Sufyān ordered Sa`d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ to curse.

The ḥadīth scholars who tried to cover up the order of cursing Imam Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib by Mu`āwīyah ibn Sufyān had to doctor and engineer the text of ḥadīth to exonerate him and mask the obvious import of the ḥadīth. In following, Consider some examples from classical times to this day about how they changed the text of the ḥadīth to derive a meaning which covers up the cursing of Mu`āwīyah. Aḥmed al-Duraqī (d. 248), an early muḥaddith, in his work Musnad of Sa`d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ reports the ḥadīth from identical narrators and himself being the last one in the chain. See how he doctors the text:

١٩ - حدثنا أحمد، حدثنا قتيبة بن سعيد<sup>(١)</sup>، حدثنا حاتم بن إسماعيل<sup>(٢)</sup>، عن بُكَيْرِ بْنِ مَسْمَارٍ، عن عامر بن سعد بن أبي وقاص: عن أبيه، قال: **دَخَلَ سَعْدٌ عَلَيَّ رَجُلًا فَقَالَ: مَا يَمْنَعُكَ أَنْ تَسُبَّ أَبَا فَلَانٍ؟** فَقَالَ: أُمَّا مَا ذَكَرْتُ ثَلَاثًا قَالَهُنَّ لِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَلَنْ أُسَبَّهُ، لَنْ تَكُونَ لِي وَاحِدَةً مِنْهُنَّ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ حُمْرِ النَّعَمِ. سمعت رسول الله ﷺ

Sa`d came to see a **man** and he asked him what prevents you from cursing fulān?..

Did you see? Instead of the name of Mu`āwīyah ibn Abī Sufyān, al-Duraqī (d. 248) changes it to a **man**. If it was not obvious that Mu`āwīyah ordered to curse Imam Ali then why change it? This is, unfortunately, dishonesty. And this ḥadīth scholar was a contemporary of Bukhari and Muslim. This doctoring is in itself an admission that it is obvious that Muawīyah's order was to curse Imam Ali. Furthermore, See also from earliest of times what al-Ḥafīz al-Bāghandī (d. 312) does as reported in Ibn Asākir:

مر معاوية - وقال الباغندي: **مر رجل - بسعد فقال: ما يمنعك أن تسب أبا تراب؟** فقال: - زاد ابن مروان: سعد. وقالوا: - أما ما ذكرت ثلاثاً قالهن رسول الله ﷺ فلا أسبّه، لأن تكون لي واحدة منهن أحب إلي من حمر النعم:

al-Bāghandī said: a **man** asked sa`d: what prevents you from cursing Abū al-Turab?...

Unfortunately, again this is cheating to exonerate Mu`āwīyah ibn Abī Sufyān. If it did not mean that Mu`āwīyah was guilty of cursing Imam Ali then why would these ḥadīth scholars change and doctor the text? Some changed the name of Mu`āwīyah to cover up the crime and others changed the word *amara* he ordered to *qāla* he said or asked, in order to advance a far-fetched interpretation. al-Nawawī in his commentary on Sahīḥ Muslim does that and also *admits* that we ought to interpret the text away from its manifest meaning. He changes and also presents the farfetched interpretation to exonerate Mu`āwīyah ibn Abī Sufyān and when he comes to the other ḥadīth in which a Umayyad governor of Medina orders a Ṣahābī to curse Imam Ali as mentioned above, al-Nawawī just passes over it without comment. However, here is his change of text from *amara* to *qaala*:

(١) قوله: ( أن معاوية قال: لسعد بن أبي وقاص ما معك أن سب أبا تراب؟) قال العلماء: الأحاديث الواردة التي في ظاهرها دخل على صحابي يجب تأويلها قالوا: ولا يقع في روايات الثقات إلا ما يمكن تأويله

He (Imam Muslim) reported that Mu`āwīyah said to Sa`d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ.....

Furthermore, this trend of hacking the ḥadīth to protect Mu`āwīyah continues to this day. For example, Ibn Hādī al-Wādī`ī in his work Tuḥfah al-Mujīb removes the name of Mu`āwīyah as the culprit from the ḥadīth and blames it on other Umayyads but retains the rest of the ḥadīth:

ودعا بعض الأمويين سعد بن أبي وقاص ليسب عليا، فما فعل، قالوا: ما منعك أن تسب عليا؟ قال: أما ما ذكرت ثلاثا قالهن له رسول الله ﷺ فلن أسبهن؛ لأن تكون لي واحدة منهن أحب إلي من حمر النعم سمعت رسول الله

Some Umayyads called Sa`d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ to curse Ali and when he refused then they asked, what prevents you from cursing Ali?....

This nāṣibī doctors the textual words and meaning to protect Mu`āwīyah from his crime though it is the same ḥadīth and he only changes the opening words and instead of Mu`āwīyah's name says some Umayyads cursed themselves and called Sa`d to curse but he refused. At least, there is admission that Sa`d was called upon to curse Imam Ali by Umayyads to which he refused. The actual meaning and episode is replaced by the word Umayyads to mask the identity of Mu`āwīyah.

It obvious for any objective and honest person that Mu`āwīyah ordered to curse Imam Alī and that it was a prevalent practice in his reign down to Umar ibn Abdul Aziz who eventually put an end to the practice. These few examples, on just one hadith only, are sufficient to make the point that the meaning of the text is that Mu`āwīyah ordered to curse Imam Alī and that is why these pro-Umayyad scholars tried various techniques to exonerate him by either removing Mu`āwīyah's name from the text or changing other words of the text. If that is not the case then why doctor the text?

چور کی داڑھی میں تنکا

On the other hand, scholars of ḥadīth have accepted that Mu`āwīyah ibn Sufyān cursed and made an order to curse Imam Ali in the ḥadīth of Sahīh Muslim and others. Even the Ameer of Nawāṣib of his times Ibn Taymīyyah (d. 728) accepted and states the ellipsis in his minhāj al-sunnah

عبد ودي. وأما حديث سعد لما أمره معاوية بالسب فإبي، فقال: ما منعك أن تسب علي بن أبي طالب؟ فقال: ثلاث قالهن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فلن أسبهن، لأن يكون لي واحدة منهن أحب إلي من حمر النعم. الحديث. فهذا حديث صحيح رواه مسلم في صحيحه<sup>(\*)</sup> وفيه

In the ḥadīth, Mu`āwīyah ordered Sa`d to curse Ali but he refused and Mu`āwīyah said what prevents you to curse Alī.....

Here, you have the admission even from the most unlikely quarters. Also the Sunnī Imam of hadith, Imam al-Sindi in his commentary on Ibn Majah states the truth and the meaning of the ḥadīth in Sahih Muslim and al-Tirmadhī:

١٢١ - قوله: (فقال منه) أي: نال معاويةً من علي ووقع فيه وسبه، بل أمر سعداً بالسب كما قيل في مسلم والترمذي. ومنشأ ذلك الأمور الدنيوية التي كانت بينهما، ولا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله،

Mu`āwīyah ordered Sa`d to curse Imam Ali as it is reported in Sahih Mulsim and Tirmadhī

Also Mulla Ali al-Qari al-Hanafi had no qualms about accepting the idea of Mu`āwīyah ordering to curse Imam Ali. He states in his *Mirqāt al-Maṣābīḥ*:

وائله وزاد في آخره: اللهم هؤلاء [أهل بيتي] وأهل بيتي أحق. وفي الرياض عن سعد قال: أمر معاوية سعداً أن يسب أبا تراب فقال: أما ما ذكرت ثلاثاً فالهن رسول الله ﷺ فلن أسبه لأن يكون في واحدة منهن أحب إلي من حمر النعم. سمعت رسول الله ﷺ يقول له،

Mu`āwīyah ordered Sa`d to curse Abū Turāb.....

In the interest of brevity on our discussion on this particular hadith as reported in Sahih Muslim, in conclusion, here it is from al-Ustadh Musa Shahīn, The Egyptian Sunni Muhaddith and author of voluminous commentary of Sahih Muslim, who unequivocally comments on the hadith and explains the ellipsis:

( أمر معاوية بن أبي سفيان سعداً ) المأمور به محذوف، لصيانة اللسان عنه، والتقدير: أمره بسب علي ﷺ، وكان سعد قد اعتزل الفتنة، [حرب علي مع خصومه]، ولعله اشتهر عنه الدفاع عن علي.

( فقال: ما منعك أن تسب أبا التراب )؟ معطوف على محذوف، والتقدير: أمر معاوية سعداً أن يسب علياً، فامتنع، فقال له: ما منعك؟

(Text: Mu`āwīyah Ibn Abī Sufyān ordered Sa`d) that which is ordered is maḥdhūf...it means Mu`awīyah ordered to curse Alī...(Text: What prevents you from cursing Abu al-Turab?) This is ma` tūf of the maḥdhūf in grammar and means Mu`awīyah ordered Sa`d to curse Alī but he refused then he asked what prevents you....

The meaning and implication according to common sense as well as in light of grammar, is obvious as learned Sunni Hadith scholar in his commentary on Sahih Muslim has further confirmed. Lastly, another voluminous commentary on Sahih Muslim called *al-Kawkab al-Wahhaj* by Muhammad al-Amīn bin Abdullah al-Shāfa`ī explains:

لسعيد بن المسيب (قال) عامر بن سعد: (أمر معاوية بن أبي سفيان) الأموي الشامي، الخليفة المشهور (سعداً) بن أبي وقاص رضي الله عنهما أي أمره بسب علي بن أبي طالب رضي الله عنه فأبى سعد أن يسب علياً (فقال) معاوية بن أبي سفيان لسعد: (ما منعك) يا سعد (أن تسب أبا التراب) علي بن أبي طالب حين أمرتك أن تسبه، وأبو

Mu`āwīyah ordered Sa`d means He ordered him to curse Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Sa`d refused to curse Alī so then Mu`āwīyah ibn Abī Suyān said to Sa`d: What prevents you from cursing Abu Turāb?.....

It stands to reason on account of doctoring the text and also explicit explanations of hadīth scholars that Mu`āwīyah cursed Imam Alī as the hadīth in Sahih Muslim states.

Furthermore, to substantiate this point further, consider another two authentic reports with identical reporters in the chain and reported by two different contemporary scholars. The Ṣiḥāḥ Sitta author, Abū Daūd (d. 275) in his Sunan masks and doctors the text to protect the identity of Mu`āwīyah but his contemporary al-Fakihī (d. 279) exposes the name. Their respective researchers authenticate both reports. First, see Abū Da`ūd as graded ṣaḥīḥ by al-Albanī in his grading of Sunan of Abū Da`ūd

٤٦٤٨ - (صحيح) حدثنا محمد بن العلاء، عن ابن إدريس، أنا حُصَيْن، عن هلال بن يساف، عن عبد الله بن ظالم المازني؛ وسفيان، عن منصور، عن هلال بن يساف، عن عبد الله بن ظالم المازني، - قال: ذكر سفيان رجلاً فيما بينه وبين عبد الله بن ظالم المازني - قال: سمعت سعيد بن زيد بن عمرو بن نُقيل قال: لما قدم فلانٌ إلى الكوفة أقام فلانٌ خطيباً، فأخذ بيدي سعيد بن زيد فقال: ألا تَرَى إلى هذا الظالم، فأشهدُ على التسعة أنهم في الجنة، ولو شهدتُ على العاشر لم يشم - قال ابن إدريس: والعرب تقول: أتم - قلت: ومن التسعة؟ قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ وهو على حراء: «أثبت حراء، إنه ليس عليك إلا نبيٌّ أو صدِّيقٌ أو شهيد» قلت: ومن التسعة؟ قال: رسول الله ﷺ، وأبو بكر، وعمر، وعثمان، وعلي، وطلحة، والزبير، وسعد بن أبي وقاص، وعبدالرحمن بن عوف، قلت: ومن العاشر؟ قال: فتلكاً هَتَيْتَ ثم قال: أنا. قال أبو داود: رواه الأشجعي، عن سفيان، عن منصور، عن هلال بن يساف، عن ابن حبان، عن عبد الله بن ظالم، بإسناده نحوه<sup>(١)</sup>. [«ابن ماجه» (١٣٤)].

When **someone** arrived in Kūfa then **someone** established a speaker to deliver a speech...

Now, compare this with the identical report in Akhbar Makkah by Imam al-Fākīhī (d. 279) and the report is graded ṣaḥīḥ by its researcher Abdul al-Malik ibn Abdullah and not by me.

٢٤٢٣ - حدثنا محمد بن أبان البلخي ، قال : ثنا عبد الله بن إدريس [الأودي] (٤) قال : أخبرني حصين بن عبد الرحمن السلمى ، عن هلال بن يساف ، عن عبد الله بن ظالم المازني ، قال : لما قدم معاوية - رضي الله عنه -

الكوفة ، أقام المغيرة بن شعبة خطباء يتناولون علياً - رضي الله عنه - ، وفي الدار سعيد بن زيد بن عمرو بن نفيل - رضي الله عنه - ، فأخذ بيدي لم قال : ألا ترى إلى هذا الظالم الذي يأمر بلعن رجل من أهل الجنة ، وأشهد على التسعة أنهم في الجنة ، ولو شهدت على العاشر لم آثم . قال : قلت : وما التسعة؟ قال : قال النبي ﷺ وهو على حراء : «أثبت حراء ، فإنه ليس عليك إلا نبي أو صديق أو شهيد» . قال : قلت : ما التسعة؟ قال رسول الله ﷺ وأبو بكر وعمر وعثمان وعلي وطلحة والزبير وسعد بن أبي وقاص وعبد الرحمن بن عوف ، قال : قلت : من العاشر؟ فتلكتا هنية ، وقال : أنا - رضي الله عنهم - .

٢٤٢٣ - إسناده صحيح .

رواه أحمد ١٨٧/١ ، وأبو داود ٢٩٣/٤ - ٢٩٤ ، والترمذي ١٨٦/٣ - ١٨٧ ، وابن ماجه ٤٨/١ ، والحاكم ٤٥٠/٣ - ٤٥١ ، وأبو نعيم في الحلية ٩٦/١ كلهم من طريق : حصين ، به . وقال الترمذي : حسن صحيح .

When Mu`awīyah arrived in Kūfa then Mughirah ibn Shu`bah established orators to curse Ali and in the palace was Sa`īd ibn Zayd, who grabbed him with his hands and said look at this Zālim who has ordered to send LA`NAH/Curse on the man who is from the people of Paradise.....

This protestor was the Sahabi Sa`īd ibn Zayd from the Asharah Mubashshirah who protested at the governor of Muawiyah; who had arranged a welcoming party for Mu`awīyah to Kufa to curse Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib. Abu Da`ud masked the names of the culprits but other objective scholars from the same time exposed their crime of cursing Imam Ali. The report is Sahih as vouched for by the researcher on marginalia of the book. The tradition of cursing permeated the Umayyad Dynasty and implemented as their propaganda tool to disparage Imam Alī ibn Abi Ṭālib. The tradition of cursing is detailed in all our classical works of history as well as ḥadīth works and requires a separate study. Lastly, in the interest of brevity, here is another supporting example from Ibn Abī al-`Āṣim (d. 287) in his kitāb al-Sunnah:

١٣٥٠ - حدثنا محمد بن موسى الشامي، حدثنا يزيد بن مهران الخباز، ثنا أبو بكر ابن عياش، عن الأجلح، عن حبيب بن أبي ثابت عن عبد الرحمن بن البيهقي قال: كنا عند معاوية فقام رجل فسب علي بن أبي طالب رضي الله عنه وسب وسب فقام سعيد بن زيد بن عمرو بن نفيل، فقال: يا معاوية ألا أرى يسب علي بين يديك ولا تغير فإني سمعت رسول الله ﷺ يقول: هو مني بمنزلة هارون من موسى.

People were gathered in the court of Mu`āwīyah and a man stood up and started to revile Alī ibn Abī Tālib (raḍī Allah anhu) and he cursed and he cursed then Sa`īd ibn Zayd ibn `Amr ibn Nufayl stood up and said: O Mu`āwīyah! Do I not see that in front of you Alī is being cursed and you are not stopping it. I have heard Rasūl Allah ﷺ say that the status of Alī to Me is like that of Harūn to Mūsa.

The practice of cursing Imam Alī was institutionalised to demean his eminence and status for the aforementioned reasons. It was the methodology of the propagandists that in order to glorify themselves, they operated in two ways: fabricate Ḥadīth in praise of Mu`āwīyah and disparage Imam Alī. This fraudulent scheme was designed to compensate for the lack of mu`āwīyah's significance among Ṣaḥābah and raise his religious standing to belittle Imam Alī.

**Note:** This extract is taken from my book "Jamal and Siffin" and it is published here separately to address this particular topic. Though, there is a huge amount of discussion on the institutionalised reviling and cursing of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (a) by the Umayyad dynasty and their founder, I have restricted this discussion from the hadith literature only.