

# Muslim Scholars' Contribution in Ḥadīth Authentication

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## Abstract

During and after the caliphate of the third Caliph, 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān people from different backgrounds and persuasions with criminal mentality tried to corrupt the Ḥadīth of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.). Muslim scholars, on the other hand, did not remain silent spectators of the alarming situation; they rose to the occasion and did all that they could to preserve the authenticity and sanctity of sayings of the Prophet (s.a.w.). This preservation and authentication were ensured from both angles, chain of the reporters, and text of the report. This paper represents a humble attempt to introduce contributions of some scholars in the past as well as today towards authentication of Ḥadīth.

**Keywords:** Ḥadīth, Muslim Scholars, Authentication, the Chain, the Text.

## Abstrak

Semasa dan selepas khalifah dipegang oleh khalifah ketiga, 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān orang dari latar belakang yang berbeza dan pujukan dengan mentaliti jenayah cuba merosakkan hadith Nabi Muhammad (s.a.w). Ulama muslim, sebaliknya, tidak kekal penonton senyap pada situasi yang membimbangkan, mereka naik kepada situasi itu dan telah cuba sedaya-upaya untuk mengekalkan kesahihan dan kesucian kata Nabi Muhammad (s.a.w). Pemeliharaan dan pengesahan ini telah dipastikan dari kedua-dua sudut, rantaian wartawan dan teks laporan. Karya ini merupakan satu percubaan untuk memperkenalkan sumbangan setengah ulamak pada masa lalu dan hari ini ke arah kesahihan hadith.

**Kata kunci:** Hadith, Ulama muslim, Kesahihan, rantai, teks

## Introduction

Ḥadīth signifies report containing information about sayings, doings, tacit approvals, and description of personal features of the Last Prophet (s.a.w.). Another term which is used as an alternative for Ḥadīth is Sunnah which literally means way, manner, habit, practice, custom etc, and technically denotes ways and practices of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.). At times, the term Ḥadīth is also used to refer to the sayings and doings attributed to the Companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.). Technically, Ḥadīth comprises two

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components, chain of narrators (*sanad*) and text of report (*matn*). *Sanad* or chain connotes the names of the sources through whom the utterance or practice of the Prophet (s.a.w.) is reported. It could be a long chain or short one. The words of the report through which is communicated what the Prophet (s.a.w.) said or did constitute the text (*matn*). *Matn* may also be short or long. Historically, Ḥadīth was used, misused, abused, and even fabricated by those interested. Muslim scholars always rose to the occasion. They did what they could to protect Ḥadīth from any kind of onslaught and ensured its authentication. Ḥadīth authentication has a long and reliable history. It is not possible to cover in a short paper all the contributions Muslim scholars made towards authentication of Ḥadīth from both chain and text angles. This paper will focus on contributions of some prominent scholars in Ḥadīth authentication.

### **Authentication of Ḥadīth: Brief Historical Background**

During the time of the Prophet (s.a.w.) and around three decades after him there was not raised any question related to the chain of narrators (*sanad*). During that period the focus was only on the text of Ḥadīth (*matn*). Verification of *ḥadīth* can be traced back to the time of the first Muslim Caliph, Abū Bakr (d.13 A.H.). He would not accept a *ḥadīth* narrated by one single *ṣaḥābī* unless confirmed by some other *ṣaḥābī*, due to the possibility of intentional or unintentional error in the report made by only one source.<sup>1</sup> This approach continued during ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb’s caliphate (13-23 A.H.). He was harder than his predecessor in accepting a *ḥadīth*. Once, for instance, when Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī (d.50 A.H.) narrated a *ḥadīth* (“The Prophet said: One who asks for permission three times and gets no response should leave”) to ‘Umar, and was asked by the latter to bring a witness to verify the Prophetic statement, the Caliph was satisfied only when he managed to bring a witness, Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī (d.65 A.H.).<sup>2</sup> ‘Umar clarified his stand to Abū Mūsā that he was actually extraordinarily careful about narrating *ḥadīth* of the Prophet

<sup>1</sup> Fallātah, ‘Umar ibn ‘Uthmān, *Al-Waḍ‘ fī al-Ḥadīth* (Maktabah al-Ghazālī, Damascus, 1981) vol. 1, p. 178.

<sup>2</sup> Abū Dā‘ūd, *Sunan* (Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyyah, Beirut, 1996), vol. 3, kiāb al-Adab, ḥadīth no. 5180.

(s.a.w.).<sup>3</sup> Scholars from the generation of *ṣaḥābah* hesitated in accepting *ḥadīth* without further verification.<sup>4</sup> ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbās (d.68 A.H.) said: “In the beginning we used to attentively listen to any *ḥadīth* narrated by anyone but when the people widened the scope, we did not accept any report except what we recognized as authentic”.<sup>5</sup> It seems this careful approach was adopted by *ṣaḥābah* due to the explosive situation after the murder of the third Caliph, ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān (d.35 A.H.), and the civil war between pro ‘Ali troops and pro Mu‘āwiyah militia. This situation was exploited by the people with vested interests and they fabricated *aḥādīth* concerning the authority of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d.40 A.H.).<sup>6</sup> ‘Ulamā’ did not close their eyes from the reality on the ground. They rose to the occasion and did their best to verify traditions attributed to the Prophet (s.a.w.). If something was narrated on the authority of ‘Alī, the knowledgeable did not accept it until it was confirmed by the disciples of ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas‘ūd (d.32 A.H.). Muhammad ibn Sīrīn (d.110 A.H.) mentions very clearly the authentication of *ḥadīth* after the civil war in these words:

“People never asked about the chain of narrators but after the civil war they asked the reporters to identify their sources. If the chain consisted of the names from the orthodox (*ahl al-sunnah*), the *ḥadīth* was accepted as authentic; if the chain comprised the people heterodox (*ahl al-bid‘ah*), it was rejected as unreliable”.<sup>7</sup>

Scholars from later generations categorized a *ḥadīth* as authentic only when they found that all of its narrators were highly authentic. Ṭā’ūs ibn Kaysān (d.106 A.H.) exhorted his students to accept *aḥādīth* only from those who were reliable.<sup>8</sup> There were around a hundred well-known pious figures in Madinah, Abū al-Zinād (d.130 A.H.) says, during his time but they were not considered reliable in *ḥadīth*.<sup>9</sup> From the second half of the first

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., ḥadīth no. 5183.

<sup>4</sup> Falātah, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 180.

<sup>5</sup> Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Dār al-Ma ‘rifah, Beirut, 1997, with the commentary by al-Nawwī), vol. 1, Muqaddimah, p. 39, ḥadīth no. 21.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 39-40, ḥadīth nos. 22-24.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, Muqaddimah, p. 44, ḥadīth no. 27.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 44-45, ḥadīth nos. 28-29.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 45-46, ḥadīth no. 30.

century of Islamic history the chain of narrators assumed a significance place in *ḥadīth* authentication. It is this significance of the chain that ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Mubārak (d.181 A.H.) refers to in his comment:

“The chain of narrators holds religious sanctity. Had there not been the chains, anyone would have uttered anything he wished”.<sup>10</sup>

Once he rejected a tradition attributed to the Prophet (s.a.w.) as unreliable merely on the ground that the last narrator in its chain, al-Ḥajjāj ibn Dīnār (d. uncertain, probably in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century after *hijrah*) did not disclose the sources between him and the Prophet (s.a.w.).<sup>11</sup> Towards the end of the first century after *hijrah* the scholars had developed a full-fledged discipline of knowledge directly related to the study of *ḥadīth*, which is known as ‘*ilm asmā’ al-rijāl*’ (biographical dictionaries). This knowledge about the narrators of *ḥadīth* was then extensively used to check the authenticity of the chain. If the chain was found reliable, the text reported through that chain was identified as authentic. In case of any problem in the chain the report was classified as weak or unreliable. *Ḥadīth* authentication remained for around 140 years after *hijrah* verbal. The first works written on authentic traditions were those compiled by Sa‘īd ibn Abī ‘Arūbah (d.156 A.H.) and by al-Rabī‘ ibn Ṣabīḥ (d.160 A.H.).<sup>12</sup> These works were followed by a number of compilations of traditions. Most prominent among them are those compiled by Mālik ibn Anas (d.179 A.H.), Ibn Jurayj (d.150 A.H.), al-Awzā‘ī (d.157 A.H.), Sufyān al-Thawrī (d.161 A.H.), Ḥammād ibn Salmah (d.167 A.H.), Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal (d.241 A.H.), and Ishāq ibn Rāḥwayh (d.238 A.H.). When it came to the time of al-Bukhārī (d.256 A.H.), there were innumerable compilations of traditions. But these works were full of problems. Al-Bukhārī embarked upon the task of producing a work comprising the most authentic *aḥādīth*. He selected traditions for his work from the mass of 600,000 *aḥādīth*.<sup>13</sup> Likewise Muslim (d. 261 A.H.) selected *aḥādīth* for his *Ṣaḥīḥ* from a bulk of around

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 46-47, *ḥadīth* no. 32.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 48-49, under *ḥadīth* no. 32.

<sup>12</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Hadīyy al-Sārī* (Dār al-Salām, Riyadh, n.d.), p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Kāmil Muhammad, Muhammad ‘Uwayḍah, *A‘lām al-Fuqahā’ wa al-Muḥaddithīn: Al-Imām al-Bukhārī* (Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1992), p. 9.

300,000 reports.<sup>14</sup> Works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim were followed by many other works. All these compilations of *ḥadīth* have one common feature i.e. authentication of *ḥadīth* through authentication of the chain (*sanad*). One may not identify any *ḥadīth* work in which the reports have been recorded on the basis of text-verification in addition to chain authentication. Scattered comments and observations on certain *aḥādīth* from the angle of texts are attributed to some scholars. Serious efforts are missing from the legacy.

### Evaluation of Chain and Text

Ḥadīth experts developed five universally acceptable criteria to ascertain the position of Ḥadīth: (1) continuity of the chain (*ittiṣāl al-sanad*), (2) integrity of narrators' character (*al-'adālah*), (3) precision of the report (*al-ḍabt*), (4) non-deficiency (*ghayr al-'illah*), and (5) non-aberrance (*'adm al-shudhūd*).<sup>15</sup> The first three criteria are exclusively to check the chain; the remaining two are applicable to both the chain and the text. If a Ḥadīth fulfils all these five criteria, it is declared authentic. In case of any defect in the Ḥadīth from any of these five angles, it is described as weak. As Ibn Kathīr puts it, the authentic Ḥadīth is the one whose chain of narrators are all continuously connected to each other, possess integrity of character, demonstrate powerful memory, and which is free from any aberrance and defect.<sup>16</sup> As for weak Ḥadīth, it remains short of fulfilling the conditions of the authentic one.<sup>17</sup> It seems, then, pertinent to have at least a brief understanding of the five above-mentioned criteria.

**Continuity of the Chain (*Ittiṣāl al-Sanad*):** All the narrators occurring in the chain must have direct connection with their

<sup>14</sup> Kāmil Muhammad, *A'lām al-Fuqahā' wa al-Muḥaddithīn: Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj* (Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1995), p. 14.

<sup>15</sup> Ṭaḥḥān, Maḥmūd, *Taysīr Muṣṭalaḥ al-Ḥadīth* (Maktabah Dār al-Turāth, Kuwait, 1984), pp. 34-35.

<sup>16</sup> Ibn Kathīr, Abū al-Fidā Ismā'īl, *Al-Bā'ith al-Ḥathīth* (Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1994; ed. Ahmad Muhammad Shākīr), 4<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

respective immediate predecessors. This situation must remain consistent until the Prophet (s.a.w.) or any of his Companions.<sup>18</sup> The position of the Companion in the chain is obvious that he met the Prophet (s.a.w.) and learned from him. The only thing to be checked about the reporter from the Prophet (s.a.w.) is whether he is a Companion or not. Once it is confirmed that he is a Companion of the Prophet (s.a.w.), nothing is checked about him. Other narrators after the Companion are thoroughly investigated as to their connectivity with their respective immediate sources. It is looked minutely when and where the two narrators met each other. It is seen who was born when and died when. For example, a chain consists of these names until the Prophet (s.a.w.): A from B from C from D from E from F from the Prophet (s.a.w.). Continuity of chain denotes that A really met and interacted with B who did the same with C who did the same with D who did the same with E who did the same with F who is a Companion of the Prophet (s.a.w.). In case, through investigation it is confirmed that, for instance, there is a gap of time or space between E and F, it means that E is speaking a lie that he heard from F. At this juncture the report concerned stands doubtful as to its authenticity.

**Integrity of Character (*al-‘Adālah*):** The narrator in a chain must be a believer in the real sense of the word, a physically and mentally mature person, free from any reasons of iniquity, and also safe from any sign of human indignity.<sup>19</sup> Disbelief or hypocrisy on the part of the narrator renders him unreliable as to the integrity of character. Insanity and biological immaturity also effect the position adversely. The narrator should not have been reported to have done anything wrong to anyone on any occasion. He should not have ever done anything below standard. If a narrator does not pray, does not fast or is found involved in nonsense acts or commits some sin or stretches his hands to the public for begging, he does in no way fulfils the criterion of integrity of character.

**Precision of the Report (*al-Ḍabt*):** The narrator must be in possession of strong memory; he must not be suffering from weakness of memory; he should not be found making gross mistake

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>19</sup> Ṭaḥḥān, op. cit., p. 146.

in his delivery of the information; he should not be forgetful or unconscious of what he takes from his source; and also he should not have too much false impression.<sup>20</sup> Any kind of defect in the precision of the report either from the memorized or documented material renders the narrator weak and unreliable.

**Non-Deficiency (*Ghayr al-'Illah*):** Deficiency in Ḥadīth denotes obscure, hidden, and reprehensible reason in the chain of narrators or in the text of report, even though the Ḥadīth appears to be safe from any defect. Deficiency might be from any of these or other aspects: (1) a particular narrator in the chain is detected to be alone in making the report concerned, (2) the text of a report is in contrast with other ones, (3) a tābi'ī narrator reports directly from the Prophet (s.a.w.), (4) the report contains saying or doing of a Companion, and not of the Prophet (s.a.w.), and (5) a Ḥadīth enters another Ḥadīth.<sup>21</sup> For a Ḥadīth to be declared as authentic there should not be such deficiency in it.

As al-Khairābādī explains, deficiency (*'illah*) in the text could be of various kinds: (1) the text of tradition goes against the Qur'ān, (2) the text is in contrast with the very objective of Islam, (3) the text clashes with the established history, (4) the text appears to be irrational, (5) the text contradicts general observation, (6) the text contains information about reward and punishment disproportionately, and (7) the text comprises unsound words and meanings.<sup>22</sup>

**Non-Aberrance (*'Adm al-Shudhūdh*):** Aberrance in Ḥadīth means that an authentic narrator reports something which is in contrast with other traditions narrated by his contemporaries who are either stronger in memory or precision of the report than him or are at par with him in memory and precision.<sup>23</sup> Obviously, this defect is related to the text of the report. Aberrance could be in five

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn, *Tadrīb al-Rāwī* (Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1989), vol. 1, p. 252.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Khayrābādī, Muhammad Abullais, *Takhrīj al-Ḥadīth: Nash'atuhū wa Manhajuhū* (Dār al-Shākir, Kuala Lumpur, 1999), pp. 268-274.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 265.

forms or any of those five ones, addition (*ziyādah*), inversion (*qalb*), confusion (*iḍṭirāb*), insertion (*idrāj*), and mispronunciation (*tashīf*).

Addition (*ziyādah*) refers to some addition in the original statement of Ḥadīth because of which the very nature of the Prophetic command changes. For example, ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar decreed that the Prophet (s.a.w.) prescribed one standard cup (*ṣā’*) of date fruit or barely as fasting month charity (*zakāt al-fīṭr*) for the people whether free or slave, and male or female from the Muslim community.<sup>24</sup> But upon investigation it was found out that the last words “from the Muslim community” were additional added by some narrator. Muslim has recorded the same tradition of Ibn ‘Umar through five chains of narrators, three are without that addition and two are with that addition.<sup>25</sup> This is a defect known as aberrance (*shudhūdh*). With the addition in the report the nature of the command changed. Without the addition the fasting month charity is compulsory for all including non-Muslim slave; whereas with the addition the charity remains confined to only Muslims. Such defect in the text renders the Ḥadīth unreliable.<sup>26</sup>

Inversion (*qalb*) signifies change in the word order of Ḥadīth. For example, on the authority of Abū Hurayrah Muslim has recorded a tradition of the Prophet (s.a.w.) concerning the divine protection of seven categories of people on the Day of Judgment. The sixth category mentioned in the report is: “The one who did charity work and concealed it to the extent that his right hand did not know what the left hand spent in charity”. According to the known practice, the right hand is used to give charity, but this tradition mentions the left hand as the giver of charity. Some narrator changed the word order in the report. The original

<sup>24</sup> Mālik ibn Anas, *Al-Muwatta’* (Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, Beirut, 1985), vol. 1, kitāb al-Zakāt, tradition no. 52.

<sup>25</sup> Muslim, op. cit., vol. 4, kitāb al-Zakāt, tradition nos. 2275-2279.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Khairābādī, op. cit., p. 265. The example is not correct because what is referred to as addition is not addition but the part of the original statement of the Prophet (s.a.w.). Al-Khairābādī relies for this contention on al-Tirmidhī who claims that the words “from the Muslims” form addition. Vide, al-Timidhī, *Sunan*, kitāb al-Zakāt, tradition no. 675.



statement might have been with this word order: “.....that his left hand did not know what the right hand spent in charity”.<sup>27</sup>

Confusion (*iḍtirāb*) connotes variations in reports on the same matter through the same source. Al-Khairābādī has given five traditions on the authority of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbās. He thinks that all these traditions refer to the same case yet the reports vary from each other hence occurrence of confusion. All the five traditions are quoted here below.

1-A man checked with the Prophet (s.a.w.) whether he should do compensatory fasting on behalf of his mother who was no more. The Prophet’s (s.a.w.) answer was in the affirmative.

2-A woman consulted the Prophet (s.a.w.) on whether she should do the compensatory fasting on behalf of her dead sister. The Prophet (s.a.w.) allowed her to do that.

3-A woman asked the Prophet (s.a.w.) whether she could observe fasting on behalf of her mother who was dead. The Prophet (s.a.w.) permitted her to do that.

4-Sa’d ibn ‘Ubādah enquired the Prophet (s.a.w.) whether he could fulfill the vow his mother could not fulfill before his death. The Prophet (s.a.w.) gave him permission.

5-Sa’d asked the Prophet (s.a.w.) as to what kind of charity work he should do on behalf of her dead mother. The Prophet (s.a.w.) advised him to build a source of water for public consumption.<sup>28</sup>

Insertion (*idrāj*) means inclusion of some non-Prophetic statement in Ḥadīth. For example, the Prophet (s.a.w.) taught ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas‘ūd al-Tashahhud for ṣolāt and said: after reciting *al-Tashahhud*, you may remain seated if you want; you may also leave if you want to do that.<sup>29</sup> Al-Nawawī claims that the last part of the tradition “after reciting *al-Tashahhud*, you may remain seated if you want; you may also leave if you want to do that” is the statement of Ibn Mas‘ūd, which got inserted in the text of tradition as the statement of the Prophet (s.a.w.).<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Muslim, op. cit., vol. 4, kitb al-Zakāt, tradition no. 2377.

<sup>28</sup> Al-Khairābādī, op. cit., p. 266. He has used this tradition as an example of confusion (*iḍtirāb*) because Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr has declared the tradition as *muḍtarab*. On what basis he considers all these five traditions as one. Probably these are really five, and not only one.

<sup>29</sup> Abū Dā‘ūd, *Sunan*, kitāb al-ṣolāt, tradition no. 970.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Suyūfī, *Tadrīb al-Rāwī*, vol. 1, p. 268.

Mispronunciation (*tashīf*) denotes misunderstanding word or words in Ḥadīth. For example, the Prophet (s.a.w.) prohibited the people from gathering in circles (*ḥilaq*) before Friday prayer. But the word *ḥilaq* is pronounced by many reporters and *muḥaddithūn* as *al-ḥalq* (shaving of the hair).<sup>31</sup> Obviously, due to the change of pronunciation the word changed in form as well as meaning.

### Role of al-Bukhārī and Muslim

History of Ḥadīth compilation will always remain incomplete without the mention of stalwarts in the field of Ḥadīth studies. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim shine in the Islamic history as sun and moon. Other Ḥadīth scholars such as al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dā'ūd, al-Nasa'i, and Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal are also highly recognized contributors to the preservation of Ḥadīth. But the significance of al-Bukhārī and Muslim is incomparable to them. These two scholars laid the foundation of Ḥadīth examination and authentication based on well-defined criteria. It is these criteria and the methodology of Ḥadīth examination that others followed. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim hold the position of teachers and pioneers in the field of Ḥadīth authentication. It will not be, then, out of place to mention these two great scholars' contribution.

Al-Bukhārī's name is Muhammad ibn Ismā'īl ibn al-Mughīrah. His grandfather al-Mughīrah was originally a Magian by religion and accepted Islam at the hands of Bukhārā's governor. His father had the privilege to meet and hear from Mālik ibn Anas. He was born in Bukhārā in 194 A.H. At a very tender age he began his memorization and investigation of Ḥadīth. When he was 16, he learned by heart as well as developed true understanding of the books of 'Abd Allah ibn al-Mubārah and Wakī' ibn al-Jarrāḥ. His practical sojourn in learning Ḥadīth began in Makkah at the age of 16. Within a year or two of his stay at Makkah he started compiling the verdicts and statements of Companions and their disciples. It was at Makkah that he compiled his work "*Al-Tārīkh*". One day someone suggested to al-Bukhārī's teacher, Ishāque ibn Rāhwayh to compile a book containing the traditions of the Prophet (s.a.w.).

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<sup>31</sup> Al-Khairābādī, op. cit., p. 267.

Al-Bukhārī was inspired from that request to his teacher and made up his mind to do that on his own. He recorded 9082 (nine thousand eighty two) traditions of the Prophet (s.a.w.) in his masterpiece, *Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*. This selection was from the lot of 600000 (six hundred thousand) which he had memorized. The actual number of traditions in his book is 2602. Since he repeated his traditions, the number swelled to almost four times higher. It contains 97 (ninety seven) chapters which al-Bukhārī arranged along fiqhī themes. Prior to his inclusion of Prophetic traditions into his work he subjected each and every single tradition to the strictest possible scrutiny from the angle of chain of narrators. It is this reason that his work of Ḥadīth is taken as the most authentic work on the Prophetic traditions. Yet, some Ḥadīth experts such as al-Dārquṭnī challenged the position of around seventy (70) traditions recorded by al-Bukhārī. Ibn Ḥajar has proved al-Dārquṭnī's criticism untenable. Al-Bukhārī died in 256 A.H.

Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj was born in Nīsāpur in around 204 A.H. At the age of twelve he began his Ḥadīth learning from towering personalities like Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā and Ishāque ibn Rāhwayh. He travelled a lot for learning Ḥadīth. He visited Makkah, Madinah, Kufah , Basrah, Baghdad, Syria, Iraq, Balkh, Egypt, and Rayy etc. The number of traditions of his Ḥadīth work, *Al-Musnad al-Ṣaḥīḥ* is around four thousand. The methodology of Muslim's Ḥadīth examination is precisely the same as al-Bukhārī's. The only difference between them is their grading of some reporters. According to al-Bukhārī, some of Muslim's chains of narrators were not perfectly safe from criticism. The beauty of Muslim's work is its particular arrangement of traditions. He has recorded all the authentic reports on the same subject matter at one place, not at different places as al-Bukhārī did. He died in 261 A.H. As Ḥadīth critics suggest, there are more problems in Muslim's work than those in al-Bukhārī's.

### **Authentication of Ḥadīth from the Angle of the Text**

It may in no way be claimed that al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and other Ḥadīth authorities ever examined the text of Ḥadīth against certain universally established criteria. Their focus was only and only on the authentication of Ḥadīth from the angle of chain of narrators. It was because they believed that authenticity of chain of

narrators ensured the authenticity of the text of Ḥadīth. Even the criticism of Ḥadīth works particularly those believed as authentic has been carried out from the angle of chain only. Scholars of *‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīth* did, to some extent, their part in making references hither and thither to the problem in the texts of traditions recorded in authentic Ḥadīth works including al-Bukhārī’s Muslim’s. But one may hardly find any serious attempt at Ḥadīth examination from textual angle. Yet, there are at least three, to an extent, serious contribution towards the authentication of Ḥadīth from textual angle: (1) Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Al-Mawḍū‘āt*, (2) Ibn Qayyim’s *Al-Manār al-Munīf fī al-Ṣaḥīḥ wa al-Ḍa‘īf*, and (3) al-Dumaynī’s *Maqāyīs Naqd Mutūn al-Sunnah*.

#### ***Al-Mawḍū‘āt* by Ibn al-Jawzī**

Ibn al-Jawzī’s (d.597 A.H.) work, *Al-Mawḍū‘āt* is indeed a compilation of fabricated traditions spreading over fifty themes. His classification of his recorded traditions as fabricated is not on the basis of text examination but only on chain examination. The headings of this book speak volumes of Ibn al-Jawzī’s inclination towards authentication of tradition from textual angle. He remained short of declaring any tradition in his work as fabricated from textual angle. But he, at times, does say: “The hearts’ aversion to the liars’ fabrication constitutes sufficient criterion for the rejection of fabricated traditions”.<sup>32</sup> He has classified the traditions in the authentic collection of Ḥadīth including al-Bukhārī’s and Muslim’s works into six categories. (1) Those traditions, which are unanimously authentic. (2) Those traditions which are authentic but only al-Bukhārī or only Muslim has recorded. (3) Those traditions which are claimed to be authentic but neither al-Bukhārī nor Muslim have recorded. (4) Those traditions which are weak in nature. (5) Those traditions which are extremely weak. (6) And those traditions which are nothing but lies fabricated in the name of the Prophet (s.a.w.).<sup>33</sup> All the traditions Ibn al-Jawzī has compiled

<sup>32</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-Mawḍū‘āt* (Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1995), vol. 1, Muqaddimah, p. 23.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-14.

in his *Al-Mawḍū'āt* can easily be rejected merely on the basis of the text, without looking at the position of the chain.

***Al-Manār al-Munīf fī al-Ṣaḥīḥ wa al-Ḍa'īf* by Ibn Qayyim**

Ibn Qayyim (d.751 A.H.) is the first who categorically puts some criteria for Ḥadīth authentication from textual angle. Those criteria developed by him are: (1) Ḥadīth does not contradict the Qur'ān, (2) Ḥadīth does not go against highly authentic aḥādīth, (3) Ḥadīth does not negate the true observation, (4) Ḥadīth does not describe the reward and punishment in disproportionate manner, (5) Ḥadīth does not contain unsound statement, (6) Ḥadīth does not praise or condemn illogically any place, person, profession, or thing. There are fifty (50) sections in Ibn Qayyim's book under each of which he has recorded traditions and declared them as unreliable from both angles the chain and the text. The total number of traditions recorded is 347.

***Maqāyīs Naqd Mutūn al-Sunnah* by al-Dumaynī**

Dr. Misfir Gurm Allah al-Dumaynī is the first scholar who wrote a comprehensive book on the need of Ḥadīth examination from textual angle. It was originally a Ph. D. thesis submitted to and approved by Umm al-Qurā University, Makkah. It comprises four major parts: Introduction and three chapters. These three chapters are entitled (1) "Criteria of Textual Examination of Sunnah by Companions", (2) "Criteria of Textual Examination of Sunnah by Ḥadīth Scholars", and (3) "Criteria of Textual Examination of Sunnah by Jurists". Some details of these chapters are given here below.

**Companions' Criteria of Textual Examination of Sunnah:** In this chapter three criteria for textual examination of Sunnah have been discussed, the Qur'ān, the highly authentic traditions, and the reason. Al-Dumaynī emphasizes that the Companions used these criteria to further authenticate the traditions reported in the name of the Prophet (s.a.w.), although they did not doubt the integrity of

their colleagues.<sup>34</sup> The companions knew very well that any statement of the Prophet (s.a.w.) could not oppose the Qur’ān because they believed that both the Qur’ān and Sunnah were from God. That is why if there was any clash between reported tradition of the Prophet (s.a.w.) and any statement of the Qur’ān, they rejected the tradition. Al-Dumaynī has advanced eight concrete examples to show the Companions’ Ḥadīth examination with the help of the Qur’ān. One example may suffice to give an idea of that. When ‘Alī heard a tradition in the name of the Prophet (s.a.w.)—“The Prophet (s.a.w.) decided the case of Barwa’ bint Wāshiq who became widow even before her husband could establish conjugal contact with her, saying: She is entitled to the dower and the inheritance from the deceased’s property, and also she has to observe waiting period (*‘iddah*)”—reported by Mi‘qal ibn Sinān al-Ashja‘ī, he rejected the report as the narration of a Bedouin because it contradicted the Qur’ānic statement: “And unto those with whom you have enjoyed the marriage, you have to give them the dowers, due to them.....” (4:24). ‘Alī was of the view that the *āyah* (4:24) makes the dower due on husband only after the physical relationship between him and the wife.<sup>35</sup> The Companions also compared an unknown tradition with the known one, not because they wanted to reject the Prophetic tradition but because they guessed some problem on the part of the reporter. Under this section al-Dumaynī has given eleven examples of this nature. For example, a tradition in the name of the Prophet (s.a.w.) was read before ‘Ā’ishah that the dog, the donkey, and the woman make the prayer invalid. ‘Ā’ishah forthrightly disapproved this report referring to the practice of the Prophet (s.a.w.). She said that the while the Prophet (s.a.w.) prayed she would be lying on the bed in front of the Prophet (s.a.w.); in case of call of the nature she would sneak away from very close to his leg.<sup>36</sup> Under the “reason” as a criterion to check the authenticity of Ḥadīth text al-Dumaynī has brought in twelve examples. One example is given here for clarification. Once Abū Hurayrah reported from the Prophet (s.a.w.) that ablution should be repeated if taken something cooked

<sup>34</sup> Al-Dumaynī, Ghuram Allah, Misfir, *Maqā’īs Naqd Mutūn al-Sunnah* (No Information about publisher, Publication Date, and Publication Place), pp. 55-56.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

on the fire. Ibn ‘Abbās did not accept the genuineness of this tradition on the ground that several things touched the fire such as oil and hot water. He did not think that if hot water was taken or oil used, ablution would have to be repeated.<sup>37</sup>

**Ḥadīth Scholars' Criteria for Authentication of Text:** Under this chapter al-Dumaynī has traced the criteria muḥaddithūn used in identifying the problem in Ḥadīth. He has mentioned seven criteria Ḥadīth scholars used in ascertaining the truth related to Prophetic traditions: (1) the Qur’ān, (2) non-aberrance (*‘adm al-shudhūdh*), (3) relatively authentic traditions, (4) established history, (5) freedom from unsound words and meanings, (6) fundamental rules and principles of Islamic law, and (7) freedom from abomination and impossibility.

For the application of the first criterion i.e. the Qur’ān al-Dumaynī has advanced thirteen (13) examples. For example, Ibn Kathīr has shown how Ḥadīth scholars rejected tradition—“One who eats with someone already blessed with divine forgiveness is also forgiven”—on the basis of an *āyah* 66:10 (“Allah sets forth an example for the non-believers, the wife of Noah and the wife of Lūt: they were respectively under two of Our righteous servants but they betrayed their husbands, and they profited nothing before Allah on their account, but they were told: Enter the fire along with others”).<sup>38</sup>

Under the criterion “non-aberrance” the author has given twenty examples for the purpose. Al-Dumaynī has not used the term “non-aberrance” as the criterion, but the examples he has advanced are all of “non-aberrance”. His wording for the criterion is very typical: “comparison among solitary traditions”. Under this he has advanced the examples of insertion (*idrāj*), confusion (*iḍtirāb*), inversion (*qalb*), mispronunciation (*taṣhīf*), and addition (*ziyādah*). And all these problems are counted under “aberrance” (*shudhūdh*). One example for each of these categories of aberrance, as advanced by the author, is given here. For insertion (*idrāj*): According to al-Suyūṭī, the tradition—“For the slave is double reward; by the One in whose hand is my soul, if it were not for *jihād* in the cause of Allah, pilgrimage, and taking care of my

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 121.

mother, I would prefer to die the death of a slave”—has the problem of insertion. The first part—“For the slave is double reward”—seems to be Ḥadīth, but the later part represents Abū Hurayrah’s own wish, which was taken later on as the part of the genuine statement of the Prophet (s.a.w.).<sup>39</sup> For confusion (*idtirāb*): Al-Tirmidhī has recorded a Prophetic tradition on the authority of Fāṭimah bint Qays: “In the wealth is indeed the right besides *Zakāt*”; and Ibn Mājah recorded the same differently: “In the wealth is not any right except *Zakāt*”. Due to the contradiction between these two reports both are rendered as weak hence unreliable.<sup>40</sup> For inversion (*qalb*): Al-Bukhārī has recorded a Prophetic tradition on the authority of Abū Hurayrah: “As for the fire, Allah increases it for whomever He wills; and with regard to the paradise, Allah will not do anything wrong to anyone”. Al-Ṣan‘ānī identifies change of the word order therein. He suggests that the tradition should have been like this: “As for the paradise, He grows it for whomever He wills; as regards the fire, Allah will not do anything wrong to anyone”.<sup>41</sup> For mispronunciation (*taṣhīf*): Anas ibn Mālik reports from the Prophet (s.a.w.): “One who said: There is no God but Allah; and in his heart there was good even of “atom” (*dharrah*) weight, will be liberated from the hell”. Shu‘bah ibn al-Hajjāj says that the word is not *dharrah* (atom) but *dhurah* (maiz).<sup>42</sup> For addition (*ziyādah*): The example is the same as quoted above for the same category of *shudhūdh*.<sup>43</sup>

Under the criterion “relatively authentic tradition” al-Dumaynī has not given any concrete example. He has rather noted twenty two principles of how the Prophetic traditions can be checked as to their authenticity.<sup>44</sup>

Under the criterion “established history”, he has given nine examples. One of them is this: According to al-Tirmidhī, when the Prophet (s.a.w.) entered Makkah after its victory, ‘Abd Allah ibn Rawāḥah was with him. Ibn Qayyim rejects this report on the

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 167-180.



ground that Ibn Rawāḥah was martyred in the battle of *Mu'tah*, four months before the victory of Makkah.<sup>45</sup>

Under the criterion “freedom from unsound words and meanings”, he has quoted seventeen traditions as example. One such tradition is this: Ibn Qayyim rejects this tradition—“Looking at the beautiful face is a devotional act (*‘ibādah*)”—on the basis of unsound import of the report.<sup>46</sup>

Under the criterion “fundamental rules and principles of Islamic law”, he has given twenty traditions as example. One of them is this: Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī consigns the tradition—“Due to a person’s addiction to adultery his wife will be afflicted with the same habit”—to trash bin on the basis of an Islamic principle available in the Qur’ān 53:39 (“And for man is nothing but what he strives for”).<sup>47</sup>

Under the criterion “freedom from abomination and impossibility”, he has given nineteen examples. One such example is this: Al-Albānī brushes aside this tradition—“Nine angles are entrusted to the sun, who throw snow onto it every day, otherwise the sun would have burn everything which came in its contact”—considering it something like Judeo-Christian tradition and against the astronomy according to which the reason for the earth being safe from the heat of the sun is the distance of 150 million kilometer between the two.<sup>48</sup>

**Jurists’ Criteria of Ḥadīth Text Authentication:** While discussing the Muslim jurists’ approach to Ḥadīth texts, al-Dumaynī has identified seven criteria: (1) the Qur’ān, (2) the Sunnah, (3) consensus of *ummah*, (4) practice of Companions, (5) logical analogy, (6) general principles, and (7) the impact of solitary tradition.

Under the Qur’ān twenty one examples have been discussed. One of them is this: Ḥanafites and other jurists do not find the tradition of Muslim—“Along with a woman as wife her paternal or maternal aunt cannot be taken by the husband as wife at the same time”—against the Qur’ānic āyah 4:23-24 (“*Prohibited to you are: your mothers, daughters, sisters, mother’s sisters; brother’s*

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 224.

*daughters, sister's daughters,; foster mothers, foster sisters; your wives' mothers; your step-daughters under your guardianship, born of your wives with whom you have established conjugal relationship—no prohibition if you have not established conjugal relationship—and wives of your sonsproceeding from your loins; and two sisters in wedlock at one and the same time, except for what is past; for Allah is oft-forgiving, most merciful; also prohibited are women who are already married, except those whom your right hand possess: thus Allah has ordained for you: except for these, all others are lawful.....”). Jurists are of the view that the tradition specifies the limit put by the Qur’ān.<sup>49</sup>*

Under the criterion Sunnah only four examples have been mentioned. One of them is this: Ḥanafites do not take this tradition—“The Prophet (s.a.w.) decided case on the basis of a witness and an oath”—for practical purpose because they find it clashing with more authentic and famous tradition—“The evidence is due on the petitioner and the oath is due on the defendant”.<sup>50</sup> Under the criterion “consensus of ummah”, he has given nine traditions as example. One of them is this: Mālik ibn Anas recorded a report that al-Qāsim ibn Muhammad used to sell all the date fruits of his garden with the exception of some weight of fruit. Mālik ibn Anas says that the practice of al-Qāsim ibn Muhammad was in line with the consensus of scholars.<sup>51</sup>

Under the criterion “practice of Companions”, al-Dumaynī has given ten traditions as example. One of them is this: Ibn ‘Umar reported that the Prophet (s.a.w.) used to raise his hands before and after bending state in the prayer. A tābi‘ī, Mujāhid reports: I prayed behind Ibn ‘Umar, he did not raise his hands in the prayer except in the beginning of the prayer. According to al-Ṭaḥāwī, the practice of Ibn ‘Umar is a valid reason to consider the tradition of the Prophet (s.a.w.) abrogated.<sup>52</sup>

Under the criterion “logical analogy”, he has brought nine examples. One of them is this: Abū Dā‘ūd has recorded a tradition: “If a person forced his wife’s slave girl to have sex with him, the slave would be freed and he would give her replacement to his

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 310.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 352.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 384.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 406.

wife; if the slave girl herself solicited him for sex, she would fall under his possession and he would give her replacement to his wife". Ibn Taymīyyah claims that logical analogy favors the authenticity of this tradition.<sup>53</sup>

Under the criterion "general rules", he has given six examples of traditions. One of them is this: Mālik ibn Anas rejects the tradition—"If a dog inserts its mouth inside a ware, it is to be washed seven times"—on the basis of a general principle available in the Qur'ān: "And eat what the dogs catch for you" (5:4).<sup>54</sup>

Under the criterion "the impact of solitary tradition", he has given four traditions as example. One of them is this: Abū Mūsā reports that once when many people laughed the while they were in prayer behind the Prophet (s.a.w.) who after the prayer commanded them to make fresh ablution and repeat the prayer. Ḥanafites reject this tradition on the basis of it being solitary tradition which if taken as authentic will put in trouble the people.<sup>55</sup>

## Conclusion

Initially, Muslim scholars like al-Bukhārī and Muslim paid attention to Ḥadīth authentication by examining chains of narrators (*isnād*), as they believed that examining reporters of Ḥadīth reports would lead to the authentication of Ḥadīth-text (*matn*). Yet, some Muslim scholars like Abū Ḥanīfah, al-Shāfi'ī, Ibn al-Jawzī, and Ibn Qayyim felt that besides examining *isnād*, *matn* is also to be scrutinized. Both these groups of Muslim scholars developed strong criteria for the purpose. All these scholars made great contributions in Ḥadīth authentication. But the task is not yet over. Scholars of Ḥadīth have to continue their endeavor to strengthen the sanctity of Ḥadīth by further examination of Ḥadīth reports from both *isnād* and *matn* angles.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., pp. 439-440.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 461.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 478.