

RESPONSES
TO OBJECTIONS
ON ḤADĪTH

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Introduction

Anything linked to the Holy Prophet (ṣal Allāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) is honoured with having a lofty status and great appreciation. The Science of Ḥadīth is also such; it is an admirable field of knowledge only questioned by those who neglect studying it, and those who do study it, realize what a rich and profound science it really is. This science and the immense body of research which has gone into it cannot be appreciated by simply reading a translation of a book of Ḥadīth.

Throughout Islamic history, there never existed a group of *true* Muslims who rejected or even doubted the authority of the Sunnah.¹ There were, from time to time, groups or individuals that rejected some Aḥadīth because they considered the method of transmission unreliable and the Ḥadīth inauthentic. However, they never denied the authority of the Prophet's statements. Sects that rejected the authority or authenticity of Ḥadīth existed in one way or another in early Islamic history, but the most resistant movement emerged in the late 19th and early 20th century.

The arguments presented by the rejecters of Aḥadīth may initially sound convincing, but after scrutinizing them, it quickly becomes very clear how deceiving they are. Their arguments are based on misconstruing the verses of the Qur’ān, selecting only those Aḥadīth that support

¹ The word *Sunnah* literally means a way, rules, or conduct of life, which was in continuous use from the pre-Islamic era. Anyone can establish a *Sunnah*, good or bad, if it is followed by others. The expression "*Sunnah* of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam)" came into use during the life of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) when Almighty Allāh ordered the Muslims to obey the Prophet and to take his life as their model. The term was also used by the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) himself. By the end of the second century, it was used in legal books almost exclusively to mean norms set by the Prophet or deduced from his behavior or authentic Aḥadīth. (Muhammad Mustafa Al-A’zamī, *On Schacht's Origin of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, p. 30-36, Suhail Academy)

The definition of the word *Sunnah* varies according to different groups of scholars namely the Muhaddithūn, Usūliyyūn and Fuqahā. The Muhaddithūn define it as: "Everything that has been transmitted to us from the Prophet ﷺ from his statements, actions, tacit approvals, characteristics or *Sīrah*, whether it was before his prophethood, or after. For example, his worship in the cave of *Hirā’*." Based on this, the word *Sunnah* would be synonymous with the word *Hadīth*. (Muhammad ‘Ajāj Al-Khatīb, *As-Sunnatu Qablat Tadwīn* p.11, Maktabah Wahbah)

their arguments, and a lack of understanding of the Arabic Language and Islamic history. During the colonial period, when most of the Islamic world came under the subjugation of the West, many individuals arose who began questioning the authority of the Sunnah. Their hidden objective was to conform to the Western civilization and the Prophetic Traditions were an obstacle in reaching it. Orientalists, or Western-minded people try to strike at the very foundation of Islam; in an attempt to mold the Sharī'ah to their own conception, which is informed by Western philosophy, fixing the label of Islam to it. This article will attempt to answer many of the objections made on Ḥadīth in general, and more specifically on the authority of Ḥadīth.

First Objection

In his article “Pakistani Views of Ḥadīth”, J.M.S. Baljon Jr. has given a survey of the arguments against the application of Ḥadīth for practice and faith.² The arguments are as follows:

“The Qur’ān explains everything; therefore, the Ḥadīth are superfluous”

The following two verses are cited to support this argument:

1. {There is no beast on the earth, nor a flying creature flying on two wings, but are communities like you. We have not omitted anything from the book, then they will all be gathered to their Lord}³
2. {...We have sent down to you the book explaining all things...}⁴

The argument that is made based on the above two verses is that Allāh Ta’ālā explained everything about the religion in the Qur’ān. Thus, the Sunnah is needless. Reliance upon the Sunnah to understand the Qur’ān, the argument goes, renders these verses untrue. Accordingly, renditions other than that of the Qur’ān contradicts these verses and must not be accepted.

² Emad Hamdeh, *The Necessity of the Ḥadīth in Islām*, p.73, IIPH.

³ Holy Qur’ān 6:38.

⁴ Holy Qur’ān 16:89.

Answer to the First Objection

It is important to clarify that there is no contradiction between the comprehensive nature of the Qur'ān and the necessity for Ḥadīth. What Allāh Ta'ālā mentioned in the above two verses are not contradictory at all. The Qur'ān is comprehensive as far as principles and fundamental issues are concerned. The Ḥadīth expounds these principles and fundamentals.

Moreover, the above verses were not among the final revealed verses of the Qur'ān; they were both revealed in Makkah. Thus, they cannot possibly mean that the Qur'ān explains everything and provides all details, because so many verses were revealed in the years that followed. The words 'anything' and 'all things' in the verses should be understood in their general sense.

Additionally, the book mentioned in the first verse may not be referring to the Qur'ān; instead, it could be referring to *Al-Lawh Al-Mahfūdh* (The Preserved Tablet). The Preserved Tablet is a tablet kept in heaven, which contains the record of the decisions of the divine will. The correct way to understand the verse could instead be that the lives and sustenance of all the creatures are recorded in the Preserved Tablet, leaving nothing out.

If the book mentioned in this verse does refer to the Qur'ān, then the verse is a general statement, because the Qur'ān does not contain the details of all things. Imām Ibn Al-Jawzī [d. 597 A.H.] explains it in the following way:

“It is a general statement that has a specific intent behind it. Therefore, the meaning is: We have not kept out anything which you need except that it has been made clear in the Qur'ān, by either a clear text, a statement that is not detailed, or an indication. The claim that the Qur'ān contains all details is rejected because reality confirms otherwise, seeing how the details of Salāh, Zakāh, Hajj and other matters, relating both to religion and worldly life, are not found in the Qur'ān. To interpret the verse to mean that the Qur'ān contains everything in it leads us to deny the truth of it. Therefore, it must have a different meaning.⁵

⁵ Emad Hamdeh, *The Necessity of the Ḥadīth in Islām*, p.75, IIPH.

In fact, the following verse further proves that the Qur'ān only contains the broad rulings, which need to be further elaborated by the Messenger:

{...And we sent down to you the reminder so that you may explain to people what was revealed to them and so they may reflect}⁶

The Qur'ān itself does not contain specific details for everything; however, it does provide us with guidance on where to go to find the information. Therefore, the above verse is not a proof against Ḥadīth; on the contrary, it establishes the need for and validity of Ḥadīth.

Allāh Ta'ālā also states in the Qur'ān:

{...Whatever the Messenger gives you, accept it, and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it}⁷

The word *mā* (whatever) in the above verse is very clear; it is a word that implies generality, meaning that one must take everything that the prophet gives them, regardless of whether it is a verse from the Qur'ān or not. Thus, the Qur'ān tells its readers to refer to the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu 'alayhī wa-sallam) and scholars as supplemental sources. The verse also clearly states that Muslims must take what the prophet (ṣallā llāhu 'alayhī wa-sallam) gives them and abstain from what he prohibits. Had everything already been mentioned in detail in the Qur'ān, would Allāh have ordered us to take what the Messenger gives and abstain from what he forbids? Furthermore, would Allāh have proclaimed the obedience to the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu 'alayhī wa-sallam) as the obedience to Allāh Himself wherein He said:

{He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allāh; but those who turn away, We have not sent you over them as a guardian.}⁸

⁶ Holy Qur'ān 16:44.

⁷ Holy Qur'ān 59:7.

⁸ Holy Qur'ān 4:80.

From this, we can conclude that the Qur'ān is not a book of detail, but rather it informs its readers how and where to find these details and explanations.

Second Objection

“In certain places, the Qur'ān appears to imply that it is self-explanatory, easy to understand, and independent of any external source to explain it.”

Answer to the Second Objection

The Qur'ān deals with two different types of verses:

1. Simple realities, (such as historical events, the cosmological signs of divine power and wisdom, descriptions of Paradise and Hell, etc.)
2. Imperatives of the Sharī'ah, along with other academic subjects such as issues pertaining to beliefs etc.

While the former is simple and can be understood without having recourse to another, this cannot extend to the inference of the legal rules and the interpretation of the legal and doctrinal provisions contained in the Book. Anyone who reads the Qur'ān will acknowledge that certain matters in it, especially laws, need explanation and are not clear when reading the Qur'ān alone. Hence, the reason for entrusting the Holy Prophet (ṣallā llāhu 'alayhī wa-sallam) with the functions of teaching and explaining the Qur'ān, further indicates that independent interpretation is not open to any person, irrespective of the volume of his knowledge. Undoubtedly, Allāh Ta'ālā mentions that the Qur'ān has been made easy to understand, but this does not exclude the necessity of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu 'alayhī wa-sallam)'s explanations.⁹ By adhering to the Ḥadīth, one is not following something different than the Quran. Instead, one is simply following the Qur'ān's interpretation.

Third Objection

⁹ Muftī Muḥammad Taqī'Uthmānī, *The Authority of the Sunnah*, p.59, Idāratul Qur'ān Karachi.

The Ḥadīth rejecters misinterpret the following verse, alleging that this is clear proof that only the Qur’ān should be followed and that those who follow Ḥadīth are similar to those who, when the Qur’ān is recited to them, they ask for a different Qur’ān or book.

{And when Our verses are recited to them as clear evidences, those who do not expect the meeting with Us say, “Bring us a Qur’ān other than this or change it.” Say, [O Muḥammad], “It is not for me to change it on my own accord. I only follow what is revealed to me. Indeed, I fear, if I should disobey my Lord, the punishment of a tremendous Day.”}

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Answer to the Third Objection

Since the Qur’ān does not contain the details of everything, the Sunnah is its interpretation and application. By adhering to the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam)’s sayings, one is not asking for a book other than the Qur’ān; rather, one is following its true interpretation. One is also following the command of the AllāhTa’ālā in the Qur’ān to follow the Prophet and his teachings.

This verse also states that the prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) only followed what was revealed to him. Thus, the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) could not have demonstrated to people how to pray *Salāh*, give *Zakāh*, and perform other acts mentioned in the Qur’ān according to his own whims and personal interpretation. The verse informs us that the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) would not do that. Therefore, everything the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) did, and established as law for his followers must be from Allāh. AllāhTa’ālā has also mentioned regarding the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam):

{Nor does he speak of his own whims. It is only a revelation sent down ‘to him’}.¹¹

Shāh Shahīdullāh Faridī summarized the nature of the Qur’ān where he wrote:

¹⁰ Holy Qur’ān 10:15.

¹¹ Holy Qur’ān 53:3-4.

“The Qur’ān deals extensively with matter of faith and morality, the nature of Allāh, the reality of prophethood, the Day of Judgement, the life of the next world, the principle of worship, or human relations and the inward attitude man must cultivate towards Allāh and his fellowmen; it also lays down civil and criminal laws, but of necessity, since the Qur’ān is intended to be easily read, understood, and encompassed, detailed application of the law is not its subject, and it is part of Allāh’s providence that this should be demonstrated by His Prophet.”¹²

Fourth Objection

The Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) said: “Do not write anything from me except the Qur’ān”¹³

Answer to the Fourth Objection

It is quite ironic that they use a Hadīth to substantiate their argument for rejecting Aḥadīth. This is indicative of their intellectual bankruptcy. Also, they accept this hadith on the prohibition of writing hadith but reject numerous other Aḥadīth that permit it.

The Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) made this statement in the early period of Islam, when the Qur’ān was still in the initial stages of revelation. There are many Aḥadīth which state that the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) approved the recording of Aḥadīth and many companions did. Among them are some who were responsible for transmitting the very hadith which forbade recording them. There are also narrations where the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) encourages others to narrate Hadīth from him and convey his teachings to those who were absent.

The companions used to listen to every word of the Prophet with the utmost care, learning the Qur’ān and the Sunnah from him, mostly in the mosque. When the Prophet left them for any reason, they immediately began to repeat what they had learned, and committing it to their memories. This practice was described well by Mu‘awiyah (may Allāh be pleased with him) and is also found in the statements of Abu ad-Darda’, culminating in the statements of Anas, the

¹² Shāh Shahīdullāh Farīdī, *The Fallacies of Anti Ḥadīth Arguments* (article).

¹³ Sahīh Muslim, Chapter of Zuhd and Raqā’iq, Ḥadīth 3004.

servant of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu‘alayhī wa-sallam). Mu‘āwiyah (may Allāh be pleased with him) says: “We sat with the Prophet, maybe 60 people in number, then the Prophet taught us Ḥadīth. Later on, if he went away for any work then we used to memorize it among ourselves, and by the time we left, it had been cultivated in our hearts.” Thereafter, many of the Companions themselves advised the Successors on the memorization of Ḥadīth, notably: ‘Ali bin Abī Tālib, Ibn Mas‘ūd, Ibn ‘Abbas, and Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī (may Allāh be pleased with them all). They used to memorize Aḥadīth either in groups or individually and they passed on the same kind of advice to their students.¹⁴

Shaykh Mustafa Al-‘Azamī lists and discusses 50 Companions who wrote and possessed collections of Ḥadīth, and he states that some had done so in the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam)’s Masjid. The practice of writing and collecting Aḥadīth could not have been done without the Prophet’s permission. He also lists 49 scholars from the first century, and 251 from the early second century scholars, all of whom recorded Ḥadīth.¹⁵

In his book, *Taqyid al-‘Ilm*, Imām Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī deals in detail with the subject of the recording of Aḥadīth and reconciles the conflicting Aḥadīth on the topic. In the first part of the book, he lists all the authentic and inauthentic narrations regarding the prohibition of writing Aḥadīth. In the next part, he lists all the Aḥadīth that give reasons as to why writing was prohibited. In the final part of his book, he mentions all the narrations that permit the writing of Aḥadīth. Through this, it becomes evident that in the beginning of Islam, the writing of Aḥadīth was prohibited, which had many reasons behind it. Some being the fear of people mixing it up with the verses of the Qur’ān, and that people should rather commit things to their immensely strong memories over writing.

Some scholars say that the Prophet’s prohibition on writing Ḥadīth was later abrogated by his permission to write. The first command was given in Makkah, when the Muslim community was still in its infancy. However, when the Muslims grew larger, and there was no fear of mixing the Qur’ān with the Prophet’s sayings, the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) gave permission to write. Many companions wrote the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam)’s

¹⁴ M. Mustafa Al-A‘zamī, *On Schacht’s Origin of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, p. 110-111, Suhail Academy.

¹⁵ M. Mustafa Al-A‘zamī, *Studies in Early Ḥadīth Literature* p. 34-106, American Trust Publications.

sayings and compiled them for their personal use. The Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) also wrote letters to the kings and leaders of his time. Just because something is written does not give it more authority than something which has not been written. Just because there was no official command from the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) to write his teachings, does not mean they hold no authority.

Fifth Objection

“Ḥadīths were only written in the 3rd century A.H.”

Orientalists like Schacht, Muir, Guillaume, Goldziher, and others spread this idea based on their misunderstanding of the statements of early Ḥadīth scholars. They alleged that the sayings of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) had disappeared for an entire century, and discovered in the third century, creating a detrimental gap that resulted in fabrications and distortions.

Answer to the Fifth Objection

When the orientalists began attacking Ḥadīth, claiming that it was not written until the third century, Muslim scholars refuted them by digging into Islamic literature and concretely proved Ḥadīth documentation. In fact, they found overwhelming evidence verifying this. Nevertheless, both modern and classical scholars do not take documentation, or lack of it, to determine the authenticity and authority of a Ḥadīth. For scholars of Ḥadīth to consider a statement authentic, it had to be through a chain of reliable Muslim narrators traced back to the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam).

Imām Ibn Hajar (may Allāh have mercy on him) states:

“Know, may Allāh teach us and you, that the sayings of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) were not compiled into collections or organized in the era of the companions and the senior successors for two reasons: First, because in the beginning, they were prohibited from doing so, as it is narrated in Sahih Muslim, for fear that some of it might get mixed with the Qur’ān. Second, because of their vast memories and sharp minds, they preferred memorizing over writing. Then towards the end of the era of the successors to the companions, the compilation of sayings and organization of

topics began to spread in different towns and innovations increased from the Khawārij, Rawāfid, and those who deny predestination. So the first to compile that (Aḥadīth) was Rabī' bin Sabīh and Sa'īd bin Abī Arūba and others. They compiled Aḥadīth relating to every topic separately, until the elders of the third generation arose and organized the legal rulings.”¹⁶

Whilst documentation was not the main method of preserving Ḥadīth, it also was not wholly disregarded. The claims of its inception in the third century is also inaccurate, as many Sahābah and Tābi'ūn did in fact write Aḥadīth in the first and second centuries. 'Alī (may Allāh be pleased with him) had a scroll in which he had written down many rulings that he had heard from the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu 'alayhī wa-sallam). His scroll was later known as *Sahīfah 'Alī*. Also, Imām Ibn Shihāb Az-Zuhrī narrated from Sālim from his father that: “The Messenger of Allāh had a letter written about charity, but he had not dispatched it to his governors until he passed away; he kept it with him along with his sword. When he passed away, Abubakr (may Allāh be pleased with him) implemented it until he passed away, as did Umar (may Allāh be pleased with him) until he passed away. In it was: ‘A sheep (is due) on five camels, two sheep on ten, three sheep on fifteen...”¹⁷ This letter is known as the Book of Sadaqah.

Sixth Objection

“We find many Aḥadīth that contradict one another. There are also many Aḥadīth that conflict with logic and reason. How then, can such Aḥadīth have authority and be trusted?”

Answer to Sixth Objection

Aḥadīth that apparently seem contradictory are very rare. Aḥadīth that pertain to the matters of *Aqīdah* (belief), the Being and attributes of Allāh, life after death, miracles, the condition of Paradise and Hell, and matters related to punishments, rewards, mannerisms, heart-softeners are not contradictory. Only certain Aḥadīth that pertain to *Ahkām* (laws) have apparent contradictions. The reason behind such contradictions is because almost all laws of the Shari'ah were revealed and obligated upon the Muslims gradually. Consequently, some laws which were obligated in the early days of Islam were later abrogated by upgraded laws. For one

¹⁶ Emad Hamdeh, *The Necessity of the Ḥadīth in Islām*, p.92, IIPH.

¹⁷ Imām Abū 'Īsā, Jāmi' At-Tirmidī, Kitāb Az-Zakāh, Ḥadīth #5.

to object on such Aḥādīth is like a person who sees a flower in its sprouting, budding and blooming stage and assumes that these stages are contradictory to one another. Furthermore, some laws were specifically revealed for certain occasions, and were later abrogated. These contradictions are easily reconciled through *Tatbīq* (reconciliation), *Nakh* (abrogation), and *Tarjīh* (giving preference).¹⁸ These methods are used by the Mujtahidūn to resolve such apparent contradictions. Some of the seemingly contradictory Aḥādīth have been clarified by the Sahābah, or the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) himself such as when he said:

“I prohibited you from visiting the graves, but (now) you may visit them, and I prohibited you (from eating) the flesh of sacrificed animals beyond three days, but now keep it as long as you like. I prohibited you from the use of *Nabīdh* except (that prepared) in dry water skins. Now drink (*Nabīdh* prepared in any utensil), but do not drink when it becomes intoxicant.”¹⁹

Comparably, such apparent contradictions can also be found in the verses of the Qur’ān. For example, Allāh Ta’ālā mentions in Sūrah Baqarah verse 174:

{Indeed, they who conceal what Allāh has sent down of the Book and exchange it for a small price - those consume not into their bellies except the Fire. And Allāh will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them. And they will have a painful punishment.}

We understand from the above verse that Allāh will not speak with the disbelievers. However, in Sūrah Sāffāt verse 24, Allāh Ta’ālā mentions: {And stop them; indeed, they are to be questioned.} Such apparent contradictions are found in the Qur’ān but can be resolved as the contradictions of Ḥadīth can. These apparent contradictions do not affect the authority of the Qur’ān. Thus Ḥadīth too, will retain its legitimacy.

With regards to Ḥadīth contradicting logic and reason and therefore not being authoritative, this objection in itself is flawed. Human intellect is inadequate to guide mankind to eternal

¹⁸ Muhammad Idris Kandehlwī, *Hujjiyat e Ḥadīth*, p. 93-94, Zam Zam Publishers.

¹⁹ Sahīh Muslim, Kitāb Al-Adhāhī, Ḥadīth #1977.

bliss without the assistance of divine revelation. If the human intellect should judge the Aḥadīth of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam), then which intellect should be considered as the yardstick? Mankind differs tremendously in their intellectual capacity. If the intellect of specific individuals should be the yardstick, then what criteria should determine who qualifies and who does not? If everyone’s intellect is considered adequate, then this would lead to utter chaos and confusion; which would never be resolved. That said, there is no solution other than trusting that which has been conveyed to us through divine revelation.²⁰

Nevertheless, the Muhaddithūn did subject Aḥadīth to a rational test before accepting them as authentic. According to al-Mu’allami al-Yamani, it was applied at every stage: in learning hadith, in teaching hadith, in judging narrators, and in evaluating the authenticity of hadith.

Imām Ibn al-Qayyim adduced several general rules for recognizing a false Ḥadīth without going into *Isnād* criticism. Some of the features he considers indicative of false Aḥadīth are:

1. Fanciful statements that the Prophet could not have made.
2. Statements that can be shown to be false empirically.
3. Nonsensical kinds of attribution.
4. Contradiction of well-known Sunan.
5. Statements claimed to have been made by the Prophet in the presence of many Companions, but which are reported by none of them.
6. Statements that bear no resemblance to other statements of the Prophet.
7. Phraseology that resembles that of sufis or medical practitioners.
8. Contradiction of the Qur’ān.
9. Inadequacy of style.²¹

Seventh Objection

“Many fabrications have been made which have mixed with the authentic narrations. Thus, there is no guarantee that one will be able to act upon the authentic narrations and avoid the fabrications.”

²⁰ Answeringhadithrejectors.com (article).

²¹ M. Mustafa Al-A’zamī, *On Schacht’s Origin of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, p. 114, Suhail Academy.

Answer to Seventh Objection

There is no collection on earth which can match the authenticity of the Ḥadīth collections. The Muhaddithūn have invented the sciences of *Asmā ar-Rijāl*, *al-Jarh wa at-Ta'dīl*, and stipulated stringent conditions to ensure the authenticity of the Ḥadīth. They scrutinized every Ḥadīth thoroughly, in a manner that has no precedence. They distinguished fabricated Aḥadīth from authentic ones and even compiled fabricated Aḥadīth in separate compilations. They listed all the fabricators and meticulously indicated to all the narrators that were considered reliable. Orientalists have applauded this science known as *Asmā ar-Rijāl*; they attest that no nation has ever been able to document and preserve the teachings of its religion as the Muslims have and no nation will ever be able to do so ever again.²²

The orientalists, Jews and Christians testify that the Muslims have preserved the teachings of Islam in a most remarkable and phenomenal manner. They are able to trace every Sanad back to the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam), linking every fact to its original source. Historical reports generally contain unsubstantiated facts and there is no system in place to detect true reports from false reports. Those who object on the authority of Ḥadīth regard historical reports credible but fail to acknowledge the authenticity and authority of Ḥadīth.

Eighth Objection

“Ḥadīth cannot be accorded authority considering the issue of *Riwāyah bil Ma’na*. The majority of the Aḥadīth have been transmitted by narrators who only narrated the interpretations of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam)’s statements. Since the verbatim statements of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) have not been preserved emphatically, then there is no guarantee that the correct interpretations of his statements have been transmitted. One cannot be sure about the changes that each Ḥadīth was subjected to.”

Answer to the Eighth Objection

The word *Hadīth* does not only refer to the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam)’s statements, rather it also refers to his actions, tacit approvals and characteristics. The Sahābah (may Allāh be pleased with them) would narrate the actions of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam),

²² Muhammad Idris Kandehlwī, *Hujjiyat e Ḥadīth*, p. 95-96, Zam Zam Publishers.

and other events that took place during his time and his teachings in regards to those events. If we were to hypothetically assume this objection to be correct, it could only apply to the narrations which contain the statements of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam), because the actions and other teachings of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) could have only been transmitted through the statements of his companions, which would inevitably differ from one companion to the other.

From a practical point of view, *Riwayah bil Ma’na* seems only natural to occur. This could have been due to the change in the dialect and vocabulary of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) compared to the time his Ahadīth was being narrated. Vocabulary changes throughout eras and places. Sometimes the narrators would substitute words of the actual Ḥadīth with synonymous words which their audience could understand more easily. Even the Sahabah were known to do this. We find incidents of the time of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) reported in slightly varying ways. This is why we find scholars mentioning that restricting the permissibility of quoting narrations to the exact words is very impractical. Imām Sufyān is reported to have said: “If we intended to narrate Ḥadīth to you exactly how we heard it, we would not have narrated even one Ḥadīth to you!”²³

Moreover, from the collection of the Aḥadīth that contain the statements of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam), a large portion of them are *Adhkār* and *Du‘ā* (supplications and remembrance of Allāh), which have mostly been transmitted verbatim. To the contrary, sometimes the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) himself would make the same statement on several occasions with slightly varying words, thus resulting in statements with slightly different words regarding one incident.

Furthermore, the Muhaddithūn have laid down stringent conditions for *Riwāyah bil Ma’na* which cannot affect the authenticity of the Ḥadīth. For *Riwāyah bil Ma’na* to be accepted, the narrator must correctly know the words and their meanings and objectives, and he must also be fully aware of the manifest impacts or effects caused by the change or substitution of the words on the meanings.²⁴ If the person is not very knowledgeable of the literal differences, then

²³ Imām Al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Madkhal ilā ‘Ilm As-Sunan*, 1/248, Dār al-Minhāj + Dār Al-Yusr.

²⁴ Muhammad Idris Kandehlwī, *Hujjiyat e Ḥadīth*, p. 93-94, Zam Zam Publishers.

there is a consensus that it would not be permissible for him to narrate the meaning. ‘Allāmah Ibn As-Salāh (may Allāh be pleased with him) says:

“When he [a narrator] intends to narrate the meaning of what he has heard and not its exact words; if he is not knowledgeable about the words and their meanings and objectives, knowledgeable of what affects the meanings, aware of the differences between the words, then it would not be permissible for him [to narrate the meaning of the Ḥadīth]. He will have to narrate the exact words he heard without any changes...”²⁵

In addition, the narrators of Ḥadīth would narrate the meaning of the Ḥadīth during necessity, when they were narrating on the basis of their memory and were not able to recollect the exact words of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam). This was the practice of the Sahabah (may Allāh be pleased with them) also. The Sahabah and the scholars after them were very careful when transmitting the statements of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam). Reminding themselves of the statement of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam): “Whoever tells lies about me deliberately, let him take his place in Hell.”²⁶ Some of them were very strict on narrating the Ḥadīth they heard from the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) with the exact words while others narrated the meaning and thereafter said words like: “*aw kama qāla Rasūlullāhi (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam)*” which meant ‘The Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) said this more or less or ‘The Ḥadīth is to this effect.’”²⁷

Conclusion

Allāh Ta‘ālā has sent the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) as a Messenger, but also as a teacher to mankind. One of the primary roles of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) was to interpret and explain to the people the Book and wisdom. We know that the Qur’ān was not revealed as a book all at once; rather, it is a collection of the verses revealed to the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam) on several occasions in a span of twenty-three years. The Qur’ān is a concise book that mainly consists of topics related to the Oneness of Allāh, the prophethood of Muhammad (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam), stories and lessons of the past

²⁵ Imām Ibn As-Salāh, *Muqaddimah Ibn As-Salah* p.172, Dār Al-Ghad Al-Jadīd.

²⁶ Sunan Ibn Mājah, Al-Muqaddimah, Ḥadīth #37.

²⁷ Muhammad ‘Ajāj Al-Khatīb, *As-Sunnatu Qablat Tadwīn*, p.93-94, Maktabah Wahbah.

nations, events of the future, and some commands. The Qur'ān is meant to be a cure for those who recite it; and bring tranquility and peace to the minds. Had all the laws of the Sharī'ah been written in detail, it would have hindered regular readership that is meant to soothe the hearts.

Another reason behind its brevity is because it is dependent on teacher discourse for detail and instruction; that teacher is the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu 'alayhī wa-sallam). Allāh Ta'ālā has commanded the Muslims many times in the Qur'ān to follow the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu 'alayhī wa-sallam) and his teachings. Thus it was incumbent upon the Muslims in the time of the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu 'alayhī wa-sallam) to follow the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu 'alayhī wa-sallam) directly, and for those after him who do not have the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu 'alayhī wa-sallam) physically among them, for them to follow him through his teachings and Sunnah.

Only those that want to follow their whims and desires and want to conform to the lifestyle of the liberal society would object to the authority of the Sunnah. That is because when the Sunnah is removed from the Shari'ah, everyone would have the liberty of interpreting the Qur'ānic verses according to their understandings and preference. However, we learn from the Qur'ān that Allāh enjoins upon us to follow Him and the teachings of His Prophet (ṣallā llāhu 'alayhī wa-sallam). Whosoever obeys will live contentedly in the world and be rewarded with eternal bliss in the Hereafter.

We ask Allāh Ta'ālā for understanding and guidance, *āmin*.

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