

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction to Hadith Studies**

## Introduction

The science of hadith deals with Prophet Muhammad's life and intends to explain based on certain methodology and key concepts. Most of the works on Hadith in the English language are dealing with historical developments concerning hadith and the debate over its authenticity. Hadith studies which combine both traditional and contemporary approaches are very few. Understanding the prophetic traditions based on methodology of hadith which are developed and applied to verify the authenticity of hadith is not covered much in English language. Hadith methodology and related sciences are very important to understand hadith correctly and also to verify accuracy of the text. The scholars in the field of hadith have undertaken painstaking efforts to verify the authenticity of hadith and developed hadith sciences and terminological concepts in this field.

Hadith is the second source of Islam and it covers the Prophet's every act, word, and confirmation and as well as his physical descriptions. Although the Prophet warned his followers about not to write other than Qur'an many Companions recorded their own hadith collections which is called *Ṣaḥīfa* in Hadith literature. By the time when most of the Qur'an was received, memorised and documented, the Prophet permitted documentation of his Sunna and addressed the Companions to preserve knowledge through writing.<sup>1</sup> Some scholars hold that Prohibition of the writing of hadith was actually meant to prevent the writing of the Qur'an and the Sunna indistinguishably on the same page but that writing was otherwise permitted if the two were clearly separated.<sup>2</sup> The Prophet granted some of his Companions permission to write his statements.

The Muslims felt to establish Sunnah and protect it from altering due to several reasons. First of all, in the Qur'an God commanded Muslims to follow the Prophet in many places; for example; "whatever the Messenger brings you, adopt it; whatever he forbids you, refrain from it; fear God and seek His protection, surely God is He Whose punishment is severe."<sup>3</sup> Humanity can attain happiness in both worlds only by following the Prophet because he is the exemplary role model for all: "Verily, there is for you a most excellent example in the Messenger of God, for him who aspires to God and the Last Day, and mentions God oft."<sup>4</sup>

Besides the verses which command Muslims to follow Sunnah the Prophet himself also encouraged Muslims to learn it. Some of his statements include;

"[On the day when some faces will be radiant and some mournful], may God make radiant [with joy and happiness] the face of the one who has heard a word from me and, preserving (memorizing) it, conveys it to others."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Hadith Studies*, The Islamic Foundation, 2005 United Kingdom, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Suyūṭī, *Tadrib al-Rawi*, p. 287.

<sup>3</sup> Qur'an 59: 7.

<sup>4</sup> Qur'an 33: 21.

<sup>5</sup> Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, 'Ilm, 7.

## Commentary on Unforgettable Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad

“May God make radiant the face of the servant who has heard my speech and, committing it to memory and observing it in daily life, conveys it to others.”<sup>6</sup>

“On the Day of Judgment, I will put my head on the ground and ask God to forgive my nation. I will be told: “O Muhammad, raise your head and ask; you will be given whatever you ask. Intercede; your intercession will be accepted.”<sup>7</sup>

“The best of words is the Book of God; the best way to follow is that of Muhammad. The worst affair is innovations (against my Sunna). Each innovation is a deviation.”<sup>8</sup>

“Every one of my community will enter Paradise, except those who rebel.” When they asked who these rebels were, he replied: “Whoever obeys me will enter Paradise; whoever disobeys me is a rebel.”<sup>9</sup>

“In the case of my community, I am like someone who has lit a fire. Insects and butterflies flock to it. I hold you by the cloth [of your garments to keep you away from the fire], but you pull yourselves into it.”<sup>10</sup>

“Don’t let me find any of you seated in armchairs, who, when something I ordered or forbade is reported to them, respond: “We have no knowledge of it. So, we follow whatever we find in the Book of God.”<sup>11</sup>

“Be careful! Surely I have been given the Book and its like together with it.”<sup>12</sup>

“Those who outlive me will witness many controversies. Follow my way and that of the rightly guided successors (caliphs) who will guide to truth. Hold fast to it and cling to it stubbornly with your teeth. Refrain from newly invented things (in religion), for each such thing is an innovation, and each innovation is a deviation.”<sup>13</sup>

“I have left to you two precious things that, if you hold fast to them, will never lead you astray: The Qur’an and the Sunna.”<sup>14</sup>

The Prophet spoke effectively and sometimes repeated his words so his Companions could memorize them.<sup>15</sup> He taught them some supplications that were not in the Qur’an with the same care and emphasis as he taught the Qur’an.<sup>16</sup> He continually urged his Companions to spread his words and teach others by warning them as: “If you are asked about something you

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<sup>6</sup> Ibn Majah, *Sunan*, Muqaddima, 18.

<sup>7</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih*, Tafsir, 2:1

<sup>8</sup> Muslim, *Sahih*, Jumu‘a, 43.

<sup>9</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih*, I‘tisam, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Muslim, *Sahih*, Fadail, 17,18.

<sup>11</sup> Abu Dawud, *Sunan*, Sunnah, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Abu Dawud, *Sunan*, Sunnah, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, ‘Ilm, 16.

<sup>14</sup> Imam Malik, *Muwatta’*, Qadar, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Muslim, *Sahih*, Fadail al-Sahabah, 160.

<sup>16</sup> Muslim, *Sahih*, Salat,” 61.

know and then conceal that knowledge, a bridle of fire will be put on you on the Day of Judgment.”<sup>17</sup>

The Sunnah as one of the two main sources of Islam was memorized, recorded, and carefully preserved so that it could be passed down without distortion or alteration.<sup>18</sup> Hence memories are liable to forgetfulness and error and prophetic traditions were documented starting from the early stage of Islam. Sa’d b. ‘Ubāda, who was a leading figure of the Ansār in Medina had in his possession a Ṣaḥīfa collection wherein he documented the sayings of the Prophet.<sup>19</sup> His son used to relate hadith from this collection. Abd Allah b. Abī Awfa took this collection and produced his own collection with his own handwriting. The Muslims in that time used to resort to this manuscript and often verified its content with this Companion.<sup>20</sup>

It is also reported that Samura b. Jundub, another Companion of the Prophet, collected some hadith with his own handwriting.<sup>21</sup> Jabir b. Abdullah compiled a collection of hadith on the subject of the rituals of the hajj where the Prophet delivered Farewell Sermon.<sup>22</sup> His collection became well-known and was copied by his students.<sup>23</sup> One of the best known hadith collection that was written during the Prophet’s lifetime was Al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Ṣādiqa (the true collection) by a Companion ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Amr b. al-‘As.<sup>24</sup> It contained one thousand Prophetic traditions, and its content has been quoted almost entirely in the Musnad of Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal. This document is referred to as the most reliable historical documents to prove the writing of hadith during the Prophet’s lifetime.<sup>25</sup>

Once Ali b. Abī Tālib was asked if he wrote down anything from the Prophet he said that Book of God and what is in this Ṣaḥīfa. He explained the content of Ṣaḥīfa as rulings about blood money and release of war prisoners.<sup>26</sup> The constitution of Medina is well-known historical document and proves the early writing and documentation of hadith. This document is concerned mainly with relations among the three major groups who lived in Medina and declared them as one community and equal residents. It is published by Muhammad Hamidullah including its original manuscript.

‘Abd Allah b. ‘Abbas, the cousin of the Prophet wrote hadith on plates and used to teach his students from it.<sup>27</sup> Another Companion Anas b. Malik documented hadith in a Ṣaḥīfa which he used to carry with him and showed it to the people he met.<sup>28</sup> If these early collections of

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<sup>17</sup> Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, ‘Ilm, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Fethullah Gulen, *The Messenger of God: Muhammad*, New Jersey: Light 2005, p. 327.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Tirmidhi, *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Kitāb al-Aḥkam, see the explanatory notes at ‘bab al-yamin ma’a’l-shahid’.

<sup>20</sup> Al-Bukhari, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhari*, Kitāb al-Jihad, see the explanatory notes at ‘bab sabr’.

<sup>21</sup> Subhi al-Salih, *‘Ulūm al-Hadith*, p. 25.

<sup>22</sup> Bukhari, *al-Tarīkh al-Kabīr*, Vol. IV, p. 182.

<sup>23</sup> Subhi al-Salih, *‘Ulūm al-Hadith*, p. 26.

<sup>24</sup> Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Taqyid al-‘Ilm*, p. 84.

<sup>25</sup> Subhi al-Salih, *‘Ulūm al-Hadith*, p. 27.

<sup>26</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Jami’ Bayan al-‘Ilm*, Vol. 1, p. 71.

<sup>27</sup> Ibn Sa’d, *Tabaqat*, Vol. 2, p. 123;

<sup>28</sup> ‘Umar Hashim, *Al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya*, p. 55.

hadith are put together they would comprise the greater part of the hadiths that were subsequently compiled in the larger collections during the third century of Hijra.<sup>29</sup>

In short, the Companions paid great attention to memorize the Qur'an and the Sunna as well as to transmit to others as acts of worship for the Prophet said "whoever comes to my mosque should come either to learn the good or to teach it. Such people have the same rank as those who fight in the way of God."<sup>30</sup> Anas reports that they frequently met to discuss what they heard from the Messenger.<sup>31</sup> Women also were taught by the Messenger, who set aside a specific day for them and his wives actively conveyed to other women whatever they learned from the Messenger.<sup>32</sup>

### The Major Collections

The development in hadith collection and documentation can be summarized under four main categories;

1. The *Ṣaḥīfa* (lit. booklet) collections which are the earliest documentation of hadith. In this stage the Companions collected some hadith for their own usage without any order or classification. The examples for this category are mentioned above.
2. The *Musannaf* collections consisted of thematic classification and started at about the middle of the second century. The famous hadith books in this field are *Muwatta'* of Imam Malik (d. 179), the *Musannaf* of Ma'mar b. Rashid (d. 154) and the *Musannaf* of 'Abd al-Razzaq b. Hammām (d. 211).<sup>33</sup>
3. The *Musnad* (lit. supported) compilations signified a stage wherein greater attention was paid to the chain of transmission which linked the hadith to the Prophet through the reports of reliable narrators.<sup>34</sup> The famous book in this category are *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal (164-241), *Musnad* of Ibn al-Najjār (d. 262), the *Musnad* of Abu Dāwud Sulayman b. Dāwud al-Tayālīsī (d. 204 H).
4. The *Ṣaḥīḥ* (sound/authentic) collections represented the fourth and basically the last stage in the development of hadith literature.<sup>35</sup> Al-Bukhari and Muslim are the most famous books and they are referred to as the two authentic collections. The previous works in Hadith tended to mix the sayings of Companions and Followers but Bukhari and Muslim committed themselves to include only the Sound hadith in their collection and classified them subject-wise.<sup>36</sup> They only accepted the authentic hadith based on very strict criteria. Their collections cover all the eight areas that al-Jami' (comprehensive) hadith books cover which are generally known as belief, legal rules,

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<sup>29</sup> Kamali, *Hadith Studies*, p. 27.

<sup>30</sup> Ibn Majah, *Sunnah*, Muqaddima, 17.

<sup>31</sup> Muhammad 'Ajjaj al-Khatib, *Al-Sunna Qabl al-Tadwin*, p. 160.

<sup>32</sup> Gulen, *The Messenger of God*, p. 332.

<sup>33</sup> Al-Sibā'ī, *Al-Sunna wa Makanatuha*, p. 105

<sup>34</sup> Kamali, *Hadith Studies*, p. 32.

<sup>35</sup> Kamali, *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Umar Hashim, *Al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya*, p. 164.

moral teachings, etiquette of eating and drinking, Qur'anic commentary, history and biography of the Prophet, travel, turmoils, the virtues of the Prophet and his Companions. Another Jami' collection is Sunan al-Tirmidhi but not in the level of the previous books concerning authenticity.

Another category is Sunan collections which specialise in the legal content in Hadith. Famous books in this area are Sunan Abu Dāwud, Sunan al-Nasaī, Sunan al-Tirmidhi, and Sunan ibn Mājah. Usually practical rules on various topics such as cleanliness, ritual prayer, the legal alms, the pilgrimage, marriage and divorce are included in these books. The Mu'jam collection refers to books of hadith in which the contents appear in alphabetical order under the names of the narrators and their teachers, or the cities and tribes to which the narrators might have belonged.<sup>37</sup>

After the first Ṣaḥīfa collections, Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz (reigned between 719-22) decided that all oral and written authentic hadiths should be compiled systematically into books and therefore he ordered 'Amr ibn Ḥazm, governor of Medina, to supervise this task. Muhammad ibn Shihab al-Zuhrī renowned for his profound learning and keen intelligence, undertook the task and acquired the honour of being the first official compiler of hadiths.<sup>38</sup> The other learned hadith scholars such as Abd al-Malik ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Jurayj (Makka), Sa'id ibn Abī 'Aruba (Iraq), Awza'i (Damascus), Zayd ibn Qudama and Sufyan al-Thawrī (Kūfa), Ḥammad ibn Salama (Basra), and 'Abd Allah ibn al-Mubarak (Khorasan) helped him in this mission.

This period of official and systematic compilation was followed by the period of classification by such prominent scholars as Abu Dāwud al-Tayālīsī and Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who produced their Musnad. 'Abd al-Razzaq ibn Hammam and others formed their Musannaf, and Imam Malik produced their Al-Muwatta. Then came the period of such great hadith scholars as Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dāwud, Nasaī, Tirmidhi, and Ibn Mājah, who produced the well-known, six most authentic Hadith books.

### Biographies of Hadith Transmitters

In order to establish the authenticity of the reports it is important to know the biographical data, chronology, and life histories of hadith transmitters. For this purpose, the scholars produced works and introduced thousands of hadith transmitters. Reliability of narration of hadith can be learned with the information that helps to explain and identify the personality and character of the hadith transmitter.

The Companions are basically one class and this is followed by the followers (tabi'in). Next in this classification is Successors (tabai tabi'in). Each group has sub-groups among

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<sup>37</sup> Kamali, 43.

<sup>38</sup> Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqaat*, vol.7, p. 2.

themselves and scholars developed different methods to classify them. Transmission chain is concerned with authentic information and without this it is difficult to verify a hadith. As a matter of fact, investigation on hadiths often revealed that spurious and careless statements have been made by individuals.

The well-known books on this field are Ibn Sa'd al-Zuhrī's (d. 230/845) 'Kitāb al-Tabaqāt al-Kabīr' , al-Bukhari (d. 256/871) 'Al-Tarikh al-Kabīr', and Abu Hatim Muhammad Ibn Hibbān al-Busti's (d. 354/965) 'Mashāhir 'Ulama' al-Amsār', 'Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalanī (d. 852 H) al-'Isāba fī Tamyīz al-Saḥābah'. Writers have taken different approaches to biographical literature on the classification of hadith transmitters; some writers classified them in accordance with categories that lived in the same era or generation, others have classified their biographies in alphabetical order in accordance with the names of narrators.<sup>39</sup>

About seven persons among the Companions are prolific narrators and a major portion of hadith has been narrated by them. These are Abu Huraira (5,374), 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar (2,630), Anas b. Malik (2,286), 'A'isha (2,210), 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas (1,660), Jabir b. 'Abd Allah (1,540) and Abu Sa'id al-Khudrī (1,170).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Kamali, *Hadith Studies*, p. 51.

<sup>40</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrib al-Rawi*, Vol. 2, p. 216