The application of critical thinking in the process of *jarḥ wa-taʿdīl* in the science of *ḥadīth*

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Abstract: The process of critical thinking could be employed in evaluating the strength and weakness of any argument. As regards *jarḥ wa-taʿdīl* (impugnment and validation), *muḥaddithūn* (scholars of *ḥadīth*) examine the reliability and trustworthiness of the transmitters to establish the acceptability of their report as being attributed to Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.). *Jarḥ wa-taʿdīl,* which constitutes the criticism of the chain of transmitters and textual criticism, is regarded as the first part of *ḥadīth* criticism. This study analyses the elements of critical thinking in differentiating between fact and opinion, author bias rhetoric, comparing and contrasting, judgment and logical conclusion, etc., whereby these elements are crucial to determine the reliability and trustworthiness of narrators of *ḥadīth*. Moreover, it discusses the application of these techniques as propounded by the *muḥaddithūn* in *jarḥ wa-taʿdīl*.

Keywords: Critical thinking**;** authentication of *ḥadīth*; *ḥadīth* criticism; chain of *ḥadīth* transmitters; *jarḥ wa-taʿdīl*.

Abstrak: Proses pemikiran kritikal boleh digunakan dalam menilai kekuatan dan kelemahan terhadap sesuatu hujah. Berkenaan dengan *jarḥ wa-taʿdīl* (men *jarḥ* dan men *taʿdīl*), para ulama hadith turut menilai kebolehpercayaan dan kejujuran perawi hadith bagi memastikan bahawa laporan mereka dapat dikaitkan kepada Nabi Muhammad (s.a.w.). *Jarḥ wa-taʿdīl*, yang merupakan kritikan rantaian perawi dan kritikan teks dianggap sebagai bahagian pertama kritikan hadith. Kajian ini menganalisis unsur-unsur pemikiran kritikal dalam membezakan antara fakta dan pendapat, retorik bias penulis, perbandingan dan perbezaan, penghakiman dan kesimpulan logik, dan lain-lain lagi, yang

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mana unsur-unsur ini adalah penting bagi menentukan kebolehpercayaan dan kejujuran perawi hadith. Selain itu, ia membincangkan aplikasi beberapa teknik seperti yang diajukan oleh ulama-ulama hadith dalam *jarḥ wa-taʿdīl*.

Kata kunci: Pemikiran kritikal; kesahihan hadith; kritikan hadith; rantaian perawi hadith; *jarḥ wa-taʿdīl*.

Ḥadīth constitutes the second source of the teaching of Islam following the Qurʾān. Those *aḥādīth* that have been proven to be authentic have a binding role in the interpretation and explanation of Qurʾānic teachings. The process of confirming and validating *ḥadīth* is crucial to ensure their authenticity. The Qurʾān demands that Muslims should reject any narration or information from any source if it is not properly assessed and evaluated (see for example Qurʾān, 49:6). To fulfil such imperative duties, Muslim scholars, particularly the *muḥaddithūn* (scholars of *ḥadīth*), have throughout history exercised extreme caution in their transmission. They have been vigilant when it came to accepting or transmitting any doubtful narration. It was thus imperative that common rational values be accepted through which the narrations could be critically examined. Companions of the Prophet as well as later generations of Muslim scholars agreed on the necessity of a set of rules and criteria. These in turn generated techniques grounded upon the revelation and on rationality, through which *ḥadīth* validation and authentication could be done. At the same time, since critical thinking was said to be an intellectually disciplined process of scientific thinking, the *muḥaddithūn* applied it for purpose of *ḥadīth* authentication, especially in the process of impugnment and validation (*jarḥ wa-taʿdīl*). Following analytical as well as comparative methods, this study examines the application of critical thinking in the process of *ḥadīth* authentication, with emphasis on the method of "impugnment and validation."

Critical thinking

Literally, "thinking" means the use of the power of reason to make judgment. Hence, critical thinking denotes the act of making careful reflection and serious consideration before taking any action (Agassi & Jarvia, 1987, p. 23). The equivalent term of thinking in Islamic thought is *tafakkur* which means reflection or contemplation upon something. The term "*tafakkur*" and its derivatives have been used 18 times in the Qurʾān in verbal forms rather than a noun. It is regarded as a process

rather than an abstract conception. The majority of the *Mufassirūn* (exegetes of the Qurʾān) interpreted it as reflection and contemplation, which is a process and not an outcome (Badi & Tajdin, 2005, p. 3). *Tafakkur* signifies a deliberate, systematic process of reflection. It goes through three interrelated stages: (a) gathering of information that comes through perception via the senses, imagination or the intellect; (b) paying closer and thorough attention to that information and acknowledging its perfect creation and aesthetic traits, leading to astonishment and appreciation; and (c) moving on to think about the Great Creator in a way that leads to stronger faith and better knowledge about His attributes (Badi & Tajdin, 2005, pp. 1-2; Badri, 1993, pp. 42-43; Ibn Manẓūr, 1990, vol. 7, p. 65).

In contemporary discourse, critical thinking connotes an intellectually disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualizing, applying, evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action (Chaffee, 2003, p. 53; see also Jones, 2001, p. 4; Moore & Parker, 1992, p. 3). As Halpern explains (1996, pp. 22-23), critical thinking consists of several cognitive skills of analysis, evaluation and rationalization that increase the probability of a desirable outcome. It is used in solving problems, calculating likelihoods, formulating inferences, making decisions and evaluating the reasoning that led to a conclusion. Because it focuses on a desired outcome, critical thinking is sometimes called directed thinking that is purposeful, reasoned and goal oriented.

Through this process, people analyse and evaluate ideas, thoughts and daily activities of life in order to reach rationally acceptable conclusions. Since critical thinking is a process of evaluation, it starts with a demand to minimize fuzziness and imprecision, then strives for logical consistence and the avoidance of contractions. For the sake of systemization of ideas and thoughts, methodological questions and critiques are considered part of this process, while epistemologically, empirical support and the avoidance of conjecture in relation to the scientific knowledge are inevitable.

Critical thinking is based on universal intellectual values that transcend the divisions of subject matter: clarity, accuracy, consistency, relevance, precision, good reasoning, sound evidence, depth, breadth,

and fairness. It involves the examination of the structures and elements of thought as well as reasoning leading to conclusions (Jones, 2001, p. 15). The content of critical thinking could be summarized into two divisions: first, a set of skills to process and generate information and beliefs; second, the habit, based on intellectual commitment, of using those skills to guide behaviour.

The Qurʾān and critical thinking

The Qurʾān develops a positive attitude towards critical thinking. It urges Muslims to engage in contemplation, reflection, reckoning and good understanding, by using modes of expression that provoke the mind and drive it to think. Likewise, the Qurʾān promotes open-mindedness, open-heartedness, flexibility, and the implementation of analytical and evaluative thinking (see Qurʾān, 34:46; 3:191).

The Qurʾān repeatedly calls for objectivity and accuracy in all matters related to life. Qurʾānic critical thinking means expressing claims and judgments based on proofs and evidences, on certainty and not on doubts or conjectures and to avoid bias, personal interests, or whims in forming opinions and giving judgments. Qurʾānic critical thinking starts with the seeking of evidence to prove claims, where anyone who claims the truth of something should produce evidence or proof to validate his argument (see Qurʾān, 6:148; 2:111).

Furthermore, the Qurʾān denounces subjectivity and whatever causes bias, prejudice. Allah says:

> When it is said to them: "Follow what Allah hath revealed:"
> They say: "Nay! we shall follow the ways of our fathers."
> What! even though their fathers were void of wisdom and
> guidance? (2:170).

This is because such elements would only give rise to negative thinking, and become obstacles in the process. The Qurʾān encourages its followers to seek evidence, and warns them not to be driven by desires, personal interests, prejudices and all other forms of bias (see Qurʾān, 2:87; 4:135; 45:23). It asks people to confirm the authenticity of any report and ascertain its truth as well as investigate its veracity so that adversity due to ignorance and subsequent regret can be avoided (Qurʾān, 49:6).

In another verse, the Qurʾān warns people against following or relying on fancies and conjectures, for these can never substitute the

truth: "But most of them follow nothing but fancy: truly fancy can be of no avail against truth. Verily Allah is well aware of all that they do" (Qurʾān, 10:36).

Obviously, such verses stress the necessity of investigating and verifying reports in all cases especially when they are conveyed by persons whose integrity is questionable. On the other hand, it is neither wise nor advisable to dismiss such reports prior to investigation or out of ignorance.

Al-jarḥ wa-al-taʿdīl (impugnment and validation of ḥadīth)

As mentioned before, there are significant numbers of Qurʾānic verses which caution believers against accepting any report without examining its authenticity. The need to verify the report equally applies to those reports attributed to the Prophet. Another relevant Qurʾānic passage is the one that validates the testimony of two persons to verify any unsubstantiated claims (Qurʾān, 2:282). Moreover, the Prophet has said "if any one tells a lie about me intentionally, let him be sure of his place in the Hell fire" (al-Bukhārī, n.d. vol. 1, p. 303; Muslim, vol. 1, p. 31). These and similar warnings motivated the *muḥaddithūn* to become vigilant in the transmission of *ḥadīth* and consequently lead to the emergence of a branch of *ḥadīth* studies known as "*Ḥadīth* Criticism" (*naqd al-ḥadīth*) which constitutes the criticism of the chain of transmitters (*naqd al-sanad*) known as "impugnment and validation" (*jarḥ wa-taʿdīl*) and textual criticism (*naqd al-matn*).

Literally, the word *jarḥ* comes from the Arabic word *jaraḥa* which means, to injure or hurt, to invalidate and declare unreliable. While the word *taʿdīl* has come from the Arabic word *ʿadala* which means to act justly, to treat everyone with indiscriminate justice, to rectify or validate. *Taʿdīl* means straightening, modulation, setting right and validation (Ibn Manẓūr, vol. 2, pp. 233-234; Wehr, 1974, pp. 596-597, 118-119). Seemingly, in the plain literal sense *jarḥ and taʿdīl* denote refinement or endorsement and defamation or indictment of someone's reliability or untrustworthiness.

Since *al-jarḥ wa-al-taʿdīl* is a combination of two words, *muḥaddithūn* have provided certain definitions to each of these two terms. Technically, *jarḥ* means, "the indictment of the reporter's justice and his retentive memory, to diminish, weaken or even reject

his narration because of his weak memory or being known with false impressions, or to forge, to falsify or to deceive and to transmit fake information" (Abū al-Layth, 2003, p. 94). It is a formal accusation of a wrongdoing or weak memory issued by a shaykh or *muḥaddith* against someone or a group, after considering evidence received through various sources. *Taʿdīl* or validation means, producing support or establishing the certainty or validity of someone's credibility. It is the process of checking data to ensure its validity and, later, presenting it in the proper format. Summarizing the definitions of various scholars on *ʿilm al-jarḥ wa-taʿdīl* ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd says it is "the knowledge through which we are able to indict and validate the narrator's justice and reliability, through specific expressions" (Kamali, 2005, pp. 80-91; Maḥmūd, 1993, p. 133).

The illustration of the proper place of *jarḥ* and *taʿdīl* in *ḥadīth* criticism is better understood in what Brown (2009, p. 77) calls "three tiered critical method." The first tier is demanding a source (*isnād*) for the report, the second evaluating the reliability of the source, and the third seeking the corroboration for the *ḥadīth*. In this classification, the *jarḥ* and *taʿdīl* comes under step two which is "Rating transmitters and establishing contiguous transmission." It is obvious that a determined forger could not be identified merely by *isnād.* Therefore, the second tier criticism involves in identifying the individuals who constituted *isnāds,* evaluating their reliability and then determining whether there is a risk of someone unreliable contributing to the transmission of the report. This second step undergoes two processes: 1) Transmitter evaluation (*jarḥ* and *taʿdīl*) and 2) Contiguity of transmission (*ittiṣāl*) (Brown, 2009, pp. 77-89). Even though the scholars have considered them as two processes, somehow they are very much interrelated. The *ittiṣāl* of a transmission could not be identified without getting the biographical details of each and every transmitter in that transmission. Moreover, in the event that a shaykh made an accusation that one of the transmitters did not in fact meet the person from whom he had narrated the text, it could be considered as indictment on such a transmitter.

Historically, *jarḥ* and *taʿdīl* as a discipline through which the clarification of the reality of the prophetic narrations, its rules, conditions of transmitters and categories of various reports, was established after the commencement of *ḥadīth* documentation in the first and second

centuries following the *Hijrah*. Since then *jarḥ* and *taʿdīl* has played a central role in the process of *ḥadīth* documentation, including the transmission, reporting, narrating, validating, and writing of the Prophet's words and deeds. Moreover, it is widely used to determine the conditions of a report- whether it was transmitted through direct hearing, reading to the teacher or by his permission, the type of the report (continuation, suspension and the like), the value and authority of the *ḥadīth* (acceptance or rejection), as well as the conditions of transmitters (impugnment and validation).

Significance of critical thinking to *jarḥ wa-taʿdīl*

As explained above, *jarḥ wa-taʿdīl* is one part of *ḥadīth* criticism which aims to decide on the accuracy and authenticity of statements attributed to the Prophet. *Ḥadīth*, as one of the primary sources of Islam that undoubtedly plays a vital role in belief and jurisprudence, needs a full-fledged method of criticism to examine its authenticity. Therefore, the *muḥaddithūn* imposed certain rules and regulations for the narration of Prophetic *ḥadīth* as well as certain criteria to evaluate them. Likewise, critical thinking, which is a way of deciding whether a claim is always true, sometimes true, partly true, or false, does not differ much from *jarḥ wa-taʿdīl* in its aim. Nevertheless, in *jarḥ wa-taʿdīl* which has a specific and concrete aim, a statement could not be accepted by merely looking to the text itself to confirm whether or not it comes from the Prophet. *Jarḥ wa-taʿdīl* process examines the reliability of a person who produced a statement attributed to the Prophet.

The above-mentioned difference could be clearly seen in the nature of these two disciplines. While a general critical thinker just examines the rationality of the statement, *jarḥ wa-taʿdīl* looks into biographical details, trustworthiness, piety and strength of memory. *Jarḥ wa-taʿdīl* as a full-fledged method of criticism with its specific aims, rules, regulations, and criteria to evaluate a chain of transmission quite similar to the techniques of critical thinking. Even the title *jarḥ wa-taʿdīl* itself points to the basic and very important principle of critical thinking. *Jarḥ* stands for indictment disapproval while *taʿdīl* stands for the approval of one's credibility.

There are general elements of critical thinking which can be applied to the process of *ḥadīth* validation. These include the process of differentiating between fact and opinion, recognizing and evaluating the authors' status, comparing and contrasting, accuracy and completeness,

recognizing logical fallacies and faulty reasoning, making judgments and drawing logical conclusions. For instance, there are ten causes which lead to allegation to the personality of the transmitters (*al-ṭaʿn fī al-rāwī)*. Five of these are related to the integrity/justice or *ʿadālah* of the transmitter, as follows: (1) lying and reporting false reports, (2) suspicion of lying, (3) committing crimes frequently, (4) advocacy of pernicious innovation and (5) ignorance. The remaining five causes are related to weak memories of transmitters. They are: (1) grave mistakes, (2) negligence (3) bad memory (4) delusion of the reliable and (5) disagreeing with reliable authorities and narrators (Ibn Ṣalāḥ, 1986, pp. 104-106). In short, it is very clear that critical thinking is very important to justify the aims of *jarḥ wa-taʿdīl* in which the techniques of critical thinking play a vital role in the differentiation of true and false claims related to Prophetic *ḥadīth*.

Elements of critical thinking in the process of *jarḥ wa-taʿdīl*

It is discerned that the elements of critical thinking are applicable to evaluate and clarify facts and opinion, author bias and rhetoric, cause and effect relationships, accuracy and completeness, comparing and contrasting, judgment and logical conclusions, or denouncing the fallacies and faulty reasoning (Epstein, 2002, pp. 5-8; Paul & Elder, 2002). Therefore, there is a necessity to investigate Muslim scholars' application of those elements in the process of defining and validating the authenticity of Prophetic *ḥadīth*. First, it is worth mentioning that the process of *ḥadīth* authentication was not based on superstitious beliefs, or on goodwill; rather, it was based on logical rules and rational analysis as well as thorough critical examination and confirmation of historical facts. Occasionally, besides the aforementioned elements of authentication, scholars in this field could compare and contrast among various narrations transmitted by different narrators to verify the authenticity or otherwise of the narration. Such procedures of validation were exclusively based on commonly shared human values and natural instincts relevant to the human disposition, regardless of religious and cultural considerations.

For instance, to reject or to be doubtful in a narration with a disconnected chain of narrators is something which is appropriate for every rational being. Thus, the human mind disapproves of a narration lacking a continuous chain of transmitters. This is because, in the event that the reporter of such narration is missing, it would rationally

be impossible to validate the authenticity of such a report. Moreover, the narration of an immoral person, liar, someone whose reliability is doubtful, or of someone whose memory is defective would eventually lead to its rejection by the human mind and natural instinct. Further, a narration with doubtful elements, such as distortion, illusion or delusion, as well as other causes of the narration's unreliability, would also be rejected by the human intellect.

Difference between fact and opinion

It is important to distinguish between facts and personal opinions particularly in the process of evaluating information gathered through diverse means. Facts are said to be statements that can be proven true by other verifiable data, while opinions are statements of a person's feelings or impressions. Literally, a fact is a thing that is known to have occurred, to exist, or to be true. Moreover, a fact is something concrete that could be proven; or a truth proven through observation or empirical data. On the other hand, an opinion is a personal view about a particular issue. In other words, opinion is what a person believes or thinks, and is not necessarily the truth (*Oxford Dictionary*, 2003).

Critical thinking normally attempts to distinguish between these rudiments when receiving information from any source. However, while modern scholars utilize this element of critical thinking to discern between opinion and fact, Muslim scholars have used it to distinguish between the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet and the opinion of the narrator. To illustrate, a *muḥaddith* might present any chain, then confront, and eventually comment on certain issues by using his own words without any connection with the chain. Some of those hearing his statement would think that such a comment comprises the actual text coming accurately through the chain. An instance of this is the *ḥadīth* reported by Ibn Mājah from Ismāʿīl ibn Muhammad from Thābit ibn Mūsā from Sharīk from al-Aʿmash from Abī Sufyān from Jābir that the Prophet said: "He who performs a lot of night prayers, his face will shine during the day" (Ibn Mājah, ḥadīth no. 1333). In actual reality, the statement is not the Prophet's word but an opinion of the *ḥadīth* narrator. According to al-Ḥakīm, Thābit entered a mosque during Sharīk's lecture and Sharīk was quoting the following chain of *ḥadīth* narration: "it was reported to us by al-Aʿmash, from Jābir. He said: the Prophet said", then Sharīk suddenly looked at Thābit who just entered and said to him: "He who performs a lot of night prayers, his face will shine during the day." It

was a digressed statement to appreciate Thābit's piety. However, Thābit thought that the statement is the text of the chain of *ḥadīth* narration (al-Suyūṭī, 1979, vol. 1, p. 339).

While *ḥadīth* has a binding legal authority and ethical implications and carries intellectual and religious guidance for the Muslims, it was extremely important to detach it from peripheral or secondary elements, such as opinions, words and actions of reporters. The detachment of *ḥadīth* from such elements was a huge task requiring critical and creative precautionary steps. The first step in the process of identifying peripheral and fabricated elements from the substantial Prophetic *Sunnah* was to question the manner of *ḥadīth* narration from its source. *Muḥaddithūn* underlined certain conditions, which should prevail during the reception of a *ḥadīth* from its source. The reporter should clearly mention through which of the following methods he received the *ḥadīth*: The first way is *samāʿ*, which means reading by the teacher to the students. Traditionally, teachers used to recite the *Sunnah* to the students for the purpose of comprehension, understanding or recording and documentation. The second way is "*ʿarḍ,*" which refers to reading by students to teachers. The students recite the *Sunnah* to the teacher, who is listening, to confirm the extent to which a student has memorized the *Sunnah*. The third is *ijāzah,* to permit someone to transmit *aḥadīth* or a collection on the authority of the scholar without reading by anyone. In this method, teachers give permission to their students after testing and examining their ability in conveying the *ḥadīth* in an acceptable manner. The fourth is *munāwalah,* meaning to handover written material to someone for transmitting it to the next generation. The fifth is *kitābah,* which means to write *ḥadīth* for someone. The sixth, *iʿlām*, is to inform someone that the informer has permission to transmit certain material. The seventh is *waṣiyyah,* which means to entrust a collection of *ḥadīth* book to someone. The eighth, *wajadah*, is to find books or *ḥadīth* written by someone, as can be seen nowadays where some manuscripts have been discovered in a library or some such place (Abū al-Layth, pp. 83-84; Aʿẓamī, 1997, p. 16).

Furthermore, the second precautionary step is that the *ḥadīth* should be *marfūʿ* (where the *ḥadīth* is elevated and attributed to the Prophet). The *ḥadīth* should consist of words, deeds, approvals, or attributes, traced back to the Prophet (s.a.w.). However, if the statement was not elevated or it was merely the acts and words of certain companions

or reporters, without mentioning the way of reporting and without elevating it to the Prophet, it would not be considered as a fact, but as an opinion which does not necessarily have any binding authority.

Recognizing and evaluating authors' status

Fabrication and forgery of information may take place through the act of hiding the identity or the moral qualities of the sources or the individuals from whom the *ḥadīth* was narrated. The moral character of the quoted individuals or sources plays a very essential role in the process of validation or nullification of any information. This is highly crucial for *ḥadīth* validation, particularly when someone reports a narration, but when asked about the particulars of the person from whom he narrated, the date or his birth or death, for instance, the reporter mentions a date earlier than the birth of the person or later than his death. An example is the *ḥadīth* narrated from ʿAfīr ibn Maʿdan al-Kilāʿiyi, who said: "ʿAmr ibn Mūsā came in the city of Hums, and then we gathered around him in the mosque. Then ʿAmar ibn Mūsā started saying repeatedly: "your nice shaykh narrated to us." However, when he kept repeatedly saying this, I asked him, who is our nice shaykh whom you are talking about? Name him; because we do not know who he is. He said: Khālid ibn Maʿīn. Then I said in which year did you meet him? He replied, I met him in year 108 A.H., and I said: where did you meet him? He said: I met him in the invasion of Armenia. Then I said to him, O shaykh fear God and do not lie! Khālid ibn Maʿīn died in 104 A.H, and you are claiming you met him four years after his death" (ʿIṭr, 1979, p. 143).

Obviously, the statements and reports made by well-known scholars whose authenticities are proven have a deep impact on society. A good example is the storytellers who were aware of the impact of using the name and the reputation of well-known scholars on the hearts and minds of the people. Storytellers and beggars have on occasions narrated strange stories to attract people to gather around them, to make them happy and contended. Well-known among the fabricators is Abū Saʿīd al-Madīyī. The famous strange narration he made was, that narrated by al-Jawzī who said: Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn prayed in Rusafah mosque. Then the storyteller stood up in the mosque and cited a *ḥadīth* to the audience and said: "It was reported to us by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn, both said that ʿAbdul ibn Muʿammar reported from Qatādah from Anas, that the Prophet (s.a.w.), said: "Whoever, says

"there is no God but Allah," Allah will reward him, from each word uttered, with a bird in paradise, with its beak of gold and feathers of pearl." Then the man keeps telling a story of about twenty pages long. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn kept looking at each other, then Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal asked Yaḥyā, "have you reported this?" And he replied: I swear to God that I have never heard this before! At the end of the story, people gave him certain gifts, but while waiting for some more, the speaker was called by Yaḥyā, then he came expecting some gifts from Yaḥyā, Yaḥyā asked him who told you this? He said: "Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn," then Yaḥyā said, I am Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn and this is Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and we have never heard and never reported such story from the Prophet (s.a.w.). He said, I heard many times that Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn is a foolish person, but today I realize the truth of such statements. Don't you know that there are many reporters with those names, and in fact I had reported from seventeen Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn. Aḥmad surprisingly put his hand on his face, and said to Yaḥyā let him go! The man stood-up and left arrogantly (Mizzī, 1980, p. 558).

Hence, the life of the individual, date of birth, death and place of living are very crucial for the assessment and evaluation of his or her status. *Muḥaddithūn* used these elements to verify certain issues about each and every person involved in narrating *ḥadīth*. Firstly, details connected with the narrator's biography, such as his or her full name, date of birth, place of birth and date of death were checked. Secondly, his or her academic writings were assessed. Thirdly, the circumstances of the meeting between the narrator and the reporter took place were taken into consideration.

Comparing and contrasting

In order to identify differences and similarities among the facts from various materials collected, as well as to authenticate the narrations, *muḥaddithūn* use the method of comparison among various available narrations. Comparison and cross examination were applied as the principal tools to establish and ascertain the textual and narrative accuracy of Prophetic *ḥadīth*. "By gathering all the *ḥadīth* on a certain subject and other data relating to time, place and particular individuals and then carefully comparing the relevant parts with one another, the *ʿulamāʾ* were able to evaluate the accuracy of *ḥadīth* and reliability

of their reporters" (Kamali, 2002, p. 116). Critical cross-examination of various narrations of Prophetic *ḥadīth* is normally done through collecting all the narrations of *aḥadīth,* then critically examining the differences of its reporters, by comparing between their reliability and intensity of their memory. Through such procedure, fair and acceptable judgment on such narrations would be issued. Validation and disqualification of certain *āḥādīth* would not be established until the processes of verification are exhausted. Some methods applied were as follows:

1. Comparison between the *āḥādīth* of the different students of one scholar or scholars of one student. Such comparisons take place by examining the similarities and differences between their narrations, whether they have additional segments or edition, dates of narrations documented and verbal narrations. This is useful for the scholars to confirm the authenticity of both the chain and text.
2. Comparison between the statements of a single scholar at different times. The process of contrasting the scholar's statements in various occasions, obviously, needs someone to possess critical and creative mind.
3. Comparison between oral recitation and written documents.
4. Comparison between the *ḥadīth* and the relevant text of the Qurʾān.

A good example of this process was the effort of Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn (158-233 A.H.) who tried to authenticate some written works on *ḥadīth* of Ḥammād ibn Salamah of Baṣrah (d. 167). To do so, it was necessary for him to travel to Baṣrah where he checked the text with Ḥammād's students, 18 of them in all, and then said in a conversation to one of them (Mūsā ibn Ismāʿīl) that Ḥammād made mistakes and his students added some more to his, and that he wanted to distinguish who made which mistakes. Ibn Maʿīn tried to identify the source of the mistakes through comparison and cross reference: if all the students of Ḥammād had made the same error, Ḥammad was likely the source, but if they differed in making the error, the error was likely to have originated from the students. In addition to identifying the specific errors, Ibn Maʿīn's enquiry enabled him to grade the various students of Ḥammād and determine their accuracy in reporting (Aʿẓamī 1997, pp. 52-53).

Another example is the *ḥadīth* investigated by Imam Muslim. The *ḥadīth* was reported by Ibn ʿAbbās that on one occasion he prayed behind the Prophet and started to stand on his left side, but the Prophet turned him to change sides from his left to his right side. This incident was then reported by the scholar Yazīd ibn Abū al-Zinād, from Kurayb, from Ibn ʿAbbās stating that Ibn ʿAbbās stood on the right side of the Prophet and he was then made to stand on the left side. There was obviously an error. So Imam Muslim gathered all the statements of the students of Kurayb, and then he collected all the statements of Ibn ʿAbbās and established that Ibn ʿAbbās had changed sides from the left to the right, not vice versa. He then further compared this with other reports by the Companions who had prayed with the Prophet and found out that Yazīd ibn Abū Zinād had committed a mistake (Muslim,1395 A.H., pp. 136-138; See also Aʿzamī, p. 55; Kamali, 2002, pp. 117-118).

Accuracy and completeness

Accuracy means conformity to fact and exactness. It is a measurement to match the actual relationship between report and its original source. In the process of *ḥadīth* validation and indictment, accuracy denotes the precisely evaluated process of *ḥadīth* narration, where a reporter is required to narrate the *ḥadīth* by its verbal expressions and narrative chains precisely and accurately. This verbal accuracy and narrative precision are needed whenever the same narrator is reporting such narration. Accuracy in this sense is needed for all aspects of the report. Accuracy is also a necessity in *isnād* in which the transmitter has to confirm the name of the authority from whom he reported the *ḥadīth*, the authority must also give the name of his source or teacher from whom he received the same *ḥadīth*, and so on until it reaches the Prophet.

Accuracy demands that the *ḥadīth* be reported with a continuous accurate chain, reported by upright persons, who possessed retentive memory, from the upper level of the chain to its lower level, without any outlandish, obvious or subtle defects. A remarkable example of this kind of situation involving Imam al-Bukhārī and Iraqi *ḥadīth* scholars who wanted to test his accuracy and precision. The traditionists, in order to test their visitor- al-Bukhārī, appointed ten men, each with ten *aḥādīth*. Then the text of each *ḥadīth* of these ten people was prefixed with the *isnād* of another. Imam al-Bukhārī listened to each of the ten men as they narrated their *aḥādīth* and denied the correctness of every *ḥadīth*. When they had finished narrating these *aḥādīth*, he addressed each of

the Iraqi narrators in turn, recounting to him each of his *aḥādīth* with its correct *isnād* (al-Dhahabī, 2001, vol. 12, pp. 408-409).

Conclusion

As the Qurʾān urges Muslims to engage in contemplation, reflection, reckoning and good understanding, it uses modes of expression that provoke the mind and enforce it to think. The Qurʾān repeatedly calls for objectivity and accuracy in all matters of life. Qurʾānic critical thinking means verifying claims and judgments based on proofs and evidences based on certainty, and not on doubts or conjectures to avoid bias, personal interests or whims in forming opinions and giving judgments.

Like critical thinking, *ḥadīth* validation and indictment is a process of intellectual discipline. Elements of critical thinking that were applied to the process of *ḥadīth* validation include: differentiating between fact and opinion, recognizing and evaluating the authors status, comparing and contrasting, accuracy and completeness, recognizing logical fallacies and faulty reasoning, making judgments and drawing logical conclusions. This process enables people to analyse and judge ideas, values, thoughts and daily activities of life, in order to reach rationally acceptable conclusions. Since the science of *ḥadīth* concerns the evaluation and validation of Prophet's sayings and actions, it starts with a necessity to minimize fuzziness and imprecision in *ḥadīth*, then strives for logical consistency and the avoiding of contractions in every part of a Prophetic narration. Epistemologically, textual critiques and analyses as well as empirical proofs to support the authenticity of each and every narration were absolute and inevitable necessities in the process of *ḥadīth* validation.

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