

# ***THE AUTHORITY AND AUTHENTICITY OF HADJTH***

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## THE AUTHORITY AND PRESERVATION OF HADITH

### A Fundamental Duty

"Verily Allah had conferred a great favour on the Believers when he sent among them a messenger from among themselves, reciting unto them the *aayaat* of Allah, purifying them and teaching them the *kitaab* (Qur'aan) and *hikmah* (wisdom)."<sup>1</sup>

"It is he who has sent among the unlettered, a messenger from among themselves, to recite to them His revelations, purify them and teach them the *kitaab* (Qur'aan) and *hikmah* (wisdom)."<sup>2</sup>

"... as we have sent among you a messenger of your own, reciting to you Our revelations, purifying you and teaching you the *kitaab* (Qur'aan) and *hikmah* (wisdom) ...."<sup>3</sup>

Four fundamental duties of *risaalah* (prophethood) have been counted in the above *aayaat* viz.

1. Recitation (i.e. propagation of the words) of the Qur'aan.
2. Teaching of the Qur'aan.
3. Teaching of *hikmah* (literally translated as wisdom, its meaning would be explained later).
4. Purifying the Muslims.

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Aal 'Imraan, Aayah 164

<sup>2</sup> Surah Al-Jumu'ah, 2

<sup>3</sup> Surah Al-Baqarah, Aayah 151

The difference between recitation and teaching of the Qur'aan indicates that just as it was Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*'s duty to propagate the words of the Qur'aan, it was also his duty to explain the meaning of the Qur'aan.

The fact that explanation of the meaning of the Qur'aan was among the fundamental duties of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* is corroborated by the verse:

"And we have revealed unto you the Remembrance (Qur'aan) so that you may explain clearly to men what has been revealed for them, and that they may ponder."<sup>4</sup>

In fact there are numerous *aayaat* in the Qur'aan that cannot be understood without the *ahaadith* of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. A few examples are:

1. "He (i.e. the Rasul *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* frowned and turned away, because there came to him the blind man, But what could tell you that perchance, he might grow in purity?"<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Surah An-Nahl, Aayah 44

<sup>5</sup> Surah Al-Abas, Aayah 1 – This *aayah* refers to the incident of the blind Sahaabi, Sayyiduna Abdullah ibn Umm Maktoom (ra). He came to ask Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* for advice. However, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* was engaged in discussion with some of the leaders of the Quraish. He therefore ignored Sayyiduna Abdullah (ra) and turned all his attention to the leaders of the Quraish because they were more in need of his attention as they were still disbelievers. On the other hand, Sayyiduna Ibn Umm Maktoom (ra) was already a Believer and would always return to Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. See Tafseer Ibn Katheer (V.4 Pg. 502)

Without the hadith we would neither know who this blind man was nor would we know the actual incident.

2. "And remember when Allah had promised you one of the two parties that it would be yours ...."<sup>6</sup>

Neither is this promise mentioned anywhere else in the Qur'aan nor is there an indication regarding these two parties. These are however explained in the *ahaadith* concerning the battle of Badr.

3. "(He also accepted the repentance of) the three who were delayed ...."<sup>7</sup>

Who were these three people and what was their story? Why were they delayed? None of these questions can be answered in the absence of the Hadith.

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<sup>6</sup> Surah Al-Anfaal, Aayah 7 – This *aayah* refers to the occasion of Badr. By the two parties is meant the caravan of Abu Sufyaan and the army of the Quraish. Allah had promised victory over any one of them. See Tafseer Ibn Katheer (V.2 Pg. 299)

<sup>7</sup> Surah At-Tawbah, Aayah 118 – This refers to the three faithful Sahaabah, Ka'b bin Maalik, Muraarah bin Rabee' and Hilaal bin Umayyah (ra) who did not participate in the campaign of Tabuk without any valid excuse. Upon the return of the Muslim army to Madinah they went apologise to Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* for not joining the army. Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* accepted their honest admission of laziness and commanded them to await further revelation from Allah. They were then boycotted by the Muslims for fifty days until revelation of the *aayah* "and (Allah accepted the repentance) of the three who were delayed (the acceptance of their *tawbah*) . . ." See Tafseer Ibn Katheer (V. 2 Pg. 411 – 413)

These are just a few examples. There are many more *aayaat* like these in the Qur'aan that cannot be understood without the *ahaadith*. Anyway, the gist of the discussion thus far is that explanation of the Qur'aan was one of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*'s fundamental duties.

### **Rasulullah's Explanation of the Qur'aan**

Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*'s explanation of the Qur'aan was in two forms viz.

- a. practical explanation, demonstration
- b. verbal explanation

### **Practical Explanation**

This took place when, after a command was passed in the Qur'aan, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* acted accordingly due to which the implication of that command was understood and the people had a practical demonstration. For example, the Believers have been commanded in the Qur'aan to perform salaah but the Qur'aan does not explain the procedure of salaah. The Qur'aan mentions only the necessary components of salaah (e.g. *ruku*, *sajdah*, *qiyaam*) but does not explain how salaah should be performed. The procedure of salaah had been shown to the ummah by Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. His statement "perform salaah as you see me performing salaah"<sup>8</sup> is thus in answer to the questioning Believer who reads the verse "establish salaah" and asks "How do I perform salaah?"

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<sup>8</sup> Saheeh-ul-Bukhari (Kitaab-us-Salaah) V.1 Pg. 88

**Note:** Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* had also verbally explained the procedure of salaah).

Similarly the Qur'aan declared Haj as *fard* (compulsory) but it did not explain the procedure of Haj (apart from a brief mention of Arafaat, Muzdalifah, Tawaaf and the slaughtering of the animals). Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* performed Haj and practically demonstrated to the ummah how Haj should be completed. During his Haj, he addressed the Sahaabah (ra) saying: "Learn from me the rites of Haj, probably I would not see you after this year."<sup>9</sup>

### **Verbal Explanation**

Verbal explanation of the Qur'aan was also of two types:

- a. A verse of the Qur'aan was mentioned after which it or the ruling established from it was explained.
- b. A ruling was passed or a statement was made in conjunction with the Qur'aan but reference is not made to that particular *ayah*.

An example of the first type is the hadith that on the day of Qiyamah, Allah will ask Sayyiduna Nuh (as) if he had conveyed the message to his people upon which he will answer in the affirmative. His ummah would thereafter be asked if he had conveyed the message to them and they will answer in the negative. Allah Ta'aala will then ask Nuh (AS) for a witness. Sayyiduna Nuh (as) will bring the ummah of Rasulullah *sallallahu*

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<sup>9</sup> Sunan-an-Nasa'i, V. 5 Pg. 270 (with the words learn your rites (the rites of haj) because I do not know, probably I will not perform haj after this year)



*alaihi wasallam* as his witness after which Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* will confirm the testimony of his ummah in favour of Nuh (as). After explaining the above Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* recited the verse ".... and in a similar manner have we made you a balanced ummah so that you would be witnesses over the nations and the Rasul would be a witness over yourselves."<sup>10</sup>

A second example could be the incident of Adi ibn Haatim (ra) who asked Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* if the words *Al-Khaytul Abyadu* and *Al Khaytil-Aswad* referred to two threads of cotton (because the literal translation of the two phrases is "the white thread" and the "black thread"). Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* replied: "No, it is the darkness of the night and the light of the day."<sup>11</sup>

There are many other examples of the same nature. Similarly the books of Hadith are replete with examples of the second type of verbal explanation of the Qur'aan. Nevertheless let us look at two examples:

1. Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said: "None of you truly believes until his desire becomes subservient to that which I have brought."<sup>12</sup>

This is in conjunction with the verse: "By your Rabb, they will not believe until they make you judge in all disputes between

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<sup>10</sup> Surah Al-Baqarah, Aayah 143 and Saheeh-ul-Bukhari (Kitaab-ut-Tafseer) V. 5 Pg. 151

<sup>11</sup> Saheeh-ul-Bukhari (Kitaab-ut-Tafseer) V. 5 Pg. 156

<sup>12</sup> Mishkaat-ul-Masaabeeh V.1 Pg. 59

them, and find in their souls no resistance against your decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction."<sup>13</sup>

2. In another hadith we read: "He who has provision and a conveyance that would take him to the House of Allah but did not make the Haj, then there is no difference whether he leaves the world as a Jew or a Christian."<sup>14</sup>

This Hadith is in conjunction with the verse: "And for Allah, Haj of the *Baytullah* is compulsory upon the people i.e. those who have the means. And the one who disbelieves, verily Allah is independent of all the worlds."<sup>15</sup>

To summarize, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* was entrusted with the explanation of the Qur'aan. Thus a major portion of the *ahaadith* either explain the Qur'aan or are derived from the Qur'aan. Just as it is compulsory to believe that Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* fulfilled his duty in propagating the text (words) of the Qur'aan, we must have conviction that he had fulfilled his duty in explaining the Qur'aan to the *ummah*. The treasures of hadith bear testimony to our belief. We would also have to accept the authenticity of the *ahaadith* until *qiyamah* because if the Qur'aan is to be preserved until *qiyamah* and the Qur'aan cannot be fully understood without the *hadith*, it is necessary that the hadith should also be preserved until *qiyamah*.

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<sup>13</sup> Surah An-Nisaa, Aayah 66

<sup>14</sup> Sunan-at-Tirmidhi (Kitaab-ul-Haj) V.3, Pg. 176

<sup>15</sup> Surah Aal 'Imraan, Aayah 97

## Two Important Incidents

On one occasion Sayyiduna Imran bin Husayn (ra) narrated the hadith of intercession to his students. Upon completing the narration, a man in the audience said to him, "O Abu Junaid! You narrate to us *ahaadith* for which we do not find any basis in the Qur'aan!" Sayyiduna Imraan (ra) became angry and asked the man: "Have you read the Qur'aan?" He replied in the affirmative and Sayyiduna Imraan (ra) asked further, "So have you found in the Qur'aan that there are four (compulsory) rak'aats in esha salaah, three in maghrib and two in fajr? The man's answer was obviously negative. "From who did you learn this?" continued Sayyiduna Imraan (ra), "Did you not learn this from us? And did we not learn it from Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*? You read in the Quran 'and make *tawaaf* around the *ka'bah*' but have you read 'make seven circumambulations' and perform salaah behind the Maqaam-u-Ibrahim? Did you not heard Allah say in the Qur'aan "Take what the Rasul gives you and give up what he prohibits you from?" Sayyiduna Imraan (ra) then concluded, "We learnt from Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* many things regarding which you people have no knowledge."

Similarly, a person said to the Taabi'i, Mutarrif bin Abdullah (ra), "Do not narrate to us except what is in the Qur'aan!" Mutarrif (ra) replied, "By Allah, (by narrating *ahaadith*) we do not desire a replacement for the Qur'aan. However, we do desire one who has more knowledge of the Qur'aan than us (Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*).

## The Meaning of Hikmah

We have previously seen that Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* was also entrusted with the teaching of *hikmah*. In order to understand the term *hikmah*, we would first have to resort to the Qur'aan. Doing so, we find many *aayaat* from which we understand that this *hikmah* is also a revelation from Allah.

"And Allah had revealed to you the *kitaab* (Qur'aan) and *hikmah* and He taught you that which you knew not."<sup>16</sup>

"And remember the favour of Allah on you and that which was revealed upon you from the Qur'aan and *hikmah* through which Allah advises you."<sup>17</sup>

Besides being a revelation, we learn from a verse in *Surah Ahzaab* that *hikmah* is something that used to be recited in the homes of the *Azwaaj Al-Mutahharaat* (wives of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*). "And remember that which is recited to you in your homes, of the revelations of Allah (i.e. Qur'aan) and *hikmah*."<sup>18</sup> The question is: "What is it that was recited in the homes of the *Azwaaj Al-Mutahharaat* other than the Qur'aan?" and "What did Rasulullah *Azwaaj Al-Mutahharaat* teach them besides the Qur'aan?" There is only one answer to these questions: the *ahaadith* and his sunnah. (The command to remember *hikmah* in this verse indicates its incumbency, and since knowledge is not the actual aim in Islam but rather a means to correct practice, the necessity to practice on the sunnah is also understood from this *aayah*.) The *hadith* also confirms that Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi*

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<sup>16</sup> Surah An-Nisaa, Aayah 113

<sup>17</sup> Surah Al-Baqarah, Aayah 231

<sup>18</sup> Surah Al-Ahzaab, Aayah 34

*wasallam* had received another revelation besides the Qur'aan. "I have been given the Qur'aan and it's like with it." The *ulamaa* of the *salaf* (pious predecessors) are therefore unanimous that the word '*hikmah*' in the above aayaat refers to the *sunnah* of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* and that the *sunnah* is also a divine revelation.

"And he does not speak of his own desire. It (his speech) is only *wahi* (revelation) that is sent to him."<sup>19</sup>

Allamah Ibn-ul-Qayyim (ra) writes: " Allah had revealed two types of *wahi* to his Rasul *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* and He had declared *imaan* and *amal* (bringing faith and practising) on both to be compulsory. These two forms of *wahi* are the Qur'aan and the *sunnah*. Allah Ta'aala says: "It is he . . ." and "And remember that which . . ." After quoting verse 34 of Al-Ahzaab and verse 2 of Al-Jumu'ah, he continues "The kitaab is the Qur'aan and *hikmah* is the *sunnah* according to the consensus of the *salaf*."<sup>20</sup>

The above discussion regarding the meaning of *hikmah* in the verses concerned, further substantiates the authority of the hadeeth and *sunnah*. Besides, Muslims have been commanded to follow the pattern of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*.

"You have in the Rasul of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the final day and remembers Allah excessively."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Surah An-Najm, Aayah 4

<sup>20</sup> Muqaddimah Ma'aarf-ul-Hadith Pg.23

<sup>21</sup> Surah Al-Ahzaab, Aayah 21

"Say! If you love Allah, follow me – Allah will love you and forgive your sins."<sup>22</sup>

Can this be achieved in the absence of the hadith?

### **Adherence to the Path of the Early Muslims**

Allah Ta'aala commanded the Muslims to always adhere to the path of their predecessors in *Din*. "And whosoever opposes the Rasul after the guidance (of Allah) becomes clear unto him, and follows a path other than that of the believers, We shall assign to him that which he had turned to and enter him into Jahannam."<sup>23</sup>

This verse sounds great warning to those who oppose the agreed opinion of the Believers (*Mumineen*). It is therefore necessary that we consider the attitude of the early Muslims i.e. the Sahaabah (ra) with regards the *hadith* and the *sunnah*.

1. It is recorded in *Tarikh-ul-khulafaa*<sup>24</sup> that whenever a case was presented to Sayyiduna Abu Bakr (ra), he would first turn to the Qur'aan. If he did not find the solution in the Qur'aan, he would turn to his knowledge of the *sunnah*. If he still could not find an answer to the question concerned, he would enquire from the rest of the Sahaabah (ra) if they had heard Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* passing judgement in this regard. On many occasions several people responded in the affirmative. Sayyidunah Abu Bakr (ra) would thereafter say: "All praise be to Allah who has made from among us those who remember the words of our Nabi *sallallahu alaihi*

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<sup>22</sup> Surah Aal 'Imraan, Aayah 31

<sup>23</sup> Surah An-Nisaa, Aayah 115

<sup>24</sup> Pg.29

*wasallam*."<sup>25</sup> Allaamah Ibn-ul-Qayyim (ra) has recorded that Sayyiduna Umar (ra) followed a similar procedure.

2. After the demise of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*, the most crucial issue that faced the Muslim community was that of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*'s successor. The Sahaabah (ra) solved this question from the *sunnah*. Tareekh-ul-Khulafaa and Tabqaat Ibn Sa'd have recorded the statement of Sayyidunah Ali (ra) that after the demise of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* we pondered over the question of "successorship" and found that Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* had made Sayyidunah Abu Bakr the *imam* in the *salaah* during his lifetime. We therefore chose for our *dunya* (worldly affairs), the one who Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* had chosen for our *deen*.<sup>26</sup>
3. The next most crucial issue that faced the Muslim community after the demise of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* was that of his burial. The Sahaabah (ra) differed in opinion as to where Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* should be buried. This crisis was also resolved by means of the *sunnah* and *hadith*. *Tarikh-al-Kaamil*, *Taarikh-al-Khulafaa* and many other books of history have narrated that when the Sahaabah differed regarding the final resting place of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*, Sayyiduna Abu Bakr (ra) addressed them saying: "I have heard Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* saying that every Nabi is buried in the place where he had passed away." Hearing the above hadith all differences ceased to exist and they unanimously agreed to bury

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<sup>25</sup> Tareekh-ul-Khulafaa, Pg.50

<sup>26</sup> Ibid Pg.15

Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* in the place where he had passed away i.e. the room of Sayyidatuna Aisha (ra).<sup>27</sup>

4. It is recorded in the *Tarikh-al-Kaamil*, *Tarikh-al-Khulafaa* etc. that Sayyiduna Abdur Rahmaan bin Auf (ra) and the rest of the Sahaabah (ra) had pledged allegiance to Sayyiduna Uthmaan (ra) after the martyrdom of Sayyidunah Umar (ra) – on the following condition:

"We pledge allegiance to you on condition that you follow the Kitaab of Allah and the Sunnah of his Rasul and his two successors."<sup>28</sup>

These are just a few examples from the books of history. Similarly there are many examples in the books of *hadith*. We cite just one example: It is narrated in the *Mu'atta* of Imaam Maalik (ra) that an elderly lady once came to Sayyiduna Abu Bakr (ra) seeking her share of the inheritance of her grandson. Sayyiduna Abu Bakr (ra) responded: "No share has been allocated to you in the Book of Allah and I am not aware of any share being allocated to you in the *sunnah*, therefore return to your home until I confer with the people (meaning that the grandmother has not been allocated any share in the deceased's estate in the Qur'aan and in my knowledge the *sunnah* too has not allocated any share for her. Nevertheless, wait until I confer with the rest of the Sahaabah)."

Sayyiduna Abu Bakr (ra) thereafter consulted with the rest of the Sahaabah upon which Sayyiduna Mughirah (ra) and Sayyiduna Muhammed ibn Maslamah (ra) bore testimony that Rasulallah

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid Pg.84

<sup>28</sup> Ibid Pg.171



*sallallahu alaihi wasallam* had in their presence allotted one sixth of the deceased's estate to the grandmother.<sup>29</sup>

If it is argued that the sources of the above are the books of the hadith and history and therefore unreliable because these were compiled after the demise of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*, our answer would be: the Qur'aan has undoubtedly commanded us to follow the path of the early Muslims. This can only be achieved if we have knowledge of the early Muslims. Our only recourse to them is those books of Hadith and *Taarikh*. Discrediting these books would make it impossible to execute this command of the Qur'aan.

**Note:** Then reason for producing four examples from the books of history in contrast to a single example from the books of *hadith* is the reliance of the rejecters of Hadith on the books of history in contrast to their rejection of the books of Hadith. Their attitude in this matter is very, very astonishing. They have scant regard for the books of *hadith* but have full confidence in the books of history. It is, however, an established fact that while the historians only aimed at gathering as much information as possible regarding various events etc. and never questioned the authenticity of their information, the *muhadditheen* (scholars of hadith) together with gathering the *ahaadith* also aimed at differentiating between the authentic and unauthentic. They were highly aware of the possibility of fabrication and therefore developed the intricate sciences of *Asmaa-ur-Rijaal* (biographies of the narrators), *Al-jarh-wat-tadeel* (accrediting and disparaging

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<sup>29</sup> Al-Mu'atta (Ma' Tanweer-ul-Hawaalik) V.5 Pg. 54

of narrators), *Mustalahul-Hadith* (principles of *hadith*) etc. whereby they scrutinized the narrators, constancy of chain of narrators etc. while the *muhadditheen* considered many conditions before accepting any narration, the historians had no conditions.

### **A Mockery of Islam and the Ummah**

Besides, refutation of the treasure-houses of *hadith* would be tantamount to mockery of Islam and the entire Muslim *ummah*. Refutation of *hadith* means that the works of Imam Maalik, Imaam Bukhari, Imam Muslim, Imam Abu Da'ud, Imam Tirmidhi, Imam Na'sai, Imam Ibn Majah, Imam Ahmed, Imam Shaafie, Imam Muhammed and many more scholars of Islam are all fabricated. Could we then not ask: "Was there not a single devout Muslim at that time who opposed this detestable scheme against Islam?"

Let us take the case of Imam Maalik (ra)'s *Mu'atta*. It was compiled in 120 AH or 130 AH i.e. approximately 110 or 120 years after the demise of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. Many Sahaabah (ra) were still living until thirteen or twenty three years before its compilation. There is no estimate of the great number of Taabi'een that were present all over the Muslim world at the time of its compilation. Apart from Shaam, Iraq, Egypt, Makkah and other countries of the then Muslim world, just in Madinah alone there were so many Taabi'een, that it is difficult to count them. Nevertheless we list the name of a few of them:

Ishaaq ibn Abdillah ibn Abi Talha	-136 AH
Isma'el ibn Muhammed ibn Zuhri	-134 AH
Rabee'ah ibn Abdir-Rahmaan	129 AH

Zaid ibn Aslam	136 AH
Saalim ibn Abi Umayyah	129 AH
Sa'd bin Ishaq	140 AH
Sa'eed ibn Abi Sa'eed al-Muqburiy	123 AH
Salmah ibn Dinaar	140 AH
Sharik ibn Abdillahi ibn Abi Namir	140 AH
Salih ibn Kaysaan	140 AH
Safwaan ibn Salim	124 AH
Abdullah ibn Abi Bakr ibn Abi Hazm	135 AH
Abdullah ibn Dinaar	127 AH
Abu-az-Zinaad	130 AH
Abd ibn Sa'eed	139 AH
Muhammed ibnul-Munkadir	131 AH
Makhramah ibn Sulaymaan	130 AH
Musa ibn Uqbah	141 AH
Wahb ibn Kaysaan	127 AH
Yahyaa ibn Sa'eed Qadi of Madinah	143 AH
Yazid ibn Rumaan	130 AH
Yazid ibn Abdullah ibn Laythi	139 AH
Hishaam ibn Urwah	145 AH

Miswar ibn Rafaa'ah

138 AH

Abu Tiwaalah

132 AH

Now ponder! We are discussing an era that was not very distant from the era of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. The people of this era had until recently enjoyed the company of those illustrious sons of Islam who had lived with Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. Academically as well as chronologically they were like the grandchildren of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* and thus very acquainted with his teachings and practices, just as a grandchild is quite aware of his grandfather's habits. Moreover, this is the city where Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* spent the last ten years of his life. Every family in this city enjoyed the companionship of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*.

In such a city and under such circumstances one man, Imaam Maalik (ra), prepares a compilation of *ahaadith* of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* and publicly teaches it in the masjid of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* to the people of Madinah and hundreds of others that travelled from distant lands. After studying at the feet of Imaam Maalik, they return to their native lands with copies of this compilation of *ahaadith* and teach it to their communities etc. How strange that notwithstanding all this activity, not a single soul has the courage to challenge the authenticity of these *ahaadith* and declare that it is a fabrication.

Furthermore, Imaam Maalik (ra) constantly refers to the above mentioned personalities and many other Taabi'een who were living at that time in Madinah saying that they had narrated these

*ahaadith* and *sunan* to him. If these narrations were fabricated, how is it that not a single person among them refuted his claims?

On the contrary, approximately a thousand people (according to Shah Abdul Aziz Dehlawi) heard the *Mu'atta* from Imaam Maalik (ra). Allamah Suyuti (ra) listed the names of fifty scholars who heard the *Mu'atta* from Imaam Maalik and thereafter continued teaching it to their students.<sup>30</sup>

This is exactly the case with all other major works of *hadith*. Over the centuries, thousands learnt and taught these works but prior to the fourteenth century, the authority of the *hadith* was never questioned.

To conclude: rejection of the authority of *hadith* and *sunnah* (as a whole), ultimately results in mockery of Islam and the entire Muslim *ummah*.

### **Summary**

In the foregoing discussion we established that Muslims are in dire necessity of the *ahaadith* because:

1. Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* was entrusted with explanation of the Qur'aan and the *ahaadith* represent his explanation thereof. In fact, the Qur'aan cannot be fully understood without it.
2. The *ahaadith* represent the *hikmah* which Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* was commanded to teach the *ummah*.

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<sup>30</sup> Tanweer-ul-Hawaalik V.1 Pg. 10

3. Muslims are commanded to obey Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* and follow his example. The character, lifestyle etc. of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* are preserved in the *ahaadith*.
4. Muslims have been commanded to follow the way of the Muslims and the early Muslims adhered to the *ahaadith*.

Since these Muslims will need to understand the Qur'aan and follow the example of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* until the Day of Qiyamah, we also conclude that the *ahaadith* and *sunnah* would be preserved and protected until the Day of Qiyamah.

### **Preservation of Hadith**

There were more than a hundred thousand Sahabah (ra) at the time of the Farewell Hajj. The books of history record the lives of approximately eleven thousand Sahabah (ra) who transmitted some saying or act of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. After the demise of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* the people turned to the Sahabah (ra) for religious guidance and when the Sahabah (ra) left the world, they sought the Tabi'een. The Tabi'een were fairly large in number. According to Ibn Sa'd there were approximately three hundred and fifty five Tabi'een in Madinah, one hundred and thirty one in Makkah, four hundred and thirteen in Kufa and one hundred and sixty four in Basrah, the capital cities at that time. If we assume that every companion had narrated at least a few sayings or actions of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* to his disciples, we may well imagine the large number of narrations that would have been preserved in this manner. The Sahabah and the Tabi'een had devoted themselves to preaching and disseminating the modes and manners of

Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. They were always eager to store in their minds and relate to others the smallest detail regarding Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. Needless to say, those were the days when the only branch of learning that enjoyed recognition and patronage was the knowledge of hadith. People considered it a great duty to educate their sons, successors and friends about the hadith. They truly understood the hadith, "May Allah bestow vigour to a person who hears my saying and learns it by heart, then conveys it to others exactly as he heard it."

### **The Manners of Preserving Hadith**

The people of that era employed four methods for the preservation of hadith:

1. Memorisation
2. Discussion
3. Practice
4. Writing

#### **Memorisation**

Allah Ta'aala had blessed the Arabs of that time with such powerful and prolific memories that they could easily memorize hundreds of verses of poetry. Nearly all of them knew by heart the pedigrees of not only themselves, but also of their horses and camels. The Arabs were so proud of their strong memories that they placed more confidence on their memories than on writing. Some poets deemed it a blemish to preserve their poetry in writing. They believed that written material could be tampered with, while memory cannot be distorted by anyone. If a poet wrote some of his poems, he would never disclose this fact because it would be regarded as an indication of his weak

memory. The Sahabah (ra) utilized this memory with even greater enthusiasm to preserve the Hadith.

Sayyiduna Abu Hurairah (ra), the famous Sahabi who narrated five thousand three hundred and seventy four *ahaadith*, said: "I divided my night into three parts. In one third I perform salaah, in one third I sleep and in one third I memorize the *ahaadith* of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*."

There were many others like Sayyiduna Abu Hurairah (ra) who had sacrificed their homes to live in the masjid of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* so that they could devote their time and energies in memorizing *ahaadith*. These people were referred to as the *Ashaab-us-Suffah*.

### **Discussion**

It was a common practice among the Sahabah (ra) to discuss the sayings and actions of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* whenever they met. Each of them would mention what he knew, while the others would listen and try to memorise it. Such discussions occurred frequently and played an important role in preserving the *sunnah* by ensuring that the *ahaadith* known only to a few individuals were conveyed to many others. Their discussions also served as a check on the mistakes of narrations, because if someone forgot some portion of a hadith, others were present to rectify him.

### **Practice**

The third method through which the *sunnah* was preserved is practice. The teachings of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* are not merely philosophical but relate to practical life. Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* did not confine himself to giving lessons



and sermons only, but also trained his Sahabah to live practical lives. Consequently, the Sahabah (ra) spared no effort in emulating the teachings of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. Each Sahabi was so enthusiastic to practice the sunnah, that he tried his best to imitate even the personal habits of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. This constant practice in accordance with the *sunnah* was another major factor that contributed to the preservation of the *sunnah*.

## Writing

The fourth method employed for preserving the *ahaadith* was writing. Many Sahabah (ra) had reduced the *ahaadith* to writing after having heard them from Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*.

Fearing that the *ahaadith* may be confused with the Quran,<sup>31</sup> Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* had initially prohibited the Sahabah (ra) from writing any *ahaadith*. Later, when a clear distinction had been established between the Qur'aan and hadith, he granted them permission to write. An example of writing *ahaadith* is found in the narration of the *Ansari* (person of Madinah) who complained to Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* of his inability to retain any hadith. Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* advised him:

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<sup>31</sup> This fear is attributed to the fact that the Quran was revealed gradually over a period of 23 years and in the beginning many were not fully aware of the style of the Qur'aan. During that time some Sahabah began to write explanatory *ahaadith* along with the Qur'aanic text. Some explanatory *ahaadith* were mixed with the text without any clear distinction between the two. It was therefore feared that the Quran would be confused with the *ahaadith*.

"Seek help with your right hand."

Saying this Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* indicated with his hand that he meant the Sahaabi should write the *ahaadith*.

Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* delivered a sermon on the occasion of the conquest of Makkah. Later, upon the request of Abu Shah, a Sahabi from Yemen, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* ordered the Sahabah (ra) to write the sermon saying "write it down for Abu Shah."

There are several other examples that prove that writing of *ahaadith* was permitted by Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. Among the many Sahabah (ra) who possessed personal written collections of the *ahaadith* are: Amr bin Hazm, Waa'il bin Hujr, Munqidh bin Hayyan, Abu Hurairah, Abdullah bin Amr, Anas, Ali, Jabir and Ibn Abbas (ra).

The history of the compilation of *ahaadith* after the Sahabah (ra) is more vast and detailed. There is sufficient historical data to prove that the people of this era continued with the unofficial compilation of *ahaadith* that was initiated by the Sahabah (ra).<sup>32</sup>

However towards the latter portion of the era of the Tabi'een, a great necessity was felt for the *ahaadith* to be officially codified. The famous khaleefah, Umar bin Abdul Aziz (ra) issued an official order to all governors under his domain to gather the 'ulamaa among the Tabi'een and their students and record the *ahaadith*

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<sup>32</sup> According to Shaikh Mustapha Azmi, fifty Sahabah, forty eight Tabi'een, eighty six late-first and early- second century scholars and two hundred and fifty of the early-second century scholars possessed written *ahaadith* in the form of letters and booklets.

found with them. The result of this official decree was that several books of *ahaadith* were prepared and spread all over the Islamic empire. These books were later incorporated into the larger books of hadith compiled thereafter.

We have thus far seen a brief sketch of two phases of the codification (compilation) of hadith. The second phase is followed by the third and final phase and extends from approximately 150 AH to the opening decades of the fourth century. This was the period of scholars like Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi etc. who had dedicated their entire lives to hadith (as though they had been created for nothing other than the preservation of *hadith*).

These people preferred the occupation of *hadith* over performing *nafl salaah* throughout the night. They travelled thousands of kilometres to the various cities of that time in search of the *ahaadith* of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. Observing the greatest amount of care and dedication, they then compiled various works of hadith.

Imam Bukhari (ra) is a perfect example of such caution. He would take ghusl and perform two rak'aats of salaah prior to entering any hadith into his famous compilation.

It is narrated about Ma'n bin Eesa (ra) that whenever he narrated a hadith which he had heard from Imam Malik (ra), he would say: "I heard this hadith approximately thirty or more times from Imam Malik."

It was at the hands of such pious and cautious personalities that the canonical works of hadith were compiled.

## Evaluation of Hadith

While emphasising the importance of propagating his teachings, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* had also warned that "He who falsely attributes something to me should make his home in the fire"<sup>33</sup>. The result was that sometimes even eminent Sahaabah and erudite scholars were seen trembling with fear while narrating ahaadith. Once when Sayyiduna Ibn Mas'ud (ra) narrated something about Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*, his face suddenly turned pale as death and he hastily added: "Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* had said this or something like this." Besides, the various aayaat of the Qur'aan that praise the Sahabah (ra) refute the slightest possibility of them falsely attributing anything to Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*.<sup>34</sup> However, with the passing of time, there were people who fabricated *ahaadith*.

## Why did People Fabricate Ahaadith?

1. Political reasons: After the martyrdom of Sayyiduna Uthman (ra) many misguided groups gradually raised their ugly heads and each of these groups made all-out endeavours to enhance their acceptability among the people. This is possibly the first reason why people fabricated ahaadith.
2. Enmity and jealousy for the Muslims: Due their enmity and hatred for the Islam and Muslims, some Jews and fire-

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<sup>33</sup> Mulla Ali Qari (ra) quotes from Jalaluddeen Suyuti (ra) that more than a hundred Sahabah (RA) have narrated this hadith.

<sup>34</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah (ra) writes in his book *Ar-Radd-alal-Akhna'iy*: Since the Sahabah (ra) were the most obedient and knowledgeable regarding Deen, none of those evil misbeliefs arose among them that arose in the people after them. It is therefore not known regarding any Sahabi that he had falsely attributed anything to Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*.

worshippers had fabricated ahaadith that ridiculed Allah Ta'aala, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* or some of the fundamentals of Islam. There were occasions when they coined ahaadith that permitted things that are prohibited in Islam and vice versa.

3. Tribalism/Nationalism: Unfortunately this is a disease from which very few are protected. During the course of history, many groups had resorted to fabricating ahaadith in praise of their tribe and in disgrace of an opposing tribe.
4. To remind the Muslims of their duties to Allah and warn them of His punishment is an important duty in Islam. However, it is regrettable that some people had coined various sorts of ahaadith in order to achieve this goal.
5. Some low, unscrupulous people had even coined ahaadith in order to earn the favour of the rulers.

These are some of the major reasons for the fabrication of ahaadith. Nevertheless, it is not true that there are scores of fabrications in our hadith literature. Apprehending the enormous danger of fabrication, the scholars of hadith took stringent measures to protect the hadith of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*.

A person complained to Abdullah bin Mubaarak (ra) regarding the fabricated narrations. He replied: "The diligent scholars will live to combat them." He then quoted the *aayah* "We revealed the reminder and we are its guardians."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The 'reminder' is the Quran. Ibn Mubarak is alluding to what was explained earlier that since it is impossible to understand and follow the Qur'aan

## The Measures Adopted to Combat Fabrication

Together with enduring the massive task of preserving the ahaadith, the scholars also developed a very systematic method in order to combat fabrication and the consequences of forgetfulness and unintended error.

### Al-Isnaad

The chain of narrators between a scholar and the person to whom the hadith is attributed (the Rasul *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*, a particular Sahaabi or a Taabi'i) is called its *sanad*. Quotation of the *sanad* is called *isnaad*. In order to detect liars, narrators with weak memories, narrators who made mistakes or were simply confused etc. scholars were required to quote a *sanad* for every hadith they narrated. No narration would be accepted without a *sanad*.

The famous Tabi'ee, Hisham bin Urwa (ra) said: "When a person narrates a hadith to you, ask him, "From who did you hear this hadith?" because he could be narrating from a person of weaker memory and honesty than himself."

Ibn Sireen (ra), said: "The Sahabah (ra) would never ask for a chain of narrators. However, when the (*fitnah*) civil war broke out (and many suspicious people began narrating strange things), they began asking for the chain so that the adherents of the *sunnah* and their *ahaadith* could be accepted and the innovators and their *ahaadith* could be detected and rejected.

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without the hadith, the divine promise to safeguard the Qur'aan includes a promise to safeguard the *ahaadith* also.

Emphasis on *isnaad* proved to be an excellent check on those wishing to falsely attribute anything to Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. Without a chain of narrators their statements would never be considered . . . But what about fraudulent citation of *asaaneed* (plural of *sanad*)? The answer is that mere citation of a *sanad* was not sufficient. Upon citing a *sanad*, it would be put to certain tests (as will be explained shortly, Insha Allah).

Abdullah bin Mubarak (ra) said: "In my opinion the *isnaad* is a portion of deen. Had it not been for the *isnaad*, whoever desired would say whatever he desired! However, he remains dumb-founded when asked 'from who did you hear this hadith?' Sufyan Thawri (ra) said: "*Isnaad* is the Believer's weapon. How will he be able to combat if he does not possess a weapon?" The importance accorded to the *isnaad* may be judged from the fact that:

1. The *sanad* (chain of narrators) was regarded as part of the hadith.
2. A hadith narrated via two or more chains of narrators was regarded as several ahaadith and not a single hadith.

As previously mentioned, a hadith was not readily accepted after citation of a *sanad*. Instead, the *sanad* was first put to the following tests:

### **Scrutiny of Narrators.**

This is the first and foremost test and relates to the credibility of the narrators. The narrator's credibility is scrutinized according to:

1. His integrity and honesty and
2. His memory

Such tests led to the development of the science of *Rijaal*. Scholars devoted their entire lives in researching the necessary details of every person that narrated ahaadith. They travelled thousands of kilometres to the towns and cities of the narrators enquiring about their honesty, piety, intelligence etc. from their families, neighbours and other community members. They were so meticulous that when Ali Ibn Al-Madeeni (ra) was questioned about his father, he first tried to avoid the question saying, "Ask some other scholar about him." But when the question was repeated for a second and third time, he replied: "It is the matter deen. He is a weak narrator." Imam Abu Da'ud (ra), compiler of one of the six canonical works in hadith, declared his son Abdullah a "great liar." Zaid bin Abi Unais said about his brother Yahya, "Do not accept the narrations of my brother Yahya because he is a reputed liar." Hundreds of books encompassing the biographies of thousands of narrators were compiled. A single book, *Al-Jarh Wat-Ta'deel* of Ibn Abi Hatim, contains the biographies of eighteen thousand and fifty narrators. The *Tahdhib-ut-Tahdhib* contains the biographies of every possible narrator that appears in any *sanad* found in any of the six canonical books.<sup>36</sup>

### **Examining the Consistency of the Sanad**

After examining the integrity of the narrators of a particular *sanad*, the scholars of hadith would scrutinize its constancy by

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<sup>36</sup> Dr. A Sprenger, a very biased orientalist writes: "The glory of the literature of the Muslims is in its biographical literature. There is no nation, and there will never be another nation, which has recorded the life of every man of letters like them. If the biographical records of the Muslims were collected, one should probably have accounts of half a million people."



searching for a breakage (missing link) in the *sanad*. If they found any breakage, they would disregard the narration.

To ensure the constancy of a chain of narrators, it is necessary to know each narrator, his teachers, whether it was possible for him to meet or correspond with the person that he claims to have heard the hadith from. It is therefore necessary that here too the scholars refer to the books of Rijaaal.

During the cause of the first and second test, a scholar quite often finds conflicting reports regarding certain narrators – some relied upon them whereas others regarded them as dishonest, unreliable etc. How should the scholar decide? The need to answer such questions eventually developed into the science of Al-Jarh-wat-Ta'deel.

### **Comparison with Other Narrations**

Often, there would be more than one student narrating a single hadith from the same teacher. In the third test the hadith under discussion is compared with the narrations of other students narrating from the same teacher. If it agrees with their narration, it would be accepted. However, if it disagrees with the narration of majority of the reliable students narrating from the same teacher, it would be declared *shaadh* (rare) and would not be accepted by the scholars.

### **General Analysis**

The scholars of Hadith define a *saheeh* (authentic) hadith as one that meets the following requirements:

1. The narrator is trustworthy – verified in the first test
2. The narrator has a reliable memory – verified in the first test

3. There is no breakage in the sanad – see the second test
4. The narration is not rare *shaadh* – see the third test
5. The narration is free of any 'illah (hidden defect) – see the fourth test

After testing the reliability of each narrator, scrutinizing the constancy of the chain and comparing the various *turuq*,<sup>37</sup> the scholars search for defects in the text of the narration. At this point the narration is examined from various angles e.g. whether the reported event was at all possible, does the reported event conform to established historical facts etc.

This is a very difficult and delicate scrutiny which cannot be undertaken without a full command of all the relevant subjects and the various books and an expertise in the science of evaluation of hadith. If after thorough scrutiny, a scholar doubts the authenticity of a Hadith, he points out that there is an 'illah (defect) in the hadith due to which it cannot be relied upon.

This is briefly the birth of yet another science, 'ilal-ul-hadith, that the Muslims developed in the course of preserving the hadith of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* and protecting it from fabrication.

Besides these, there is also the science of *Mustalah-ul-Hadith* (principles of hadith) that includes all the rules and discussions pertaining to *isnaad*, *rijaal*, *al-jarh wat-ta'deel*, 'ilal, etc. (All of these are like branches of the science of *Mustalah-ul-Hadith*).

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<sup>37</sup> The reports of different students narrating from the same student are called the *turuq* (different ways) of that hadith.

Muslims scholars have written tremendously in each of the sciences mentioned thus far.

### **Books on Fabricated Narrations**

Another important step towards protecting the purity of hadith was the collating of fabricated narrations in book form. The aim is collating such books was to assist the scholars in identifying fabricated narrations.<sup>38</sup>

***Abu Hudhaifa Muhammad Karolia***

***19 Rabee'-ul-Awwal 1438***

***19 December 2016***

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<sup>38</sup> This booklet was initially compiled and published in 1415-1994. At that time it comprised of two articles. In this edition we merged the two articles into one.

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