

was initiated by the necessity of discerning between the authentic and the spurious, and the very Imams Bukhari and Muslim, not to mention the lesser traditionists, are direct products of this critical attitude. The existence, therefore, of false ahadith does not prove anything against the system of hadith as a whole (1 Muhammad Asad, 'Islam at the crossroads', p.p .127,128}. The traditionists and the jurists have formulated sound principles in the light of which the genuineness of the Hadith can be fully established. These principles relate to both parts of the Hadith: Isnad (chain of transmission) and Matn (text). The trustworthiness of those through whom the Hadith is transmitted i.e. Isnad can be reliably judged with the help of Asma ar -Rijal , a science which critically scrutinizes the narrators of the ahadith. Those who understood this work showed perfect impartiality in recording the details of their lives. Similarly , laws were also framed to test the genuineness of text (matn). The reliability of a narrator may be taken as external evidence for establishing the authenticity of a Hadith. A hadith which withstands this thorough search and scrutiny and is proven to be authentic, is part and parcel of Divine injunctions and binding on a believer to follow. The unblemished character of the narrator (ar-Rawi)is a condition to the acceptance of a tradition as genuine. For this purpose, occupation, honesty and particularly the reliability of his memory had to be studied. Not only should his memory be good but it must have the power of relation which implies also that he should have properly heard the words of the speaker, understood their meaning and reproduced them with accuracy at the time of narration. He should

be a man of learning .He should not have committed any crime,told a lie ,given false evidence, and should not be guilty of carelessness or indifference. His religious beliefs and learning should be understood, his piety, impartiality and truthfulness considered, before accepting what he says .This sort of critical examination of the authorities is known as 'Jarh wat-ta`dil.' Jarh is the process by which a witness is declared unreliable while ta`dill is the process by which he is declared reliable.

Thousands of traditionists (Muhaddithin) spent their lives in gathering every detail of the lives the transmitters of traditions about the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Due to their painstaking researches, the science of Asma ar- Rijal developed to such an extent that through it, one can learn about the lives of at least 100,000 persons involved in reporting ahadith.

Sometimes the chain of authorities may be complete and yet on account of non-satisfaction of the condition laid down for narrators the tradition may be rejected. A tradition which is contradictory to the text of the Qur`an, or violating a well-known tradition, or is something repudiated by the companions, will not be accepted. There is another very important test whereby the authenticity of a Hadith may be judged, and it is the test where the application was commanded by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)himself. "There will be narrators," the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)is reported to have said, "reporting hadith from me, so judge by the Qur`an: if a report agrees with the Qur`an, accept it, if otherwise, reject it." As already stated, hadith is but an explanation and interpretation of the Qur`an and hence

the Qur'an must have precedence over the Hadith .For example, during the caliphate of Umar (Allah be pleased with him),a woman named Fatima bint Qais told Umar (Allah blessed with him) that when her husband divorced her.The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not tell him to provide her maintenance allowance. .Umar (Allah be plesed with him)said: We cannot leave the book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon with him) on the report of a woman about whom we do not know whether she remembered or forgot. Again, ,on hearing a tradition reported on the authority of ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with him), A'isha (Allah be pleased with her)did not accept it and remarked: You or your transmitters do not tell lies, ,but sometimes one misunderstands .”

Classifications of Hadith :

The Muhaddithin have classified Hadith into the following categories in order to establish the rank and degree of reliability of the tradition:

Hadith in Nabvi: A simple saying of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) which must be borne in mind as nothing but inspired, commencing with the words: the Messenger of Allah {May peace and blessings of Allah be upon him}said}:

Hadith –I-Qudsi: A saying of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) having reference to Divine direction starting with the words (Allah the exalted said): The following hadith transmitted on the authority of Abu Dharr Ghifari (Allah be pleased with him) in which Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings

of Allah be upon him) conveys the message of Allah in His very name, is an example of Hadith Qudsi:

{O' My servants! I have made oppression unlawful for Myself and have forbidden this oppression for you also. Therefore, don't oppress one another. You all go astray, except one whom I direct to the right path. Hence beg guidance from Me only . (Muslim)

On the basis of investigation, the Hadith has been classified under the following three main categories:

1. Sahih (sound): sound or most authentic tradition in which there is no weakness either in regard to the chain of transmission (Isnad) or in regard to the text (matn). The Isnad or authorities should be carried uninterruptedly to the companion or the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in case of a Sahih Hadith.

It must be remembered in this connection that the authenticity of Sahih ahadith has been fully established by the scholars of hadith as regards the purity of text (matn) and the soundness of the chain of transmission (Isnad). The old scholars have standardized all of them and have performed this work with such precision , objectivity and skill that it is difficult to improve upon it. We can now safely depend upon them for guidance in all important matters of life.

2. Hasan (approved): Sound but a little less authentic than the first category. It differs from a Sahih Hadith in the sense that some of its narrators are believed to have had a weak memory, as compared to that of narrators of Sahih Hadith.

3. Da'if (weak): A tradition in which there is some defect either in the chain of transmission, or in proper understanding of the transmitter,, or its contents are

not in perfect agreement with Islamic beliefs and practices. It is in fact all traditions of weak or less reliable authority. However all traditions called da`if are not rejected .Those which exhort people to do good or which narrate incidents may be quoted. Abu Dawud quite often used da`if traditions when he could find nothing better to illustrate the point with which he was dealing.

According to the chain of narrators, the Hadith is classified as:

Muttasil or Mausul (Contiguous): it refers to a Hadith which has narrators without any interruption, irrespective of the fact whether it can be traced directly to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) or to one of his companions .

Mutawatir (Continuous): A tradition reported by a large number of people in different times, so as to make it impossible for any falsehood to creep into it.

Mashhur (well-known): A tradition which is handed down by at least three different reliable authorities,or according to another view, a tradition which, although widely disseminated, it was originally transmitted by one person from the first generation .

Gharib (peculiar, obscure): It refers to a Hadith in which the chain of transmission a number of narrators is reduced to one at any stage.

Imam At Tirmidhi used two special terms in regard to hasan and gharib ahadith for further categorization of these:

Hasan Sahih

Hasan Sahih Gharib .

Hasan sahih hadith is one which according to Imam At Tirmidhi stands at a higher level than mere hasan, but at a bit lower than Sahih.

Hasan Sahih is at times qualified by the word **gharib** when the link of transmission is joined to another at a certain point by one transmitter only. Obviously it is hasan in regard to its soundness, and **gharib** in regard to its chain of transmission.

Mu`allaq (Suspended): if the companions of the narrators at the beginning of a tradition are missing.

Mursal (Forwarded): If the companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) are found missing from the chain of transmission and a **Tabi`i (Successor of the companion)** transmits it from Allah`s Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), such a hadith is called (**Mursal**).

Mudallaas (Hidden): Where one or more narrators are suppressed.

Munqati (Disjoined): A tradition in which either a link in the chain of transmission is found missing or an unknown narrator is found to join the links.

Ma`addal (perplexing): Where two successive narrators are missing in between.

MAudu (Forged,fabricated): It refers to something falsely attributed to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) It is the opposite of Sahih.

MAtruk (Discarded): Where narrators are accused of falsehood in matters other than the narration of the tradition.

MUnkar (Disapproved): A tradition in which a weak transmitter of ahadith opposes one who is quite authentic and reliable as a narrator of hadith.

Ma`ruf (celebrated): This is opposite of Munkar.

Shadh (isolated): A tradition in which a comparatively less authentic narrator of hadith opposes one whose account is more authentic than his.

15.Marfu (traced directly): A tradition which can be traced back to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) directly, without any defective transmission .

MMauquf (Delayed): It refers to a Hadith in which the reporting companion does not make it explicitly clear that he is narrating from Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), for example the narrator says that:Umar bin Khattab said this and this..

MMaqtu (severed): It refers to a Hadith in which the chain of transmission cannot be traced beyond the Tabi`n or successors of the companions.

MMuttafiq alaih (Agreed upon): Traditions accepted and agreed on by both Imams Bukhari and Muslim, who are universally acknowledged as the most truthful compilers of Hadith.

MMazoola (deceptive): It refers to a Hadith in which the narrator does not give the name of his teacher, and instead gives the name of one who is one step higher than his teacher, using the words (from so and so). The fact of hiding the name of the teacher is called Tadlees (Deception).

20.Marfu Muttasil: It refers to a Hadith with its narrators up to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

21. Mudraj (inserted,interpolated): A tradition in which the narrator has substituted some of his own

words in reporting a saying from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

22. **Aziz (Respected):** It refers to a Hadith separately reported by more than one narrator.

23. **Ahad :** It refers to a Hadith with one narrator only.

Canonical Books of Hadith and Brief life –sketches of their compilers:

The compilation of ahadith is divided into three categories:

1.The first one includes, Sahih al Bukhari –Sahih Muslim and Muwatta of Imam Malik.

2.The second one includes al Jami Tirmidhi, Sunan Abu Dawud , Musnad Imam Ahmad binHanbal and Nasa`i

3.The third category consists of those ahadith, which include all types of weak .traditions. Their chains of transmission have some missing links in them.e.g Musnad of Uthman bin Abi Shaiba,Musnad of Tayalsi, Musnad of Abdullah bin Muhammad bin. AbiShaiba. .Only the learned scholars can derive benefit from them.

Out of the above categories, the most authoritative books on hadith are Sahih of Bukhari (194-256 A.H) and the Sahih of Muslim (202-261A.H). In addition to these, are four other books that are also recognized as authoritative (completing “The Authentic Six” books of hadith –Sihah sittah). These are known as the sunan of Abu Dawud (202-275A.H) , Jami At Tirmidhi (279A.H),

Sunan of Nasa'i (215-303A.H) and Sunan of ibn Majah (209-273A.H).

It is important to note that none of the books of hadith including "Sihah Sittah" were commissioned by any authoritative body, as no such body exists in Islam. They were collected on the initiative of the individual compilers. Each one of them had to be critically examined and accepted by the community, before being recognized as an authoritative work. This applied to the works of Bukhari and Muslim, just as it did to the others. Here we give brief life-sketches of some well-known compilers of books of Hadith.

1. Imam Abu Hanifa

The full name of Imam Abu Hanifa is Abu Hanifa an-Nu'man ibn Thabit ibn Zautha al-kufi. He was born in Basra in 80 A.H. and died in Baghdad in 150 A.H. His father, Thabit, was a silk dealer in the city of Kufa, and it is said that his grandfather, Zautba, was a native of Kabul.

Imam Abu Hanifa learned jurisprudence from Imam Abu Ja'far of Baghdad. His public lectures in Kufa soon gave him the name of a great scholar and people flocked daily to hear him and to question him on the rites of worship and the law. Imam Abu Hanifa had two renowned students, Imam Muhammad and Imam Abu Yusuf, who were the main personalities in expounding his law. It is mostly their views of the great master's teaching that now form the basis of the Hanifa School of thought. Imam Abu Yusuf has preserved for us in his Kitab al-Khara, the chief views of his master.

Imam Abu Hanifa was a very pious and god-fearing man. When Caliph Al-Mansur offered him the post of

Chief Qadi he declined as he did not wish to shoulder such a heavy responsibility. Yazid bin Umar bin Hubarira, the Governor of Kufa, had him flogged for his refusal and his persistence landed him in prison, where he eventually died. It is generally believed that he was poisoned on the order of the Caliph.

2.Imam Malik ibn Anas

Imam Abu Abdullah Malik ibn Anas was born in Madina in 94A.H.(716A.D). He lived in the same place and received his earliest impressions of Islam from Sahl ibn Sa`d, one of the surviving companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). He was considered to be the most learned man of his time, and his self-denial and abstinence were such that he usually fasted four days in a week. He enjoyed the advantages of a personal acquaintance with the Imam Abu Hanifa although differing with him on many important questions regarding the authority of the Traditions. His pride, however, was at least equal to his literary endowments. As proof of this, it is related of him that when the great Caliph Harun-Rashid came to visit the Shrine of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), Malik went to meet him and the Caliph addressed him: O` Malik! I ask you for a favour that you will come to me every day and my two sons, Amin and Mamun and instruct us in traditional knowledge. The Imam replied haughtily: O` Caliph! Science is of a dignified nature and instead of going to any person, it requires that all should come to it. The story further continues that the Caliph sent both his sons to