MIFTAAH HADITH INTENSIVE - DAY 3

Classification of Hadith

- There are three main classifications of hadith:
  - Authority
  - Number of narrators
  - Strength

Classification According to Authority

- This classification is based on the primary narrator of the statement.
- There are four types:
  - Hadith Qudsi (from Allah)
  - Hadith Marfu' (from the Prophet (ﷺ))
  - Hadith Mawquf (from a Companion)
  - Hadith Maqtu' (from a Successor)
- Hadith Qudsi
  - A narration from the Prophet (ﷺ) attributed to Allah
  - It is subject to the same critique as other ahadith
  - It is the highest form of hadith
  - Difference between Qur'an and Hadith Qudsi:
    - Qur'an is the uncreated speech of Allah; Hadith Qudsi is the speech of the Prophet (ﷺ) used to express meanings inspired by Allah

EDUCATION | PRESERVATION | APPLICATION

- Reciting Qur'an is a act of worship that is rewarded; Hadith Qudsi is not
- Qur'an is mutawatir (divinely protected); Hadith Qudsi is not

- Hadith Marfu'
    - A saying, action, approval or characteristic directly attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ)
    - It is the highest raised hadith.
    - Four types of hadith marfu':
        - Statements – what the Prophet (ﷺ) said; this is the strongest type
        - Actions – what the Prophet (ﷺ) did
        - Tacit approvals – what the Prophet (ﷺ) approved/disapproved
        - Characteristics – the Prophet's attributes
- Hadith Mawquf
    - A saying, action, approval that is attributed to a Companion
    - It means that the chain of narrators stops at the Companions.
    - This type of hadith can be a proof in the absence of hadith marfu'.
    - If there were two different opinions present between the Companions – we accept both
    - If there were something the Companion agreed upon – the ummah will agree upon
    - Sometimes the Companions were weary of attributing a hadith to the Prophet out of fear of misquoting him. Hence, they attribute it to themselves.
    - Three types of hadith mawquf:
        - Statements; what a Companion said
        - Actions; what a Companion did
        - Tacit approvals; what a Companion approved/disapproved

EDUCATION | PRESERVATION | APPLICATION

- Hadith Maqtu' (from a Successor)
    - A saying or action that is attributed to a Successor
    - Their statements are important as it was from the Companions.
    - Majority are commentary on hadith – they were not laws, but reminders.
    - This type of hadith can be a proof in the absence of hadith marfu' and hadith mawquf.

Isnad

- The history of isnad is divided into three phases:
  - Developmental phase
  - Golden era
  - Post-canonical phase
- Linguistic meaning: Sanad refers to a resting place. While isnad refers to something that rests upon something else.
- Technical meaning: Sanad refers to the chain of transmission
- The matn rests on the sanad. Hence, it is called a sanad. Without it we would not be able to trace that the hadith came from the Prophet – it was developed for verification purposes.

Developmental phase

- During the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), lying was uncommon. The link of the Companions was a direct one with the Prophet (ﷺ) – therefore the knowledge of their hadith did not need any verification.
- Once the Prophet (ﷺ) passed away, Islam expanded in the time of Umar ibn al-Khattab – nearly seventy percent of the world was under Muslim rule.
- There were new Muslims, and their piety was not at the same level as the Companions. Hence, it is not far-fetched that someone would narrate something that is untrue.

EDUCATION | PRESERVATION | APPLICATION

- As the Companions are passing away, the stringency of hadith grew and they were more careful whom they would narrate a hadith to.
- It was also at this time that fitnah was prevalent; misunderstandings occurred and recklessness crept into the ranks of Muslims.
- There was a need for verification on anyone who would quote a hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ) – even the Companions were asked to corroborate their sources, as there was no certainty that one is a reliable narrator.
- Sanad has always been documented as part of hadith narrations. However, after a hundred years, the Muslims scholars began systemizing the tradition in a more disciplined manner.
- Despite the rigorous process, there were false narrations and forged hadith that slipped through the cracks – but there was a process of sifting between reliable and unreliable hadith.

Golden Era

- In the first century, isnad was developed into a science. Knowledge had been localized into different regions.
- There were centers for people to learn in Makkah, which consisted of Abdullah ibn Abbas and his students and in Madinah, there was Aisha RA and her students. While Abdullah ibn Mas'ud was in Iraq, in Egypt, there was Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-As, and in Syria, Muawiya ibn Abu Sufyan, so on and so forth.
- After a few hundred years, people started traveling for the pursuit of knowledge – and the entire Muslim civilization became one global village. People would go to the madar (hub) of hadith from the different centers of learning.
- Ibn Mubarak said isnad is synonymous to our faith. If we did not have an isnad, anyone could make up our tradition and attribute it to the Prophet (ﷺ).

EDUCATION | PRESERVATION | APPLICATION

- Previously a hadith was only attached to a matn, but once the system of isnad was fully developed, it became part and parcel of hadith transmission – a hadith cannot be transmitted without an isnad.
- Each validity of hadith rested upon the chain of transmission. Each different chain of transmission is treated as a different route – therefore there were multiple iterations and versions for one hadith that stemmed from many different routes.
- There were also different types of hadith (qudis, marfu', mawquf, maqtu'). Hence, the number of ahadith also started increasing.
- In the first two centuries isnad was so transformative that people from different sciences (i.e. in the field of tafsir, fiqh etc.) began to adopt the method of isnad. Hadith literature developed simultaneously.
- This era lasted between two to three hundred years. By the fifth century, all the hadith that were in circulation with their verified chain of transmissions were documented and preserved in books of hadith. Isnad went from an epistemological tool to becoming a source of barakah.

Post-canonical phase

- Once the tradition had reached its peak, it shifted to purposes of blessings.
- There were certain changes in the culture; gatherings of hadith readings became prevalent.
- We get a sanid not to verify the information but so we can become part of the continuous chain of transmission.

Islamic standards of isnad

- Isnad is an exclusive concept to the Muslims. The Islamic concept of isnad is unique as it is continuous, verified and it is part and parcel of our tradition.

3 p.g.   E D U C A T I O N | P R E S E R V A T I O N | A P P L I C A T I O N

- Anything that is in our hadith tradition is accompanied with a chain of transmission.
- Anywhere else outside of the hadith tradition, it was very rare and there were broken chains with unverified narrators.
- Any chain outside of the statement of the Prophet (ﷺ) will not be treated with the same level of stringency.
- Subject matter will also be examined in its authenticity. While we will only accept what is reliable, those that are unreliable will still be accepted and used as a supplementary (commentary, virtues etc.) although its level of authenticity will be lower.

Narrator Criticism

- Isnad will be meaningless without accurate information. A string of narrators' names simply will not allow us to substantiate the statements.
- Reliability and verification also rely on narrator criticism or al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl (discrediting and accrediting) is a system to evaluate the narrators of hadith.
  - Narrators – Those who are in the links of sanad
  - Criticism – Evaluating the narrator of the hadith
  - Jarḥ – To criticize negatively/discredit
  - Taʿdīl – To verify/accredit/ positively approve
- Scholars of hadith realized the need of al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl for the science of isnad to become meaningful.
- When the science of isnad became part and parcel of hadith transmission, in the first two to three hundred years, scholars began discussing narrators using certain phrases. However, they did not have universal terms and nothing was codified.
- In the 300s, the science of al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl began. Ibn Abi Hatim al-Razi who was born in Rayy (north-eastern Iran) and came from a tradition of scholars, saw the gaps that needed to be filled in this science. Hence, this was when al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl was cemented.

- Muslims have gone to great lengths to make sure all lives of these narrators are documented.
- There are three aspects of al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl:
  - Terms used for discussing narrators
  - Criteria of reliability
  - Process of critique and validation

Terms used for discussing narrators

- As narrators were increasing, the scholars used terms to describe these narrators.
- There were eight categories divided between four groups that are positive in connotation; Taʿdīl (accreditation) category, and four groups that are negative in connotation; Jarḥ (criticisms) category.
- Expressions of accreditations
  - Thiqah (Reliable), Mutqin (Expert), Thabt (Precise) – these narrations can be used freely
  - Sadiq (Truthful), Mahalluhu al-sidq (His place is of truth), La ba's bihi (No problem) – these narrations are accepted and examined
  - Shaykh (Venerable) – these narrations will be recorded and examined
  - Salih al-hadith (Suitable in hadith) – these narrations will be recorded for consideration
- Expressions of criticisms
  - Layyin al-hadith (Lenient in hadith) – these narrations will be recorded and examined for consideration
  - Laysa bi qawi (Not strong) – these narrations will be recorded and examined for consideration, but lower in status
  - Da'if al-hadith (Weak in hadith) – these narrations are below the second, they will be considered
  - Matruk al-hadith (Abandoned in hadith), dhahib al-hadith (unreliab in hadith), khadhab (liar) – these narrations are unreliable, they will not be recorded

EDUCATION | PRESERVATION | APPLICATION

Criteria of reliability

- The scholars of hadith had four methods to assess the reliability of a narrator and determine their standing:
- Observation – they would spend time with the person and observe his everyday life
- Ask and examine – they would ask questions to see if the person is making up information
- Checking their books – they would go through the person's notes; if they see discrepancies he cannot be trusted
- Comparative analysis – they would categorize the students or the source into different groups and then compare against the narrations of those who are reliable to determine if the person is acceptable. This was the most frequently used method.

Process of critique and validation

- The scholars of hadith documented everything that they could about the lives of a narrator.
- However, for the purposes of narration, they would only look for two aspects: al-adalah and al-dabt.
- All the other information serves to give them clues about these two aspects of their lives. Hence, it could also affect their reliability.
- Once they went through this process, they documented it in books of al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl. These books are the largest repositories of Islam; they were based on different genres and categorizations.
- Some methods of compilation for al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl books were based on: reliable/unreliable narrators, different regions, compilation of narrators from different books etc.

Check and balance

- There were checks and balances in the science of al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl. Scholars would vet through statements from previous scholars as well. This was based on reliability and nor personal prejudice.
- Scholars of hadith made mistakes – but the likelihood of their mistakes were very slim compared to others. They did not let their personal prejudices take over.
- Al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl was about serving a greater purpose for Islam. While preserving someone's integrity is important and it may have seemed to be backbiting, it is permitted because a higher objective was placed on whether or not the narrators are saying the truth about Islam.

Analysis of Counter Arguments

- According to scholars of hadith, the Companions are exempt from the process of verification – and this made them all reliable narrators. However, there were contentions over this matter.
- The major contentions were:
  - The presence of hypocrites
    - The hypocrites were known, like Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul
    - From amongst the 50 prolific narrators of hadith from the Companions, their lives were well-documented. Their lives bear testimony to their reliability.
  - The Companions would criticize one another
    - Their criticisms did not tarnish their integrity; they had internal differences and reconciled, and they respected one another
  - The maxim defies human nature

- It is human nature to make mistakes and it is highly impossible to have those who are absolutely reliable living amongst our communities
- Some Companions reportedly committed major offenses
  - If they sinned, it did not affect their truthfulness. They did tawbah and they were still reliable based upon their adalah and dabt.
- To counter these arguments, we take a look at why the Companions are unverified. These are the reasons:
  - They are verified in the Qur'an and sunnah
    - Allah praises the Companions and He was pleased with them.
    - The Prophet (ﷺ) said never to criticize his Companions.
  - Anyone who studies about the Companions' lives know that they had no incentive to lie, intentionally make mistakes, or make up information
    - The Companions put their lives at the forefront of Islam and were the first to sacrificed everything for the Prophet and Allah
  - The concept of corroborations also existed amongst the Companions. When one of them was narrating, others were also there and they could determine based on corroboration.
  - The Companions came from an oral tradition. Hence, they are unlikely to falter in their memory. They had impeccable memory; they even memorized their genealogy etc.
  - When the Companions relate information, it is firsthand information. The chances of them forgetting something they heard is highly unlikely because they were present with the Prophet (ﷺ).
  - When the Prophet (ﷺ) taught hadith, he would repeat it at least three times, and they would retain it. They then revised and reiterated it to the other Companions before transmitting it.

EDUCATION | PRESERVATION | APPLICATION

MIFTAAH HADITH INTENSIVE - DAY 3

Mufti Muntasir Zaman

Compilation of Hadith Reports & Literature

- Many people are skeptical when they are dealing with hadith. Hence, we will visit these notions in these topics.
- Isnad and narrator criticism sieved through the pool of information. This is the first step of preservation.

The Writing of Hadiths

- It was part of the Prophet's mission to preserve the message.
- Methods of preservation:
  - Oral transmission – memorization was key for the Companions
  - Verbal transmission – conveying it to other Companions
  - Practical implementation – practicing and putting it into action; the Companions' lives were modeled around him
  - Written documentation – documenting what they heard
- Writing was not something common, easy or accessible within the society during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ).
- Many Companions were unlettered, with the exception of a few like Zayd ibn Thabit, Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-As, among others.
- Two conflicting types of narrations regarding the Prophet's position on writing hadiths:
  - In some narrations, the Prophet (ﷺ) would encourage his Companions to write hadith and in other instances, he would discourage it.

EDUCATION | PRESERVATION | APPLICATION

- The Prophet (ﷺ) wanted the Companions to focus on practicing instead of documenting in the early stages of his mission.
- He also wanted them to focus on the Qur'an as it was being documented; so that it would be firmly preserved in their hearts.
- However, in the latter parts of his life, he instructed them to write it down. There were proofs that the Prophet (ﷺ) encouraged the Companions to document hadith.
- Following the Prophet's demise, some Companions like Ali and Ibn Abbas were not opposed to writing down hadith; while other Companions like Umar were against it – but at some point, he allowed it.
- The Companions' main concerns about writing hadith:
  - Writing would weaken their memory
  - The fear of unguided access to knowledge
  - Majority of them were unlettered

The Evolution of Hadith Literature

- Paper was not available and writing materials were scarce. The Companions would write on leaves, animal bones, parchment etc. Hence, it took time for writing to gain traction.
- Within the first hundred years, hadith was written in two forms:
  - Note taking – Companions would write hadith as notes
  - State sponsored compilation of hadith – the Umayyad dynasty instructed for the Muslims to start documenting hadith they had orally preserved
- Today, there are many books of hadith available at our disposal. But there was a process through which these books were written – they evolved.
- It is a misconception that Imam Bukhari is the first person to write hadith. There were hadith written and documented before he was born.

EDUCATION | PRESERVATION | APPLICATION

- Every single hadith in Sahih al-Bukhari was available prior to his collection. This tells us that he is part of a project that happened years before.
- Imam Bukhari was however able to sift through thousands of ahadith and gather the most reliable ones.
- Allah chose Imam Bukhari to preserve the tradition, but there were also others before and after him that was part of the preservation.
- There were five stages to writing hadith from the 1st to the 4th century:
  - Stage #1: Sahifah
    - The Companions would take notes
    - It was common for the first hundred years
  - Stage #2: Musannaf
    - Beginning from the mid-2nd century
    - Organized books based on chapters
    - More than Prophetic hadith
    - Statements of Companions and Successors were included
    - Example: Muwatta of Imam Malik
  - Stage #3: Musnad
    - Beginning from the late 2nd century
    - Strictly compiled Prophetic hadith
    - It was compiled according to the Companions that narrated the hadith
    - Example: Musnad of Imam Ahmad
  - Stage #4: Sunan & Sahih
    - Beginning from the 3rd century
    - Merged Musannaf and Musnad methodologies
    - Focused on hadith that were strictly Prophetic
    - Example: Sunan at-Tirmidhi, Sunan an-Nasa'i, Sunan Ibn Majah

EDUCATION | PRESERVATION | APPLICATION

- Sahih
  - Focused only on reliable and authentic hadith
  - Imam Bukhari was driven after hearing his teacher suggest the idea – he was the first
  - Example: Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim
- Stage #5: Analytical
  - Beginning from the end of the 3rd century
  - Hadith writing was irrelevant
  - Being creative with existing hadith; reorganizing and recategorizing
  - Writing commentaries, new compilations on alternative hadith, collection of forty hadith etc.
  - Three important contributions:
    - Mustadrak
    - Mustakhraj
    - Mu'jam

Dealing with "Problematic" Hadith

- Definition of a problematic hadith:
  - It means apparently problematic – For example, it may seem unscientific, outdated, illogical etc.
  - It is any objection anyone has against hadith and anything they struggle to understand about a hadith

The Historical-Critical Method

- It is our fitrah that we are ingrained with fundamental rights and wrongs.
- Anything apart from this, it is the product of our society.
- We are influenced by the Western historical study.
- This is why when discussing hadith, when we find something apparently problematic, we need to revisit the assumptions and premises upon which our views are built.

- Whether consciously or subconsciously, our discussions are based on the Historical Critical Method (HCM).
- Muslim scholars hold different opinions than Western historians and philosophers today
- Over the last 700 years, three things that led Western society views on history:
    - During the Renaissance, the rediscovery of the Greco-Roman heritage
    - The age of discovery
    - The protestant reformation
- The way the Western tradition views tradition as a whole is the product of their very specific experience with Christianity.
- When we adopt their way of thinking we fail to realize it is a product of their specific historical moment.
- Their distrust of clergy, scripture rests on a very specific tradition.
- While Muslims use science to further their faith. But for the Christian tradition, the more they went into science, the further they went from their scripture.
- They had a crisis of faith due to the lies found in their scripture (i.e. anachronism).
- All of this led to studying scripture not as a devout Christian, but being separated from it and studying it as an outsider. Hence, this led to disgust and aversion to religion.
- Tools the HCM relied on:
    - Anachronism
    - Principle of analogy – people are all the same
    - Principle of dissimilarity – anything that conforms to orthodoxy are not true
- The key difference between Western and Muslim tradition is their first assumption is one of skepticism.
- Their default assumptions:

- A presumption of doubt about authenticity and unreliability
- A general suspicion towards orthodox narratives presented in texts/reports
- Belief that by analyzing historical sources using a certain method, a scholar can figure out the true story
- A materialistic approach to history – the idea of Divine intervention are unheard of

Dealing with Apparently Problematic Hadiths

- These hadith are criticized based on claims that they are absurd, unscientific, impossible or contradictory. For example, the hadith about Aisha's age when the Prophet married her.
- Every hadith whose content is seen as problematic has a specific explanation.
- Ways to deal with problematic hadith:
  - Determine its authenticity
  - Gather all the different routes of the hadith
  - See if there are different versions that can resolve the problem
- There are four broad guidelines to keep in mind when dealing with apparently problematic hadiths:
  - Understand the limits of human reason and experience
    - Using the five senses in our realm, we should rationalize – there is the ghayb
    - Nothing in our tradition or shariah is irrational
    - There are things in this world that is beyond our comprehension
  - Understand the importance of contextualization
    - Understanding the Prophet's life will help contextualize hadith and objections people may have
    - We cannot superimpose our cultural norms and project it on the past society – this is unfair

EDUCATION | PRESERVATION | APPLICATION

- - - We are the product of the society that we live in; it is fine to feel uncomfortable but we cannot say it is wrong
  - The usage of figurative speech
    - We should not read Qur'an and hadith from a materialistic lens
    - Science is not the objective of the shariah
    - One should not get hung up on the words used
  - The need to distinguish between impossibility and unlikelihood
    - Anything is possible with time and technology, and there is a likelihood that it will happen – the same can be said about the akhirah