

IN DEFENSE OF

---

THE PROPHETIC  
TRADITION

A REFUTATION OF THOSE WHO DENY  
THE AUTHENTICITY AND AUTHORITY  
OF THE HADÎTH AND SUNNAH

سُؤَالُ اللَّهِ  
مُحَمَّدٌ

MAWLÂNÂ FEIZEL CHOTHIA

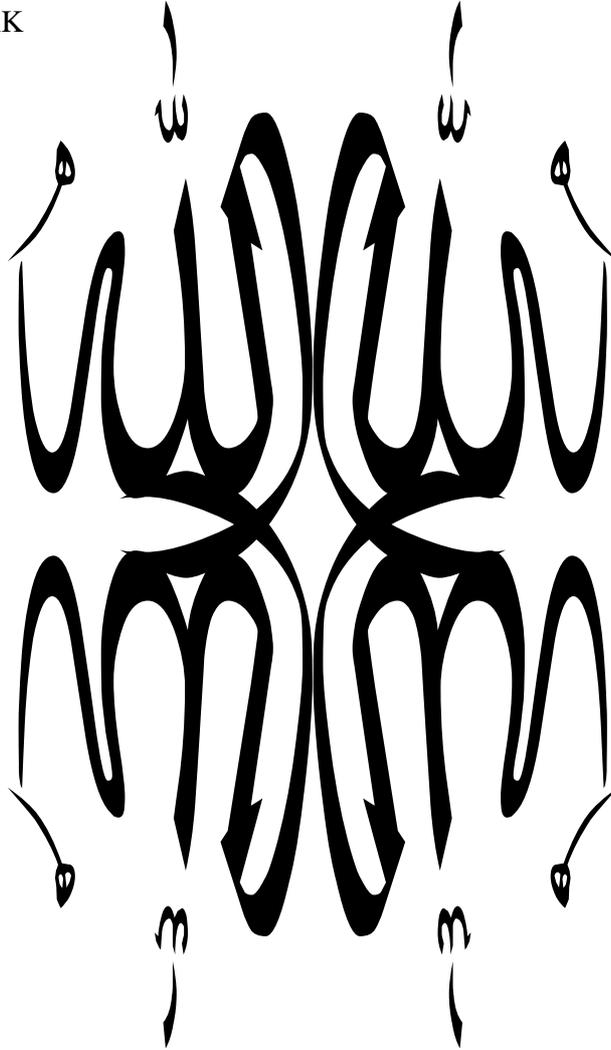
*DEDICATED TO  
ALL SCHOLARS  
WHO ENDEAVOUR  
TO PROJECT THE TRUTH*

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PUBLICATIONS

DAR AL-AHNAF, P.O. BOX 45313, MAYFAIR, 2108, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

**PUBLISHED BY:**

DÂR AL-AHNÂF  
34 WINSTON RD.  
HOMESTEAD PARK  
2092  
JOHANNESBURG  
SOUTH AFRICA



*In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful*

All praise is due to Allah,  
Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them,  
the Compassionate and Merciful, the Almighty, the Wise  
our Loving Guide and Protecting Friend.

May Allah's mercy and blessings be upon our beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ,  
the best teacher, the finest example of behaviour and a mercy to the worlds,  
and upon his blessed family and Companions. *Âmîn*

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## A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T

"Whosoever is not grateful to people is not grateful to Allâh."<sup>1</sup>

**I** wish to express my heartfelt gratitude in appreciation of the selfless contribution of various Muslim individuals to the production of this treatise.

I would be failing in my duty if I did not display my gratitude to them, and especially to my most revered teacher, Dr. Prof. Abdur Rahman I. Doi for his guidance, advice, sympathy and keen interest. I should also express my heartfelt thanks to my mentors, Mawlânâ Hasan Docrat and Mawlânâ Ebrahim Kadwa, two truly outstanding and erudite scholars of Islam, who very kindly proof-read the work. Thanks are also due to my beloved parents for helping me to procure the necessary source books. I owe a special debt of gratitude to my wife, without whose support, rents for helping me to procure the necessary source books. I owe a special debt of gratitude to my wife, without whose support, rents for helping me to procure the necessary source books. I owe a special debt of gratitude to my wife, without whose support, rents rents for helping me to procure the necessary source books. I owe a special debt of gratitude to my wife, without whose surents for helping me to procure the necessary source books. I owe a special debt of gratitude to my wife, without whose support, stions and constructive criticism; especially the esteemed scholar, Mawlânâ Hasan Docrat. May Allah, the Exalted, grant them the best of rewards in this world and the hereafter.

Finally, let me add that if this work stimulates a more assertive and active interest in *Hadîth* literature and Islamic culture amongst young Muslim scholars, I will consider my research to have been amply rewarded.

## P R E F A C E

All praise is due to Almighty Allâh. We praise him and seek his help and forgiveness. And we seek refuge in Allâh from *Shaytân*, the Accursed, and from the evil of our own selves and wicked deeds. Whosoever has been guided by Allâh, there is none to misguide him. And whosoever has been misguided by Allâh, none can guide him. I bear witness that there is no god except Allâh, alone, without partner or associate. And I bear witness that Muhammad (S) is His Servant and Messenger. May Allâh, the Exalted, bestow His peace and blessings on Prophet Muhammad, upon his good and pure family, as well as upon all the noble Companions and upon those who follow them in righteousness until the Day of Reckoning.

Verily, the most truthful speech is the Book of Allâh, and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad (S); while the worst affairs are heretical novelties, for every novelty is a blameworthy innovation. Every innovation (in matters of religion) is misguidance and every misguidance is in the Fire.<sup>1</sup>

This short monograph exists in order to present the viewpoint of mainstream Islam with regard to the *Hadîth* literature and, more specifically, its criticism by modernist scholars and Orientalists. While a number of works on the topic are available in European languages, several of these represent Orientalist approaches to scholarship which fail to give the reader an understanding of the normative Muslim viewpoint.

The contemporary relevance of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (S) is a contentious issue among many westernised individuals and modernist scholars and is hotly debated in Muslim societies of our present day. Arriving at the correct view requires unbiased, scholarly research of the available literature which must be supported by authentic, decisive proof.

A considerable amount has been said and written about this subject, and the proliferation of doubt and confusion necessitates critical, meticulous analysis and assessment, in order for one to come to a clear, decisive conclusion which leaves not the least bit of doubt in the mind of the reader. I hope, by Allâh's leave, to succeed in achieving these treasured aims and objectives.

In assembling this treatise, use has been made not only of contemporary works, but also of original Arabic sources. Even the specialist reader, therefore, may perhaps find in this work some important material which may not be available in any of the conventional works on the subject. I have analyzed and assessed the claims made by many against the relevance and

veracity of the issue at hand. I have also stringently researched the pertinent verses of the *Qur'ân* in order to shed light on the issue as well as to dispel a number of misconceptions about the efficacy of the Traditions. It is hoped that this monograph on the authenticity and authority of the *Hadîth* and *Sunnah* will help the reader to place it in proper perspective and to appreciate its inherent bona fides and its eternal relevance.

I pray that Allah grants success in this endeavour, accepting it as a work done purely for His sake and bestowing upon us and our brethren in faith, sincerity and guidance to His straight path.

## INTRODUCTION

The *Hadîth*, the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (S), form a sacred literature which, and for Muslims, ranks second in importance only to the *Qur'ân* itself. As a source of law, ethics and doctrine, the immense corpus of *Hadîth* continues to exercise a decisive influence. Islamic scholarship has thus devoted immense efforts to gathering and classifying the *Ahâdîth*, and ensuring their authenticity, an undertaking which stands today as a highly original and impressive scholarly achievement.

*Hadîth* literature is a subject as important as it is fascinating. It is important because it serves as an astonishingly voluminous source of data for the history of pre-Islamic Arabia and of early Islam, and for the development of Arabic literature, as well as of Islamic thought in general and Islamic law in particular. It also played a decisive role in establishing a common cultural framework for the whole Islamic world,<sup>1</sup> and continues to wield substantial influence on the minds of the Muslim community;<sup>2</sup> an influence which, it seems clear, will continue for the foreseeable future. It is fascinating because it sheds so much light on the psychology of the *Hadîth* scholars - the Traditionists - the devoutly scrupulous as well as the confirmed forgerers, and on many of the key political and cultural movements which germinated and developed in the various regions of the Muslim world throughout its complex history. It portrays a brilliant medieval academic world which gave birth to many European scholarly institutions, including the doctorate and the baccalaureate.<sup>3</sup> It also contains many of the basic ideas now current about democracy, justice among mankind and nations, the condemnation of aggression, and the ideal of global peace. All this, moreover, is linked resolutely to the sacred, to a consciousness of man's exalted meaning and destiny, which seems to mark the Muslims out today more than ever before.

The Muslims (since the blessed Prophet's (S) lifetime), and European scholars too (for about the last two hundred years), have paid close attention to the *Hadîth* and to its ancillary sciences. During the time of the Prophet (S), the Companions were zealous to learn and recall his words and the incidents of his life. Many of them wrote these *Ahâdîth* down, and distributed them for the benefit of their co-religionists. A large number of *Ahâdîth* were thus collected in the first century of Islam, and were disseminated throughout the vast Islamic empire, partly in writing, and partly as an oral tradition. During the subsequent centuries, efforts were made to compile more or less exhaustive collections of *Ahâdîth* which were

considered to be reliable by specific scholarly criteria, and long and arduous journeys were undertaken for this purpose. Thus, partly in the second century after the Prophet's (S) emigration from Makkah to Madînah, but largely in the third, important collections of such *Hadîth* were compiled and published. As some *Ahâdîth* were known to have been forged - some even during the Prophet's (S) lifetime - immense care was taken to ensure their credentials. To this end, the Muslim scholars introduced the system of *Isnâd*, the chain of authorities reaching back to the Prophet (S) which shows the historical status of a report. This was introduced at an early date, and by the first quarter of the second century was treated as a necessary part of every Tradition. In time, too, branches of literature grew up to serve as foundations for the criticism of every individual *Hadîth*. As the *Isnâd* alone was not considered to be a sole and sufficient guarantee of a *Hadîth*'s genuineness, a number of other general principles were laid down as litmus tests for the authenticity of a text. It has hence been generally accepted by the Traditionists that the validity of a Tradition is sufficiently determined by the rigorous techniques of criticism which have thus been developed by the specialists.<sup>4</sup> Many of these matters have been touched upon in this treatise.

# 1

## HADÎTH DEFINED

### 1.1 THE MEANING OF HADÎTH

The Arabic word *hadîth* has the primary connotation of 'new', being use as an antonym of *qadîm*, 'old'. From this derived the use of the word for an item of news, a tale a story or a report - be it historical or legendary, true or false, moral or scandalous, relating to the present or to the past. The word was employed in this sense by the pre-Islamic poets, and by the *Qur'ân* and the Prophet (S). Story tellers also were called *huddâth* : the purveyors of *hadîth*.<sup>1</sup>

This general sense of the word has, as elsewhere in the Arabic lexicon (eg. *Salâh*, *sujûd*, *Zakâh*, *taqwâ*), been altered under the far-reaching influence of Islam. Since the lifetime of the Prophet (S) himself the Muslims called reports which spoke of his actions and sayings as 'the best *Hadîth*'<sup>2</sup>, and, in due course, the word became increasingly confined to such reports.

Not only his Companions, but the Prophet (S) himself appears to have used the term in this sense. When he remarked to Abu Hurayrah that he knew his anxiety about *Hadîth*, he was referring to his own *Hadîth*<sup>3</sup>. When ʿAli instructed, "When you write down the *Hadîth*, write it with the *Isnâd* ", he was referring particularly to the *Hadîth* of the Prophet (S)<sup>4</sup>.

### 1.2 HADÎTH AND SUNNAH

Closely connected to the word *Hadîth* is the term *Sunnah*, which, although originally bearing the sense of 'precedent' and 'custom',<sup>5</sup> and used thus in sixteen places in the *Qur'ân*,<sup>6</sup> was employed by the Muslims for the accepted practice of the community, and, in later years, for the practice of the Prophet (S) only.<sup>7</sup>

*Sunnah* thus referred not only to the *Hadîth* of the Prophet (S) but also to the established practice of the community. But once the literal meanings of *Hadîth* and *Sunnah* gave way to their technical usages and were both exclusively used in reference to the conduct of the Prophet (S), the two became almost synonymous. *Hadîth*, as such, differs from *Sunnah* in the sense that *Hadith* is a narration of the conduct of the Prophet (S) whereas

*Sunnah* is the example or the law that is deduced from it. *Hadîth* in this sense is the vehicle or the carrier of *Sunnah*.<sup>8</sup>

## THE EVENT OF THE HADÎTH

### 2.1 RESPONSE TO THE PROPHETIC MISSION

The *Hadîth* has been the subject of the closest interest among the Muslims since the lifetime of the Prophet (S). His astonishing career could not have failed to capture the undivided attention of those around him.<sup>1</sup> To his enemies he was a revolutionary bent upon destroying the whole fabric of their society, whose activities had to be keenly watched if the progress of his mission was to be suppressed. His words must have been the focus for endless reflection, conversation and heated discussion. They watched his movements so closely and carefully that many of his most secretly conceived plans could not escape their watchful eyes. Abû Lahab, one of their most committed leaders, would go to him when he preached his faith to the Arabian tribes, and try to dissuade them from paying any heed to his peaceful sermons.<sup>2</sup> They discovered his plans when his followers were migrating from Arabia to Abyssinia, sending men after them to try and bring about their forced return.<sup>3</sup> They found out that he was secretly speaking to the people of Madînah, and they threatened the Madînans with hostility and violence if they continued their friendship with him.<sup>4</sup>

If his enemies took a close interest in his statements and actions, then the interest of his followers was more intense still. They had accepted him as their sole guide and prophet, identifying themselves with him completely in his life for Allâh and his struggle against the Quraysh and the other hostile tribes. Their destiny was bound up with the future of the faith which he had received. His success was theirs. All his actions served them as an ideal, and hence a precedent (*Sunnah*); every word which he uttered was a law to them, while his moral choices, so different from those of their age, yet so immediate in their impartial wisdom, provided them with a system of personal and social virtue which they tried to follow as faithfully as they could.<sup>5</sup>

When he chose a golden ring for himself, his friends put one on also; and when he took it off, gave it away, and wore a silver one instead, they also emulated his example.<sup>6</sup> If he rose at midnight and stood for hours in prayer, his friends wished to do the same, and he himself, fearful for their strength, had to bid them to stop.<sup>7</sup> If he fasted continually for more than one day, his

followers would desire to do the same, and he would have to explain to them that he had his own additional duties which were not incumbent upon them.<sup>8</sup> Zayd ibn Khâlid spent a whole night at his door in order to watch him offer his night prayers.<sup>9</sup> Nawwâs ibn Samcân stayed at Madînah for a whole year to enquire from the Prophet (S) what was virtue and what was vice.<sup>10</sup> Abû Saçîd al-Khudrî observed carefully the length of time he remained standing during his afternoon prayers.<sup>11</sup> Ibn cUmar even counted the number of times he asked pardon of Allâh in one sitting.<sup>12</sup>

So much veneration and respect did the Companions have for the Prophet (S) that one of them collected some of his perspiration, which was said to be 'sweeter than musk', and stipulated in his will that it should be sprinkled on his body before it was put into the grave.<sup>13</sup> Others preserved any thing that had been touched by him, and used it as a miraculous cure for disease.<sup>14</sup> Still others presented their children to him for his blessing.<sup>15</sup>

Given this intense devotion to the Prophet (S), inspired by his charisma, holiness and integrity, many Companions made a point of observing his life, and recording for posterity everything that they could. Thus Abû Hurayrah kept his constant company for three years, sacrificing all worldly pursuits in order to see and hear what the Prophet (S) did and said,<sup>16</sup> and regularly devoted a period of time to fixing in his memory the words he heard.<sup>17</sup> cAbd Allâh ibn cAmr ibn al-cÂs physically wrote down everything he heard from the Prophet (S).<sup>18</sup> cUmar ibn al-Khattâb, who was living at a distance from Madînah and was unable to attend the Prophet (S) everyday, made an agreement with one of the Ansâr that they would be present with him on alternate days, and report to each other everything they saw and heard from him.<sup>19</sup> Those Companions who had not been physically present when the Prophet (S) said or did anything made up the deficiency by asking of those who had been present, taking care to ensure the veracity of the intermediary source. In fact, it is said to have been a common practice among the friends of the Prophet (S) that whenever any two of them met, one would enquire from the other whether there was any *Hadîth* (i.e. news of the Prophet's (S) acts or speech), and the other would tell him what he knew.<sup>20</sup>

## 2.2 GENESIS OF HADÎTH LITERATURE

The Prophet (S) himself, conscious of his mortality, attached a good deal of importance to the knowledge of his own *Hadîth*. He used to ask his Companions to make them as widely known as possible, and take care that nothing should be falsely attributed to him.<sup>21</sup> He encouraged his followers to

acquire knowledge (i.e. of the *Qur'ân* and *Sunnah*), and teach it to others.<sup>22</sup> The course of study which he prescribed for the People of the Porch (*Ashâb al-Suffah*), those ascetics who lived at a porch attached to his house, included the *Qur'an*, the *Sunnah* and the art of writing.<sup>23</sup> When appointing state officials he gave preference to those who were learned in the *Sunnah* as well as the *Qur'ân*. Such, for instance, was the case with the appointment of *imâms* (prayer leaders) and *qâdîs* (judges), and and was probably the case with other appointments also.<sup>24</sup> And in an especially celebrated *Hadîth*, he ask Mucâdh, when the latter was going out as governor of Yemen, on what basis he would issue judgements. "On the basis of the *Qur'ân*," Mucâdh replied. "Suppose said the Prophet (S), "that you do not find it in the *Qur'ân*?" " Then on the basis of the *Sunnah*," answered Mucâdh.<sup>25</sup>

The Companions did not simply commit as many as they could of the Prophets (S) words to memory. Some of them collected these in written books known as *Suhuf* (sing. *sahîfah*), which they would use as a basis for lectures, and which were later preserved by their families, and by the next generation of Muslims, the Successors (*Tâbicûn*).<sup>26</sup> For example, the *Sahîfah Sâdiqah* compiled by ʿAbd Allâh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿÂs, the *Sahîfah* of ʿAlî, the *Hadîth* collections of Râfiʿ ibn Khadîj, Jâbir ibn ʿAbd Allâh, Samurah ibn Jundab, Abû Hurayrah, ʿAbd Allâh ibn ʿAbbâs, ʿAbd Allâh ibn Maseûd and the *Sahîfah* of Hammâm ibn Munabbih (may Allâh be pleased with them all).<sup>27</sup> These are the blessed names of some of those Companions who kept a record of the Prophet's (S) utterances and addresses, judgements and verdicts on different issues and his actions and deeds in all circumstances.

After the Prophet's (S) death, when his Companions scattered throughout the new provinces, many of them, and many of the Successors undertook lengthy and difficult journeys, courting poverty and various hazards, in order to learn and collect as many *Ahâdîth* as they could. With the passage of time, they founded independent scholarly disciplines which would help the community to understand the *Hadîth* of the Prophet (S), and to assess its genuineness and source.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, side by side with the collection of *Hadîth* was initiated its critical scrutiny so that the genuine Traditions may be sifted from the concocted ones. "The fact that there are some spurious *Ahâdîth* did not in the least escape the attention of the *Muhaddithûn*, as European critics naively seem to suppose. On the contrary, the critical science of *Hadîth* was initiated by the necessity of discerning between the authentic and spurious, and the very Imâms Bukhârî and Muslim, not to mention the other Traditionists, are direct products of this critical attitude. The existence, therefore, of false



## PRESERVATION OF THE HADÎTH BY MEMORY

### 3.1 THE PRACTICE OF THE COMPANIONS

The Prophet (S) himself was the teacher of his *Sunnah*.<sup>1</sup> To make memorizing and understanding easy he used to repeat important things thrice.<sup>2</sup> After teaching the Companions he used to listen to what they had learnt.<sup>3</sup> The Companions in turn listened to every word of the Prophet (S) with utmost care. After having learnt some portion of the *Qur'ân* or *Hadîth* from the Prophet (S) they used to recollect what they had learnt. This happened mostly in the *Masjid* and has been described by Mucâwiyah.<sup>4</sup> Evidence to the same effect can be seen in the statements of Abû Dardâ'.<sup>5</sup> The culmination of this practice is evinced in the report of Anas ibn Mâlik, the servant of the Prophet (S). He says:

"We sat with the Prophet, maybe sixty persons in number and the Prophet taught us *Hadîth*. When he went out for some necessity, we used to memorize it amongst ourselves, and when we departed it was as if cultivated in our hearts."<sup>6</sup>

The Companions faced the problems of daily life and its requirements as does everybody. So it was not practically possible for all of them to attend the circle of the Prophet (S) on every occasion. Therefore, those who were occasionally absent from the educational circle of the Prophet (S) used to learn from those who were present. This process has been described very well by the Companion Barâ' ibn cÂzib.<sup>7</sup> Some of them came to an agreement between themselves to attend the circle of the Prophet (S) in shifts, as we find in the case of cUmar.<sup>8</sup>

Recollection of *Hadîth* was carried out in the time of the Companions as it was in the days of the Prophet (S). Abû Hurayrah used to divide the night into three portions; one third for sleeping, one third for prayer and one third for the recollection of the *Hadîth* of the Prophet (S).<sup>9</sup>

cUmar and Abû Mûsâ al Ashcârî memorized *Hadith* through the night till the morning. We find the same in the case of Ibn cAbbâs and Zayd ibn Arqam. Ibn Buraydah reports a similar situation with Mucâwiyah in the Syrian city of Hims.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, we find a good number of the Companions such as ʿAlī ibn Abi Tâlib, Ibn Mascûd, Ibn ʿAbbâs, and Abû Sacîd al-Khudrî advising the Successors on the memorizing of *Hadîth*. So the same pattern of learning the *Hadîth* continued in the time of the Successors. They used to memorize *Ahâdîth* either in groups or individually.<sup>11</sup>

It is essential to remember that the Companions put into practice whatever they learnt by heart or by writing. The knowledge of Islam is for practice, not knowledge for the sake of knowledge, and the Companions knew this well. It is sufficient to note that Ibn ʿUmar took eight years to learn only the second *sûrah* of the *Qur'ân*.<sup>12</sup>

While the *Ummah* showed remarkable assiduity and energy in preserving the *Qur'ân*, it strove even more vigorously to preserve the *Sunnah* and accomplished feats in this regard which the followers of no other religion have been able to do for their scriptures.

The only difference was that since the *Qur'ân* was revealed in verbal form it was incumbent to preserve its words as well because the revelation was verbal and its very miracle consisted in being so, but in the revelation not recited by Allâh, that is the *Hadîth* and *Sunnah*, the substance was from Allâh but the words were not so. For this reason it was not essential that its words too should be literally preserved; it was permissible to report even the implication. Therefore the *Ummah* expended all its energies on the preservation of the thematic content of the *Hadîth* though it made strenuous efforts to preserve the words too. Thus the words of each *Hadîth* are either preserved as they were or are so near it as if they were almost the same. In any event, the preservation of the Traditions was contrived by Allâh himself.<sup>13</sup>

### 3.2 STAGES OF PRESERVATION

The first period of the collection of the Traditions is represented by the Age of the Companions. At that time most of the *Hadîth* remained ensconced within the minds of the Companions and others. Although the copying down of the Traditions had then commenced, as will be described later, still, by and large, it was memorization of the Traditions that featured prominently and the Companions fulfilled the divine promise most punctitiously and conscientiously with the help of their memory because they believed the obligation to preserve the Prophetic heritage lay with them as if this promise was being held out to them alone.

The second period was that of collection. This is the period succeeding that of the Companions and is characterised by the transcription of the *Hadîth* over all parts of the Muslim world. The memorizers of the Traditions had the *Ahâdîth* copied, and took the fullest care to substantiate their veracity by quoting the authorities.

The third period is the one known as *Taczîr al-Hadîth* (Sifting of the Traditions) in which, by a process of differentiation, *Ahâdîth* proper were separated from the statements of the Companions and Successors and consolidated. This was succeeded by the period of criticism when the fabricators (*waddâcûn*) who were, in fact, denigrators of the *Hadîth* in the guise of acceptors, arose and the period of sound scholars who winnowed the authentic Traditions, commenced. Each *Hadîth* was examined as to its authoritativeness, the *Sahîh Ahâdîth* (authentic Traditions) were separated from the *Dacîf* (weak) and the genuine from the fabricated ones. The *Isnâd* (chain of narrators) also were emphasized, so as to facilitate the ability to precisely determine the reliability of the authority behind a *Hadîth*.

The *Ahâdîth* were classified on the basis of their authority, credentials and the number of its narrators, exactly according to the principles laid down by the Qur'ân. This led to the different terminological titles of different kinds of *Hadîth*, and the *Ummah*, displaying its remarkable acumen and genius in this behalf, preserved them in a most proficient manner.<sup>14</sup>

The enormous work done by the *Ummah* in this regard might be appreciated by the fact that about eighty-two disciplines were evolved for its preservation and the art of reporting or narration was examined from every aspect, such that each aspect of it assumed the status of a discipline in itself and thousands of books were written on each of them because of which the various sciences of *hadith* developed like *Matn al-Hadîth* (text of the Traditions), *Sanad al-Hadîth* (authority of the Tradition as evinced by the transitional chains), *Aqsâm al-Hadîth* (different classes of traditions), *Gharib al-Hadîth* (traditions based on individual report or narration), *Mustalihât al-Hadîth* (technical terms employed in the science of Traditions), *Ilal al-Hadîth* (scruples about the narrators of Traditions), *Matâ'in al-Hadîth* (the factors that vitiate the authenticity of a Tradition), and *Asmâ' al-Rijâl* (the biographies of the authorities constituting the transmissional chains). All these assumed the form of regular fully fledged sciences and many more extremely important disciplines relating to reporting sprang up through the stimulating influence exercised by the *Hadîth* which ensured that the survival of the *Hadîth* no longer depended upon the memory of the people or the personal affinity and endeavour of a person but that it should become a regular discipline fully supported by

scientific principles and the dictates of logic such that the marvelous achievements in this domain have become one of the greatest exploits of history and a matter of glory for the Muslims.<sup>15</sup>

### 3.3 A PREVALENT MISCONCEPTION

The prevalent error incurred with regard to the *Hadîth* is the presumption that the Traditions of the Holy Prophet (S) are not authentic and have not been handed down to us intact; neither as to their text nor as to their substance. The texts are supposed to be of doubtful authenticity because the *Hadîth* is assumed to have not been compiled in the lifetime of the Prophet (S) himself, but were reported orally from man to man, and a memory strong enough to retain the words exactly is something unnatural. The substance of the *Hadîth* is similarly supposed to be doubtful because everyone who heard something from the Prophet (S) could perforce understand it only in his way - which might be in accord with what the Prophet (S) had really meant, or be opposed to it, and, being unable to retain the very words, reported to others only what he himself understood, and thus even the substance could not remain intact. So, when neither the text nor the content are authentic, how can the *Hadîth* serve as a valid authority? This is the substance of the objection raised by the *Qur'âniyyah*, who believe the Holy *Qur'ân* to be the only source of the *Sharîcah*.<sup>16</sup>

#### 3.3.1 THE TEXT OF THE HADÎTH

In fact, this error results from disregarding the lives of the early *Muhaddithûn* and *Fuqahâ'* (the scholars and compilers of the Traditions and the jurists). Some people have simply imagined them to be like themselves in the matter of weak memory, want of zeal and lack of piety. Their great power of memory is established by a large number of incidents reported about them, which, one after the other, bear out the same fact. For example, the Companion Ibn ʿAbbâs heard a poem of one hundred couplets only once, and ever afterwards it was preserved in his memory;<sup>17</sup> or, once in an assembly, one hundred *Ahâdîth* were recited in the presence of the great master of the science of *Hadîth*, Imâm Bukhâri, with the text and the names of the authorities deliberately mixed up, and he pointed out the errors, corrected every one of the *Ahâdîth*, and repeated the authentic versions of all the one hundred *Ahâdîth* word by word.<sup>18</sup> The masters of the science of *Hadîth*, from time to time, used to request their own teachers to repeat the

same *Ahâdîth* in order to test the precision of their memory, and never found a word more or less.<sup>19</sup> All this is quite well-known, and has been narrated in the biographies, histories and detailed catalogues of the reporters of the *Hadîth*, and should suffice to establish the great power of memory these great masters possessed. If one looks carefully into these catalogues, one would find that the *Ahâdîth* reported by people with a relatively weak memory have been excluded from the category of *Sahîh* (or the most authentic) *Ahâdîth*. This again is a sufficient proof for the scrupulous care that the masters of this science have taken in determining the authenticity of the *Hadîth*.<sup>20</sup>

Besides the power of memory, there is another factor as well. Since Allâh, the Almighty, had chosen these august personalities for this task, their faculty of memory had been strengthened with Divine help. For example, in a *Hadîth*, Abu Hurayrah relates that once the Prophet (S) said:

"He who spreads the mantle would not forget anything that he would hear from me." "I spread my mantle until he (concluded) narrating something. I then pressed it against my chest, and so, thereafter, I never forgot anything that I heard from him."<sup>21</sup>

It would not be proper to raise the objection here that we have just presented a *Hadîth* in support of our argument, while the very validity of the *Hadîth*, as such, is in dispute. As a matter of fact, all the *Ahâdîth* of the Prophet (S) are not in dispute, but only those which have a bearing on the injunctions of the *Sharîcah*. The *Hadîth* we have just referred to only relates an incident. Such *Ahâdîth* fall into the category of the science of history, which is unanimously accepted as a valid standard of reference in an argument. Besides, we ourselves hear of people in our own day who possess extraordinary memories.<sup>22</sup>

So much for the power of memory. Now, the zeal and incentive of those scholars for committing the *Hadîth* to memory and for transmitting them intact is evident. Among the incentives behind this zeal were the praises and prayers of reward the Holy Prophet (S) offered for such as guarded his *Sunnah*. For example, the Prophet (S) said:

"May Allâh grant happiness to the man who heard what I had said, then committed it to memory, preserved it intact, and transmitted it to others exactly as he had heard it."<sup>23</sup>

Those great masters made all possible efforts to be worthy of his prayers, and hence their anxiety to transmit the *Hadîth* as accurately as possible. They had also a great dread of the least alteration because they had heard from the Prophet (S) that:

"The man who falsely imputes to me something which I have not said, should take it for granted that his resting place is Hell."<sup>24</sup>

Some of the Companions of the Prophet (S) stood in such dread of it that they never related a *Hadîth* at all. Then also, the great specialists of the science of *Hadîth* so often, in the case of lengthy traditions, used to qualify their report of the *Hadîth* by stating the alternative words reported or by saying, "...This or something like this...", etc.. This displays their scrupulousness and their anxiety to preserve the authenticity of even the words. This being the case, one can see no harm even if all the Traditions were not recorded in a written form in the days of the Prophet (S).<sup>25</sup>

On careful consideration, one would indeed admit that this fact has been very helpful and efficacious in preserving the authenticity of the *Hadîth*. For so long as a man is habituated to write things down and has come to depend on memoranda, his memory does not come into full exercise, while every human faculty needs practice in order to grow. We have often seen quite illiterate people working out lengthy sums orally. On the other hand, literate people can remember very little, unless they write it down. This is one reason why people in our day have such weak memories. The other reason has been indicated above. That is to say, Allâh, the Almighty, had given the early masters a very strong memory, for he had chosen them for the task of compiling the *Hadîth*, and consequently, compiling the injunctions of the *Sharîcah* on the basis of the *Qur'ân* and the *Hadîth*. This task has already been completed for the most part, and what still remains to be done does not require a strong memory. And it is a law of nature ordained by Allâh that certain human faculties are specially developed in consonance with the special needs of a certain age. For example, the development of the special mental faculties required for scientific discoveries and inventions in our day too well illustrate the point.<sup>26</sup>

### 3.3.2 THE CONTENT OF THE HADÎTH

As for the objection that, in the case of some *Ahâdîth*, it is the sense alone that has been reported, and not the actual words, we agree that it has sometimes been so. But there are several considerations even here. Firstly, the Companions of the Prophet (S) did not habitually resort to this practice unless there was a need for it, and, considering their power of memory being what it was, such a need arose only rarely. Secondly, the same *Hadîth* had often been heard and reported by a number of Companions. If one of them has reported only the sense, another has reported the actual words. When the purport of two such reports is found to be identical, it shows us that even those who have reported the sense alone, have understood the words quite correctly. In fact, the man who is scrupulous and is fearful of Allâh, would take great care in trying to grasp the sense too, and would tremble with dread lest he should misinterpret it - he would not be satisfied unless he receives it without the slightest doubt or reservation. If it should sometimes happen - though it is rare enough - that the words have not been preserved at all, even then it is evident that a man who is close to the speaker and knows him intimately, can understand his speech in the light of the context, the situation, the tone and the accompanying gesture, as correctly as no one else ever can. On this basis, the insight of the Companions of the Prophet (S) into the *Qur'ân* and the *Hadîth* must be as trustworthy as the understanding of the two by others can never be.<sup>27</sup> This is underscored by a saying of Ibn Mascûd:

"These were people among us who when they learnt ten verses, would not go further until they knew its meanings properly and acted upon them. Thus we learnt the *Qur'ân* and based all our actions upon it."<sup>28</sup>

This statement shows that the Companions were well versed in the interpretation of the *Qur'ân* and that in the absence of any guidance from the Holy *Qur'ân* and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (S) the interpretation of the verses of the *Qur'ân* by the Companions will be binding on future generations.<sup>29</sup> The Prophet (S) has stated:

"The best generation is my generation and then those who follow them."<sup>30</sup>

If we accept the divinely inspired wisdom of the Prophet (S), it follows that the farther we go from the Prophet's (S) generation, the less likely we are to

be able to correctly interpret and apply the real intentions implied in the *Qur'ân* and *Sunnah*. An equally obvious deduction is the fact that the rulings of older scholars of note are more likely to represent the true intentions deducible from the *Qur'ân* and *Sunnah*. These older rulings - the basis of Islamic jurisprudence - are therefore important links and guidelines which cannot wisely be ignored in the study and continued application of Allâh's laws.<sup>31</sup>

## THE WRITTEN PERPETUATION OF THE HADÎTH

### 4.1 THE COLLECTIONS OF THE COMPANIONS

Some of the Companions, having learnt the art of writing, wrote down *Ahâdîth* during the lifetime of the Prophet (S) himself.<sup>1</sup> ʿAbd Allâh ibn ʿAmr, for instance, requested his permission to do this, and thereafter wrote down whatever he heard from him.<sup>2</sup> His collection, *al-Sahîfah al-Sâdiqah*,<sup>3</sup> was seen by Mujâhid, and later came into the possession of ʿAmr ibn Shuʿayb, a great-grandson of ʿAbd Allâh.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, it is said that ʿAlî, the son-in-law of the Prophet (S), had in his possession a *Sahîfah* which contained certain laws.<sup>5</sup> Another *Sahîfah* is said to have been in the possession of Samurah ibn Jundab, a document which is identical to his *Risâlah* addressed to his son, and which contained many *Ahâdîth*.<sup>6</sup> Jabir ibn ʿAbd Allâh likewise had a *Sahîfah*, the contents of which were later transmitted by Qatâdah.<sup>7</sup> Saʿd is also reported to have had a book from which he related certain usages of the Prophet (S).<sup>8</sup> Bukhârî mentions a *Hadîth* related from the 'book' of ʿAbd Allâh ibn Abî Awfâ, while Abû Bakr, the first *Khalîf*, is reported to have collected five hundred *Ahâdîth*, which he later destroyed because of extreme scrupulousness.<sup>9</sup> Ibn ʿAbbâs wrote down the *Ahâdîth* which he learnt from Abû Râfiʿ.<sup>10</sup> He appears to have collected *Ahâdîth* in more than one book. Tirmidhi reports in his *Kitâb al-ʿIlal* that some people from *al-Tâʿif* brought one of his books to Ibn ʿAbbâs, and read it to him;<sup>11</sup> he is also said by Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr to have left at his death so many books that they could serve as a complete load for a camel; these books were later used by his son ʿAlî.<sup>11</sup> It is from these books of Ibn ʿAbbâs that al-Wâqidî may have drawn some of his material, as is shown by a passage cited in the *Mawâhib*.<sup>12</sup> Abû Hurayrah, too, is said to have written down *Ahâdîth* - probably towards the end of his life. These he showed to Ibn Wahb<sup>13</sup> and to Umayyah al-Damrî.<sup>14</sup> The *Sahîfah* of Hammâm, based on the reports of Abû Hurayrah, is of course well known.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to this kind of report, which establishes that the Companions assembled actual written collections of *Hadîth*, we also have numerous reports indicating that they regularly wrote down individual *Ahâdîth* that they had learnt or encountered. A report in the *Sunan* of Tirmidhi tells us that one of the *Ansâr* complained to the Prophet (S) about his weak memory, and

was advised by him to take assistance from his right hand - i.e. to write material down.<sup>16</sup> Another Companion, al-Râfi<sup>c</sup> (also known as Abû Râfi<sup>c</sup>), secured the Prophet's (S) permission to write down *Ahâdîth*.<sup>17</sup> A certain Abu Shâh, hearing the Prophet's (S) oration in the year of the Conquest of Makkah, asked him to have it written down for him, and his request was granted.<sup>18</sup> ʿItbân ibn Mâlik al-Ansârî liked a *Hadith* so much that he wrote it down, so as to possess a physical copy of it.<sup>19</sup>

The Prophet (S) had himself dictated certain laws, with respect, for instance, to the poor-tax,<sup>20</sup> the prayer and the fast, charity, and blood-money.<sup>21</sup> One such document, containing laws with regard to the revenues which had been sent to officials was found after his death attached to his sword, and in time came into the possession of his successors.<sup>22</sup>

## 4.2 NARRATIONS WHICH FORBID COMPILATION

Despite this, however, there are many Traditions which forbid the writing down of any scriptural material other than the *Qur'ân*.<sup>23</sup> Abû Saʿîd al-Khudrî, Zayd ibn Thâbit (the Prophet's (S) own scribe), and Abû Hurayrah, related Traditions to this effect;<sup>24</sup> and many other Companions and Successors are reported to have disliked and discouraged the writing of the *Hadîth*. In particular there are the names of ʿAlî, Ibn Mascud, Ibn ʿAbbâs, ʿAbd Allâh ibn ʿUmar, Abû Mûsa al-Ashʿarî, Ibn Sîrîn, al-Dahhâk, ʿÂbidah al-Madaniyyah, Ibrahim al-Nakhaʿî, Ibn al-Muctamir, al-Awzâʿî, ʿAlqama ibn Qays, ʿUbayd Allâh ibn ʿAbd Allâh, and others.<sup>25</sup> Some such authorities (like ʿAlî and Ibn ʿAbbâs), are, as we have already seen, also reported to have written down *Ahâdîth*, and possessed *Sahîfas* and other books. Others (such as al-Dahhâk, Ibrâhîm, and ʿAlqamah) are said to have objected to the writing of *Ahâdîth* in book form, but not to making such notes as might serve to help the memory. Others still (such as Ibn Mascud and Ibn Sîrîn) are said to have opposed the writing of *Hadîth* in any form.<sup>26</sup>

The *Hadîth* analysts have attempted to explain this apparent contradiction in many ways. Ibn Qutaybah, in his book *Ta'wîl Mukhtalif al-Hadîth* (Interpretation of Divergent *Ahâdîth*) says that either the prohibitive *Ahâdîth* belong to an earlier period in the life of the Prophet (S), and are abrogated by the later ones which carry permission, or, alternatively, the prohibition was meant only for such Companions as were not well trained in the art of writing, and did not include those who could write proficiently without fear of distortion.<sup>27</sup>

### 4.3 POPULARISING THE ART OF WRITING

We know, however, that although the art of writing was introduced into Arabia at some time before the birth of the Prophet (S), and Arabic prose works were not entirely unknown to the Arabs before his day, they were not particularly widespread in Arabia before the advent of Islam. It is said that in pre-Islamic Makkah (the most advanced Arab city), only seventeen people knew how to write.<sup>28</sup> In Madînah, where the influence of the Jews (who are said to have been the teachers of the Arabs in this regard) had been considerable, the number of Arabs who could write was less than a dozen, only nine of these being mentioned by name by Ibn Saʿd,<sup>29</sup> who also remarks that writing was a rarity in Arabia before Islam, and that it was considered a great distinction to know it.<sup>30</sup>

Despite this, new conditions meant that the Prophet (S) encouraged the popularising of this art among the Arabs. Under his guidance, many Muslims who came under his influence at an early age (such as ʿAlî, ʿAbd Allâh ibn ʿAmr, and Ibn ʿAbbâs), learned to read and write. He requested ʿAbd Allâh ibn Saʿd ibn al-ʿÂsî of Makkah to teach the people of Madînah to write.<sup>31</sup> He was also concerned with female literacy: he asked Shifâ' bint ʿAbd Allâh to teach reading and writing to his wife Hafsa.<sup>32</sup> After the Battle of Badr he declared that any prisoner of war who was too poor to pay the required ransom and who knew the art of writing could regain his liberty by teaching Muslim children to write;<sup>33</sup> it was from one of these prisoners of war that Zayd ibn Thâbit, the trusted scribe of the *Qur'ân*, himself learnt to read and write.<sup>34</sup> Neither could it have been without the suggestion of the Prophet (S) that ʿUbâdah ibn al-Sâmit taught the *Qur'ân* and the art of writing to some of the People of the Veranda, one of whom presented him with a bow in exchange.<sup>35</sup>

Indirectly, too, the Prophet (S) played a key role in the spreading of literacy among the Arabs, by means of establishing a state which wrote down its treaties with the various tribes, its constitution, letters to the various tribal chiefs, orders to officials, and laws for conducting the affairs of state. His immediate successors made reading and writing compulsory in the schools which they established. Thus did Islam inaugurate what can only be described as the most effective literacy programme known to history.<sup>36</sup>

The conclusion is generally drawn that the sayings of the Prophet (S) which discourage the writing of the *Hadîth*, being fewer than those which encourage it, must have been based on fears that written *Hadîth* might become confused with the text of the *Qur'ân*, about the purity of which he

was so scrupulous. But as soon as he discerned that these hazards were at an end, he permitted the written recording of *Hadîth*. The date of one *Hadîth* in the *Sahîh* of al-Bukhârî, which gives to Abû Shâh permission to write down one of his discourses, is dated the year of the Conquest of Makkah,<sup>37</sup> a fact which would favour the view that the *Ahâdîth* which allow the writing of *Hadîth* postdate those which indicate a prohibition. The fact of the dictation of certain laws in the later years of the Prophet's (S) life also lends support to this theory. Similarly, the attitude of ʿUmar towards the collection of *Ahâdîth* shows that the prohibition was not in force during that time. It is reported that ʿUmar intended to collect *Ahâdîth*, and it is extremely unlikely that he would have considered the matter seriously for an entire month as he did, had he been aware of any Prophetic teaching to forbid the writing-down of *Hadîth* material, particularly since all the Companions appear to have advised him in favour of such a collection; while he explained his final decision against doing so in terms of his fear of the neglect of the *Qur'ân* rather than any alleged Prophetic prohibition known to him.<sup>38</sup>

Western scholars, too, have held that the *Hadîth* were written down during the lifetime of the Prophet (S). Goldziher, an Orientalist and die-hard antagonist of Islam, for instance, writes that: "It can be assumed that the writing down of the *Hadîth* was a very ancient method of preserving it... Many a Companion of the Prophet (S) is likely to have carried his *Sahîfah* with him and used it to dispense instruction and edification to his circle. The contents of these *Suhuf* were called *Matn al-Hadîth*; those who disseminated these texts named in succession their immediate authorities, and thus the *Isnâd* came into being."<sup>39</sup>

#### 4.4 REFERENCE TO EARLIER COLLECTIONS

An objection raised by many Orientalists and modernist Muslim scholars in this regard is that the *Hadîth* literature is largely based on mere oral transmission, which lasted for more than a century; and the extant *Hadîth* collections do not refer to any records of *Ahâdîth* which may have been made at an earlier period. Goldziher, who, strangely, has made this claim too, has himself recognised more than a dozen *Suhuf* containing Prophetic *Ahâdîth* which were compiled by the Companions and their Successors. As for the lack of reference to them in the later *Hadîth* collections, it has been explained that this is due to the fact that the early Traditionists referred to the authors of the books from whom they received them through their own teachers, instead of referring to the books themselves, which could suffer

interpolation and forgery.<sup>40</sup> Goldziher himself has demonstrated this with reference to the practice followed by Wâqidî and Ibn Sa'ad, and has also collected a good deal of material on the writing down of *Ahâdîth*, and the existence of Arabic books during the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods.<sup>41</sup> The more recent publication of one such early document, the *Sahîfah* of Hammâm ibn Munabbih by Dr. Hamîdullâh, and the identification of its contents with those of part of the *Musnad* of Ibn Hanbal, with very slight variations, strongly supports this theory. Simarlily, Abbott, basing herself on early papyrus documents unknown to Goldziher, surveys the very considerable evidence for extensive written records in the first century, and concludes that "oral and written transmission went hand in hand almost from the start."<sup>42</sup>

## THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE HADÎTH

### 5.1 ABSURDITY OF NEGATION OF THE HADÎTH

To declare the compilations of *Hadîth* and the books on *Tabaqât* (biographies of the various generations), *Asmâ' al-Rijâl* (biographies of the narrators), history and the life-record of the reporters of *Sîrah*, *Hadîth* and Islamic history to be unreliable, false or fictitious would mean that the Muslims had no history, no intellectual or practical achievements to their credit, since there is no dependable way of knowing about those achievements. Surely, no Muslim could accept such a position.<sup>1</sup>

How strangely inconsistent is the behavior of some of the deniers of the *Hadîth*. For they can believe the histories to be true but hold the *Hadîth* to be untrustworthy. Yet these historians neither take pains to indicate how and through what source they came by their knowledge of any particular event, nor observed the conditions prescribed and adopted by the Traditionists for testing the authenticity of those reports. Is it not absurd that chronological narratives of past events should be acceptable, but not the standard collections of the traditions even though it was strictly laid down for the compilers of the *Hadîth* that they should indicate in unbroken succession the sources and authorities for every single report that came to their knowledge of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet (S), or of events and circumstances relating to the Companions, and further, that there must be conclusive evidence available as to the veracity, integrity and reliability of those sources and authorities?

To reject the Traditions as unreliable, despite solid and irrefutable proofs of their truth and authenticity, is to say that their collectors and compilers recorded incorrect and imaginary reports together with spurious references and a concocted chain of narrators! These critics and fault-finders should ask themselves whether it is possible that no 'genuine' Muslim was present at the time of the collection of *Hadîth* to challenge the fraud and condemn it?<sup>2</sup>

### 5.2 THE EXAMPLE OF AL~MUWATTA

Take *al-Muwattâ*, for example. This volume of Traditions was compiled in 120 A.H., i.e. one hundred and ten years after the death of the Prophet (S).

Until about twelve years before its compilation venerable Companions who had the good fortune to see or hear the Prophet (S) in person were alive, while the number of *Tâbicûn* (Successors) who lived throughout the Islamic territories of the Hijâz, Syria, Egypt and Iraq, and in Madînah itself, where the book (*al-Muwattâ*) took shape, was very considerable indeed.<sup>3</sup> Leaving aside the bonds created through direct instruction and training, the period of time between the generation of the Successors and the Prophet (S) was the same as that between grandfather and grandchildren. Thus, even if the deliberate effort of teaching and instruction had not been made, the people of that generation would have become acquainted, in the normal course of things, with numerous details of the Prophet's (S) life, as all grandchildren are about the character, habits and actions of their grandparents.

Now, consider, the collection of the Prophet's (S) sayings made by Imâm Mâlik. These were made in the very place where the Prophet had spent the last ten years of his life, where there was hardly a home that had not come under his influence or did not have some association with him. Imâm Mâlik read these out openly - in that very town - and thousands of people came from all over the Islamic world and listened to what he said, many of them also making copies, taking them home and thereby transmitting their contents to tens of thousands of men. Is it conceivable then that not one single Muslim should say that all these *Ahâdîth* or a large part of them were false or fabricated?

Even if Imâm Mâlik had not been the man of integrity and calibre that he was, could he have dared to make such a fabrication in those circumstances? Even supposing that he had done so, is it possible that the people of Madînah could have passively accepted such a fabrication, and remained silent spectators to the making of a fraudulent addition to faith which would be propagated to the end of time?

Imâm Mâlik, moreover, indicated the names of twenty-five *Tâbicûn* (Successors) and of other Madînans as the sources who related the Traditions to him. If it is accepted, for argument's sake, that the Imâm himself was guilty of falsehood and misrepresentation, surely these persons, who were alive at the time, would not have allowed him to get away with it.

In sum, to condemn *al-Muwattâ* or the other standard compilations of the Traditions and their chains of transmitters as wholly inaccurate is not only to sink to the depths of perdition but also to indicate one's stupidity and ignorance.

For that reason, no one before the present era ventured to make such a charge. On the contrary, these collections have, from the time of their compilation, consistently been recognised as correct and authentic. A very

large number of learned men have heard from their seniors and also related them to others. *Al-Muwatta* too, was read out by Imâm Mâlik to nearly a thousand persons. Suyuti also, in the preface of *Tanwîr al-Hawâlik* has mentioned the names of about fifty people who narrated *al-Muwattâ* after hearing it directly from Imâm Mâlik.<sup>4</sup> The process has been going on without interruption up to the present time and people have been narrating it from their predecessors in the same way, but on an even larger scale.

Again, it is hard to understand why people who so wantonly reject the *Hadîth* do not realise that every living community naturally inclines towards safeguarding its heritage and does its utmost to preserve the relics and the memory of the attainments of its illustrious ancestors. This being the case, how could it be that the Muslims who are the best of peoples and distinguished in the world for their love of learning and other commendable qualities of mind and character, should not have taken steps to preserve the life-record and sayings of their own Prophet (S)?<sup>5</sup>

### **5.3 CONTROVERSY IN AUTHENTICITY**

#### **5.3.1 VOLUME OF THE COMPILATIONS**

Among the claims raised against the authenticity of the *Hadîth* is that the number of *Ahâdîth* in the later collections is far larger than the number of those contained in the earlier anthologies or the early works on Islamic law. This, it is said, shows that many of the *Ahâdîth* are of questionable authenticity.

The increase in the number of *Ahâdîth* included in the later collections (i.e. of the third century A.H.) is easily fathomed by anyone conversant with the history of the collection of *Hadîth*. The early compilers did not know as many Traditions as were known to their successors. For simultaneously with the expansion of the Islamic empire, the custodians of the *Hadîth* travelled widely and settled throughout the new dominions, narrating the *Ahâdîth* known to them to create a provincial corpus. It was only after students of *Hadîth* had travelled through all these countries and collected together the Traditions known to the specialists living there, and narrated them to their own disciples, that larger and more complete collections of the *Hadîth* could be compiled.<sup>6</sup>

#### **5.3.2 THE YOUNGER COMPANIONS**

Another claim is that the *Ahâdîth* reported by the younger Companions are far more numerous than those related by the older Companions.

Some European scholars have envisaged a natural course of events in which those who associated with the Prophet (S) for a long period would have reported more Traditions about him than those who only knew him for a short while. This, however, was not the case. The younger generations of Companions reported a far larger number of *Ahâdîth* than their older brethren. From this, certain Orientalists have concluded, many *Asânîd* of the younger Companions were forged. This question, however, has already been raised by the classical *Hadîth* scholars themselves, who point out that since the older Companions passed away not long after the death of the Prophet (S), they had less time to pass on all the Traditions known to them, whereas the younger Companions, such as ʿĀ'isha, Ibn ʿAbbâs and Abû Hurayrah, lived for a far longer period, and were able to disseminate the *Ahâdîth* known to them much more extensively. This in fact supports the veracity of the Traditionists; for if all the *Asânîd* had been forged by them, they would have tried to produce *Asânîd* from the older Companions in larger numbers.<sup>7</sup>

### 5.3.3 CONTRADICTIONARY AHADÎTH

Yet another supposition is that many of the *Ahâdîth* contradict each other. There is no doubt that a large number of *Ahâdîth* contradict one another. But to conclude from this that most are therefore forged is not a logical inference. For it is a natural thing for the leader of a fast-developing movement to change the instructions he issues to his followers, in order to respond to a changing situation. Hence we find that the Prophet (S) at times issued advice or instructions which superceded those which he had given earlier. An instance of this is furnished by the presence of contradictory *Ahâdîth* concerning the admissability of recording the *Hadîth* in writing; the earlier *Ahâdîth* prohibit it, while later *Ahâdîth* regard it as permissible. In some cases of evident contradiction, the clashes can be resolved by pointing out the different circumstances under which the contradictory instructions were given. In various other cases, contradictions have been explained by isolating ideas common to them which were expressed in various ways at different times. This is not to say, of course, that no *Ahâdîth* were forged, and that forged *Ahâdîth* did not conflict with sound ones; in fact, the Muslim scholars have already recognised and analysed this point.<sup>8</sup> But one cannot but be surprised to find that some European scholars have cited *Ahâdîth* as evidence of contradictions in the literature, when Muslim scholars have for a

thousand years dismissed those very *Ahâdîth* as spurious, or as cases of abrogation.<sup>9</sup>

#### 5.3.4 FORGERY

It is also professed that definite evidence exists of the large-scale forgery of the *Asânîd* as well as of the texts of *Ahâdîth*.

The forgery of *Asânîd* as well as the texts of Traditions is a historical fact accepted by all the Muslim scholars. The development of an extensive and sophisticated literature on *Mawdûcât* (forged narrations discarded by the Traditionists) is sure and sufficient proof of this. Here again, one is surprised to find some European scholars citing these *Ahâdîth* not only to illustrate the vagaries of the sectarian mind in various periods - a wholly legitimate deduction - but also to prove that the literature as a whole is of questionable reliability.

On other occasions, they have cited *Ahâdîth* traditionally considered authentic as forged. For instance:

Goldziher<sup>10</sup> cites the following *Hadîth* from *Tirmidhî*:

Ibn ʿUmar related that Muhammad ordered all dogs to be killed save sheep-dogs and hounds. Abû Hurayrah added the words *aw zarcîn* (or field dogs). Whereupon Ibn ʿUmar makes the remark that Abu Hurayrah owned cultivated land. A better illustration of the underlying motive of some *Hadîth* can hardly be found.<sup>11</sup>

Having produced this *Hadîth*, Goldziher says that the remark of Ibn ʿUmar proves that even the earliest transmitters were not free from selfish and dishonest motives. The Muslim Traditionists, however, have explained Ibn ʿUmar's remark as meaning that Abû Hurayrah, being possessed of personal experience of the subject-matter of this *Hadîth*, was in a better position to know what its wording was.<sup>12</sup>

Goldziher<sup>13</sup> asserts that the *Hadîth* reported by Bukhârî:

"Make journey (for pilgrimage) only to three (*Masâjid*) - the Inviolable *Masjid*, the *Masjid* of the Prophet, and the *Masjid* of Jerusalem",<sup>14</sup>

was forged by Ibn Shihâb al-Zuhrî in order to help ʿAbd al-Mâlik against his rival ʿAbd Allâh ibn al-Zubayr. This assertion is chronologically unsound. Ibn al-Zubayr was killed in 73 A.H., while al-Zuhrî was born in 51 A.H., or even later. He therefore would have been too young at the time of Ibn al-Zubayr's death to have become a widely-accepted authority on Tradition; had the *Khalîf* really wished to find a *Hadîth* propagandist, he would probably have chosen someone more venerable and established. Goldziher's theory is further weakened by the fact that al-Zuhrî's authority for this *Hadîth* (the famous Saʿîd ibn al-Musayyib, who died in 94 A.H.) was still alive, which would have made it hard to misuse his name: a propagandist would have chosen someone safely defunct. Again al-Zuhrî is not the only Traditionist who reported this *Hadîth* from Saʿid.<sup>15</sup>

One further example should suffice to demonstrate the purely speculative nature of many of the Orientalist's assertions. Some state that once the fabrication of *Hadîth* had become a common and established practice among the Traditionists, they attempted to stop it by forging a *Hadîth* which prohibited the practice. The well known *Hadîth* in which the Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

"Whoever falsely attributes anything to me, let him prepare his abode in Hell,"<sup>16</sup>

together with a set of similar traditions, was, according to them, fabricated in order to stop the fabrication process.<sup>17</sup> The *Hadîth*, however, is *Mutawâtir*, having been reported by more than seventy Companions and through numerous independent chains of authorities. It is found in different forms in all the important *Hadîth* collections, and has been accepted by all the Traditionists as one of the most reliable and extensively-attested of all the Traditions. It is hard to conceive how it could have been concocted verbatim and at the same time by such a large number of scholars distributed over several provinces.<sup>18</sup>

Fabrications were made in the names of the Prophets (A) who came before Prophet Muhammad (S), of which he was aware, and to which reference is made in the *Qur'ân*; similarly, forged Traditions were attributed to the Prophet (S) himself during his lifetime. Under such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the great leader should have warned his followers against this practice. These Orientalists were surely well-acquainted with these facts; yet they persisted in asserting that these *Ahâdîth* were forged - without offering any proof.<sup>19</sup>

### 5.3.5 CRITICISM OF TEXTS

Another contention is that the Muslim critics confined their criticism of the literature to the *Isnâd* alone, and never criticised the texts transmitted.

It is true that all the *Musannaf*<sup>20</sup> collections of *Hadîth* are arranged into books and chapters according to subject-matter, and contain a short description of the *Isnâd* in technical language, without much analysis being presented of the character of the text. Yet in the very extensive exegetic literature, the commentators do of course subject the text to a close critique, following the principles of text criticism. It appears, however, that the function of the collection and formal *Isnâd* criticism of the *Ahâdîth* was reserved for the collectors, while the function of their material criticism was left for the jurists and the commentators on the various anthologies.

According to the Muslim critics, the *Isnâd* provides good evidence, but not an absolute guarantee of the soundness of a *Hadîth* text. If such a text is contrary to the explicit text of the *Qur'ân*, or to the text of a *Mutawâtir* tradition, or the *Ijmâc*, or contrary to reason and common experience, it is considered to have been forged. The Orientalists appear to be unaware of the extensive literature on *Matn* criticism.<sup>21</sup>

## 6

# 'WISDOM' BESIDES THE QUR'ÂN

## 6.1 THE SUNNAH IS HIKMAH

Along with the teaching of the Scripture, the teaching of 'wisdom' has also been declared to be the Prophet's (S) function. For a proper understanding of the word 'wisdom' we first refer to the *Qur'ân* which uses the word '*hikmah*' (wisdom) as a source of guidance that accompanies the *Qur'ân* itself. There occur at least seven<sup>1</sup> places in the *Qur'ân* where *hikmah* occurs next to *al-Kitâb* (the Book i.e. the *Qur'ân*). In *Sûrah al-Nisâ'*, for example, it is said:

"Allâh revealeth unto thee the Scripture and wisdom, and teacheth thee that which thou knewest not. The grace of Allah towards thee has been infinite,"<sup>2</sup>

and, in *Sûrah al-Baqarah*:

"And remember Allâh's grace upon you and that which He hath revealed unto you of the Scripture and of wisdom, whereby he doth exhort you."<sup>3</sup>

From *Sûrah al-Ahzâb* we learn that with the verses of the *Qur'ân*, 'wisdom', also, was recited in the apartments of the wives of the Prophet (S):

"And bear in mind that which is recited in your houses of the revelations of Allâh and of wisdom."<sup>4</sup>

Now, what else was read out in the houses of the Prophet's (S) wives apart from the Scripture? And what other things did the Prophet (S) recite to his pious wives besides the *Qur'ân*? It could be nothing but his own *Sunnah*. As we turn from the *Qur'ân* to its teacher, it again becomes clear that there was another thing, aside from the *Qur'ân*, which was revealed by Allâh to the Prophet (S), namely, 'wisdom'. Says he:

"The *Qur'ân* was bestowed upon me, and, along with it something which was similar to it."<sup>5</sup>

## 6.2 THE SUNNAH DIVINELY INSPIRED

So when 'wisdom' is simply another name for *Sunnah*, we can establish from the three verses given earlier, in which 'wisdom' like the Scripture is stated to be a Divine revelation, that the *Sunnah*, too, was taught directly by the Almighty to His Messenger (S). The Prophet (S) never spoke from his own imagination, whim or impulse, nor from a selfish desire to impress his own personality but only what Allâh had revealed unto him. The *Qur'ân* bears witness to this fact:

"Nor does he say (ought) of his own desire. It is no less than inspiration revealed (to him)."<sup>6</sup>

This verse confirms that the Prophet (S) received direct inspiration from Allâh which guided all his thoughts and actions. It further shows the importance of the *Hadîth* and the *Sunnah* in the interpretation of the entire message of the *Qur'ân* and in the formation of the Islamic system. The Prophet's (S) *Sunnah* explained the contents of the Divine revelations. It gave practical demonstration of their significance. This is why the *Qur'ân* has been declared as a guide and the Prophet's (S) sacred life as a model pattern for mankind:

"Indeed there hath come to you from Allâh a light and a Book perspicuous."<sup>7</sup>

"Ye have indeed in the Apostle of Allâh a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for anyone whose hope is in Allâh, and the Final Day."<sup>8</sup>

It is only from the *Qur'ân* and the authentic record of the *Hadîth* that we can obtain full view of this model pattern. Thus, next to the *Qur'ân*, the *Hadîth* is the second source of the Islamic law of social and personal behavior, because the commandments of the Prophet (S) are as binding on the believers as the commandments of Allâh:

"Whenever Allâh and the Apostle have decided a matter it is not for a believing man or woman to follow a course of their own choice."<sup>9</sup>

The *Qur'ân* and the Traditions have been considered equivalent as regards authority, as is apparent from the following verses:

"Obey Allâh and obey the Messenger, and render not your actions vain."<sup>10</sup>

"Obey Allâh and the Messenger and beware."<sup>11</sup>

"Obey Allâh and the Messenger when he calleth you."<sup>12</sup>

These verses show that the *Qur'ân* and the *Sunnah* are proved authorities with regard to the *Sharîcah*, which, apart from investing the *Qur'ân* with authority, are proof patent for the authoritative stance of the *Hadîth* too.

## THE QUR'ÂN AND ITS EXPOSITION

### 7.1 PRESERVATION OF ITS TEXT

Allâh authored a divine, transcendental code of laws, as man by himself was not competent enough to forge a comprehensive and permanent code of law. Likewise, the task of transmitting the exposition and interpretation of the divine message was also undertaken by Allâh, since man, by the very nature of his limited comprehension, could not gain entry into the innermost significances, subtle meanings and objectives of the *Qur'ân*. When the descent of the revelation commenced, the Prophet (S) first used to learn the words by rote and repeat them by tongue, so that these words, by this process, may be etched upon his mind. Allâh, however, restrained the Prophet (S) from doing so:

"Stir not thy tongue herewith to hasten it."<sup>1</sup>

Later He directed the Prophet (S) to only listen to the divine words:

"And when We read it (the *Qur'ân*) follow thou the reading."<sup>2</sup>

Allâh again committed Himself to its charge by saying:

"Lo! Upon Us (resteth) the assembling thereof (in your heart) and the reading thereof (with your tongue)."<sup>3</sup>

This promise obviously relates to the preservation of the words of the revelation in the heart of the Prophet (S), since the movement of the Prophet's (S) tongue and the recitation of the revelation are concerned with the words only, not the meaning. Therefore, Allâh's promise that He will guard the revelation and preserve it word for word for eternity is supported by the above verse.<sup>4</sup>

### 7.2 DIVINE DETERMINATION OF ITS MEANING

As for the meaning and the inner significance of the revelation, this too was not left to the Prophet (S). It never happened that reflecting upon a verse of the *Qur'ân* he would say that one meaning of a particular verse might be either this or that, and since such and such an explanation would be more in keeping with the words, this was what was meant by Allâh Almighty. No! It is Allâh who took upon Himself the task of explaining the connotation, purpose and meaning of each verse, saying:

"Then lo! Upon Us (resteth) the explanation thereof."<sup>5</sup>

It is obvious that this explanation or exposition is something other than the *qirâ'ah* (reading or reciting), the responsibility for which was taken in the first part of this verse; otherwise the second part would be superfluous. Then again, to read out or recite is tantamount to *qirâ'ah*, and not to exposition (*bayân*), which aims at expatiation and clarification of a hidden, vague or obscure point that may not be within the human ken. When, therefore, the Prophet (S) had heard the words of the revelation and had fully grasped their significance, there is little point in exposition, for besides being contrary to the idiom and usage, it would be trying to attain what is already achieved. Inevitably, therefore, *bayân* (exposition) does not pertain to the words from the point of language, idiom and reason. This leaves only the meaning and significances which still remain obscure to the listener after hearing the words. Therefore it becomes clear that the word *bayân* (exposition) applies to the meaning and significance, being linguistically also formed for them. The sum and substance of all this discussion, therefore, is that Allâh took upon Himself the task of transmitting the meanings of the different verses of the *Qur'ân*.

This discourse shows that both the words and the meanings of the *Qur'ân* are from Allâh; the Holy Prophet (S) is not a claimant to either, but is the transmitter and trustee thereof, that is, not only the narration of words and their collation and recitation are from Allâh but exposition of their meaning, annotation and determination of intent were also from Him. Obviously when the Prophet (S) to whom the *Qur'ân* was revealed, was kept subservient to the All Highest in explaining the significance of the *Qur'ân*, then how could the *Ummah* be authorised to determine its meaning and significance? It would be preposterous to suggest that the *Ummah* could arrogate to itself the right to allocate meanings to this verse or that. Allah Almighty, therefore, kept the *Ummah* subordinate to Divine interpretation and made over the rehearsal and reproduction of that very exposition to the Prophet (S) by

which he had made him grasp the significance and intent of His message, so that he might explain to the *Ummah* the nature of divine intent<sup>6</sup>:

"And we have revealed unto thee the Remembrance that thou mayst explain unto mankind that which hath been revealed to them, and that haply they may reflect."<sup>7</sup>

### 7.3 TAFAKKUR (CONTEMPLATION)

Even *tafakkur* (contemplation) was placed after the understanding of the significance of the *Qur'ân*, so that pondering should not determine the meaning but operate within the limits of the meanings already determined by exposition and, thus, only the intents of Allâh may be unfolded by reflecting, and those not intended should not be introduced under cover of the words. Such thinking cannot be equated with Divine Knowledge but would be mere arbitrary imaginings and gross delusions. It would not be Divine Wisdom but futile ratiocination. At another place the *Qur'ân* says:

"And We have revealed the Scripture unto thee only that thou mayst explain unto them that wherein they differ."<sup>8</sup>

It is quite manifest that this conflict would either relate to the *Qur'ân* and that people would create differences and raise controversies about the meanings of its verses, or to the affairs of the world, for which every party, in order to support its own stance, would quote from the *Qur'ân*, thereby creating differences about their real character. The remedy for both of these was declared to be the exposition made by the Prophet (S) himself so that the real nature of the meaning of the verses and of the affairs of the world may be established. So vis-a-vis two rival contentions, such an exposition would help in their appraisal and deciding which one is preferable. This is only possible when such an exposition is other than the *Qur'ân*. If it is the *Qur'ân*, the meanings of which are being disputed, then how can these very controversial significances decide the matter between contending parties? The Prophet's (S) exposition, which is Divinely inspired, therefore, would be a verity other than that of the *Qur'ân*. This would act as the court of the last resort in the face of conflicts and would be disposed in favour of the most preferable view out of the views of the various parties and individuals, thereby removing the difference and bringing forth what is right.<sup>9</sup>

Not only can the *Hadîth* not be denied, but its denial is like dashing one's head against a rock.; the denial cannot damage the *Hadîth* but the denier's faith would certainly be harmed. For, according to the *Qur'ân*, its understanding is not possible without exposition, and Divine intents and purposes cannot be unfolded without it. Thus the guarding of the *Qur'ân* cannot mean merely the preservation of its words only, but the *Qur'ân* and its exposition both, because one aspect of the *Qur'ân* is its words which are related to Divine recitation and the motion of the Prophet's (S) tongue, and the other is its spirit, meanings and purposes which are related to exposition and elucidation by Allâh or His Prophet (S). Thus the preservation and perpetuation of the *Qur'ân* means that not only its words and expressions, but meanings and objectives too should be safeguarded. The preservation of the words without the meanings would mean guarding only half the book and not the whole. In the reverse event also, if the meanings are preserved but its verbal aspect is omitted, then only half the *Qur'ân* would be preserved. Complete preservation can only be ensured when the words and meanings, i.e., the *Qur'ân* and its exegesis, are both kept intact. If not, the preservation will be incomplete, and not worth the same, although the promise that has been made is for total safeguarding. This is evident from the word '*hâfizûn*' (guardians) used in the absolute sense in the *Qur'ân* with reference to its preservation. So Allâh has taken upon Himself the responsibility for preserving the *Qur'ân* and the *Hadîth* both, as it would have been difficult for the one to survive without the other.<sup>10</sup>

## DIVINE PROTECTION OF THE QUR'ÂNIC EXPOSITION

### 8.1 EXPOSITION AS A NECESSARY ACCOMPANIMENT

The object of the Prophetic mission is to ensure the ascendancy to perfection of all men to the end of time, as is evident from the verse:

"Lo! I am the Messenger of Allâh to you all."<sup>1</sup>

This lofty purpose could not have been accomplished merely by the inspirational education imparted to the Prophet (S) and the recitation of the *Qur'ân* to him until and unless the Divine word and its exposition are conveyed to all of mankind exactly under the same Divine protection and are guarded till the end of the world in the same way as it was guarded in the heart of the Prophet (S). For this reason, Allâh imposed upon the Prophet (S) the same charge of guiding and educating mankind which he had taken upon Himself in respect of guiding and educating him. That is, he should recite the verses of the *Qur'ân* to mankind in order that its words be communicated to them, as well as establish concatenation of educating people and providing them guidance so that the intents and purposes of Allâh should reach mankind too, and a system for the continuous onward transmission of the *Qur'ân* and its exposition as a sacred trust should come into operation.

Accordingly, the responsibilities of the Prophet (S) were indicated in the following verse:

"Allâh verily hath shown grace to the believers by sending unto them a Messenger of their own who reciteth unto them His revelations, and causeth them to grow, and teacheth them the Scripture and wisdom, although before (he came to them) they were in flagrant error."<sup>2</sup>

In this verse the same responsibility of reciting the *Qur'ân* and imparting education has been placed upon the Prophet (S) which Allâh had taken upon Himself with respect to the Prophet (S), so much so that the entrusting of this duty as a part of his mission was duly intimated. But as to whether the

Holy Prophet (S) did give a practical shape to this surrogateship or not, conveying the exposition of the *Qur'ân* to mankind along with the *Qur'ân*, it was expressly said about education:

"He teacheth you that which ye know not,"<sup>3</sup>

and about guidance:

"And lo! Thou verily dost guide unto a right path."<sup>4</sup>

As regards exposition it was said:

"And remember we have revealed unto thee the Remembrance that thou mayst explain to mankind that which hath been revealed unto them."<sup>5</sup>

Thus it is proved that the recitation which came to the Prophet (S) through divine education, exposition and guidance proceeded veritably from the Prophet (S) to mankind. It is also clearly shown that ever since the descent of the *Qur'ân* began, its exposition has been a necessary accompaniment thereof because without this the *Qur'ân* would be but a set of words, the meanings and contents of which would be determined by people themselves according to their own understanding such that inferences and interpretations drawn would be merely conjectural. It is because of this that the responsibility of recitation and reading of the *Qur'ân* as well as the charge of imparting guidance, education and exposition was undertaken by the Divine Author Himself. Hence Allâh has called Himself the First Reader of the *Qur'ân*, as is evident from "...and when We begin to read it..."<sup>6</sup>, otherwise the words "...and when you read it..." would have been employed. Similarly, Allâh has called Himself the First Expositor and Interpreter of the *Qur'ân* as is evident from "...Then lo! Upon Us (resteth) the explanation thereof..."<sup>7</sup>, or else "...Then lo! Upon you (resteth) the explanation thereof..." would have been said. Thus by calling Himself the First Reader and the First Expositor, Allâh has claimed that, whether they be the words of the *Qur'ân* or its meanings, both have been revealed by Him. In neither does the Prophet's (S) composition or improvisation have any place whatsoever. Both are inseparably bound up with each other. Neither will the words be of any use without the meaning, nor can the meanings be adduced without express words.<sup>8</sup>

## 8.2 GUARDIANSHIP OF ITS EXPOSITION

It is natural, therefore, to conclude that, wherever the descent of the *Qur'ân* features, it would necessarily signify the descent of exposition as well. Similarly whenever and wherever we speak about the preservation of the *Qur'ân* the preservation of the exposition would be included as well. Thus, when Allâh says:

"Indeed We have revealed the Reminder (i.e. the *Qur'ân*),"<sup>9</sup>

it cannot mean that Allâh sent His Word into the world without meanings and purport, or that the meanings were sent without words. The only plausible meaning of this verse is that the *Qur'ân* was sent into the world in its plenary form, that is plenary with regard both to words and their significance. As such, the word 'Reminder' here means both the *Qur'ân* and its exposition, both of which are revealed. In the next part of the verse it has been stated in respect of guarding the *Qur'ân*:

"And indeed We are its Guardians."<sup>10</sup>

Here the pronoun in 'its' refers to that very 'Reminder' which signifies the *Qur'ân* as well as its exposition. If this is so, then the exposition of the *Qur'ân* shall be within the corral of preservation together with the *Qur'ân* itself and Allâh's guardianship with respect to both shall have to be acknowledged. What is thus meant is that, until and unless the exposition of the *Qur'ân* is protected, the protection accorded to the *Qur'ân* will go only half the way and remain both incomplete and defective. In the verse under consideration the word 'Guardians' has been employed as a nominative absolute, which, according to Arabic grammar, should oblige us to accept it as the absolute guardian, and plenary guardianship comprehends both words and meanings, the *Qur'ân* and its exposition.

The meaning of the verse, therefore, runs something like this: Allâh Almighty is the Guardian of the *Qur'ânic* words and their meanings and exposition. Obviously Allâh cannot be the Guardian of the words only and not of their implications and significance, although it is the meaning of the word which conveys the connotation of the word itself and its objectives. What benefit can there be to have the means when the end is lost? On the same analogy the verse cannot mean that Allâh should be the guardian of the meanings and not of the words, since, if the symbols are lost, it would not be

possible to find our way to the meanings. In this case the very meanings cannot exist, let alone preservation thereof. This would have been possible only in the case of the word 'Guardians' being identified with specifically the word or the significance; then the preservation of that alone would have been meant. But the fact that this expression has been used in the absolute sense, indicates that both implication and exposition are covered by it. In the event of even one of the two of them being missing, the guardianship of the *Qur'ân* would not have been effectuated, although this is the very thing the safeguarding of which is being declared. In fact, the *Qur'ân* itself would no longer remain, to say nothing of its formal preservation.<sup>11</sup>

## THE PROPHET AS EXPOSITOR OF THE QUR'ÂN

### 9.1 ORDINATION AS TEACHER

The *Qur'ân* is both the foundation and fountain of faith, and among the fundamentals of Divine Law, the *Sharî'ah*, its place is unique. Its purpose however is only to lay down the principles. Its elaboration and interpretation are left to the *Hadîth* and *Sunnah*.

As all knowledgeable people are aware, the *Qur'ân* was not sent down to the Muslims directly. Before its revelation a Messenger was raised up and the *Qur'ân* was sent down to him with the specific objective that people should read and interpret it in the light of the Prophet's (S) guidance and exposition and not according to their own knowledge and understanding. The *Qur'ân* says:

"And we have revealed unto thee the Remembrance (i.e. the *Qur'ân*) that thou mayst explain to mankind that which hath been revealed for them, and that haply they may reflect."<sup>1</sup>

It is through the *Qur'ân* that mankind is informed both of the status and the duties of the Prophet (S). It is stated repeatedly that the Prophet (S) would not only recite the verses and make people remember them but also expound their meaning, unravel their mysteries and explain their wisdom.

"Even as we have sent unto you a Messenger from among yourselves, who reciteth to you our revelations and purifyeth you, and teacheth you the Scripture and wisdom, and teacheth you that which ye knew not."<sup>2</sup>

"Allâh verily hath shown grace to the believers by sending unto them a Messenger of their own who reciteth unto them His revelations, and purifyeth them, and teacheth them the Scripture and wisdom; although before (he came to them), they were in flagrant error."<sup>3</sup>

"He it is who hath sent among the unlettered ones a Messenger of their own to recite unto them His revelations, and to purify them, and to teach them the Scripture and wisdom, though heretofore they were, indeed, in error manifest."<sup>4</sup>

In all three verses above, two things are distinctly and separately mentioned. Firstly recitation of the revelations, and secondly the teaching of the Book.

It is thus apparent from the *Qur'ân* itself that just as direct recitation and preaching of the Divine revelations are part of the Prophetic duties of the Prophet (S), so too are their exposition and interpretation. It follows logically that the text of the *Qur'ân* is binding and absolute, as is its interpretation as provided by the Prophet (S). Otherwise it would have been meaningless to charge the Prophet (S) with the teaching of the Book and make it a part of his Prophetic mission. In sum, on the basis of these *Qur'ânic* statements, the Prophet (S) is not only the Messenger of Allah but also the teacher and interpreter of the Divine message.

With the recitation and propagation of the revelations, he also explained their meaning and gave instruction in them. And since the *Qur'ân* is the last word of Allâh and Prophet Muhammed (S) His last Messenger, it follows that no new Scripture nor Messenger is ever again to be sent down to mankind. It is essential that this Last Book remains intact and unchanged at every stage from the time of its revelation until the end of the world. Further, if the preservation of the *Qur'ân* is vitally important, the continuance, transference and conservation of the Prophet's (S) verbal as well as practical explanation of it is equally necessary, at all times, for full understanding.<sup>5</sup>

## 9.2 METHODS OF EXPOSITION

### 9.2.1 DEMONSTRATION

The Prophet (S) explained the *Qur'ân's* meaning through verbal interpretation and demonstrated, through his own practice, how to live and act in accordance with the *Qur'ân*. The Prophet (S) was always one demonstrating the meaning of a *Qur'ânic* command by carrying it out himself. In this way, both the precise import of the words of the *Qur'ân* and their practical form and design were made clear. For example, the obligatory injunction to establish *Salâh* (regular, formal worship) was revealed in the *Qur'ân* as were some of the elements of *Salâh* (like *qiyâm*, *rukûc*, *sujûd* and *qirâ'ah*). But the actual manner of offering *Salâh* and the order in which the

various acts connected with it were to be performed, were not described in the *Qur'ân*. The particular form of offering *Salâh*, the systematic arrangement of the various acts that compose it, was thus left to be determined by the Prophet's (S) conduct.<sup>6</sup>

In realising that a command of the *Qur'ân* requires the establishment of regular worship, it is only natural to want to know how this is to be done in practice and indeed what is the proper way of establishing *Salâh*. The Prophet's (S) exhortation:

"Offer *Salâh* as you have seen me offering it,"<sup>7</sup>

holds the answer.

Apart from a practical exposition of regular worship, the Prophet (S) also explained in words how *Salâh* was to be established and offered. Similarly, the *Hajj* (pilgrimage) was prescribed as a religious duty in the *Qur'ân* but its method and formalities were not defined. The Prophet (S) showed the correct way by performing the *Hajj* himself, and since the interpretation of the *Qur'ân* could be possible only through his words or deeds he declared openly at ʿArafât, on the occasion of the Farewell Pilgrimage, when all the pilgrims were present:

"O people! Learn the rites and ceremonies of the *Hajj* from me. It is possible that I may not see you after this year."<sup>8</sup>

### 9.2.2 VERBAL INTERPRETATION

Of his verbal explanation there were two forms. In one he would mention or allude to a *Qur'ânic* verse and then comment upon it or state the law or injunction derived from it. In the other he expounded the meaning or purport of what he had deduced from the *Qur'ân*, on the basis of his Allâh-inspired knowledge and understanding, without referring to it or otherwise indicating the verse

Of the numerous illustrations relating to the first method, the following is an example:

Adî ibn Hâtim enquired from the Prophet (S) whether the *Qur'ânic* words "...the white thread..." and "...the black thread..." meant two threads. The Prophet replied, "No! They

mean the darkness of the night and the whiteness (i.e. light) of the morning."<sup>9</sup>

Relating to the second method we shall draw one example to serve as an illustration. The Prophet (S) once said:

"No one of you can be true in his faith unless his desire is subordinated to the guidance I have brought."<sup>10</sup>

Clearly, the above Tradition is derived from, amongst others, the following verse of the *Qur'ân*:

"And it becometh not a believing man or a believing women, when Allâh or His Messenger have decide an affair (for them), that they should (after that) claim any say in their affair."<sup>11</sup>

That is, after the verdict of Allâh and the Prophet (S) the duty of the believers lie only in submission and obedience.

Most of the sayings of the Prophet (S) are in fact either a direct explanation of or a derivation from the *Qur'ân*. They are an integral part of his Prophetic mission on the authority of Divine pronouncements. "And he teacheth them the Scripture,"<sup>12</sup> and "That thou mayest explain to mankind that which hath been revealed for them,"<sup>13</sup> serve to remind us again that the Prophet's (S) expositions, deductions and interpretations are worthy of acceptance and compliance.<sup>14</sup>

## THE PROPHET AS EXEMPLAR OF THE QUR'ÂN

Mere transmission of the Book of Allâh to the people faithfully and sincerely does not exhaust the Prophet's (S) duties. On him also lies the responsibility of explaining the real purport of the *Qur'ânic* teachings and then giving them a visible shape so that mankind may see, along with the injunctions of Allah, the process of their transformation into reality and the outward forms in which they are to be crystallised. Words alone, however powerful and however pointed, cannot be fully comprehended unless these conjure before our minds definite forms and shapes. Similarly, precepts, however valuable, can be best understood only when these are supported by living examples.<sup>1</sup>

It is indeed a boundless favour of Allâh to humanity that, along with his message, he also sent to us his Messengers (A) to elaborate and elucidate it, and then transmute it into practical reality under his direct guidance.

The *Qur'ân* has enjoined upon the believer to dutifully emulate the example of a perfectly religious and Islamic life, as presented to the world by the Prophet (S). Allâh says:

"Ye have indeed in the Apostle of Allâh a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for anyone whose hope is in Allâh, and the Final Day."<sup>2</sup>

The believers are thus commanded in all their actions to follow in the steps of the Prophet (S). It is not as some people mistakenly believe only in war or other situations of distress that the duties of patient perseverance and fortitude upheld by him have been prescribed. For it is most unreasonable that the Prophet's (S) conduct is only worthy of emulation in time of war and not in conditions of peace or that while he provided us with a good example where *Jihâd* is concerned, that there is nothing for us to model ourselves upon in other matters.

At another place, a more embracing and unqualified command to follow the example of the Prophet (S) has been given to those who profess love for the Almighty:

"Say, (O Muhammad, to mankind): If ye love Allâh follow me. Allâh will love you and forgive you your sins."<sup>3</sup>

Here, the example of the Prophet (S) is unequivocally declared to be the criterion of love for Allâh. For if those who believe in the *Qur'ân* are not bound as a matter of course to follow the Prophet's (S) example why should Allâh have directed the Prophet (S) to tell mankind so?

It is absurd to suggest that the words 'follow me' in the above verse imply only that people should listen to the *Qur'ân* the Prophet (S) recited to them. The meaning of 'emulation', 'taking after' or 'following in the steps' invariably denote living according to the pattern of conduct, and modelling one's life upon the person's characteristic behavior.<sup>4</sup>

The *Sunnah* of the Prophet (S) is a standard of living every Muslim should aspire to reach. Certainly, who else could be a better guide to Muslims than the Prophet (S) himself. His words and deeds, therefore, are a source of inspiration and guidance for all Muslims in all time to come.<sup>5</sup>

## THE SUNNAH COMPLETES THE QUR'ÂN

### 11.1 AN EXPLANATORY SUPPLEMENT

If there is no other authentic source of knowledge other than the *Qur'ân*, and if the reports of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet (S) are rejected as untrustworthy, then the meaning and significance of the verses of the *Qur'ân* itself will remain unclear and incomplete. For instance, it is declared in the *Qur'ân*:

"So when Zayd had performed the necessary formality (of divorce) from her, We gave her unto thee in marriage."<sup>1</sup>

Can the full significance of this verse be appreciated without recourse to the Traditions and a placing of reliance upon them? Or is it possible to know solely from the *Qur'ân* who Zayd was, who his wife was, and what actually happened? Or, another example:

"He frowned and turned away because the blind man came unto him. What could inform thee but that he might grow (in grace)."<sup>2</sup>

Can it be discovered solely from the *Qur'ân* who the blind man was and with whom the Prophet (S) was engaged in conversation at the time?

Similarly, in the *Qur'ân*:

"If ye help him not, still Allâh helped him when those who disbelieved drove him forth, the second of two: when these two were in the cave, when he said unto his comrade: 'Grieve not. Lo! Allâh is with us.'"<sup>3</sup>

From where was the Prophet (S) driven out? Who was the Companion with him? In which cave were the two hiding? Can the *Qur'ân* alone answer these questions? And is there any way of finding out except from the Traditions?

These are only a few examples, and many more instances could be given. The aim, however, is only to show that it is almost impossible to understand or explain the meaning of a large number of *Qur'anic* verses if the Traditions are rejected as useless and inauthentic.

In short, whoever believes in the *Qur'ân* as a Divine Scripture and regards it as vitally important for the believers to understand and follow, at all times, must rely on and accept the truth of those reports of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet (S) which Muslim scholars and Traditionists compiled. It must also be remembered that a very large number of these Traditions form a valuable explanatory supplement to the *Qur'ân*.<sup>4</sup>

## 11.2 THE ADHÂN

If those people who, on account of some academic or conceptual misunderstanding, genuinely imagine that the *Qur'ân* alone is the first and last word on faith and that no religious principle or instruction, or injunction of the *Sharî'ah* can be established as true and valid from any source except the *Qur'ân* - and who genuinely believe that the duty of the Prophet (S) lay only in conveying the Scripture - gave a little thought to the *Qur'ân* itself, as honest seekers after the truth, they would discover numerous instances of a religious act or observance being mentioned in the form of an event or a parable or in some other connection, which shows that it was carried out as a religious duty during the period of revelation, even though an explicit injunction regarding it was not contained in the *Qur'ân*. It must, therefore, be admitted that the command for it was given through the *Sunnah*.

For example, no one claiming to be a Muslim could deny that the *Adhân* or call to prayer given before *Salâh* is a religious act, continuously observed among the Muslims since the time of the Prophet (S). In the *Qur'ân*, the *Adhân* is mentioned once in *Sûrah al-Mâ'idah* as part of the statement of fact that the foolish disbelievers made fun of it by imitating it derisively, and with mocking gestures:

"And when ye call to prayer they take it for a jest and sport,"<sup>5</sup>

and on another occasion, in *Surah al-Jumu'ah* in connection with another command:

"When the call is heard for the prayer of the Day of Congregation, hasten unto the remembrance of Allâh and leave your trading."<sup>6</sup>

But though it is known from these verses that the *Adhân* was current religious practice among the Muslims, not a single verse can be found in the *Qur'ân* through which the *Adhân* may be said to have been prescribed to the believers. It naturally follows that the command for the *Adhân* was not given through the *Qur'ân* but through the *Sunnah*.<sup>7</sup>

## RECIPROcity OF THE SUNNAH AND THE QUR'ÂN

The relationship of the *Sunnah* to the *Qur'ân* can be understood in the following three capacities:

### 12.1 CORROBORATION

Firstly, the *Sunnah* may consist of rules that confirm and reiterate the *Qur'ân*, in which case the rules concerned originate in the *Qur'ân* and are merely corroborated by the *Sunnah*. The question as to whether the *Sunnah* is an independent source is basically redundant with regard to matters on which the *Sunnah* merely confirms the *Qur'ân*, as it is obvious that in such cases the *Sunnah* is not an independent source. A substantial part of the *Sunnah* is, in fact, of this variety: all *Ahâdîth* pertaining to the five pillars of the faith and other such matters like the rights of parents, respect for the property of others, and *Ahâdîth* which regulate homicide, theft, and false testimony, etc., basically reaffirm the *Qur'ânic* principles on these subjects.<sup>1</sup>

### 12.2 EXPLICATION

Secondly, the *Sunnah* may consist of an explanation or clarification of the *Qur'ân*; it may clarify the ambivalent (*mujmal*) of the *Qur'ân*, qualify its absolute statements, or specify the general terms of the *Qur'ân*. This is once again the proper role that the *Sunnah* plays in relationship to the *Qur'ân*: it explains it. Once again a substantial part of the *Sunnah* falls under this category. It is, for example, through this type of *Sunnah* that *Qur'ânic* expressions like *Salâh*, *Zakâh*, *Hajj* and *ribâ*, etc., have acquired their juridical (*Shar'î*) meanings. To give another example, with regard to the contract of sale the *Qur'ân* merely declares sale to be lawful as opposed to *ribâ* (usury), which is forbidden. This general principle has been elaborated by the *Sunnah* which expounded the detailed rules of the *Shar'îcah* concerning sale, including its conditions, varieties and sales which might amount to *ribâ*. The same could be said about the lawful and unlawful varieties of food, a subject on which the *Qur'ân* contains only general guidelines while the *Sunnah* provides the details.<sup>2</sup> The *Sunnah* supplements

these principles by enacting additional rules which facilitate a proper implementation of the general principles of the *Qur'ân*.<sup>3</sup>

The forgoing two varieties of *Sunnah* comprise the bulk of Prophetic Tradition, and the *Ulamâ'* are in agreement that these two types of *Sunnah* are integral to the *Qur'ân* and constitute a logical whole with it. The two cannot be separated or taken independently from one another. It is considered that the *Sunnah* which qualifies or elaborates the general provisions of the *Qur'ân* on devotional matters ( *cibâdah*) for example, or on the punishment of theft, the duty of *Zakâh* and the subject of bequests, etc., could only have originated in Divine inspiration (*Ilhâm*), for these cannot be determined by means of rationality and *Ijtihâd* (independant judgement) alone.<sup>4</sup>

### 12.3 FOUNDING SUNNAH

Thirdly, the *Sunnah* may consist of rulings on which the *Qur'ân* is silent, in which case the ruling in question originates in the *Sunnah* itself. This variety of *Sunnah*, referred to as *al-Sunnah al-Mu'assisah*, or 'Founding *Sunnah*', neither confirms nor opposes the *Qur'ân*, and its contents cannot be directly traced back to the Holy Book. To give some examples: the prohibition regarding simultaneous marriage to the maternal and paternal aunt of one's wife (often referred to as 'unlawful conjunction'), the right of pre-emption (*shufc*), the grandmothers entitlement to a share in inheritance, the punishment of *rajm*, that is, death by stoning for adultery when committed by a married Muslim, all originate in the *Sunnah* as the *Qur'ân* itself is silent on these matters.<sup>5</sup>

### 12.4 THE INDEPENDANT STATUS OF THE SUNNAH

This last variety constitutes an independent source of *Sharî'ah*. There is evidence in the *Qur'ân* which substantiates the independent status of the *Sunnah*. The *Qur'ân*, for example, in more than one place requires the believers to "obey Allâh and obey His Messenger".<sup>6</sup> The fact that obedience to the Prophet (S) is specifically enjoined next to obeying Allâh warrants the conclusion that obedience to the Prophet (S) means obeying him whenever he orders or prohibits something on which the *Qur'ân* might be silent. For if the purpose of obedience to the Prophet (S) were to obey him only when he explained the *Qur'ân*, then "obey Allâh" would be sufficient and there would have been no need to add the phrase "obey the Messenger".<sup>7</sup>

Elsewhere the *Qur'ân* clearly places submission and obedience to the Prophet (S) at the very heart of the faith as a test of one's acceptance of Islâm. This is the purport of the verse which reads:

"By thy Lord, they will not believe till they make thee the judge regarding disagreements between them, and find in themselves no resistance against the verdict, but accept it in full submission."<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, the *Hadîth* of Mucâdh ibn Jabal supports this argument. When the Prophet (S) asked him as to the sources on which he would rely in making decisions, he replied, "To the Book of Allâh," and then "To the *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allâh."<sup>9</sup> The *Hadîth* is clear on the point that the *Sunnah* is authoritative in cases on which no guidance can be found in the *Qur'ân*. The *Sunnah*, in other words, stands on its own feet regardless of whether it is substantiated by the *Qur'an* or not.<sup>10</sup>

Allâh has explicitly rendered obedience to the Prophet (S) an obligatory duty (*fard*). In his capacity as Messenger of Allâh, the Prophet (S) has introduced laws, some of which originate in the *Qur'ân* while others do not. But all Prophetic legislation emanates in divine authority. The *Sunnah* and the *Qur'ân* are of the same provenance, and all must be upheld and obeyed. The Prophetic mission itself, that is the fact that the Prophet (S) is the chosen Messenger of Allâh, is sufficient proof for the authority of the *Sunnah*. For it is through the *Sunnah* that the Prophet (S) fulfilled his Divine mission. There is no *Sunnah* whose origin cannot be traced back to the *Qur'ân*.

Commonality is also established between the general objectives of the *Qur'ân* and the *Sunnah*: the *Sunnah* and the *Qur'ân* are unanimous in their pursuit of the three-fold objectives of protecting the necessities (*darûriyyât*), complementary requirements (*hâjiyyât*) and the embellishments (*tahsîniyyât*).<sup>11</sup> Even when the *Sunnah* broaches new ground, it is with the purpose of giving effect to one or the other of the objectives that have been validated in the *Qur'ân*. Thus the identity between the *Qur'ân* and *Sunnah* is transferred, from one of theme and subject, to that of the main purpose and spirit that is common to both.

Some of the rulings of the *Sunnah* consist of an analogy to the *Qur'ân*. For example, the *Qur'ân* has decreed that no one may marry two sisters simultaneously. The *Hadith* which prohibits simultaneous marriage to the maternal and paternal aunts of one's wife is based on the same effective cause (*cillah*), which is to avoid the severance of close ties of kinship. In short, the *Sunnah* as a whole is a supplement to the *Qur'ân*. The authority of

the *Sunnah* as an independant source of law and its principle roles in relationship to the *Qur'ân* are a verity.<sup>12</sup>

## THE STATUS OF THE PROPHET

The fundamental error of those who deny the *Sunnah* and Traditions is that they have not understood the true place and position of the Prophet (S). They need only ponder the *Qur'ân* for a correct appreciation of the nature, duties and functions of the Prophet (S), and it will become clear to them that the station of the Prophet (S) is not only that of Allâh's Messenger. Rather, he is also to be followed and obeyed explicitly. He is the leader, the guide, the judge, the ruler, the arbiter, etc. and it is, again, in the *Qur'ân* itself that the various capacities and functions of the Prophet (S) are delineated.

### 13.1 OBEDIENCE TO THE PROPHET

The Prophet (S) is to be obeyed and the believers are religiously bound to carry out his orders. The following words are addressed to the Muslims, in different places in the *Qur'ân*:

"Obey Allâh and obey the Messenger."<sup>1</sup>

From the manner in which the twin commands have been expressed, in two separate phrases, anyone with a feel for the Arabic language and idiom will readily concede that, like obedience to Allâh, obedience to the Prophet (S) is permanently enjoined upon the Muslims as a religious obligation. It does not simply mean that the Scripture brought into the world by the Prophet (S) and the precepts and injunctions contained in it should be believed and followed, for in that case, it would have been needless to add the directive "Obey the Messenger" to "Obey Allâh" which had already been issued. In further elaboration of this point we offer the following verse, from *Sûrah al-Nisâ'*:

"And when it is said unto them: Come unto that which Allâh hath revealed and unto the Messenger, thou seest the hypocrites turn from thee with aversion."<sup>2</sup>

Here two things are spoken of, one immediately after the other. People are exhorted not only to "come unto that which Allâh hath revealed" but also "unto the Messenger". Further, the way the two duties have been enjoined is

enough to show that the rendering of obedience to the Prophet (S) stressed in the verse does not simply denote submission to the Scripture revealed to him by Allâh, but that loyalty to the person of the Prophet (S) is also made a distinct and permanent requirement.

In the same *Sûrah* it is also stated that the Prophets (A) had been raised up with no other object than that they should be obeyed and their commands carried out:

"We sent no Messenger save that he should be obeyed by Allâh's leave."<sup>3</sup>

### **13.2 A LEADER**

**T**he Messengers are leaders and guides by the command of Allâh:

"And We made them leaders who guide by Our command."<sup>4</sup>

### **13.3 A JUDGE**

**T**he Prophet (S) has also been raised to the position of ruler and arbiter by Allâh and it is a prerequisite of faith for the believers to refer their disputes to him for adjudication and accept his decision ungrudgingly:

"But nay, by thy Lord, they will not believe (in truth) until they make thee judge of what is in dispute between them and find within themselves no dislike of that which thou decidest, and submit with full submission."<sup>5</sup>

"And it becommeth not a believing man or a believing woman, when Allâh and his Messenger have decided an affair (for them), that they should (after that) claim any say in their affair."<sup>6</sup>

"The saying of (all true) believers when they appeal unto Allâh and His Messenger to judge between them is only that they say: 'We hear and we obey. And such are the successful.' "<sup>7</sup>

Each of the above verses is emphatic in its expression that the Muslims are bound in faith to submit to the decision of the Prophet (S) in all matters.

One's faith and religion cannot remain intact after denying or sneering at any matter about which the Prophet (S) had given a clear, categorical and unambiguous decision, and they are in no position to wrangle about it.<sup>8</sup>

"O believers, obey Allâh and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you, and if you differ amongst yourselves concerning anything, then refer (that matter) to Allâh and his Messenger, if you believe in Allâh and the Last Day, and this is best and the result is befitting."<sup>9</sup>

Aside from confirming what has been stated above, a little reflection on the above verse would reveal the fact that, if the *Sunnah* is not completely protected, then it would be impossible to obey the Messenger of Allâh or refer to him in matters of conflict. This would mean that Allâh has ordered His servants to the obedience of that which is non-existent. This surely is false!<sup>10</sup>

#### **13.4 SUCCESS IN SUBMISSION**

**J**ust as it is necessary for anyone's success and felicity that he submit to Allâh, it is also imperative for him to obey the Prophet (S). Conversely, as defiance of Allâh is a grievous error and a source of severe misfortune, so too is defiance of the Prophet (S):

"Whosoever obeyeth Allâh and His Messenger, he verily hath gained a signal victory."<sup>11</sup>

"And whoso is rebellious to Allâh and His Messenger, he verily goeth astray in error manifest."<sup>12</sup>

Again, on the day the unbelievers are cast into Hell they will suffer anguish for disobeying the Prophet (S) in the same way they will repent for having been disobedient to Allâh:

"On the day when their faces are turned over in the fire they will say: 'Oh, would that we had obeyed Allah and had obeyed His messenger.' "<sup>13</sup>

Or again:

"On that day those who disbelieved and disobeyed the Messenger will wish that they were level with the ground (i.e. become a part of the earth so that they might escape the chastisement)."<sup>14</sup>

The Muslims are warned not even to talk among themselves of disobedience towards the Prophet (S):

"O ye who believe! When ye conspire together conspire not together for crime, wrongdoing and disobedience toward the Messenger."<sup>15</sup>

### **13.5 TAKING WHAT HE GIVES**

**T**he Muslims are enjoined to take whatever the Prophet (S) gives and abstain from whatever he forbids:

"And whatsoever the Messenger giveth you, take it. And whatsoever he forbiddeth, abstain (from it)."<sup>16</sup>

What this verse implies is that the commands and prohibitions of the Prophet (S) are not to be treated in the spirit in which are taken the wise sayings of sages and philosophers or the verdicts of rulers. The words and deeds of the Prophet (S) are, indeed, the perfect expressions of the highest wisdom ever conceivable; but this alone does not completely fulfill the demands of belief in prophethood. The basic point in this belief is that one should affirm with full confidence that it is Allâh who speaks through the Prophet (S) all that he utters by way of spiritual guidance or practical legislation, and that one should thus follow him in every walk of life with a view to achieving the love of Allâh and salvation in this world and the world to come. The Prophet (S) is no doubt human, but his leadership is divinely inspired and none can be called a Muslim who does not accept this basic doctrine of the Holy *Qur'ân*.<sup>17</sup>

Even if the above verse is supposed to apply only to worldly goods it supports our argument for, at least, it makes it clear that whatever the Prophet (S) may deal out of his free-will is worthy of acceptance by the believers without the least hesitation or objection.<sup>18</sup>

### **13.6 CLAIM OVER THE BELIEVERS**

**T**he Prophet (S) has a greater claim on the life of the believer than the believer himself:

"The Messenger has a greater claim on the life of the believers than (the believers) themselves."<sup>19</sup>

The Prophet (S) is the vicegerent of Allâh and enjoys greater power and freedom in the matter of the life and property of the believers than the believers themselves. It is not permitted to the believer to jump into a blazing fire but if the Prophet (S) commands him to do so it becomes a religious duty.

### **13.7 PLEASING THE PROPHET**

**T**o please the Prophet (S) along with Allâh is an essential condition of faith:

"Allâh with his Messenger hath more right that they should please him if they are believers."<sup>20</sup>

### **13.8 LOVE FOR THE PROPHET**

**L**ike love for Allâh, love for the Prophet (S) should also be stronger than any attachment to worldly things. Those who fail in it are wrongdoers and shall remain devoid of Divine Guidance:

"Say: If your fathers, and your sons, and your brothers, and your wives, and your tribe, and the wealth ye have acquired, and merchandise for which ye fear that there will be no sale, and dwellings ye desire are dearer to you than Allâh and His Messenger and striving in His way: then wait till Allâh bringeth His command to pass. Allâh guideth not wrongdoing folk."<sup>21</sup>

It is by following the Prophet (S) that we can achieve the cherished goal of winning Allâh's favour.

### **13.9 RESPONDING TO THE PROPHET**

**I**t is the duty of the believer to respond at once when the Prophet (S) calls him for anything:

"O ye who believe: Obey Allâh, and the Messenger when He calleth you to that which will give you life."<sup>22</sup>

### **13.10 PERMISSION OF THE PROPHET**

**I**t does not become the believer to depart without asking the Prophet's (S) leave when he summons him for a common business, otherwise there is for him fear of a terrible punishment:

"They only are the true believers who believe in Allâh and his Messenger and, when they are with him on some common errand, go not away until they have asked leave of him."<sup>23</sup>

The *Qur'ân* goes on to warn those who do not observe this command and slip away without the Prophet's (S) permission in these words:

"And let those who conspire to evade orders beware lest grief or painful punishment befall them."<sup>24</sup>

### **13.11 DISOBEDIENCE TO THE PROPHET**

**W**hoever disobeys the Prophet's (S) commands will be punished in the fire of Hell:

"And whosoever disobeys Allâh and his Messenger and transgresses the limits set by Him, He will cause to enter into a fire, abiding therein forever, and for him shall be a shameful punishment."<sup>25</sup>

## THE ETERNAL RELEVANCE OF THE SUNNAH

### 14.1 THE AFFAIRS OF THIS WORLD

In this day and age, many people commit a number of fatal errors with regard to Prophethood. Amongst these is the fallacy that the teachings and injunctions of the Prophet (S) are supposed to be exclusively concerned with the affairs of the other world, while with regard to the affairs of this world one is supposed to be absolutely independent of such injunctions. The Holy *Qur'ân* and *Hadîth* belie such a supposition in explicit terms. For example:

"And it becommeth not a believing man or a believing woman, when Allâh and His Messenger have decide an affair (for them), that they should (after that) claim any say in their affair. And whosoever disobeys Allâh and His Messenger has manifestly strayed from the right path."<sup>1</sup>

The occasion on which this verse was revealed was actually a matter of purely mundane nature. In order to make the point still more clear, we cite a rational instance. It is a matter of everyday experience that the worldly rulers, through the laws which they make, do interfere with our personal and private affairs too. Then, should the only true and real ruler not have this right?

There is, however, a Tradition of the Prophet (S), usually called '*Hadîth al-Ta'bîr*', which has caused doubts in some minds. This *Hadîth* relates how the Holy Prophet (S), when questioned, told the people of Madînah not to intergraft male and female palm-trees, but when the produce turned out to be scanty that year, he remarked:

"You know better the affairs of your world."<sup>2</sup>

This incident can be understood in a number of ways and be employed to define a number of Islamic ideals.

Firstly, in all matters, the Prophet's (S) attitude was determined by the thought of how it would effect the quality of his existence in the hereafter. He was in no way lacking in human qualities, but his mind attached value

only to things which were in some manner connected with the hereafter, and when any such connection was absent, he found it difficult to take interest in the purely mundane. It is at this juncture that we encounter the Prophet (S) saying: "You know better the affairs of your world."<sup>3</sup> This conviction of the Prophet (S) is no mere intellectual assumption. When it takes root, a man's whole course of life and plane of living are altered by it; it turns a man into a being of an entirely different order. The lesson of the Prophet's (S) life is that unless the plane of living is radically changed, there can be no improvement in the quality of one's actions. When the Prophet (S) arrived at this truth, its propagation became his greatest concern. Paradise, tidings of which he brought to his fellowmen, became his prime objective, and his fear of hell, of which he likewise gave warning to others, knew no bounds.<sup>4</sup>

This incident also serves as a practical instance to display the latitude of thought encouraged and stimulated by Islam, whereby human beings are to take the initiative of exploiting the Allâh given intellect they have been afforded in order to discover the sublime scheme and pattern of the universe. This discovery would, consequently, confirm the teachings of the Prophet (S) and fortify the believers faith. This would, however, always be conscientious of, and not ever transgress the established limits as defined by the *Qur'ân* and *Sunnah*.

The least that can be said with regard to this *Hadîth* is that it applies to matters regarding which the Prophet (S) expressed a mere opinion or advice, and not to matters regarding which he laid down a definite injunction. As such, it in no way subverts the legislative relevance of the *Hadîth* as a corpus juris.

This incident is much the same as that of the Prophet's (S) oversleeping for the *Fajr* prayer or the occasions when lapses occurred in *Salâh* by him forgetting something<sup>5</sup>. In these respects the Prophet (S) himself said:

"I do not forget, but I am made to forget in order that I may show the *Sunnah* method (i.e. establish an authoritative Prophetic precedent)."<sup>6</sup>

These ad hoc and seemingly spontaneous incidents were really all divinely orchestrated and served, much as the rest of the life and practice of the Prophet (S), as the context in conveying to mankind certain specific divine teachings and instructions.

## 14.2 MODIFICATION OF THE SUNNAH

Another sophism is the supposition that the Prophetic directives regarding worldly affairs may be modified in accordance with the requirements of every age.

Had these injunctions not been laid down as ends in themselves, there would not have been any harm in holding such an opinion. But since it is an established fact that they are ends in themselves, there is no room at all for such a contention.

Here one may put forth a rational objection to this effect: The needs and requirements of human life keep on changing with every age, and this has been the grounds for the abrogation and supersession of every Prophetic canon prior to that of Prophet Muhammed (S). How can it then be possible that, on the one hand, during the mere six centuries that lie between Prophet عيسى (Jesus) (A) and Prophet Muhammad (S), the needs and requirements of mankind underwent such a radical change that a new dispensation became necessary, but, on the other hand, during more than double the period which has passed since the days of Prophet Muhammad (S) upto our own day, those needs and requirements have not yet suffered the slightest change?

To this objection we would reply that if the Legislator is perfect in His wisdom and is also omniscient, it is quite possible for Him to frame, when He so wishes, a set of laws which can fulfill the requirements and needs of all successive ages up to the Day of Judgement.<sup>7</sup>

### 14.3 THE SUNNAH INEXPEDIENT

Arguing from the conditions prevailing in the modern world, still a doubt may arise that it is daily observed that if one tries to follow the *Sunnah*, many obstructions in conducting the ordinary business of life are faced, which only shows that its injunctions are not suitable for this age.

To this we reply that the complaint about life becoming difficult can be justifiable only if all people follow the *Sunnah*, and yet the business of life should be obstructed. And this nobody can prove today. But, infact, the history of Islam proves the contrary. The difficulties which one has to experience these days are due to the fact that those who do not follow the *Sunnah* far outnumber those who do, and when this minority has to deal with that majority, a tension is sure to follow. Thus the real source of the difficulties is our present way of life and not the *Sunnah*.

As a matter of fact, no real difficulty arises at all in acting upon the *Sunnah*. It is only the fear of some personal loss that conjures up a suspicion

that the *Sunnah* is very restrictive and difficult to be practiced. But is there any system of law in existence which does not entail and tolerate individual loss for the sake of public good, without which no stable society can exist?<sup>8</sup>

#### 14.4 RAISONS D'ETRE

Another misconception is again related to the Prophetic injunctions. Some people invent certain *raisons d'etre* for these injunctions on the basis of their personal opinion and insist on making the validity of the injunctions depend solely on the presence or absence of these very *raisons d'etre*. In consequence of this, they begin to misinterpret, distort and even annul the injunctions laid down by the *Qur'ân* and the *Sunnah*. Thus we have heard of some people who somehow have convinced themselves that the *raison d'etre* of the ritual ablutions (*wudû'*) was no more than cleanliness, and, finding themselves clean enough, did not think it necessary to perform the ablutions at all before offering the prayers. There have been others who have imagined that the *raison d'etre* of the of the ritual prayers was moral perfection, and, taking the attainment of this merit to be the desired end, gave up the daily prayers altogether. The same kind of encroachments have been made in the case of other forms of worship like fasting, *Zakâh* (ritual alms-giving), and the pilgrimage to Makkah. In the same way, other prohibitions in the *Qur'ân* and the *Sunnah* too, like that concerning interest, have been subjected to similar distortions. In short, such people have attempted to abrogated the *Sharîcah* totally.

Apart from such a procedure being a patent heresy, the contention put forth by such people are mere assertions unsupported by any substantive, rational argument. For is it not rationally possible that a large number of these injunctions should be forms of worship and intended to develop devotion and piety in man, and that, in putting man under the obligation to obey these commandments, the real *raison d'etre* should be to test his fidelity and faith? Besides that, is there any argument to prove that the *raison d'etre* should be those effects which emanate from the generic form of a particular injunction, just as the efficacy of medicines emanates from their respective, specific virtues.

As far as the search for *raisons d'etre* in itself is concerned, it is quite possible that one man may hit upon one thing, and another upon a different thing. What would, then, be the rational criterion for preferring one opinion to another? According to the well-known rule that when two equiposed propositions contradict each other, both of them are neutralized<sup>9</sup>; we shall

have to declare both of them to be invalid. Through this process of elimination, the injunctions of the *Sharî'ah* themselves would finally be obliterated and annulled. This being so, would any sensible Muslim, who intended to remain faithful to his religion, choose to countenance such a procedure?

A corollary of the same error is that some people, in defending Islam against its detractors, try to justify the injunctions of the *Qur'ân* and *Sunnah* by advancing similar rationalisations and *raisons d'etre*.

Now, there is a great danger in adopting such a procedure. The *raisons d'etre* thus suggested are purely conjectural. If any of them is found to be questionable, the related injunction itself thereby becomes dubious and defective. Thus, it amounts to providing the detractors of Islam with a permanent opportunity for disputing and negating the Prophetic injunctions.

The truth of the matter is that these injunctions are laws, and no one does ever seek secret motives in legal rules and regulations, nor does one have the right to change, alter or abrogate laws on the ground of the imagined secret motives. It is the legislator himself who alone possess these powers.

No doubt, the veritable *Mujtahidun* (i.e. masters of Islamic jurisprudence) have, in the early centuries of Islamic history, sometimes pointed out the *raisons d'etre* of certain injunctions. But this example should not mislead one to appropriate this privilege to himself. Those great Masters had the requisite talent for making such deductions. Further, these deductions and their variations were corroborated by the legions of scholars of the succeeding generations and, consequently, consensus was achieved as to their legitimacy and veracity, since these very *raisons d'etre* in no way contradicted the spirit of Islam as defined by its primary sources. These then became part and parcel of 'the believers way', and adherence to the path of the believers is obligatory, as mentioned in the *Qur'ân*:

"And whoso opposeth the Messenger after the guidance (of Allâh) hath been manifested unto him, and followeth other than the believer's way, We appoint for him that unto which he himself hath turned, and expose him unto hell - a hopeless journey's end."<sup>10</sup>

Nowadays both these factors are absent. In the case of the Modernists, besides the paucity of knowledge, the pursuit of vain desires is the thickest veil which conceals the truth from their eyes.<sup>11</sup>

## 14.5 SALVATION TO THE NEGATORS

Yet another error of some is that they are prepared to allow the possibility of salvation even to those who deny Prophethood. Their contention is that even the Prophets (A) themselves came for the purpose of affirming the unity of Allâh, therefore, in so far as a man has attained the intended object, it does him no harm to deny something which was not intended to be the ultimate object.

A summary and traditional refutation is provided by those verses of the Holy *Qur'ân* and those pronouncements in the *Hadith* which explicitly state that those who deny Prophethood shall be placed in hell forever<sup>12</sup>. And the rational refutation is that he who denies the Prophet (S) denies Allâh, for, in so doing, he is denying Allâh's word - that is, verses of the *Qur'ân* like:

"Muhammad is the Messenger of Allâh."<sup>13</sup>

And a precedent from the worldly life is this: If a man were to acknowledge X as his king, but were to keep defying the viceroy of his province, would this behaviour be considered meritorious, or even pardonable, by the king?<sup>14</sup>

## 14.6 CALCULATION OF THE NUMBER OF AHÂDÎTH

Another serious misgiving under which so many Orientalists and westernised Muslims are labouring is that when they are told, for example, Imâm Muslim selected four thousand *Ahâdîth* out of a total collection of three hundred thousand, they think that since such a large number of *Hadîth* were unreliable, and therefore rejected, that the whole stock of *Hadîth* is unauthentic and should be rejected outright. This assumption displays the utter ignorance of these critics about even the elementary knowledge of the science of *Hadîth*. *Matn* (or text) is not the basis upon which is calculated the number of *Ahâdîth*. *Hadîth* are counted on the chains of transmission (*Asânîd*). Thus, when we say that Imâm Muslim collected three hundred thousand *Ahâdîth* and included only four thousand in his compilation, it does not imply that he rejected the rest of the Prophet's (S) sayings as being unreliable. What it means is that the words and deeds of the Prophet (S) were transmitted to Imâm Muslim through so many chains of transmission out of which he selected four thousand chains as most authentic and narrated the text on their authority. A *matn* (or text) which is transmitted through one hundred *Asânîd* (chains of transmission) is, in *Hadîth* literature, treated as one hundred *Ahâdîth*. For example, the text of the first *Hadîth* in Bukhârî

(i.e. "Actions are based upon intentions,"<sup>15</sup>) is counted as a selection of one out of seven hundred *Ahâdîth* since it has been transmitted through such a large number of *Asânîd*.

In conclusion, the essence of the arguments of many misguided people suggest that the commandments of the Holy Prophet (S) were valid only during his lifetime, and that now when he is no more amongst us, we need follow only the injunctions of the *Qur'ân* and treat the *Hadîth* as an account of the past which has some allusion to the life of the Prophet (S), having no practical value as a code of life. These miscreants little realise that a denial of the eternal validity of the *Sunnah* amounts to a denial of the *Qur'ân*'s claim that the Prophethood of Muhammad (S) is not time-bound; it is universal, and the Prophet's (S) words and deeds are the timeless expression of the Will of Allâh:

"Say: O mankind! Surely I am the Messenger of Allâh to you all, of Him whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but He: So believe in Allâh and his Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, who believes in Allâh and His words, and follow him so that you may be guided aright."<sup>16</sup>

Muhammad (S) is the Messenger of Allâh for all of mankind; no new Prophet is to be raised after him. His prophethood is thus universal and eternal. It is, therefore, an integral part of one's faith in the prophethood of Muhammad (S) that his words and deeds should always be taken as one of the two most reliable sources of right guidance. The code of divine guidance which does not regard Prophet Muhammad (S) as the supreme guide from Allâh cannot in any way be relied upon in Islam. One could seek this guidance directly from the Prophet (S) during his lifetime, but now it is the authentic Traditions that serve this purpose admirably well.<sup>17</sup>

## SCOPE IN QUESTIONING THE AUTHORITY OF HADÎTH

### 15.1 THE TRANSMISSIONAL CHAIN

A *Hadîth* may be conjectural and dubious inasmuch as it needs authentication, but it is intrinsically as absolute as the *Qur'ân* itself. If a given *Hadîth* is said to be putative or supposed (*zanni*), it is not because of the *Hadîth* itself but the way it has been transmitted. Compliance with the Prophet's (S) commands does not become questionable for the imperative nature of the *Hadîth* stands proven by:

"And whatsoever the Messenger giveth you, take it. And whatsoever he forbiddeth, abstain (from it)."<sup>1</sup>

To acknowledge the *Hadîth* is to believe in the *Qur'ân*, and to negate it is to deny the *Qur'ân*. Obedience to it is similarly obedience to Allâh:

"Whoso obeyeth the Messenger, obeyeth Allâh."<sup>2</sup>

The discussion revolves not around the *Hadîth* itself but the *Isnâd* and the narrations. Evidently, the fact of the transmissional chain being open to exception means only that a particular *Hadîth* is not absolute or does not stand proven, not that the *Hadîth* itself, as a genre, has no authority or the word of the Prophet (S) does not carry authority. This would be like a traveller who does not reach his goal because of something wrong with the road and says that the goal does not exist or has become extinct. Thus a weak or unreliable transmissional chain does not involve the negation of the *Hadîth*. Therefore, in principle, there is no scope for this on the mere ground of weak transmission of the *Hadîth*. At the utmost, it furnishes scope for denying a particular authority on which a *Hadîth* is based which is not denial of *Hadîth* but simply the critique of the authority.<sup>3</sup>

It is sheer impertinence to deny the science of *Hadîth* because if this fake principle is adopted, then even the *Qur'ân* cannot be acknowledged inasmuch as it too has reached us through intervening media. Similarly, if it is held that the *Hadîth* is not acceptable as its narrators are not numerically

and qualitatively like those of the *Qur'ân*, that is, not so many and such as those of the *Qur'ân*, the only conclusion that we can reach is that since such and such a *Hadîth* does not possess the degree of testimony enjoyed by the *Qur'ân*, it is not as absolute as the *Qur'ân*, and not that we do not believe in the *Hadîth* itself. In this case, the most that can happen is that such Traditions would not be considered appropriate for establishing finally authoritative injunctions on them.<sup>4</sup> But even approximative injunctions are part and parcel of the *Sharîcah*, so even the aproximative nature of such injunctions would not be detrimental to their validity.<sup>5</sup> So, to say that the narrators are not as numerous and as unimpeachable as they should be, only reflects upon their degree of authenticity, not on the *Hadîth*. In any case, this does not provide a way of escape for the negators of the *Hadîth*.<sup>6</sup>

## 15.2 DENYING ITS CLASSIFICATION

The most that the doubting 'Thomases' can say is: "We accept that the science of the *Hadîth* is the exposition of the *Qur'ân*, because the proof therefore is forthcoming in the *Qur'ân* itself, but it is not obligatory upon us to accept its classification into different kinds and to accord our tacit approval to particular persons mentioned in the transmissional chain, when the *Qur'ân* has not indicated any particular kinds of *Hadîth* with persons."<sup>7</sup>

The answer to such a statement would be that, in the first place, this scruple is senseless. If the *Qur'ân* indicates a general matter, then its particular illustrations and minutae should be searched for in its history and not in the pages of the *Qur'ân* itself. If the *Qur'ân* were to adopt the approach that follows from this assumption, it would not be a basic constitution at all but a compendium of by-laws and polymathia, which is obviously against the dignity of the *Qur'ân*. The *Qur'ân* has only laid down the fundamentals of the *Sharîcah*. To seek for particular applications in the *Qur'ân* would be to demonstrate our ignorance of the making of fundamental laws; even more, a living proof of our insensitivity to the significance of such laws. Therefore, when the science of *Hadîth* has been agreed upon as having been specifically proven from the *Qur'ânic* text, then the acts based upon its principles and the different kinds of *Ahâdîth* have also to be acknowledged as proven. There is no scope whatsoever, consequently, for denying a derivation after the original has been acknowledged.<sup>8</sup> A detailed examination of the sub-catagories of the *Hadîth* as derived from the basic principles of the *Qur'ân* will be presented later.<sup>9</sup>

### 15.3 CRITICISM BASED ON REASON

It is also wrong to criticise a particular *Hadîth* on the basis of *dirâyah* (reason), for the lowest degree of authentic *Hadîth* is that in which the authenticity and the connotation both should be approximative, while the substance of what people call *dirâyah* (reason) is only a rational argument of conjectural nature. An argument based on an approximative report is to be preferred to a rational argument of approximative nature for the very fact of this rational argument being approximative, in itself, indicates the possibility of its being erroneous. And further, there exists no final, purely rational argument to establish its contention. So, in holding it to be erroneous we shall not be going against the requirements of reason. Although in this situation there is room for reconciling the two arguments by turning them away from their literal sense and giving them some other interpretation, yet, according to the regular rule of human language that the basic sense in all words is the literal and apparent one,<sup>10</sup> we would take the report in its literal sense, and would not consider the connotation of the rational argument as valid.<sup>11</sup>

## NEGATION OF HADITH IS NEGATION OF THE QUR'ÂN

### 16.1 CREDENCE OF THE HADÎTH NARRATIVE

The narrative of the *Qur'ân* not only provides evidence for the *Mutawâtir* (continuous) narrative but also proof for the reliability of narration and reporting, pure and simple; because the narration of the *Qur'ân* is but a species of continuous narration, which is but a variety of narration. That is to say, narration and report are in the nature of genus, and continuous narration is just one variety thereof. Evidently, to deny a thing divided after admitting its division, or to consider the former unreliable after admitting the latter as reliable, is just like denying the absolute after admitting the finite or the general after accepting the particular, although the finite cannot exist without the absolute and the particular without the general.

The continuous narrative, once conceded as reliable, will naturally lead one to accept narrative also because the acknowledgement of one is the acknowledgement of the other. Therefore, having acknowledged credence of the *Qur'ânic* narrative it becomes necessary to admit the credence of the narrative of the *Hadîth* also, although their comparative position and the difference in rank of their behests cannot be denied.<sup>1</sup>

### 16.2 TWO ALTERNATIVES FOR THE NEGATORS

There are only two alternatives for those who negate *Hadîth*: they should deny transmission and narration as a genus out and out, and , consequently, openly deny the *Qur'ân* along with the *Hadîth*. But if they believe in the narration of the *Qur'ân*, then they must admit the narration of the *Hadîth* as well in view of their having admitted narration as a verity. They cannot accept the *Qur'ân* and negate the *Hadîth*, otherwise they would be considered deniers of the narrative itself. Further consideration would amply show that the proof for continuous narrative does not rest merely upon the fact of continuity of narration of the *Qur'ân* but is provided by the proof of the *Qur'ân* itself. It is not necessary that its proof should be sought in the continuous narration of the *Qur'ân* alone, since once the *Qur'ân* is admitted

as gospel truth , the question naturally arises, how did we come to know that this *Qur'ân* is the very *Qur'ân* that was revealed? If we came to know it from the *Qur'ân* which has not yet been proved as such, then how can it provide proof for anything else? This is called 'presuming a thing before it comes into existence',<sup>2</sup> a sort of a posteriori approach. Thus we can know it is the self-same *Qur'ân* through an extraneous source, and what else can this source be but the reports regarding the Holy Prophet (S) which were recorded and have reached us intact? This is what is called the *Hadîth*. Therefore, proving that the *Qur'ân* is verily the *Qur'ân* depends upon the *Hadîth*.

Considered this way, could it be possible that the acknowledgement of the *Qur'ân* should be made imperative but not that of the *Hadîth*? If this is so, then it would not be possible to prove and establish the very existence of the *Qur'ân*.

A report which conveys to us knowledge of such a definite, indubitable and most important book like the *Qur'ân* should similarly be absolutely definite. If it remains uncertain, then obviously the proof of the *Qur'ân* would also be not definite but conjectural, and denial thereof would lead us to heresy. This report must perforce be definite and extremely convincing, and no report except that based on continuous narrative can be so. Hence before proving the *Qur'ân*, not only is the identity of the *Hadîth* proved, as the relation between the narration of the *Qur'ân* and the *Hadîth* is that of genus and species, but the proof of the special kind of *Hadîth* known as *Tawâtur* (continuous narration) is also obtained.

Thus in whatever way we acknowledge the *Qur'ân*, it would be essential to acknowledge, at least, the *Ahâdîth* of continuous form for which the narration of the *Qur'ân* too is a standing proof, and even a standing proof for the acknowledgement of the *Qur'ân* itself, so that the proof of one automatically leads to the proof of the other. Thus, incidentally, we get proof for continuous narration from the *Qur'ân* itself.<sup>3</sup>

## THE QUR'ÂN ON HADÎTH NARRATION

### 17.1 VARIETIES OF NARRATIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE NUMBER OF NARRATORS

Let us now consider the three remaining kinds of reports - the *Mashhûr* (a narration by three persons of unquestioned antecedents), *ʿAzîz* (a narration reported by two persons of integrity) and *Gharîb* (the individual report), in the context of the *Qur'ân*.

#### 17.1.1 KHABAR MASHHÛR

The proof of the report known as *Khabar Mashhûr*, comprising three reports of unquestioned origin, and its authority also can be obtained from the *Qur'ân*. Describing the *Ashâb al-Qaryah* (People of the City), the *Qur'ân* says:

"Coin for them a similitude: The People of the City when those sent (from Allâh) came unto them; When We sent unto them twain, and they denied them both, so We reinforced them with a third, and they said: 'Lo! We have been sent unto you'."<sup>1</sup>

This incident pertains to the people of Antioch. It will be evident from the foregoing that, after two Prophets (A) had been denied, a third one was added because it is against human nature to negate three trustworthy and just persons; and it would form a conclusive testimony against the inhabitants of the city. An assembly of three persons forms a *jamâ'ah* (group)<sup>2</sup> and it is but natural to assume that a party of three persons - and that too comprising truthful and pious persons - cannot lie nor can they be belied. Evidently, the crucial thing here is the number three with regard to narration and transmission, not the nature of prophethood because even one Prophet transcends the whole world in the qualities of trustworthiness, justice, truthfulness and honesty. If the People of the City had held prophethood in reverence, they would not have dared to belie even one of those Messengers (A). It would not have been necessary to add to the number of the

Messengers (A) as regards their apostelic capacity. But, since proof positive had to be provided, three completed the tale to convey the message to them. It will, therefore, be clear that, on the generally accepted principle, the evidence offered by three persons whose integrity stands unquestioned and duly vouched for, cannot be considered refutable.<sup>2</sup>

This establishes the principle that if a report reaches us through the statements of three persons of reliable and unquestioned antecedents, then, according to the *Qur'ân*, it cannot be rejected because such testimony crosses the bounds of probability and passes into certainty, leaving no scope for doubt. And since *Khabar Mashhûr* is of this very nature, proof is furnished for it and its authoritative stance from the *Qur'ân* itself. That being so, he who negates the verity and authority of *Khabar Mashhûr*, in fact, denies the aforesaid principle of the *Qur'ân*.<sup>3</sup>

### 17.1.2 KHABAR ʿAZÎZ

Similarly, *Khabar ʿAzîz*, which is reported by two persons of integrity, is confirmed by the *Qur'ân* and carries authority for all relevant matters:

"And call to witness two just men from among you, and keep your testimony upright for Allâh."<sup>4</sup>

This shows that the evidence of two persons is not only trustworthy but also authoritative and governs decisions in innumerable matters pertaining to life and property as well as social and moral affairs. Thus, the fact that the *Qur'ân*, in the above verse, has admitted the testimony of two persons as reliable and proof positive, means, in reality, proclaiming the same about *riwâyah* (narration). Hence if the evidence offered by two persons is admitted in so important an institution as the court of law which carries political importance as well, then why should it not be worthy, in an equal measure, of being admitted outside the court in public, where it carries no such importance even? This must needs be so. In fact, it should be a highly reliable authority. Therefore, the *Qur'ân* itself turns out to be the source of the narration by two persons, formally known as *Khabar ʿAzîz*, being reliable and peremptorily acknowledgeable. The negation of *Khabar ʿAzîz* and its authoritativeness, therefore, negates the above verse and, consequently, the *Qur'ân*.<sup>5</sup>

### 17.1.3 KHABAR GHARÎB

### 17.1.3.1 THE REPORT OF A PROPHET

As for *Khabar Gharîb*, also called *Khabar Fard* (an individual narration), based on the report of one man, it can be proved through the invocation of not one but numerous verses of the *Qur'ân*. Earlier, proof was furnished for the *Khabar Mashhûr* (reputed narration) from the Holy *Qur'ân* by arguing from the cumulative report of three Prophets (A). It was only in this case (i.e. that of the *Ashâb al-Qaryah*) that three Prophets (A) were sent at a time who collectively conveyed the message of Allah. Otherwise for each *Ummah* (nation) only one Prophet and warner was sent who conveyed Allâh's message. The Prophets *Nûh* (Noah), *Ibrâhîm* (Abraham), *Mûsâ* (Moses) and *ʿĪsâ* (Jesus) (A) were commissioned as Prophets to their respective nations individually, and each one transmitted Allâh's message to it.<sup>6</sup> What else was this if not an individual report.

Therefore, whenever the *Qur'ân* mentions the mission of the Prophets (S), it relates to an individual report only. Wherever the expressions: "...and so said *Nûh*..."; "...and so said *Mûsâ*..."; "...and so said *Ibrâhîm*..." have occurred it represented a strong, irrefutable proof of the authoritative and unquestionable character of the individual report. Such proofs are found in innumerable verses of the Holy *Qur'ân*. Whereas we can find but a few verses in support of the *Khabar ʿAzîz*, *Khabar Mashhûr* and *Khabar Mutawâtir*, there are hundreds of verses pertaining to the individual report, which makes its proof more strong and unshakable than others. When Divine reports proceed from one person alone to all then one cannot help concluding that all Divine faiths and *Sharîcahs* rest upon individual report; and not *Khabar Mashhûr* or *Mutawâtir*. Considered thus, this kind of narrative acquires precedence over all other categories of narrative. It becomes all the more essential to subscribe to it as constituting the basis of all religions. Its negation would result in the collapse of all *Sharîcahs*. It is perhaps for this reason that the *Qur'ân* has furnished proof for it in one verse after another. The number of such verses run into the hundreds. Therefore holding belief in the *Khabar Fard* is more essential and obligatory than in the case of the others.<sup>7</sup>

### 17.1.3.2 THE REPORT OF A NON-PROPHET

If one still persists in saying that the personalities of the Prophets (A) were extraordinary and therefore stood on a special footing, and that the proof of

reports by ordinary persons can be furnished by instances of reports by ordinary persons only, and not those of extraordinary ones, we would reply that the Holy *Qur'ân* has shed light on this also and the proof of *Khabar Fard* can be found even in the reports of non-Prophets contained in its pages. For instance:

"And a man came from the uttermost part of the city, running. He said: 'O *Mûsâ*! Lo! The chiefs take council against thee to slay thee; therefore escape. Lo! I am of those who give thee good advice.' So he escaped from thence, fearing, vigilant."<sup>8</sup>

It is obvious that the man who carried the report to Prophet *Mûsâ* (A) was an ordinary person, and *Mûsâ* (A) believed him, which was but the report of one man. Mentally *Mûsâ* (A) accepted its effect in the form of fear and physically in his going. The Prophet *Mûsâ* (A) accepted the information as fully true and was effected by it as he felt that the reporter had nothing in him that would tell upon his credibility. And the reporter himself supported his statement by saying: "I am of those who give thee good advice." The inference drawn from this statement is that the reporter was emphasizing the fact that he was not influenced by personal desire nor was he bluffing on someone's instigation but that he was a well wisher of the Prophet (A) and had come to inform him out of sincerity.<sup>9</sup> This shows that the greatest attribute of a narrator is that he should have no ulterior motives and that his sincerity would make the report authentic. Thus, if an ordinary person comes to a Prophet (A) and he not only takes him at his word but acts upon his advice, then what greater and more valid proof could be forthcoming with regard to the authoritative nature of the *Khabar Fard*? And this too despite the fact that the probity and veracity of a non-Prophet are nothing as compared to that of a Prophet. A drop stands no comparison with the ocean; nevertheless the report of a non-Prophet was acknowledged as correct because the reporter was relating something that was strictly in accordance with the principles of narration; he was neither tainted nor motivated by any ulterior purpose, and was not led by any venal desire. The proof of the individual narrative has been provided by the *Qur'ân* not in one but so many ways. This shows that the *Qur'ân* has been very meticulous about proving this type of information, as if, against the negators of the *Hadîth*, the *Qur'ân* has emphasized that kind of narration which the negators of the *Hadîth* particularly evade, that is the individual narration which they do not consider worthy of any attention whatsoever.<sup>10</sup>

### 17.1.3.3 THE REPORT OF AN EVIL-LIVER

The *Qur'ân* has not only given examples in support of the *Khabar Fard* from the Angels,<sup>11</sup> Prophets and common people but, going further, or still more, going down the ladder, accepted individual reports by evil-livers also, subject to the condition of corroboration and investigation. Accordingly, Allâh has said:

"O ye who believe! If an evil-liver bringeth you tidings, verify it, lest ye smite some folk in ignorance and afterward repent of what ye did."<sup>12</sup>

This shows that even the report of an evil-living person can be reliable and enjoy veracity, provided it is duly established. It can serve as testimony even in important affairs. The nett result of all this is that the report of a single person is, according to the principles laid down in the *Qur'ân*, not fit for rejection or unreliable but after due scrutiny and investigation can be depended upon and prove testimony in important affairs. Restraint has only been laid upon acting on a report before investigation but not in absolute terms; otherwise Allâh would have said in clear terms that if an unreliable person brings you any news do not believe him at all; not that it should be accepted and considered reliable after investigation. The condition for inquiry was laid so that elements of unreliability which had crept into the information because of the evil -living of the reporter, should be eliminated and the information should become reliable.<sup>13</sup>

## 17.2 VARIETIES OF NARRATIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE NARRATORS

The Holy *Qur'ân* has not only shed light on the different basic kinds of *Hadîth* in relation to the number of narrators; it has furnished guidelines as well on their classification with respect to the attributes of the narrators; such that this classification serves as a criterion and standard for the remaining kinds of its categories too.

The second kind of classification of the *Hadîth* thus relates to the virtuous qualities of the narrators. It is according to these that the narrators are considered *Thiqah* (trustworthy), *Ghayr Thiqah* (untrustworthy), *Muctabar* (reliable) and *Ghayr Muctabar* (unreliable), and their grades, high or low, are determined. The basis of these virtues too has been determined by the

*Qur'ân* just as the standard number of narrators for narration based on numerical strength was prescribed by it.

### 17.2.1 SAHÎH LI~DHÂTIHI

The two qualifications which make a narrator acceptable are *cAdâlah* (probity and correct judgement) and *Dabt* (retentive memory). The *Qur'ân* has imposed the condition of sound judgement for testification in the court of law:

"And call to witness two just (*cadl*) men among you, and keep your testimony upright for Allâh."<sup>14</sup>

The second condition that the *Qur'ân* has postulated is that of sound memory and retentiveness, that is, the memory of the testifier should not be faulty, for which the express term is *Dabt* (retentiveness):

"And call to witness, from among your men, two witnesses. And if two men be not (at hand), then a man and two women, of such as ye approve as witnesses, so that if the one erreth (through forgetfulness) the other will remember."<sup>15</sup>

The verse has pointedly mentioned the provision of a corrective to women's forgetfulness<sup>16</sup>. Not because for men forgetfulness is not reprehensible and is not derogatory to it, but because there is a strong presumption of forgetfulness in women, since they have, in normal course, seldom to do with the courts of law and their understanding of affairs is not of such high order that they should be reliable, resulting in the necessity of someone else's succour. Thus the mental make-up of women requires, as it were, a prop. This distinction arises from a special situation and not variation in principle. Again, as the condition, "...of such as ye approve...", has been imposed for men, which necessitates the approval of the witness by the seeker of evidence, and all too obviously the choice will fall upon a person not deficient in memory or blameworthy, hence if memory and retentiveness have been explicitly mentioned in respect of women, in the case of men the will of the person who selects the witnesses has been stressed. Therefore according to the principle derived from this verse, sharp retentiveness and memory are necessary for testimony, and when testimony is but narration, it is necessary for report and narration as well, irrespective of whether the

reporter is a man or woman. By combining these two verses, we automatically reach the conclusion that on the basis of the *Qur'ânic* principle, only such testification shall be irrefutable and only such narrations shall be acceptable as shall have as their transmitters, persons who are sound in judgement and possess good retentiveness; they should not suffer from poor memory and unsound judgment. Such report or narrative, in the terminology of the science of the Tradition, is called *Sahîh li-Dhâtihi*, whether it is by one, two, three or more narrators. The *Sahîh li-Dhâtihi* narrative is thus basic with regard to the characteristics of the narrators, the foundation of which has been laid by the *Qur'ân*.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, if the narrators are of sound judgment and have a strong memory, and along with it, the chain of transmission is *musalsal* or *muttasil* (continuous or consistent) then this narration will be called a *Hadîth* intrinsically accurate (*Sahîh li-Dhâtihi*)<sup>17</sup> which represents a very high type of narration in view of the attributes of the narrator because he possess the highest degree of judgment and memory; the two attributes which make a narrator credible and trustworthy. A *Hadîth* falling within this category will, therefore, be considered fundamental. All other types of narration arise from addition, alteration, accretion and diminution in respect of the requisite merits of the narrator. For this reason it would be a derivative thereof.<sup>18</sup> For instance, if the narrator is devoid of the sense of right judgment, then this loss or deficiency will give rise to five basic defects called *Matâcin al-Hadîth* (Derogators of the Traditions) - namely, *Kidhb* (falsehood), *Tuhmah al-Kidhb* (ascription of falsehood), *Fisq* (evil-living), *Jahâlah* (ignorance) and *Bid'ah* (innovation). If a narrator is a liar, has been dubbed a liar, is an evil-liver or an ignorant person, and happens to introduce his own innovations, then he will not be considered *ʿAdil* (sound of judgment) and his report cannot be given credence.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, if the narrator does not possess sound memory, then this aphasic condition will lead to five weakness that render his report unreliable: *Fart al-Ghaflah* (excessive carelessness), *Kathrah al-Ghalah* (frequency of error), *Mukhâlifah al-Thiqah* (contradicting the trustworthy), *Wahm* (delusion) and *Sû' al-Hifz* (poor memory).<sup>20</sup> This means that if a narrator is negligent and careless; he is not alert, cautious and intelligent; is prolific in mistakes and listless; says something new, contrary to what is said by trustworthy persons; is whimsical and doubtful about his own report; possesses a poor memory and is forgetful, then he will not be called strong in memory and retentiveness. Hence his report will not be worthy of credence.<sup>21</sup>

## 17.2.2 SAHÎH LI-GHAYRIHI , HASAN LI-DHÂTIHI AND HASAN LI-GHAYRIHI

But there are degrees of these deficiencies in judgment and memory. If a *Hadîth* suffers in a slight degree from weakness in these two respects but has been narrated from other sources and is supported by a large number of narrators, then it is called *Sahîh li-Ghayrihi* (authentic, despite having this slight defect, due to contributing factors). If it is not redeemed and these slight defects persist then such a *Hadîth* would be called *Hasan li-Dhâtihi* (intrinsically good). If in such a state this defect is aggravated, but then, on the other hand, reported by a plurality of sources, the narration would be called *Hasan li-Gayrihi* (good, despite the deficiency, due to contributing factors).<sup>22</sup> The degree of reliability and credence of such *Ahâdîth* will be determined accordingly.

There are thus four basic kinds of *Ahâdîth* according to the types of narrators: the *Sahîh li-Dhâtihi*, the *Sahîh li-Ghayrihi*, the *Hasan li-Dhâtihi* and the *Hasan li-Ghayrihi*. Of these the most fundamental is the *Sahîh li-Dhâtihi* which is the highest of its kind. The other three kinds arise from some kind of deficiency. We have seen that the *Mutawâtir* kind is the basic type of narration with regard to numerical strength, and any shortcoming or weakness in it gave rise to the other three kinds.

If in the three kinds of *Ahâdîth* which depend upon the merits of the narrators, any weakness in the derogators is aggravated, this will lead to still other types of *Ahâdîth*, e.g. *Mawdûc*, where the judgment of the narrator is vitiated by falsehood; *Matrûk*, where the narrator is stigmatised for falsehood; *Mubham*, where the narrator is ignorant; *Shâdh*, where the narrator cannot hold things fast - a defect which makes him liable to excessive carelessness, prolificness in error, or gainsaying the trusted; *Mucallal*, where the narrator is victim to whims and attacks of oblivion; and *Mukhtalat*, where the narrator displays poor memory.<sup>23</sup>

Looked at closely, all these sub-varieties will be found to arise from the three principal ones, nay, from the one basic kind only, namely, the *Sahîh li-Dhâtihi*, because of the visitation of some kind of deficiency in different proportions and degrees. Hence all these would be called dichotomous branches of this kind which is the most perfect type. Therefore, the source of this one kind would be the source of all these - the *Qur'ân*. It is again the *Qur'ân* which has established the criterion of the particular conditions and merits of the *Sahîh li-Dhâtihi*, i.e. judgment and retentiveness, as the prerequisites of accepting or rejecting narrations.<sup>24</sup>

## 17.3 THE TEN DEFECTS

Further consideration will show that the *Qur'ân* has not only highlighted these two basic qualities with regard to the narrator's or reporter's characteristics - namely, sound judgement and memory - but has also clearly pointed out the ten defects which arises from the absence of or deficiency in these. Thus, while describing the authority of the *Qur'ân*, Allah almighty has shed light on the primary narrators in the transmissional chain, saying, the person narrating from Allâh is the Angel *Jibrâ'il*, while the Holy Prophet (S) reported from the latter. Casting light on this 'golden chain' and the attributes of its constituents the *Qur'ân* says:

"Indeed it (i.e.the *Qur'ân*) is the word of an honoured Messenger, mighty, established in the presence of the Lord of the Throne, (one) to be obeyed, and trustworthy; and your companion is not mad. Surely he beheld him on the clear horizon. Nor is this the utterance of a devil worthy to be stoned."<sup>25</sup>

### 17.3.1 THE ANGEL JIBRÂ'ÎL

#### 17.3.1.1 RASÛL

By "honoured Messenger" is meant the Angel *Jibrâ'îl*, who transmitted the *Qur'ân* to the Holy Prophet (S) and read it out to him. The *Qur'ân* has not said, since he is an angel, people should acknowledge his narration; that is, they should do so because of being overwhelmed by his majesty. What has been enjoined, on the other hand, is that his report should be acknowledged after being examined on the principles by which a narrative should be adjudged, and only then should it be considered acceptable.

Hence, being a Divine Messenger, in fact, means possessing knowledge of Allâh; the antithesis of knowledge is ignorance. Thus, by the very fact that the Angel *Jibrâ'îl* has been called the Messenger, he has been winnowed of ignorance which constitutes one of the factors that negate the veracity of a statement, report or narrative.<sup>26</sup> True Messengership necessitates, first and foremost, subservience and surrender of the Messenger himself to the message:

"And now have We set thee (O Muhammad) on a right way of (Our) command; so follow thou that (way)."<sup>27</sup>

Since a true follower can never be an innovator, the defect of *Bid'ah* (innovation) is also removed by the word *Risâlah* or Prophethood. The word *Risâlah* also confirms the merits of the report of the accredited authority, for a statement which has been reported by a person of unimpeachable authority, like a Messenger, will be acceptable as reality. The attribute of Apostleship therefore negates three things derogatory to narration - ignorance, innovation and the anti-authoritative approach.<sup>28</sup>

### 17.3.1.2 KARÎM

The second attribute mentioned about the Angel *Jibrâ'il* is that of his being *karîm* (honoured), for which, according to the following verse of the *Qur'ân*, *taqwâ* (piety or Allah consciousness) is necessary:

"Lo! The noblest of you, in the sight of Allâh, is the most pious."<sup>29</sup>

A *muttaqî* is a person who observes *taqwâ* (piety or Allâh consciousness). According to the *Qur'ân*, in matters of religion, *taqwa* means remembrance, assiduity, retentiveness, recalling and alertness:

"Lo! Those who are pious, when a thought of evil from the devil assaults them, they do but remember (Allâh's guidance) and behold they see (aright)."<sup>30</sup>

This should make it obvious that the *karîm* (honourable) and *muttaqî* (pious) cannot be careless, whimsical, of bad memory and prolific in errors. How otherwise could one be recalling Allâh constantly? Therefore, by virtue of *karâmah* the characteristics of excessive neglect, whimsicality, bad memory and excessive error are also quashed. The converse of *taqwâ* is *fisq* and *fujûr* (debouchery). Therefore both in the juridical and literal sense the opposite of the *muttaqî* is the *fâsiq*. Anyone who is, therefore, noble and pious will never be a *fâsiq* (debouch). The word *karim* negates *fisq*. Therefore by the characteristics of *karâmah*, all the five derogators of *Hadîth*, namely, excessive neglect, excessive errors, delusion, poor memory and excessive evil-living are completely negated.<sup>31</sup>

### 17.3.1.3 AMÎN

The third attribute is being *amîn*, or someone who holds a thing in trust, which is the root of the principles of narration. Probity is the opposite of *khiyânah* (perfidy) which in reporting involves both falsehood and ascription of falsehood. Probity negatives both of these. Thus, three detracting factors, namely, ignorance, innovation and opposition of the reliable, are eliminated by *Risâlah*. The five negators - excessive negligence, excessive errors, delusion, poor memory and evil-living - are eliminated by *karâmah*, while the two remaining ones, viz., falsehood and ascription of falsehood are removed by *amânah*. Thus in the Angel *Jibrâ'îl al-Amîn* (Gabriel the Trustworthy), all the vitiating elements of a narrative have been negated because of his being *amîn*.<sup>32</sup>

### 17.3.1.4 DHÎ QUWWAH , MAKÎN AND MUTÂC

At the same time the Angel *Jibrâ'îl* has been positively called *dhî quwwah* (powerful), as he is not one who would say anything under duress and knowingly distort narration. He has been also called one "established in the presence of the Lord of the Throne".<sup>33</sup> If the word *makîn* (firmly fixed) signifies 'staying', this would mean that those in Heaven are ever in 'proximity' to Allâh: they are not remote and therefore receive statements from close quarters.

The situation that arises from remoteness, namely, that they should 'hear' and report amiss, is improbable in their case. What they, therefore, report is immaculate both with respect to narration and 'hearing'. There is no mistake whatsoever in what is heard nor is there the least defect in words and narration, which, in the terminology of the Traditionists, are called *Tahammul* (bearing) and *Adâ'* (communication)<sup>34</sup>; that is to say, both the hearing and the communication of the report are firm and strong. Thus, the source of both the principles of the *Muhaddithûn* (Traditionists), namely, *Tahammul* and *Adâ'*, also proves to be the *Qur'ân*. If the meaning of the word *makîn* is taken to be one commanding respect, it follows that the persons mentioned in the verse are the denizens of the empyrean, most honoured and high-ranking in the 'Eyes' of Allâh; they are held in the highest esteem in the Court of Allâh. How can such favoured ones of Allâh distort His words?

Then the Angel *Jibrâ'îl* has been called *mutâc* (one to be obeyed) which shows his universal approbation and the highest degree of regard for his

report; that is, his words are so highly prized that the universe of Angels is ever eager to hear what he has to say. In sum, both before Allâh Almighty and His creation, the love and respect in which he is held has been made clear, thereby making prominent both the position of the narrator of the *Qur'ânic* revelation and the distinguishing traits of narration. At the same time, the contraries of these traits are also eliminated. Thus, it is established that the *Qur'ânic* revelation which was conveyed to the Prophet (S) by *Jibrâ'îl* is worthy of credence not only because it has been narrated by an angel but also because it fulfills to the most perfect degree the requirements of the principles of narration.<sup>35</sup>

### 17.3.2 THE PROPHET (S)

The second reporter of the *Qur'ân* is the last of the Prophets (S). In respect of his narration also the matter has not been confined to saying this only, that he is a Prophet, and the crown of Prophets and Messengers (A), and that, therefore, his narration should be accepted. Indeed, this would have constituted the strongest reason and stimulus for the acceptance of his report. But merely asserting this would not have furnished such proof in accordance with the principles of narration as would have been clinching even for the negators. Therefore the testimony of the second exalted narrator, the Holy Prophet (S), has been confirmed according to the principles of narration. Four qualifications were set down for him; of these, three are negative and one is positive. The negative ones are:

(1) He is not *majnûn* (insane).<sup>36</sup> Obviously the narration of an insane person cannot be worthy of credence; this, in effect, implies that the narrator must be sane.

(2) He should not be niggardly in conveying knowledge about the Unseen.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, he has public enlightenment in view. Evidently, if a person is stingy in imparting knowledge, he is prone to prevaricate in its communication so that the full text is never conveyed and the truncated report does not convey the full sense. This is the greatest foible of a narrative and is of bad faith. But a person who is inspired to benefit others and is devoid of niggardliness in conveying knowledge, which is the hallmark of all accomplished persons, would always endeavour to communicate faithfully, and it

would be impossible that any error should make way into his report.

(3) The *Qur'ân* is not the word of the accursed *Shaytân* (Satan)<sup>38</sup> but that revealed to and reported by the Holy Prophet (S). *Shaytân* is the fountainhead of all evils and wickedness, whereas the Prophet (S) is the well-spring of all that is good and noble, which establishes the fact that he is the compendium of excellences and accomplishments. This is enough to testify the veracity of a report.

(4) The Prophet (S) saw the Angel *Jibrâ'îl* on the clear horizon.<sup>39</sup> That is to say, the reporter from whom the Prophet (S) is receiving the revelation of the *Qur'ân* has been seen by him with his own eyes. This is a fundamental aspect of narration.

Thus, by establishing the all-comprehensive nature of the Prophet's (S) virtues, all the derogators have been eliminated just as was done in the case of the Angel *Jibrâ'îl*, and by mentioning the fact of his vision, the basis of narration has been laid on actual observation, which is something basic with regard to the principles of narration.<sup>40</sup>

## 17.4 SECTION SUMMARY

The four kinds of *Ahâdîth* from the standpoint of the number of narrators have been defined in the *Qur'ân*. The *Mutawâtir* (continuous narration), *Khabar Mashhûr* (a narration reported by three persons of unquestioned antecedents), *Khabar 'Azîz* (a narration reported by two persons of integrity) and *Khabar Gharib* (the individual report) are proved from the various verses of the *Qur'ân* to show how the number of narrators defines the nature of a narrative. This further shows that the foundations of all these basic kinds which arise from the number of narrators, more or less, and their multiplicity or otherwise, and which the *Muhaddithûn* have maintained in the books on the terminology of the *Hadîth*, have been laid by the *Qur'ân* itself. Similarly, that character and conduct which make their report acceptable, and those two basic virtues to which all the merits of the narrators gravitate, have also been determined by the *Qur'ân*, namely, sound

judgement and memory. The ten vitiating factors which grow out of the want or absence of these factors have their origin in the *Qur'ân* too.

As for the other kinds of *Ahâdîth* which have been described earlier, they are the products of the *Sahîh li-Dhâtihi*. These sub-varieties come into being because of want of the twin attributes of *cAdâlah* and *Dabt* in varying degrees and therefore all of them would be regarded as the ramifications and derivatives of the *Sahîh li-Dhâtihi* variety in proportionate measure as their existence is associated with this basic kind.

Thus it is the *Qur'ân* that has laid down the foundation of the science of the *Tradition* and its derivatives. This should make it obvious that not only the *Hadîth* as a class, but its basic kinds and characteristics have also been defined by the *Qur'ân*. What for? The answer is unequivocal. The *Qur'ân* did this because it needed exposition, and so acquainted the world with both the system of narration and the *Hadîth*, of which it was hitherto unaware. Previously men did not know what narration really implies and what its authority is, and what is the criterion for accuracy and inaccuracy. The *Qur'ân* made a distinction for the first time of the characteristics of the *Ahâdîth* with regard to the number of narrators and their merits. It also fixed the measure of how many kinds of reports should be possible in such a case and what ranks these reports should have in view of their reliability and evidence and so on. All this is so because the object was that, in this way, the Traditions of the Holy Prophet (S) should come before the commonality of mankind, blazing the trail of the living and perfect implementation of *Qur'ânic* commands, so that people should know what is the way of the most perfect of Prophets (S).

At the same time the high status of the *Muhaddithûn* has been made clear, for it is they who set forth the principles of narration, the foundations of which were laid by the *Qur'ân*; in effect, by following the *Qur'ân* their minds were able to extract all those principles and canons which lay hid in the *Qur'ân*.

*Isnâd* (chains of authority) and *Riwâyah* (narration) are, therefore, a distinguishing feature of Islam, which no other religion has, as it is the *Qur'ân* which has given us the basic principles governing the mode of determining the authenticity of a report, its investigation and exposition. The *Qur'ân* stands on these principles and so does its exposition, the *Hadîth*.

This distinctive feature of Islam proved intolerable to its enemies and their intellectual offspring, who were nurtured by their pernicious influence. So, "through envy from within their souls"<sup>41</sup>, as the *Qur'ân* says, they tried to obliterate this feature. Their line of attack was to raise doubts about the mode of narrative of both the *Hadîth* and the *Qur'ân* and so make the

simpleminded among the followers of Islam turn away from it in disgust. But He who is the real Guardian of faith and is its Revealer, guarded it, and rendered their efforts abortive. As a last resort, out of their malignity, and in the name of the *Qur'ân* itself, they conspired to sabotage the process of *Qur'ânic* revelation and its exposition, namely, the Prophetic narration. But the *Qur'ân* frustrated their efforts, making their machinations boomerang upon them. In connection with the *Hadîth* and narration, the *Qur'ân* has declared itself to be the source of the authoritative *Hadîth*, derogatory *Hadîth*, the *Hadîth* relating to the merits of the narrators, the number of narrators and the kinds of *Ahâdîth* in respect of their merits arising from their greater or lesser number, and various kinds of narrations etc., arising from their weakness or strength, so that no malevolent person should dare to make a stalking-horse of the *Qur'ân* itself to discredit its own exposition.

Therefore, the narrations of *Ahâdîth*, whether they depend upon the number of narrators or on their contents, can never go beyond the *Qur'ân* because it is their mainspring and they are not a product of human invention or fabrication. The names, titles and technical terms, however, have been determined by the scholars suited to their nature. This determination surely cannot mean that the facts are also the product of their ingenuity. Obviously when these standard principles of classification and sub-classification of the *Hadîth* into different categories and sub-categories have been established by the *Qur'ân*, the negation of *Hadîth* is in reality the negation of the *Qur'ân* and the denial of the authoritative stance of the *Hadîth* constitutes the denial of the authoritative stance of the *Qur'ân*.<sup>42</sup>

## THE SUBVERTERS OF HADÎTH

Allâh Himself has forewarned us clearly regarding the various types of saboteurs of the *Hadîth*; the devious ways in which they shall operate, and their pernicious intentions. This He has expressly done so that lovers of truth in the *Ummah* should remain alert to the designs and stratagems of such people.

### 18.1 THE FABRICATORS

The Holy Prophet (S) has sounded warnings in his Traditions about the different kinds of deniers of *Hadîth* and the devious modes they would adopt to discredit it. He described one class as emerging in the form of fabricators who will concoct *Ahâdîth*. The aim of such counterfeit or ersatz *Ahâdîth* would be to discredit the whole science of *Hadîth* so as lead to the denial thereof. Abu Hurayrah has quoted the Prophet (S) as having said:

"In later times such charlatans and liars will arise as will relate concocted *Ahâdîth* to you which neither you nor your forebearers could have ever heard. Beware of them lest they should lead you astray and instigate internicine strife amongst you."<sup>1</sup>

This is a prognostication about the persons who, apparently calling the *Qur'ân* and the *Hadîth* absolutely trustworthy, would subtly generate incredibility by coining *Ahâdîth* and mixing them with the genuine ones so that people at large may gradually lose their faith in the institution of the *Hadîth*.

### 18.2 THE NEGATORS

The second class of persons about whom the Prophet (S) has spoken is that of the negators who openly deny the Traditions in order to discredit or destroy them, and very cunningly, taking cover of the *Qur'ân*, contrive to put an end to its exposition, that is the *Hadîth*, by the *Qur'ân* itself. According to a narration by Miqdâd ibn Ma'ðikarib, the Prophet (S) said:

"Know that the *Qur'ân* has been revealed to me and its analogue (the *Hadîth*) also. Be alert! There will come a time when you will come across a well-fed person reclining on his couch saying: 'O people! Hold fast to the *Qur'ân*. Whatever is prohibited in it you should accept as prohibited and whatever has been allowed therein, consider permissible; (the *Ahâdîth* are not at all trustworthy)', although it is a fact that the Messenger of Allâh (S) has also prohibited many things (in the Traditions), just as Allâh has done (in the *Qur'ân*). See that the flesh of the domestic donkey is prohibited (by the *Hadîth*); so is that of animals with incisors (carnivores); etc., etc."<sup>2</sup>

This *Hadîth* has also disclosed the *raison d'être* behind the negation of the *Hadîth*. This would be caused by opulence because freedom from want and poverty, and luxurious indulgence would lead to scepticism about religion.<sup>3</sup> The *Qur'ân* has said:

"Nay, but verily man is rebellious, that he thinketh himself self sufficient."<sup>4</sup>

### 18.3 THE DISTORTERS

We have been apprised of another kind also which, while acknowledging the text of the *Hadîth*, distorts its meaning. Ostensibly admitting both the *Qur'ân* and the *Hadîth*, such people, nonetheless, regard themselves free to interpret them as they desire, considering their faculty reason to be the sole arbiter in determining signification and thus, exercising their subjective reasoning, endeavour to tamper with the meaning of the *Qur'ân* and the Traditions in such a way as to instigate a schismatic spirit within the *Ummah*. The Holy Prophet (S) therefore said:

"The Jews disintegrated into seventy-one sects and the Christians into seventy-two. And so shall my *Ummah* fragment into seventy-three sects; all of them but one shall be in Hell."<sup>5</sup>

This splitting up into different factions has occurred not exclusively because of the denial of the *Qur'ân* and the *Hadîth* outright but under the cover of affirmation, giving rise to seventy-three sects on doctrinal basis. This is

exactly the specious type of interpretation characteristic of the Jews and the Christians which led to seventy-two false sects among them and because of which the real tenets of the Pentateuch and the New Testament were gradually lost.

"They change words from the context and forgot a good part of the message that was sent to them."<sup>6</sup>

Allâh has informed of various kinds of men who disingenuously tamper with, misappropriate and ruthlessly assail Allah's guardianship of His message. Some are imposters, others liars, and yet others hankerers after the world. Some deny the wording of the *Qur'ânic* exposition (the *Hadîth*) and some its meanings and implications. Others will question its validity, throw ironic remarks and innuendos on its historicity and yet others will hold the *Qur'ân* itself to be a spurious and fabricated document and try to lure people away from Islam. Thus, some will deny the *Qur'ân* and some its exposition. These imposters and miscreants attempt to waylay the *Qur'ân* and the *Hadîth* in every possible way as regards its words, meanings, canons and principles. The exposition is an essential adjunct of the *Qur'ân* without which the Book of Allâh cannot be sustained at all. These evil-minded persons denied the exposition of the *Qur'ân* in a number of ways in order to sabotage it in furtherance of their nefarious designs. But thanks to the indefatigable endeavours of the scholars and the *Muhaddithûn* who discharged the duty of preserving the *Hadîth*, by devising scientific methods and techniques, and by making use of these very methods and modus operandi utterly smashed their machinations in respect of the denial of the Traditions, setting at naught all their insidious stratagems with cogent arguments and sound logic.

"Their will always be among the later generations, righteous people who will (expose and) refute the misinterpretations of the exaggerators, the undue assumptions and blank lies of the unrighteous and the vile misconstructions of the distorters and ignorant people (and thus nullify the nonsensical things said and professed by them)."<sup>7</sup>

One cannot but marvel at the elaborate arrangement made by the Divine Being that while He created these sacred means and agents (memorizers and *Muhaddithûn*) who preserved the *Qur'ân* and the *Hadîth*, He informed beforehand of the enemies of *Hadîth*, and their stratagems and various ways of denying the Traditions, so that the savants of the *Qur'ân* and *Hadîth*

should remain aware of their designs, craftiness and chicanery. This was part of Divine guardianship of the *Qur'ân* and the *Hadîth*.

For those who interfere with His word and its Exposition, exemplary punishments have been proclaimed. Despite these warnings, still these mischief-mongers and malfactors do not desist from their nefarious activities and due to their innate perversities, continue their subversive pursuits. They are often chastised, but this habit has become so ingrained in them that they cannot desist from the temptation of falling into it again and again. Their sense of moral values is lost and so they are incapable of seeing objectively or taking admonition.

However, Divine providence is engaged in safeguarding the *Qur'ân* and the *Hadîth*. The evil-workers are beleagued by the forces of truth. Sound reason and the principles of narration compel them to suffer humiliating defeat, but their very living depends upon the negation, fabrication, ridiculing of *Hadîth* and misguiding people. So Allâh Almighty, Who in all His wisdom created Shaytân with his destructive activities in order to prepare the way for unleashing and strengthening the powers of faith, created likewise the deniers of the *Qur'ân* and the *Hadîth* and their evil deeds in order to prepare the way for unfolding the powers of the *Qur'ân* and the *Hadîth*. Anyone who tried to strike at the twin foundations of the true faith, the *Qur'ân* and the *Hadîth*, fell into the pit which he himself had dug and suffered an ignominious defeat. Those sects which negated the *Qur'ân* and the *Hadîth* arose for a limited period and then fell to such depths that no trace of their existence has remained. But the *Qur'ân* and the *Hadîth* are still as resplendent as ever. The same fate which befell the distorters and fabricators of the *Hadîth* shall befall its negators too who expose it to ridicule.<sup>8</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The station of the Messenger of Allâh (S) and the nature and significance of his mission is an inexhaustable subject of study. Much more can be written on it than we have attempted, and hundreds of *Qur'ânic* verses could be cited. We will close this brief discussion with the observation that when it is established beyond doubt from the *Qur'ân* that the Prophet (S) is the leader, the guide, the ruler, the judge, the arbiter and the one to be obeyed, etc., it follows automatically that wholehearted compliance with his commands, instructions, decisions and pronouncements in respect of religion - whether these be prescriptive or prohibitive - is an essential condition of faith.

During his lifetime the Prophet (S) was accepted in this capacity by the *Ummah* and this significance was attached to his sayings and good example. The Companions who had seen and heard him personally took exceptional pains to maintain and preserve the entire record of his sayings and deeds and they handed it down to succeeding generations with utmost care, conscientiousness and attention. In subsequent decades, the Almighty Creator blessed the best, most meritorious members of the *Ummah* with great good fortune. He granted them the means to compile, arrange, examine, study, criticize, evaluate, learn, teach, translate, explain, preserve and propagate, the enormous volume of the *Sunnah* and *Hadîth*, and to develop various branches of learning pertaining thereto and in a hundred other ways serve the cause whose glory has not been equaled by any other community. Indeed, though some fourteen hundred years have elapsed since the passing away of the blessed Prophet (S), the radiance of his sayings and good example is still with us to guide the steps of the seekers of truth - just as it was during the earliest phase of Islam.

Such providential care for the preservation of the teachings of the Prophet (S) was, in fact, necessary after the termination of the glorious order of Prophets (A). Since no Messenger of Allâh was to be raised up after Prophet Muhammad (S) until the Day of the Final Judgement; since he was to function as the Divine Messenger to the end of time, it was essential that his precepts, maxims, exhortations and good example remained complete and intact, unchanged and unadulterated, as long as the human race endured on earth. And this so that people could derive the same inspiration and enlightenment from them as those did who were blessed enough to affirm

faith in his luminous example during his own lifetime. Today no objector or habitual fault-finder would deny that such an arrangement by the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds has consistently held good for the last fourteen centuries, and we firmly believe that it will continue to do so in time to come. Out of His infinite Mercy, Allâh will not cease to produce men ready to serve His lofty design and purpose whenever and however.<sup>9</sup>

## NOTES

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1 This introductory address constitutes a portion of various narrations of '*Khutbah al-Hâjah*', a standard form of opening address used by the Prophet (S) on certain occasions of import, such as the Friday sermon, the marriage ceremony etc.. It has been authentically related in various compilations of the Sunnah, such as Imâm Muslim's *Sahîh Muslim*.

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- 15 Bukhârî, *Sahîh*, I, 1.
- 16 *Qur'an*, 7: 158.
- 17 Muslim, *Sahîh*, tr. Siddiqi, iii.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER FIFTEEN

- 1 *Qur'ân*, 59: 7.
- 2 *Qur'ân*, 4: 80.
- 3 Tayyib, *The Qur'ân*, 116.
- 4 Suyûtî, *Tadrîb al-Râwî*, Dâr al-Râ'id, Cairo, 1970, 142.
- 5 Thanwi, *Answer*, 70.
- 6 Tayyib, *The Qur'ân*, 117.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 117.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 117.
- 9 See pp. 59-70.
- 10 Badrân, *Usûl*, 400.
- 11 Thanwi, *Answer*, 72.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER SIXTEEN

- 1 Tayyib, *The Qur'ân*, 121.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 122.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 122.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

1 *Qur'ân*, 36: 13-14.

2 Badrân, *Usûl*, 85.

3 Tayyib, *The Qur'ân*, 123.

4 *Qur'ân*, 65: 2.

5 Tayyib, *The Qur'ân*, 123.

6 For details refer to the index of Yusuf Ali's translation of the *Qur'ân*.

7 Tayyib, *The Qur'ân*, 124; also see Kamali, *Principles*, 71.

8 *Qur'ân*, 28: 20-21.

9 Tayyib, *The Qur'ân*, 129.

10 *Ibid.*, 129.

11 *Qur'ân*, 69: 40.

12 *Qur'ân*, 49: 6.

13 Tayyib, *The Qur'ân*, 130.

14 *Qur'ân*, 65: 2.

15 *Qur'ân*, 2: 282.

16 As for women we are aware of the cyclical psychological strains that she has to encounter. The Symptoms during early pregnancy, the anti-natal and post-natal depressions, the phenomenon of menopause, the physiological and psychological problems due to infertility and the psychological problems faced after miscarriage. It is under these circumstances that women can experience extraordinary psychological strains giving rise to depression, tension, insecurity, lack of concentration, aggressive behaviour, mood swings and short term memory loss. We must also not overlook the fact that women are known to be more sensitive and emotional than men. Women are also less familiar with business procedures than men as their field of work is usually in the home. Therefore women may be liable to commit mistakes in this respect. Further two women will share the responsibility of giving testimony and will give one another the desired company and moral support that is often needed in these tense and often intimidating situations. A women by her own biological and psychological constitution faces many such problems. It does not however make her inferior to man but it does illustrate that she is different.

16 Tayyib, *The Qur'ân*, 133.

17 Azami, *Studies*, 62.

18 See Sibâcî, *Sunnah*, 95.

19 *Ibid.*, 95.

20 Tayyib, *The Qur'ân*, 132.

21 *Ibid.*, 132.

22 See Azami, *Studies*, 60-62.

23 Tayyib, *The Qur'ân*, 133.

24 *Ibid.*, 133.

25 *Qur'ân*, 81: 19-25.

26 Badrân, *Usûl*, 139.

27 *Qur'ân*, 45: 18.

28 Tayyib, *The Qur'ân*, 135.

- 29 *Qur'ân*, 49: 13.
- 30 *Qur'ân*, 7: 201.
- 31 Tayyib, *The Qur'ân*, 136.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 136.
- 33 *Qur'ân*, 81: 20.
- 34 Azami, *Studies*, 16-24.
- 35 Tayyib, *The Qur'ân*, 137.
- 36 *Qur'ân*, 81: 22.
- 37 *Qur'ân*, 81: 24.
- 38 *Qur'ân*, 81: 25.
- 39 *Qur'ân*, 81: 23.
- 40 Tayyib, *The Qur'ân*, 138.
- 41 *Qur'ân*, 2: 109.
- 42 Tayyib, *The Qur'ân*, 140.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

- 1 Tabrizî, *Mishkât*, I, 55.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 57.
- 3 Tayyib, *The Qur'ân*, 150.
- 4 *Qur'ân*, 96: 6-7.
- 5 Tabrizî, *Mishkât*, 61.
- 6 *Qur'ân*, 5: 13.
- 7 Tabrizî, *Mishkât*, 56.
- 8 Tayyib, *The Qur'ân*, 152.
  
- 9 Azami, *Sunnah*, 40.

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## GLOSSARY

- (A)**: abbreviation of 'Upon whom be peace'.  
**cadl**: justice, upright and just.  
**cadâlah**: justice, uprightness of character.  
**âhâd**: solitary Hadith, report by a single person.  
**ahâdîth** (pl. of **Hadîth**): narratives and reports of the deeds and sayings of the Prophet (S).  
**ahkâm** (pl. of **hukm**): laws, values and ordinances.  
**câmm**: general, unspecified.  
**caql**: intellect, rationality, reason.  
**asl**: root, origin, source.  
**âyah** (pl. **âyât**): lit. sign, indication; a section of the Qur'ânic text often referred to as a verse.  
**bâtil**: null and void.  
**bayân**: explanation, clarification.  
**bid'ah**: innovation in religious rites and principles.  
**fiqh**: the understanding and application of Islamic law.  
**fard**: obligatory, obligation.  
**fâsid**: corrupt.  
**fâsiq**: a flagrant, intentional wrongdoer.  
**hadîth** (pl. **ahâdîth**): narratives and reports of the deeds and sayings of the Prophet (S).  
**hajj**: the once-in-a-lifetime obligation of pilgrimage to Makkah.  
**hukm** (pl. **ahkâm**): law, value, ruling  
**ijmâc**: consensus of opinion.  
**ijtihâd**: lit. exertion; tec. the reasoning process by which Islamic laws are deduced after thorough research.  
**jihâd**: the struggle to establish or spread Islam whether it be physical or spiritual; the term is commonly used in reference to actual battle.  
**khabar**: news, report; also a synonym for Hadîth.  
**khalîf**: lit. successor, tec. a title given to the leader of all Muslims.  
**khâss**: specific, a word or a text which conveys a specific meaning.  
**kidhb**: lying, falsehood.  
**masjid**: house of worship in Islam.  
**mawdûc** (pl. **mawdûcât**): fabricated, forged.  
**nass** (pl. **nusûs**): text, explicit textual ruling.  
**qâdî**: judge.  
**qiyâs**: analogical deduction.

**rajm**: stoning to death.

**riwâyah**: narration, transmission.

**(S)**: abbreviation of 'May the blessings and peace of Allâh be upon him'.

**sahâbah**: lit. companion; tec. anyone who saw Prophet Muhammad (S) and died as a Muslim.

**sahîh**: valid, authentic, accurate

**salâh**: formal obligatory prayers.

**sanad**: basis, authority, proof.

**sujûd**: prostration in salah.

**sunnah**: lit. practice, precedent; tec. the Prophetic precedent consisting of his sayings, actions and silent approvals.

**tâbi'ûn**: lit. followers; tec. those who met and studied under the guidance of the Sahâbah and died as Muslims.

**taqwâ**: the protection of self from the wrath of Allâh by doing what He has commanded and avoiding what He has forbidden.

**ta'wîl**: allegorical interpretation.

**tawâtur**: continuous recurrence, continuous testimony.

**ulamâ'** (sing. **âlim**): lit. scholars; tec. Islamic scholars.

**ummah**: the faith-community of Islam.

**usûl** (sing. **asl**): lit. origin; tec. fundamental principles.

**wahî**: divine revelation.

**wudû'**: ritual ablution with clean water.

**zakâh**: compulsory\institutionalised charity.

**zannî**: speculative, doubtful.

**zâhir**: manifest, apparent.