

Hadith Theory

Categories / Types / Classifications of Hadith

What is meant by Hadith and what are the categories / types / classifications of Hadith?

Literally, Hadith means a narration or a recitation of a specific event. Sunnah is the deeds of the prophet (s.a.w). However, according to Islamic Terminology Hadith is generally characterised as the deeds, sayings and silent approval of the holy prophet (s.a.w), the Ashab, the Tabi'in and the Taba'ut Tabi'in.

These reports form the basis of Islamic law, Quran's interpretation (tafsir), and early Islamic history. In Islamic terminology, the term hadith refers to reports of statements or actions of prophet Muhammad, or of his tacit approval or criticism of something said or done in his presence. Classical hadith specialists say that the intended meaning of hadith in religious tradition is something attributed to prophet Muhammad (s) but that is not found in the Quran. The word Sunnah (custom) is also used in reference to a normative custom of Muhammad or the early Muslim community

Hadith Qudsiy (or Sacred Hadith) is a sub-category of hadith which are sayings of Prophet Muhammad. Muslims regard the Hadith Qudsiy as the words of God (Arabic: Allah), repeated by Prophet Muhammad and recorded on the condition of an isnad. Accordingly, the Hadith Qudsiy differs from the Quran in that the former are "expressed in Prophet Muhammad's words", whereas the latter are the "direct words of God". An example of a Hadith Qudsiy is the hadith of Abu Hurairah who said that Prophet Muhammad said: "When God decreed the Creation He pledged Himself by writing in His book which is laid down with Him: My mercy prevails over My wrath." A hadith is divided into two parts namely the Isnad and the Matn. The isnad or the Sanad is the chain of narrators or reporters. It is the list of Ashab, Tabi'in, Taba'ut Tabi'in and scholars who have heard or reported the Hadith directly or indirectly from the holy prophet (s.a.w). The number of persons in an Isnad varies. It may reach 150 persons. The Matn is the text or context or message. It is what has been reported or done by the prophet (s.a.w) or any Sahaba or any Tabi'in or Taba'ut Tabi'in.

As such these are the types of Hadith: Swahih, Hasan, dwa'if and Mawdu'.

Firstly, the Swahih hadith which is referred to as the authentic hadith can be divided into 2 kinds.

(a) 'Swahih li dhaatihi' is a Hadith whose chain of narrators is unbroken, every narrator is reliable ('aadil), well-known for memorization and preservation (dabt) of the hadith.

(b) 'Swahih li ghayrihi' is a hadith having the same qualities as the previous one except for the dabt of a narrator which may be slightly less reliable but that is compensated for by the fact that the hadith is narrated from many chains of people. [The word dabt refers to a narrator having a good grasp of what he narrates as well as a sound memory and/or carefully kept books.]

Next we have the Hasan Hadith which is referred as good or fair. It is divided into 2 kinds.

(a) 'Hasan li dhaatihi' is a hadith which has the qualities of Swahih except that the dabt is not as reliable and there are not enough other chains of narrations to raise it to the status of 'Swahih li ghayrihi'.

(b) 'Hasan li ghayrihi' is a hadith which is lacking in more than one quality required for the Swahih but this lack is again compensated for by the presence of other chains of transmission of the same hadith.

Moreover, we have the Dwa'if hadith which is known as the weak hadith. It is a hadith which is lacking more than one of the qualities of Swahih and there are not enough alternate chains to raise its status to Hasan.

Fourthly, we have the Matrook and Mawdu'. The Matrook is a hadith in whose chain is a narrator known for being a Liar and the Mawdu' is a hadith in whose chain is a narrator upon whom it is established that he fabricated hadith.

Hadith Categories	Unbroken Chain of Narrators	Every narrator is reliable ('aadil)	Narrator's Dabt (Memorization and Preservation of Hadith) is good
1. Swahih li Dhaatihi	Good	Good	Good
2. Swahih li Ghayrihi	Good	Good	Less reliable but the hadith is narrated by other chains of narrators
3. Hasan li Dhaatihi	Good	Good	Less reliable but the hadith is not narrated by enough chains of narrators
4. Hasan li Ghayrihi	Lack in more than 1 criteria but the hadith is narrated by other chains of narrators		
5. Dwa'if	Lack in more than 1 criteria but the hadith is not narrated enough by other chains of narrators		
Matrook	The narrator is known as a liar		
Mawdu'	It is a fabricated hadith		

Criteria For Swahih Hadith

How are Hadith defined as Swahih (Authentic)? What are the criteria for a Hadith to be Swahih (Authentic)?

A hadith consists of two parts: its text, called Matn, and its chain of narrators, called isnad. Comprehensive and strict criteria were separately developed for the evaluation of both the Matn and the isnad. The former is regarded as the internal test of ahadith, and the latter is considered the external test. A hadith was accepted as authentic and recorded into text only when it met both of these criteria independently.

The pure and undisputed character of the narrator, called rawi, was the most important consideration for the acceptance of a hadith. As stated earlier, a new branch of 'ilm al hadith known as asma' ar rijal was developed to evaluate the credibility of narrators. The following are a few of the criteria utilized for this purpose.

Firstly, the name, nickname, title, parentage and occupation of the narrator should be known.

Next, the original narrator should have stated that he heard the hadith directly from the Prophet (s.a.w).

Moreover, if a narrator referred his hadith to another narrator, the two should have lived in the same period and have had the possibility of meeting each other.

Fourthly, at the time of hearing and transmitting the hadith, the narrator should have been physically and mentally capable of understanding and remembering it.

As a fifth point, the narrator should have been known as a pious and virtuous person.

Sixthly, the narrator should not have been accused of having lied, given false evidence or committed a crime.

In addition, the narrator should not have spoken against other reliable people.

More to the point, the narrator's religious beliefs and practices should have been known to be correct.

As another important aspect, the narrator should not have carried out and practiced peculiar religious beliefs of his own.

On the other side, there are many criteria for the Matn.

Firstly, the text should have been stated in plain and simple language.

Next, a text in non-Arabic or couched in indecent language was rejected.

Moreover, a text prescribing heavy punishment for minor sins or exceptionally large reward for small virtues was rejected.

Fourthly, a text which referred to actions that should have been commonly known and practiced by others but were not known and practiced was rejected.

As a fifth point, a text contrary to the basic teachings of the Qur'an was rejected.

Sixthly, a text contrary to other ahadith was rejected.

In addition, a text contrary to basic reason, logic and the known principles of human society was rejected.

More to the point, a text inconsistent with historical facts was rejected.

As another important aspect, extreme care was taken to ensure the text was the original narration of the Prophet and not the sense of what the narrator heard. The meaning of the hadith was accepted only when the narrator was well known for his piety and integrity of character.

Tenthly, a text critical to the Prophet, members of his family or his companions was rejected. Another one was that a text by an obscure narrator which was not known during the age of Swahaabah [the Prophet's companions] or the Tabi'in [those who inherited the knowledge of the Swahaabah] was rejected.

According to Imam Bukhari it was vital that all reporters as from him till the prophet (s.a.w) should be trustworthy and reliable. He would give preference to students of highest rank of any particular teacher. In this way he would ensure the best report without mistake found in the text. He also accepted the usage 'an – contemporary in hadith collection. The meaning of 'an means 'from' or 'concerning' and it implies that the one narrating the hadith should know and hear from the one before him personally. Imam Bukhari would reject Hadith with discontinued Sanad.

According to Imam Muslim he made a clear distinction between *Haddathana* and *Akhbarana*. 'Haddathana' meaning 'he narrated to us' implies that the person had heard it directly from his teacher. There is direct contact between the teacher and the student who is listening attentively. 'Akhbarana' meaning 'he informed us' implies that the student is reading the hadith before the teacher. He also accepted Hadith only through the consensus of Traditionist. He has recorded only that hadith which, at least, two reliable *Tabi'in* (successors) had heard from two Companions and this principle is observed throughout the subsequent chain of narrators.

According to Abu Dawood all hadith supported by the Practice of Ashab of the prophet (s.a.w) are accepted. However he would make great investigation if there is any contradictory in a hadith or between 2 hadith or more. According to him, if a Mursal Hadith (1 person omitted) is backed and supported by a

Swahih hadith then it will be accepted. He would also follow the conditions and styles of Imam Bukhariy and Imam Muslim

According to **Imam Tirmidhi**, he never narrated hadith from those who fabricated hadith. According to Allama Tahir Muqaddisi, he mentions that *al-Jami`ut-Tirmidhi* contains four types of hadith: those ahadith that conform to the conditions of Bukhari and Muslim, those ahadith that conform to the conditions of Abu Dawud and Nasa'i, those ahadith that have certain discrepancies either in the *sanad* or *matan* and those weak hadith that some *fuqaha* have relied on. But after mentioning a weak hadith, he would explain the state of its weakness. Imam Tirmidhi accepted a hadith which is narrated with the word 'an provided both the narrators are contemporaries. A *mursal* (1 person omitted) hadith is accepted by Imam Tirmidhi when it is supported by a chain of narrators which is not broken.

According to Imam an Nasaa'i, he would reject a reporter if all Traditionists did so. He would also reject a hadith if the reporter has mentioned anything extra while others have not reported it from the same teacher.

According to Ibn Majaa he made a merger of all categories of Hadith. However, he would take care of not including false hadith in his collection. He brought this collection with Swahih, hasan and dwa'if hadith with the view to broaden the scope and availability of hadith to the public.

Along with these generally accepted criteria, each scholar then developed and practiced his own set of specific criteria to further ensure the authenticity of each hadith.

Importance of Hadith

What is the importance of Hadith in one's life?

Hadith being the words, deeds and silent approval of the prophet (s.a.w), Ashab, Tabi'in and Taba'ut Tabi'in are very important in one's life.

Firstly, it is a personal Code of Conduct which is put into practice by those who really want to follow the shari'ah and those who love Allah and His Nabi (s.a.w). It is a set of laws to be put into practice.

Next it is important as it forms part of the Shari'ah. The Qur'an is the first source of the Islamic Law followed by the Hadith. It can't be removed or ignored at any cost.

Moreover, it is a complement to the Qur'an. Allah sent the prophet (s.a.w) alongside with the hadith as a means to complete the Qur'an. The Qur'an is the theoretical part as the Hadith is the practical part.

Fourthly, it is the Tafsir and explanation of the verses of the Qur'an. There are many verses which need the explanation of the prophet (s.a.w) from the Hadith. There are verses which are understood when references are made with an event in the life of the prophet like for battle of Badr.

As a fifth point it gives details on how to perform Ibaadah and other acts of worship. There are direct orders from the Qur'an of what to do as commands from Allah as part of the Shari'ah but they are not explained of how to be put into practice. The prophet explained them in his Hadith.

Sixthly, it helps to avoid pitfalls. It is a way and means where Muslims can have lessons based on stories narrated in hadith in order to avoid mistakes and errors of past nations where the punishment of Allah was sent.

In addition, it helps to upgrade our status through wazifah or invocation. It is found that there are many short sentences or phrases given by the prophet (s.a.w) as part of invocation or remembrance of Allah. They are done for nearness with Allah.

More to the point, it helps in having the knowledge of the life of the prophet and the Salaf. It is a tutorial of how the prophet led his life with his wives, children, Muslims, non-Muslims and the animals. In it are the stories and lessons from the Ashab.

As another important aspect, it explains how to deal with Muslims and non-Muslims. It elaborates on the conduct and way of how to treat a non-Muslim in a Muslim country and how to live in a non-Muslim country as being a Muslim. The treatment of both the Muslims and the non-Muslims is detailed.

Tenthly, it elaborates on Halal and Haram and it is an example in all spheres of life (both materialistic and spiritual). It enlightens us on what must be done and what is prohibited and as such how to be elevated in the sight of Allah and how to be successful in this world, Qabr and Akhirah.

Relationship between Qur'an and Hadith

What is the relationship between Qur'an and Hadith?

Allah Almighty says in the Quran: "We sent them with clear proofs and written ordinances. And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought." (An-Nahl 16:44) Commenting on this verse, Imam Al-Baghawi, one of the well-versed scholars of Islam, said in his tafseer: "The message — in the verse — refers to the divine inspiration. And the Prophet is the clarifier of the divine inspiration. The explanation of the Quran is to be sought in the Sunnah." (Al-Baghawi 25)

Thus, the relation between the Quran and the Sunnah is such that the latter is a clarification of the former. The Sunnah explains and interprets the Quran. It gives more details about what is concisely mentioned in the Quran, especially when it comes to legal rulings.

Many laws, as well as acts of worships, are briefly mentioned in the Quran. Then, the Sunnah elaborates on such items and gives more details and explanation or interpretation. A good example for this is the prayers. The Quran orders Muslims to pray, but it does not mention how many times Muslims should pray.

Or, when and how to pray but it does mention: "And obey Allah and obey the messenger; but if you turn away, then upon Our messenger is only [the duty of] clear notification." (At-Taghabun 64:12) So, Allah orders us clearly to follow and obey the messenger and take whatever he gives us. And as we are talking about prayers, the Prophet says: "Pray as you saw me praying." (Al-Bukhari) Zakaat (obligatory alms), fasting the month of Ramadan, monetary transactions, and so on. All of the above titles are touched on briefly by the Quran but the Sunnah elaborates on them.

In a nutshell, the Quran is inspired by Allah in meaning and wording. However, the Sunnah is inspired by Allah in meaning while the wording is from Prophet Muhammad. Allah says in the Quran what means: "Nor does he speak from [his own] inclination. It is not but a revelation revealed." (An-Najm 53:3-4).

So, the Sunnah, as the Prophetic text, comes right after the Quran as part of the revelation, and both of them are the two main sources of Islam. Allah made it clear that Sunnah should be followed when he says: "He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah." (An-Nisaa' 4:80).

Another hadith that shows that Quran and Sunnah are interrelated, and warns against taking the Quran and abandoning Sunnah goes: "Indeed I have been given the Book (that is, the Quran) and something like it along with it." (Abu Dawud)

To conclude, the Quran and the Sunnah together are the sources of guidance and laws for Muslims. The Sunnah is the explanation and interpretation of the Quran. That is why they cannot be separated, as they work harmoniously to convey the message of Islam and show people what Allah wants from them in order for them to lead the best life on this earth and also to win Heaven in the hereafter.