

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO HADITH

DEFINITION

Literal meaning: Speech/conversation. The plural of Hadith is Ahādith.

Definition: Ahādith are the sayings, actions, states and confirmations of Rasulullah Muhammad son of Abdullah (peace be upon him), and that of his Sahabah.

Synonyms: a) Athar b) Khabar c) Sunnah d) Riwāyah

SUBJECT MATTER AND PURPOSE

Allāmah Kirmāni (may Allah have mercy on him) states that the subject matter of Hadith is the personality of Rasulullah (peace be upon him) as a prophet.

The purpose of studying Hadith is to obtain the guidance taught by Rasulullah (peace be upon him) and thereby be successful in the world and hereafter.

STUDY OF HADITH

Hadith study is primarily divided into two:

1. Riwāyah: Narrating Ahādith, writing them and preserving them
2. Dirāyah: Understanding the different aspects of Hadith, chain of narrators, authenticity of the Hadith and its meaning(s)

PARTS OF A HADITH

1. Sanad: The chain of narrators from the person narrating, going back to the original person it came from
2. Matan: The wording of the Hadith
3. Taraf: The beginning of the Matn or an expression within it which acts as an indicator of the Hadith

IMPORTANCE OF HADITH

‘He (Allah) is the One who raised up, among the unlettered, a Messenger from among themselves who recited the verses of Allah, and makes them pure, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom.’ (Holy Qur’an 62:2)

‘(We sent the Prophets) with clear proofs and written ordinances. And We revealed to you (oh Muhammad) the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought.’ (Holy Qur’an 16:44)

‘And he (Muhammad) does not speak from desires. It is but revelation revealed to him.’ (Holy Qur’an 53:3-4)

‘Whosoever spoke a deliberate lie against me, should prepare his place in hell.’ (Hadith is mass transmitted)

VIRTUES OF STUDYING HADITH

‘May Allah beautify/keep fresh a person who hears a saying of mine, so he understands it, remembers it and conveys it. There may be one who conveys knowledge to someone who understands it better than he does.’ (Tirmidhi)

‘Narrate from me, even though it may be one verse/statement.’ (Bukhari)

Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) mentioned, ‘If it was not for the Sunnah (Hadith), none of us would have understood the Qur’an.’ He also said, ‘People were always on piety as long as there were those who studied Hadith. But if they learn knowledge without Hadith, they will be deviated.’

PRESERVATION OF HADITH

‘Indeed, It is We Who sent down the Reminder (Qur’an) and indeed We will be its Guardian’. (Holy Qur’an 15:9)

There were three methods used to preserve the Ahādith of Rasulullah (peace be upon him):

- a) Memory b) Practice and Teaching c) Writing

CATEGORIES OF NARRATORS

1. Good memory and long companionship with the Shaykh they are narrating from
2. Good memory and short companionship
3. Weak memory and long companionship
4. Weak memory and short companionship
5. Weak and unknown narrators

Imam Bukhari (may Allah have mercy on him) always takes the Ahādith of the first category of narrators in his Sahih, and sometimes from the second category as a supporting narration. Imam Muslim (may Allah have mercy on him) always takes the Ahādith of the first and second category of narrators in his Sahih, and sometimes from the third category as a supporting narration.

HADITH IN TERMS OF NUMBER OF NARRATORS

1. Mutawātir (mass transmitted): Narrated by such a large number of narrators in each level that it is impossible for the narration to be a lie. Thus, it must be believed as part of one's faith.
2. Ahād: Not on the level of Mutawātir. It further splits into: Mashhūr (3 narrators atleast in each level of the chain), then Aziz, then Gharib.

TYPES OF HADITH IN TERMS OF STRENGTH

1. Sahih (strongly attributed)
 2. Hasan (well attributed)
 3. Dha'eef (weakly attributed)
- (A fabricated narration is called Maudhoo'.)

CONDITIONS OF SAHIH HADITH

1. An unbroken, connected Isnād (chain) of narrators who are known and recorded
2. All narrators possess 'Adālah (piety)
3. All narrators possess Dhabt (precision and accuracy)
4. Narration doesn't have Shudhūd (confliction with stronger narrators)
5. Narration doesn't have a problematic 'Illah (hidden defect picked up only by experts)

Some people think that all Sahih Ahādith are only in Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim. This is totally false. There are many Sahih Ahādith in the other books of Hadith too. In fact, Sunan Ibn Mājah includes Ahādeeth of many levels but it has a few Ahādith which are even more Sahih than some Ahādeeth in Sahih al-Bukhari. The principle of declaring a narration or a narrator reliable or unreliable is an intricate science with many rules, and the forte of experts. There are over 50 possible ways that a Hadith can be classified as Dha'eef, depending on the weakness in chain, narrator or wording etc. However, most of these do not occur in practice.

HADITH IN TERMS OF CHAIN STRENGTH

1. Muttasil: Where there is an unbroken chain of known narrators narrating back to the original source
2. Munqati': Where there is a missing or ambiguous link in the chain. This has many types.

HADITH IN TERMS OF WHERE CHAIN ENDS

1. Qudsi: Where Rasulullah (peace be upon him) quotes from Allah Ta'ala (but is not from the Qur'an).
2. Marfu': Traced back to Rasulullah (peace be upon him) directly
3. Mau'quof: The chain stops at a Sahabi
4. Maqtū': The chain stops at a Tābi'ee

SAHABAH (MAY ALLAH BE PLEASED WITH THEM) WHO NARRATED THE MOST AHĀDITH

1. Abu Hurairah: 5300+
2. Abdullah ibn Umar: 2600+
3. Anas ibn Mālik: 2200+
4. A'isha, mother of Believers: 2200+
5. Abdullah ibn Abbās 1600+
6. Jābir ibn Abdullah: 1500+
7. Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri: 1100+
8. Abdullah ibn Mas'ud: 800+
9. Abdullah ibn Amr ibn Ās: 700+

The last Sahabi to pass away was Abu Tufail Amr ibn Wāthilah who passed away between 100 to 110 Hijri.

'Allah does not take away knowledge by taking it away from the hearts of the people, but He takes it away by the death of the Scholars till no Scholar remains. Then people will take as their leaders the ignoramus who when asked will give verdicts without knowledge. So they will go astray themselves and will lead the people astray.' (Bukhari)

Mu'āwiyah (may Allah be pleased with him) stood up to deliver a sermon and he said, 'Where are your scholars? Where are your scholars? For I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) say, 'The Hour will not be established until a group of my Ummah is manifest over the people, and they do not care who lets them down, who betrays them or who supports them'' (Ibn Mājah)