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"He is not to blame for the slips, to some of which I have referred, since those who are exonerated of defect or deficiency or slips being rarely found nowadays."

Adwa' 'ala al-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyyah

A weighty effort and burden that only very few people can undertake and shoulder nowadays.

This is a book for which its author exerted a toil that can never be exerted but only by a very few people who can be enumerated in the present days, where intellectual laziness prevails, and comfort and good health be preferred to diligence and hardship and labour.

Anyone reading this book attentively and deliberately will verily observe the great deal of effort exerted by the author, who kept on, throughout long years, going through voluminous books and references. The books which the researchers could never endure going through, due to the abundance of chains and their repetition, plurality and mess of narrations, reiteration of khabar al–wahid for numerous times at different occasions.

The least to be said about reading such books is that they cause readers to grow tired and become bored and weary. It is hard enough for man to toil himself in reading the widely–known Sunnah books, making comparison between the traditions reported in them on the *nass* (text) and the *asanid* (chains of transmitters) with which this *nass* was reported, and searching after that for the *rijal* constituting those *asanid* through the relevant books.

It is sufficient to mention that the author (of this book) has read 'al–Muwatta' of Malik, with Sahih al–Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan Abi Dawud, Sunan al–Tirmidhi, Sunan Ibn Majah and Musnad Ahmad. However he has gone through lengthy expositions (*shuruh*) for some of these books, and through many other lengthy and short books compiled on interpretation of the *hadith* texts, *rijal* of the *asanid*, and the Prophet's *sirah* (conduct) and also the classes (*tabaqat*) of narrators. At the end of the book he has recorded the titles of the books he has read and investigated attentively, or referred to when writing his book. Enough be for anyone to look at these titles to realize how much forbearance, sufferance and

meditation exerted by the author, toward that which he read. This in itself indicates a strenuous effort and heavy burden that can never be undertaken nowadays but only by very few people, as previously said.

This being the first merit to be recorded for the author of this book, which I have read twice, witnessing the author's stating within the fold of his book all the books he confirmed and referred to. It is quite clear evidence indicating his non-practising exaggeration nor multiplication when he recorded these books among the references, but he in fact has extensively and accurately benefitted from them all.

The theme of this book is really a critical and valuable one that people nowadays shrank from indulging in, and rather be so afraid and scared of it...fearing their pens slip or be a cause for instigating the dissatisfaction of the conservative people who opining that such kind of knowledge is to be sacred or like an inviolable thing liable only for reporting and quotation. This, while criticism, going deeply and giving verdicts all being matters into which no one is entitled to plunge.

Thus, the author has added to the merits of forbearance and tolerance, and exerting oneself for the sake of researching and verification, another advantage which is having courage to seek truth and proclaiming it whenever feeling quite assured of. On this way he never feared any blame or objection, being ready all the time for debating his opinions and defending what is established for him to be the truth.

So the subject is truly critical and valuable, i.e. scrutinizing all the traditions reported to us to be uttered by the Prophet (S), and distinguishing the correct ones from other than them, so as Muslims be assured of whatever is reported to them from the Messenger of Allah (S). The author has persisted in citing utterances ascribed to the Prophet while he has never uttered them, but they were composed and attributed to him for different purposes. Some of them were foisted by a group of Jews showing up Islam and piety, inventing things from their own, ascribing some to the Prophet, and foisting some others into the Torah, while having nothing to do with the Prophet or the Torah.

Some of them were foisted into sermons and stories with the intention of inviting people toward virtues and loving good and abstaining from (committing) sins. So they provoked people's desires and intimidated them, never disdaining from (falsely) ascribing utterances to the Prophet believing them to have more influence over people than speech of preachers and punishment; beside other things were foisted for flattering the caliphs and rulers, and seeking to find favour with them.

Beside other things invented by those having controversy on *kalam* and *fiqh* (jurisprudence), for defending their views in these two sciences, and some other things foisted with the intention of propaganda for some political parties, in the primeval ages. Further, there were individuals indulged extensively in fabricating many traditions to make people in general and the upper class in particular, believe them to be of abundant knowledge and accurate awareness of the Prophet's sayings and deeds.

All that had its considerable effect in corrupting the minds and causing views of many people to deviate from the straightforwardness in comprehending the religion and conceiving the Prophet as he should be

conceived by all Muslims, free from all that absurdity which was falsely ascribed to him while he being totally exempted from it all. Besides, this conduct was a means for opponents and enemies of Islam to find fault with and assault, unjustly and slanderously, the *Din* and the Messenger who brought it.

The former *muhaddithun* have taken notice of all that, exerting their utmost to pick out the veracious traditions, cleansing them from the lies of the falsifiers and affectation of the pretenders. The method they followed in this exertion was investigating the biography of the *rijal* who reported the *hadith* throughout epochs, till it was written down. They used to follow up every and each one of these *rijal*, verifying his being of pure conduct, sincere faith in Allah and His Messenger, earnest in telling the truth all the time and in his speech about the Prophet in particular. It is really a commendable and fruitful effort that was exerted by those who are well–versed among the *'ulama'* of *hadith*, making their best of the job in the extreme.

This effort, despite its strenuousness and productivity, could never be enough, since the most difficult and complicated job is to study life of people, trying to recognize its details and minute matters. May be you search and investigate without managing to discover any reality about people or their minute mysteries, or what is concealed in their minds, or any sort of weakness in their souls and conduct they insist on hiding.

Another effort to be added to this one is to study the text itself. The man might be sincere and trusted on the outside, in a way that when giving testimony it be accepted by all judges, but Allah alone is aware of all secrets and whatever is concealed in minds and kept inside hearts. The *rijal* from whom he reported the *hadith* might be truthful and trustworthy like him, whose testimony is verily approved by judges, but their hearts harbour evil intentions that they hide from people.

Therefore, we have to deeply investigate and verify the *hadith* that he reports from his likes among the just narrators, to know to what extent it complies with the Qur'an to which doubt can never reach nor suspicion can be ascribed to from any side. That is due to the fact that the Qur'an has never reached us through narrators, individuals or groups, but it was conveyed through generations of the Islamic *Ummah*, concurring unanimously on reporting it in the form we are acquainted with today.

The Qur'an was never reported by these generations through memory but in its written form, that was inscribed during the Prophet's lifetime, collected during caliphate of Abu Bakr. Then it was written down on codics and sent abroad to all countries during caliphate of Uthman. Thus in it the written narration and that learnt by heart were brought together with both being identical to each other, leaving no room for any doubt to be raised about each text of the Qur'an, due to the fact that they all reached us through an unequivocal way.

This is true also concerning many of the Prophet's acts and deeds, which were not reported by some individual or group but rather through the Islamic *Ummah*, generation from another, like the five ordained prayers which Allah prescribed without details, but were exposed and explained by the Prophet, when he

established them with his Companions (as their imam), in the form the *Ummah* concur today.

This can be applied too in respect of *zakat* (alms–due), *hajj* (pilgrimage) and fasting of the month of Ramadan, some of whose rules were elaborated by Allah in the Qur'an and by the Prophet through his way of fasting and teaching his Companions how to fast. So, when any Prophetic tradition being reported to us, we have to investigate (the veracity of) its text to see its being non–contradictory to the Qur'an or incompatible to the Prophet's Sunnah and acts reported through authentic chain of transmitters (*mutawatir*). When noticing a bit or much incongruity in it we would reject it, with being at heartease toward rejecting it, since the Prophet was just an interpreter of the Qur'an and demonstrator of its general precepts.

And thus was the practice of A'ishah. As when she was told that some of the Companions were claiming that the Prophet had seen his Lord on the night of ascension (*mi'raj*), she said to them: I've been shocked of what you said. Then she recited the holy verse:

"Vision perceiveth Him not, and He perceiveth (all) vision; He is the Subtile, the All-Aware." (6: 103).

Again she was told: through some of the Prophet's Companions that he (S) said: The dead man is tormented because of the lamentation of his family members. But she rejected this *hadith*, reciting the Almighty's saying:

"... and no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another." (6: 164)

The upright among the Prophet's Companions were feeling so restrained and hesitant of reporting any tradition from the Prophet. Further, Umar used to be so severe against anyone narrating abundantly the Prophet's traditions, and even he would beat those narrators with his gem (*durrah*), as he did with Abu Hurayrah, threatening him with exile out of the Medina toward his homeland in Yemen, if he would resume reporting the traditions. It is reported that the Prophet himself has forbidden the writing down of his traditions, never liking other than the Qur'anic verses being inscribed from him.

All this was stated by the author in his book, without contriving it himself, but it being something all ingenious among Muslim scholars used to utter and state in their books, as practised by Ibn Taymiyyah and his disciple Ibn al–Qayyim and others. But the traditionists have forgotten or turned away from this, the fact that caused confusion and misconception among people regarding whatever is related to *hadith*. The author's favour in demonstrating this fact, particularly in the present age, lies in creating the

opportunity for reading and observing it by those desiring their religion to be ameliorated and be immune against any confusion or miscellany.

However, the author has exceeded proper bounds in some places. It is out of scope here to refer to all of these places and occasions, for sake of brevity and evading extravagance in prolongation, but I suffice with citing some examples.

Let's take Ka'b al-Ahbar, who was a Jew that embraced Islam during the reign of Umar. We are informed by the narrators that he apprised Umar of his being slain within three nights. When asked by Umar about its proof and evidence, he claimed that it could be found in the Torah. Umar was astonished at hearing that his name be referred to in the Torah. But Ka'b told him that what was mentioned in the Torah was his attribute and not his name.

The next day he came to him saying: Only two days are left (for his murder). On the third day he came to him in the morning exclaiming: Two days have passed and only one is left...and you will be verily killed tomorrow. As that day approached, and during morning prayer, the non–Arab slave came toward him (Umar) and stabbed him while he was arranging the rows for (performing) the prayers. The author affirms that Umar was murdered due to a plot hatched and engineered by Hurmuzan, with collaboration of Ka'b, assuring that this conspiracy was certain in whose certainty no doubt could be raised but only by the ignorant and illiterate people.

I want to assure the author that I am one of those illiterate people, since I doubt this intrigue so intensely, never considering it more than an imagination. As that wretched slave killed himself before questioning him. Ubayd Allah ibn Umar also hastened in slaying Hurmuzan before any investigation. While Ka'b al-Ahbar survived for seven or eight years, without being interrogated or accused by anyone with the charge of collaboration in this plot. He most often used to frequent to Uthman. Then he departed Medina betaking himself toward Hams, residing in it till his death in the 32 Hijrah year. So how could the author emphasize, first of all, the occurrence of this conspiracy, and collaboration of Ka'b in it on the other hand.

However, all Muslims became so furious and displeased at the hasty move of Ubayd Allah ibn Umar in slaying Hurmuzan out of ignorance and calumny against him, without handing him to the Caliph, or establishing the testimony against him, since he has, in a way or another, participated in murdering his father. A group of the Prophet's Companions insisted on the Caliph (Uthman) to enforce the determined punishment (*hadd*) against Ubayd Allah, as he killed a Muslim man without introducing him to be tried by the ruler, and without establishing any proof against him confirming that he has slain Umar. Despite all that, Uthman pardoned him, fearing that people would say: Umar was killed yesterday, and today his son is to be killed. This pardon was counted by those who rebelled against Uthman as one of his blunders.

When Ali (a.s.) came to power, he was determined to punish Ubayd Allah for the crime he perpetrated. But the latter escaped Ali and sought shelter with Mu'awiyah, under whose protection he lived in

security, till he was killed in the Battle of Siffin. It is known that Uthman has never inquired Ka'b about anything, with no one accusing him with any charge. He departed the Medina toward the Sham where Mu'awiyah was its governor. He, without being questioned by Mu'awiyah about anything, lived there till he died. So what is the source or the evidence for this emphasis, upon which the author has persisted to the extent he damned Ka'b, though he was unfit for that? What is commonly known about Ka'b is that he has embraced Islam, and it is known too that to curse him by Muslims being impermissible.

Another example, is that his (author's) claim that the motive behind Abu Hurayrah's keeping the Prophet's company was not affection toward him, or seeking to acquire the religiosity and guidance he had, but he accompanied him out of the desire to fill and satiate his abdomen, claiming that he (Ka'b) was a destitute and his sustenance was provided by the Prophet (S). For proving this, the author cites a hadith reported by Ahmad ibn Hanbal and al-Bukhari too.

But the same *hadith* was reported by Muslim from Abu Hurayrah, the text of which being more expressive and clear–cut than the one reported by al–Bukhari and Ibn Hanbal. Abu Hurayrah was claiming that he was serving the Prophet in return for satiating his abdomen (hunger). And there is difference between one who says he was serving, and one saying he was keeping the company of. In such cases, having good opinion of someone is worse than having evil one. And I never surmise that Abu Hurayrah has come forward with those coming from Yemen toward the Prophet (S), neither for declaring allegiance to him nor for learning religion under his hand, but only for filling his abdomen.

This is verily exaggeration in interpretation and evil-mindedness. The author is so severe and stern toward Abu Hurayrah that I am afraid he has gone somewhat to the extreme. As we know that Abu Hurayrah was prolific in reporting the traditions from the Prophet, and that Umar used to be so strict against him in this respect, with some of the Prophet's Companions disapproving many of the traditions he reported, charging him with depending extensively upon Ka'b al-Ahbar in his reporting. It was feasible for the author to record all those remarks in an objective way, as is said, without plaguing himself into them angrily or rancorously.

Since what he is writing is not a story or literature so as to show off his character with all its components including fury, grudge and rancour. But he is supposedly writing about a scholar and a science linked to religion. And it is known that the most outstanding merit of the scholars, especially in the present age, being self-denial when writing about knowledge and their use of their minds and intellects when researching and determining, not their emotions.

So it is unfair to claim that the only reason behind Abu Hurayrah's company to the Prophet was to take food from him, while we know that he embraced Islam, prayed behind the Prophet, hearing and taking some of his traditions. Let the author say he has not enjoyed the Prophet's company but only for three years, while the traditions he reported from him exceeded in number those reported by the Emigrants who accompanied the Prophet in Mecca and Medina, and by the Helpers who kept the Prophet's company since his migration toward Medina till he was called by Allah. This can be a sufficient factor for

taking precaution and being on guard toward all the traditions reported about him.

The other point I want to state here being that the author, in his protracted *hadith* about Abu Hurayrah, says that he, out of his covetousness to eating and eagerness for dainties, used to eat with Mu'awiyah and perform his prayers behind Ali (a.s.), with pronouncing: Eating with Mu'awiyah is fattier, (or in more precise words: *al-murdirah* with Mu'awiyah is fattier [*murdirah* is a kind of sweet]), and to pray with Ali is better.

I want to know how could it be able for Abu Hurayrah to eat with Mu'awiyah and perform prayers with Ali (a.s.) simultaneously, while one of them being in Iraq and the other in the Sham, or one being in the Medina and the other in the Sham, unless this be done during Battle of Siffin. But I never believe him to be safe if doing so during the war, since in that case he would have been accused by one of the two sects with hypocrisy and espionage. While these words being recorded only in some books, the author would have rather investigated and verified the truth before stating them. This being the least and easiest requirement on the part of the scholars.

Further, the author persists on emphasizing the fact concurred unanimously by Muslims that the traditions narrated by individuals and single persons (*ahad*) as said by the traditionists, can never indicate but only surmise. For this reason the Muslims never take these traditions as inferential evidences for the principles (*usul*) and doctrines of religion but only for the sub–rules of *fiqh* and virtuous deeds, besides using them for urging to do good and intimidation and warning against vices. And all the traditions on which the author based his speech about the subjects we cited examples for, being only *ahadith* reported by individuals and *ahad* (with no authentic chain), never indicating decisiveness or certainty. So how would he allow himself to abstain from trusting such traditions, depending on them then for accusing people with charges failing to present evidences to their confirmation.

The last remark to conclude my discussion, which I consider brief, though seeming protracted, being that the author, after realizing – seemingly – his failure to gain pleasure of people beside inability to win the hearts of the clergy in particular, embarked on defaming them some time, slaming them another time, and labelling them again with thought inertia once and with marginality another time. Through all this, he seduced these people by his self, calling them to heed only to his book, with imagining that he was detesting them and never counting them fitting and competent for valuable researching and endeavour to discover knowledge realities. Had he tolerated till the coming out of his book, and be read by people, so as to know their opinion and commentary on it, this tolerance and patience would have much better and preservative for him.

Nevertheless, I affirm again my admittance to the author's strenuous and fertile strival and effort in compiling this book, and his genuine sincerity for knowledge and truth in his searching for *hadith*.

Hence, no harm will befall him for the slips to some of which we referred previously. Since those who are immune against deficiency, neglect of duty and slips are rarely found. And Bashshar uttered the truth

when saying:	
If you never drink bitterness over speck,	
thirsty you be, and is there anyone of pure drink!	

Taha Husayn

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