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Meeting 1: Definition, Significance, Branches

Definition

'Hadith' literally means a new word or thing, the antonym of which is 'Qadim' meaning 'old'. The plural form of Hadith is 'Ahadith'. Thus, the Holy Quran in this sense is a 'Hadith', nay 'the best Hadith'. The Almighty Allah has referred to the Quran in several Ayaat as 'Hadith'. [For instance, see: 52:34, 53:59, 39:23]

'Hadith' in the expression of Muslims as well as in this study is the quotation of the saying, the action or the confirmation of the Prophet of Islam (S). The Shia extend the meaning of the 'Hadith' to include that of Fatima Al-Zahra (a.s.) and the 12 Imams of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s.). Their sayings also include their verbal or written words. It also includes all their words whether their addressees are people or God such as their supplications.

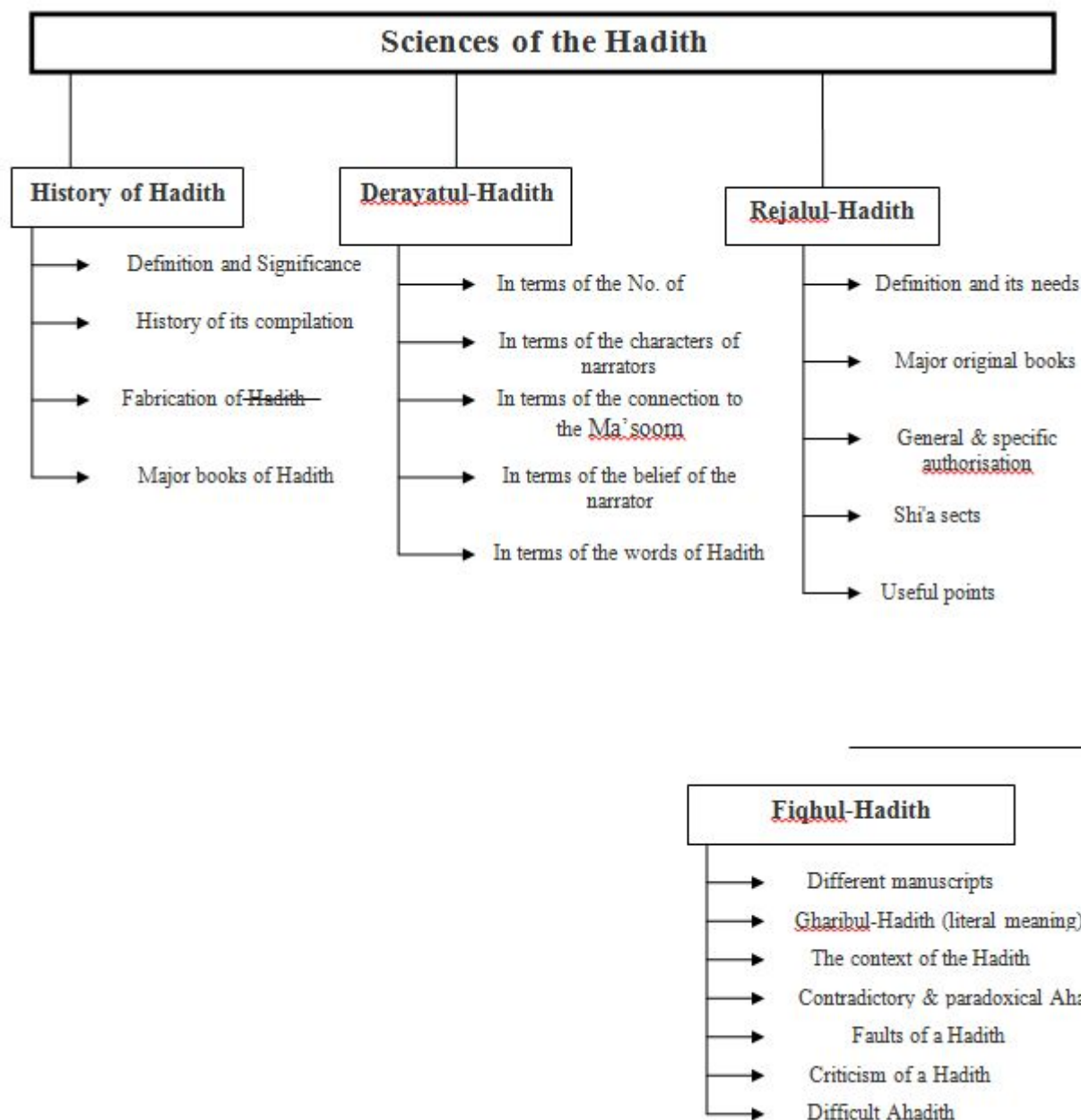
The Sunnis usually extend the meaning of the Hadith to include the sayings of the Companions of the Prophet (S) as well as the Companions of the Companions (Taabe'een).

Hadith is sometimes called 'Rewayah' (quoted), 'Khabar' (news), 'Sunna' (tradition and the way of life) and 'Athar' (report). Hadith is usually translated in English into 'narration'.

Hadith and Hadith Qodsi

Hadith is different from the Hadith Qodsi (Holy saying) in that Hadith is the saying of the Ma'soom that he by divine inspiration or revelation utters in explanation of the religious matters. Hadith Qodsi is the Words of God that a Prophet quotes from the Almighty Allah. Hadith Qodsi is free from the challenge of miracle and it is not part of the Quran.

The examples of Hadith Qodsi are quotation of Prophet David (a.s.), Prophet Moses (a.s.) and Prophet Muhammad (S) from God. For instance, the Prophet of Islam (S) said: "The Almighty Allah says: Fasting is mine and I reward it (or I am the reward of it). [1](#)



Proofs for the Significance of Hadith in Islam

Rational proof

The holy Quran is the first and the most important source of knowledge in Islam. Nonetheless, the holy Quran includes only the general principles of the prosperity of man in here and in the hereafter. It is for this reason that Muslim scholars whether Shia or Sunni asserted that the complete denial of the Hadith and the claim of 'the Book of Allah suffices us' will lead to nothing other than distortion of Islam and denial of the necessary aspects of Islam. Therefore, to understand the major portions of Islam one has no choice but to be well acquainted with the Sunna of the Prophet (S) and the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s.).

Quranic Proofs

To practice and adhere to the Quran necessitates referring to the Hadith. The Almighty God in various Ayaat has referred the Muslims to the Sunna of the Prophet (S). The following Ayaat are some examples in which the explanations of the details of the religion is left to the Prophet of Islam (S):

مَا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَى فَلِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ كَيْ لَا يَكُونَ دُولَةً بَيْنَ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ مِنْكُمْ ۚ وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

"Whatsoever the Messenger gives you take it and whatsoever he forbids you abstain (from it)."

59:7

وَلَوْلَا أَنْ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْجَلَآءَ لَعَذَّبَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابُ النَّارِ

ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ شَاقُّوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ اللَّهَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

"Nor does he speak of (his own) desire. It is only a revelation revealed." 53:3-4

بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ ۚ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

"And We have sent down unto you that you may explain clearly to them what is sent down to them and that they may give thought." 16:44

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

"Indeed in the Messenger of Allah you have a good example to follow." 33:21

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ ۚ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ ۚ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

"Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and obey those of you who are in authority (the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt)." 4:59

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَىٰ ۚ وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

"Allah wishes only to remove all evil deeds from you O Family of the Prophet and to purify you with a thorough purification." 33:33

Prophetic Recommendations for Protection and Memorization of the Hadith

The followings are some examples:

1. Recommendations for Narrations of Hadith: "Know the status of people to us according to their narrations from us." Narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s.).[2](#)

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) narrated from his father Imam Baqir (a.s.), "My dear son. Know the status of the Shia according to their narrations and knowledge. For surely the knowledge is understanding of the Hadith and by understanding the Hadith a believer will be elevated to the highest level of faith."[3](#)

The Prophet of Islam (S) on the day of Mina said, "May Allah bloom the face of a slave of God who hears my words and understands them and pass it those who did not hear it. So, how many people who transfer knowledge without understating it, and how many people who transfer knowledge to the one who is more learned than them."[4](#)

Muawieh Bin Ammar said to Imam Sadiq (a.s.), "There is a person who narrates so many Hadith from you and spreads it among people. He makes the hearts of your followers strong. On the other hand, there is another worshipping person who is also one of your followers but does not narrate that many Hadith from you. Which one is more virtuous? The Imam replied, 'The one who narrates many of our Ahadith and distributes them among people and strengthens the hearts of our followers is more virtuous than one thousand worshippers.'[5](#)

2. Recommendations for the writing of the Hadith: The Prophet of Islam (S) said, "Whoever writes from me a knowledge or a Hadith so far as that knowledge or Hadith remains a reward will be written for him."[6](#)

A man from Ansar (the habitants of Madina who helped the Migrants) used to attend the sessions of the Prophet (S), listen to his sermons in awe, yet he could never remember the sermons of the Prophet (S) after he left. When he complained to the Prophet (S) the Prophet (S) said pointing to the man's hand, "Seek the help of your hand i.e. write my words down."[7](#)

3. Recommendations for the Memorization of Forty Hadith: Imam Kadhem (S) quoted from the Prophet of Islam (S): "Whoever Muslim memorizes forty Hadith that Muslims need in the matter of the religion on the day of Judgement the Almighty God will raise him as a learned scholar."[8](#)

The Prophet of Islam (S) in his recommendations to Imam Ali (S) said, "O Ali! Whoever from my Ummah memorizes forty Hadith seeking by that the pleasure of the Almighty God and the Hereafter, the Almighty God will associate him on the Day of Judgement with the Prophets and the truthful and the witnesses

and the righteous people, and how good associates are they."^{[9](#)}

Such Ahadith have been the motivation of tens of scholars throughout history to compile books named Al-Arbaeen (Forty Hadith) such as the Arbaeen of the Late Sheikh Bahaei and the Arbaeen of the Late Imam Khomeini.

4. The tradition of the earlier learned Muslims: Jabbar Bin Abdullah Al-Ansari heard that Abdullah Bin Anis has heard a Hadith from the Prophet (S) concerning being unfair to people, the Hadith that Jabbar had no knowledge of. He purchased a camel and travelled for a month to find Abdullah in Damascus only to hear the Hadith directly from Abdullah and return home! It is narrated from Abu Qolabeh Basri (died in 104 AH) that he resided in Madina for three years to hear a Hadith from the main narrator of it.^{[10](#)}

As important as the Hadith is, unfortunately it has not always been preserved in its immaculate origin. Thus, it has also become the source of all sectarianism and divisions in Islam. This is a very controversial topic with which we shall deal in the next lesson.

^{1.} Al-Majlesi; Beharul-anwaar, vol.96,p.252

^{2.} Al-Majlesi, Beharul-Anwaar, vol.2, p. 150

^{3.} Al-Majlesi, Beharul-anwaar, vol.2, p. 184

^{4.} Ibid

^{5.} Al-Majlesi, Beharul-anwaar, vol.2, p. 145

^{6.} Al-Hendi, Kanzul-Ommal

^{7.} Al-Majlesi, Beharul-anwaar, vol.2, p. 152

^{8.} Al-Majlesi, Beharul-anwaar, vol.2, p. 153

^{9.} Ibid

^{10.} Sobhi Saleh, Uloomul-Hadith, p.47

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