

Unit:6

Introduction to Hadith

The Status of Hadith in Religion

It does not need us to explain that the first and foremost primary source of the Sacred Law (Shari'ah) is the Holy Qur'an – the Book of Allah. It is through the clear and explicit commands and teachings of the Holy Qur'an that we are obliged to follow the Messenger of Allah. This is because, without the Messenger of Allah it is merely impossible for anyone to understand the Qur'an; its explanations and meanings, and it is also impossible to learn the detailed rulings of each and every obligation in Islam.

Therefore, the Ahadith of the Messenger of Allah certainly form the second source for the Sacred Islamic Law - the Shari'ah, as these are the one and only means of gaining information as regards the Messenger of Allah; his commands; his sayings; his actions; his explanations and commentaries on the verses of the Holy Qur'an, all of which are necessary for us to know in order for us to understand the Holy Qur'an.

Now, we quote a few of the many verses from the Holy Qur'an, in which on innumerable occasions we have been commanded to follow in the footsteps of the Messenger of Allah. Thus, making it obligatory upon us to follow his teachings.

I. "O believers! Obey Allah and His Messenger and turn not away from him after hearing him..." [Surah:8 – al-Anfal, Verse:20]

II. "And obey Allah and His Messenger and dispute not with one another, otherwise you will show timidity..." [Surah:8 – al-Anfal, Verse:46]

III. "And We did not send any Messenger but that he should be obeyed by Allah's will." [Surah:4 – al-Nisa', Verse:64]

IV. "O beloved! Say, 'O people! If you love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you..." [Surah:3 – Al-e-Imran, Verse:31]

V. "then, O beloved! By your Lord, they shall not be Muslims until they make you judge in all disputes among themselves..." [Surah:4 – al-Nisa, Verse:65]

VI. "O believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and those who have power of command amongst you, then again if there may arise any difference amongst you, refer it to Allah and His Messenger..." [Surah:4 – al-Nisa', Verse:59]

VII. "O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and let not your deeds go waste." [Surah:47, Muhammad, Verse:33]

VIII. “He who obeys the Messenger, then verily he has obeyed Allah...” [Surah:4 – al-Nisa’, Verse:80]

IX. “O beloved! Say: ‘Obey Allah and the Messenger.’ then, if they turn away, surely Allah loves not the infidels.” [Surah:3 – Al-e-Imran, Verse:32]

X. “And what the Messenger gives you, take it and what he forbids you, and abstain from it...” [Surah:59 – al-Hashr, Verse:7]

XI. “Surely you have an excellent example for your guidance in (the life of) the Messenger of Allah...” [Surah:33 – al-Ahzab, Verse:21]

It has been clearly established and proven from the above-quoted verses from the Holy Qur’an that it is incumbent upon each and every Muslim to follow the Messenger of Allah, and his teachings.

Therefore, all of the law and orders enforced by the Messenger of Allah are incumbent upon us to follow in the same way, as it is obligatory upon us to follow every Divine command that is transmitted to us by the Holy Qur’an, as the command of the Messenger of Allah is indirectly the command of Allah the Most Exalted.

One Fundamental Question:

After having understood all of what has just been explained, we should contemplate and ponder carefully upon a question that is posed: “Is this command of following the Messenger of Allah as reiterated by many verses of the Holy Qur’an (as mentioned above) only related to when the Messenger of Allah was physically alive in this mundane world, or does this apply till the Day of Judgement?”

If – Allah forbid! – this Divine command was specified only to the physical life of the Messenger of Allah, then this would quite simply, in other words, mean that acting upon the Qur’an, following the teachings of Islam is also limited and specified to the blessed era of the Messenger of Allah. This is because to follow the teachings and sayings of the Messenger of Allah were made incumbent upon every single Muslim, only for the fact that without this, it is impossible for anyone to follow the teachings of Islam and the Qur’an. Thus, when it has been commanded to follow Islam, Qur’an and its teachings till the Day of Judgement, then it has been proven that to follow the Messenger of Allah and showing obedience to him is also a command that shall not cease till the Day of Judgement.

One Great Proof for the Authentication of Ahadith

When it has been clearly understood that to follow Islam and the Qur’an is till the Day of Resurrection, and that it is impossible for anyone to have knowledge and thus act upon the laws and rulings of Islam and the Holy Qur’an without following and imitating the Messenger of Allah, then another fundamental question arises: According to rational thinking, the language, the common law and the Sacred Islamic Law it is always the commands and orders that are followed. Thus, where are those commands and orders enforced by the Messenger of Allah, whose obedience, imitation and following the Qur’an has made obligatory upon us? This is

because the demand to follow without having any laws, commands and orders (to follow them) is merely against logic and the Sacred Law itself!

Therefore, when even today the Qur'an demands us to follow, imitate and obey the Messenger of Allah, it is necessary that the laws, orders and commands of the Messenger of Allah are present before us (so that we can 'follow'). It is apparent that the laws and commands of the Messenger of Allah are not those that have been given by Allah in His Book – the Qur'an, as it is quite sufficient as an obligation upon us to follow these Divine commands. So, we must believe after having stated all of this, that the laws and orders of the Messenger of Allah, whose following and obeying has been made obligatory upon us, are separate to those Divine commands that are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an.

After this introduction, we need not say that the collection of the commands, laws, sayings, actions, explanations to the Qur'anic verses and Sacred laws that have been transmitted to us from the Messenger of Allah are called "Ahadith".

From this we understand the importance of Ahadith, and its status in Islam. No one would deny its importance, only such a foolish person who denies obedience to the Messenger of Allah – Allah forbid!

History on the Compilation of the Ahadith

Before we touch upon the merits and virtues of the science of Hadith and what relates to it, it is necessary to explain why the Ahadith were compiled from the blessed era of the Companions till this date and how was the process of compilation?

A very brief insight into this is that the blessed era of the Messenger of Allah was the time when the verses of the Holy Qur'an were being revealed. because the most important task in this era was the collection of these verses and preserving this Divine trust, this was why the Messenger of Allah emphasised over and over again that the Companions compile and write only the verses of the Holy Qur'an – nothing else. This was so that no confusion be made if anything besides the Holy Qur'an would also be recorded.

However, permission was given to memorise, record, preserve and then transmit the Ahadith by tongue. Imam Muslim narrates from Hadrat Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, who reports that the Messenger of Allah has stated, "No one should write my speech. Whosoever has written anything beside the Qur'an should eliminate it; and transmit my Ahadith verbally; there is no harm in doing so. Whosoever attributes a lie to me, then he should prepare for himself an abode in the fire of Hell."

on top of this, there were some Companions – who had full certainty not to confuse the Verses of the Holy Qur'an from the reported speech of the Messenger of Allah – who wrote the Ahadith.

Imam al-Bukhari narrates on the authority of Hadrat Abu Hurairah who states, "There was none from among the Companions who narrated the most Ahadith except for Hadrat 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr (ibn al-'As); as he used to record them by writing them down, and I did not do that."

When all of the verses of the Holy Qur'an – some that were written on separate pieces of paper, some on leaves, some on slates, some on deer skin, some that were memorised in the hearts – were collected and compiled into one book form during the blessed era of Hadrat 'Umar al-Faruq and Hadrat 'Uthman; and all of the copies of the Holy Qur'an were distributed far and wide to many different countries, by which there was no concern for the verses of the Holy Qur'an being confused with the reported speech (Ahadith) of the Messenger of Allah, the process of collecting, compiling and writing the Ahadith began in the era of the Righteous Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz upon his suggestion.

The editor of Imam Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti's commentary on the Alfiyyah states in the introduction that, "when Hadrat 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz was given the responsibility of being a Caliph in the year 99 A.H. he wrote to Hadrat Abu Bakr ibn Hazm – the Shaikh of the Imams Ma'mar, Laith, Awza'i, Malik, ibn Ishaq and Ibn Abi Dhi'b and also the vice of the Caliph in the Court of Justice of al-Madinah al-Munawwarah – to collect and compile all the Ahadith of the Messenger of Allah, as he feared (sacred) knowledge becoming extinct, and the demise of the possessors of this knowledge – the 'Ulema." [Introduction to the Alfiyyah – Page 5]

Not only this, but in fact, Hadrat 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz wrote to all those far and wide to collect and compile any Hadith of the Messenger of Allah, they find. [Tarikh Isfahan – Abu Nu'aim]

Upon the motivation, encouragement, and relentless efforts of Hadrat 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, the first book on the science of Hadith was compiled by Hadrat Abu Bakr ibn Hazm. Thereafter, innumerable books were written and compiled on different topics of this precious science of sacred knowledge, by many elite Shuyukh who came from many different places.

Among those who compiled and wrote books of Hadith at this very early age of its compilation were ibn Juraij in Makkah al-Mukarramah; ibn Ishaq and Imam Malik in al-Madinah al-Munawwarah; Rabi' ibn Sabih, Sa'id ibn 'Urwah and Hammad ibn Salimah in Basra; Imam Sufyan al-Thawri in Kufa; Imam al-Awza'i in Syro-Palestine; Hisham in Wasit; Jarir ibn 'Abdullah in Rai, and ibn al-Mubarak in Khurasan. All of these men of great knowledge, were contemporary and of one category. Most of them were the students of Hadrat Abu Bakr ibn Hazm and Imam ibn Shihab al-Zuhri.

Afterwards, the Ahadith were spread far and wide due to the compilation and writing of books on Ahadith; laying down the foundation principles for accepting or rejecting a report; collecting background information of the narrators and their beliefs; writing books on the etiquettes and manners essential for a student pursuing this sacred knowledge of Hadith. All of these were compiled to form a sub-subject of Hadith – Usul-e-Hadith or the Principles of Hadith.

Ahadith were compiled using the rigorous of all criterions and rules to accept a report, until the Six Authentic Collections of Ahadith became accepted and popular. These are the Sahih of Imams Bukhari and Muslim, the Jami' of Imam al-Tirmidhi, the Sunan of Imams Abu Dawud, Nasa'i and Ibn Majah.

We have shed some light upon Ahadith, its History of Compilation, and its status in Islam. Those true and sincere Muslims who love Islam and the Qur'an, and who recognise themselves as individuals of this Ummah, which is flourishing with its long-lasting heritage of over fourteen hundred years of an unbroken chain of transmission to our liege lord the Messenger of Allah, are not in need of any evidence to prove the veracity of Ahadith.

Yes, however, for those hypocrites who deny the reliability of Ahadith, yet name themselves People of the Qur'an, if I had much time, I would make it apparent like the certitude of the sun at midday with irrefutable proofs and evidences that their denial of the Ahadith is in reality the denial of the words of Allah. They are not doing this only to make way for themselves not to follow the Qur'an.

Their main argument is that the translation and meaning of the verses of the Holy Qur'an should be left to their own will; however they desire they extract the meanings of the Holy Qur'an, so that, even after altering the correct meaning and translation of the Qur'anic verses, they can falsely claim to be the followers of it.

We ask Allah the Most Exalted to protect the Muslim Ummah from the evil of the onslaughts of those who reject Ahadith, and that he gives them guidance to broaden the light of Ahadith to eliminate the darkness that prevails the Ummah today.

His choicest blessings and salutation be upon the best of His creation, our Master Muhammad, his progeny, upon his companions and all of his followers.

