

# The Hierarchical Arrangement Of Hadith Collections According To Shah Waliullah Dahlawi's Opinion

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**Abstract.** Consciousness of source is an important problem for all sciences in disclosing the accuracy of information. One of the sources which are used in determining the information especially historical one are books. The degree of reliability of resource contains the credibility of the information. And the first step for determining the truthfulness of hadith in Islamic theology is to see its sources. But each of them has different degrees in terms of reputation. In other words, there are some unesteemed books in addition to some others which have won confidence. Shah Waliullah Dahlawi had categorized the books of hadith in terms of fame and reliability into five categories several centuries ago. In Dahlawi's opinion the books which located on the first and second layers gained the trust of the hadith scholars. So they are suitable to use as a source. The third layer should be used only by hadith scholars. The books in the fourth degree include lots of weak and fabricated hadiths which shouldn't be used as a source. And the last group of books includes only the fabricated hadiths.

Keywords: Hadith, sources of hadith, reliability, fame, hadith collections, Dahlawi

## 1. Introduction

The knowledge of history have been inherited to the posterities through oral transmissions, written transfers (such as books, documents, edicts, inscriptions, letters, money, newspapers, periodicals) and visual instruments (such as painting, reliefs, sculptures and goods). In determining the accuracy of the information, the value of these tools is a major problem for all sciences. And the reliability of resource or its trickiness affects the credibility of the information. This case also appeared in the debates about the books including the hadiths which have been used as a second informational source in Islam. The evaluations which made by a famous Indian scholar Shah Waliullah Dahlawi (d.1176 a.h.), in his famous work

*Hujjat Allah al-Baligha*, is very important in this respect. The problem of source in the science of hadith will be studied through the opinion of Dahlawi in this paper.

Dahlawi pointed the tradition of oral transmission which existed at the beginning of the history of hadith, under the chapter where he examined the hadith books. According to him, this was originally the only way to have the knowledge of the sayings of the Prophet (peace of God be upon him) (Dahlawi, 387). It is obvious that the science of hadith occurred due to the oral transmission of knowledge. Indeed, the *isnad* (the chain of transmission of hadith) of which the muslims proud was a result of oral culture (Tarti, 119). But there is almost no need to the *isnad* in the written traditions. It is a fact that *isnad* has lost its importance over

time, especially from the 5th century after hijrah. Because it became widespread to read the hadiths from the books after the *isnad* ended.

Dahlawi expresses this situation in this way: "In our times there is no way to receive these reports except for to follow the literature written in the science of hadith. For today there is no report which is reliable unless it is written in the books." (Dahlawi, 387)

## 2. The Ranks of the Collections of Hadith

In Islamic theology the first step for determining the truthfulness of hadith is to see its source. When a hadith is faced, some questions come to mind such as: "is there a source for this hadith?" or "if there is a source what is the source of this hadith?" However, to take part in a hadith book is not enough to determine the value of knowledge. In this case another question comes to mind: "What is the quality of the source?" Here it is achieved that the reliability of each one of the hadith books is not homogeneous. In other words, if the source is known, then the value of this source must be questioned from the point of view of the science of hadith.

At this point, quality rankings of hadith books made by Shah Veliyyullah Dehlevi is remarkable. According to him, it is necessary to know the degree of the hadith books. Because each one of the hadith collections are taking place in different categories in terms of reliability. In other words, in addition to much reliable books, there are also some books of hadith known as untrustworthy. Dahlawi, before several centuries, categorized the books of hadith to the five classes in terms of fame and reliability as follows:

1- The books which have reliability and fame in highest degree.

2- The books which were written by the competent scholars in the science of hadith but have reliability and fame in second degree.

3- The books which have reliability and fame in low degree.

4- The books which include much many weak (*daif*) and fabricated (*maudu*) hadiths.

5- The books which include only fabricated hadiths.

According to the Dahlawi's opinion the reliability means to be consisted of a book from genuine (*sahih*) hadiths. The fame means to him

the widespread circulation of hadiths of this book among the hadith experts. And it means also the great interest which those hadiths attracted by hadith scholars before or after they were recorded in the books. (Dahlawi, 387 ff.)

Although Dahlawi has not got an explanation in this direction, it is possible to say that he has taken inspiration from some previous attempts. For example, in the history of hadith there were some categorizations of hadith collections like *al-sahihayn* (the two genuine books), *al-sunan al-arbaa* (the four books), *al-kutub al-hamsa* (the five books) *al-kutub al-sitta* (the six books).

*al-Sahihayn* is a double set which were composed of the books of al-Bukhari and Muslim (*al-Jami al-Sahih*). And the first one was considered more reliable than the second. *al-Kutubu al-sitta* were occurred by adding four books named *al-sunan al-arbaa* to these two books. These are the *Sunan* of Abu Daud (d. 275 a.h.), *Sunan* of al-Tirmidhi (d. 279 a.h.), *Sunan* of al-Nasai (d. 303 a.h.) and *Sunan* of Ibn Maja (d. 273 a.h.). The degree of authenticity in each set is gradually reduced from the first book toward the last. For example, while the Bukhari's book of *al-kutubu'l-sitta* was considered as the most reliable, the book of Ibn Maja was considered as the least reliable. Therefore Ibn Maja's book was sometimes left out the set and the some other books were accepted as *al-kutub al-hamsa*. Some people put the *Muvatta* of Malik (d. 179 a.h.) and others put the *Sunan* of Darimi (d. 280 a.h.) instead of it (Siddiqi, 73-75).

Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti's (d. 911 a.h.) categorization of the books of hadith is closer to grouping of Dahlawi. Suyuti in the introduction of his book named *Jam al-Javami* said that all of the hadiths which situated at these following works are authentic: al-Bukhari's *al-Jami al-Sahih*, Muslim's *al-Jami al-Sahih*, Ibn Hibban's (d. 354 a.h.) *al-Sahih*, Malik's *Muvatta*, Ahmed's (d. 241 a.h.) *al-Musnad*, Ibn Huzayma's (d. 311 a.h.) *al-Sahih* etc. According to Suyuti there are *sahih* (genuine/sound), *hasan* (good) and *daif* (weak) hadiths in the following works: The *Sunan* of Abu Daud, *Sunan* of al-Tirmidhi, *Sunan* of al-Nasai and *Sunan* of Ibn Maja, *Musnad* of Tayalisi (d. 204 a.h.), *Musannaf* of Abd al-Razzaq (d. 211 a.h.), *Musannaf* of Ibn Abi Sayba (d. 235 a.h.), three *Mujams* of Tabarani (d. 360 a.h.) etc. To him the books whose hadiths are weak without doubt: *Duafa* of al-Ukayli (d.

322 a.h.), *Kamil* of Ibn Adi (d. 365 a.h.), *Tarih* of Baḡdadi (d. 463 a.h.), *Tarihu Dimasq* of Ibn Asakir (d. 571 a.h.) and Daylami's (d. 558 a.h.) *Musnad al-Firdavs*... (Suyuti, 44)

### 3. The Details Of The Ranks

And Dahlawi detailed his division of hadith collections without reference to the formation above as follow:

1- The books which have accuracy constitute the first rank of the books on hadith. In other words, it is possible to express them as the first quality books. According to Dahlawi's opinion, only three books are situated in the first quality: Malik's *Muvatta*, al-Bukhari's *al-Jami al-Sahih* and Muslim's *al-Jami al-Sahih*. To him the experts in hadith studies agreed that everything in these three books is sound (*sahih*). The hadiths at the highest degree of the first rank reach the degree of mutawatir (reported by the numerous authorities), and the others are absolutely sound (*al-sahih al-qati*) (Dahlawi, 389).

According to Dahlawi, the books which are located on the first layer have won the confidence of the hadith experts. (Dahlawi, 395) So they are suitable to use as a source of prophetic reports.

In fact, while putting the *Muwatta* in the first place in the ranking of quality, Dahlawi separated from point of traditional view. In other words, He disrupted the traditional scientific term of *al-kutub al-sitta* which is widespread and implying reliability in history of hadith. The term of *six books* also reflects the ranking of quality for the hadith books and in contrary of Dahlawi's opinion al-Bukhari's *al-Jami al-Sahih* takes place at first and Muslim's *al-Jami al-Sahih* takes in the second place. In addition to this, *Muvatta* has not been accepted as authentic as these *two books* and it usually has not been considered from the set of *six books*.

In spite of this, Dahlawi attempts to defend the authenticity of the hadiths of *Muwatta* as a whole. He continued his claim by mentioning that more than one thousand person transmitted this book from Malik without an intermediary. Much interest have been devoted to this book and paid attention by the hadith experts and legal scholars in time of author and after him (Dahlawi, 389-390).

It seems that Dahlawi gave a special attention to the *al-Muvatta*. Obviously he was affected

from Shafii's words expressing that *al-Muvatta* is the most authentic book after the Quran (Dahlawi, 390). Another affect is probably the commentary of *al-Muvatta* written by him. Indeed Dahlawi often expresses his admiration to Malik and his work in the commentary on *al-Muvatta* titled *al-Musaffa*. One of his expresses is as thus: "I was convinced that the most authentic book after the Book of Allah on earth is *al-Muvatta* and a definite information has occurred in my heart in this matter." (al-Musavva, 29). Probably this is the reason why he didn't specify *al-Sunan* of Ibn Maja among the second rank of hadith book, although it is the last of the *six book* (*al-kutub al-sitta*).

He also attributes an absolute authenticity to the *Sahihayn* (al-Bukhari's and Muslim's *al-Jamiu'l-Sahih*) and claims that the hadith scholars agreed (*icma*) that all of the hadiths in them are certainly sound (Dahlawi, 391). In fact he is not the first and only owner of this claim. But some new researchs have shown that this claim is not true and some of the hadiths of al-Bukhari and Muslim have been criticized by some muslim scholars in the past. The subject was examined by M. Said Hatiboglu with some examples in an article in 1997 written in both Arabic and Turkish (Hatiboğlu, 1-30). Dahlawi has not seen or ignored these criticisms which were made before him. One of the many examples which given by Hatiboğlu is a criticised report which situated in both the books of al-Bukhari and Muslim as: Abu Huraira narrated that Allah's Apostle said: "This branch from Quraish will ruin my ummah." The companions asked: "What do you order us to do?" He answered: "I wish the people keep away from them" (al-Bukhari, Menakib, 25; Muslim, Fitana 18).

The famous hadith scholar and compiler of hadith Ahmad b. Hanbal asked from his son to remove this report from his famous book (*al-Musnad*) because of its weakness (Ahmad b. Hanbal, II, 301).

There are some other opinions different from Dahlawi's claim on this problem. Accordingly, to say that it is the most authentic book about a book of hadith means that it is the most authentic as a whole but does not mean that each one of its hadiths are aqually *sahih*. This is also true for the book of al-Bukhari. Therefore to say that Bukhari's book is more authentic than Muslim's book doesn't mean that all of Bukhari's narrations are more sound. But it is possible to claim that some of the hadiths, <sup>147</sup>

Muslim are more sound than the Bukhari's narrations (Itr, 257). According to the opinion of Mustafa al-Azami every single hadith is tested according to its own merit, not by the prestige of its recorder (Azami, 107). In other words, The authenticity of the hadith is not determined by looking at its source, but determined with the strength of its narrators as Qasim b. Qutluboga said (d. 879 a.h.) (Kasimi, 82).

2. In Dahlawi's classification the second rank was consisted of the books which were remained next after Muvatta and the two Sahih but can't attain the rank of them. But their authors were well-known with their reliability and being deeply immersed in the sub-branches of hadith. It includes the *Sunan* of Abu Daud, the *Jami (Sunan)* of al-Tirmidhi and the *al-Mujtaba (Sunan)* of Nasai. The *Musnad* of Ahmad b. Hanbal was almost included in this rank too (Dahlawi, 392-394).

According to Dahlawi, the books which are grouped on second layer has won the confidence of the hadith experts like the formers (Dahlawi, 395). So they can be used as a source of prophetic reports too.

3. The third rank is comprised of those Musnad, Jami and Musannaf kinds compiled before al-Bukhari and Muslim and during their time and after them. They collected the sound (sahih), the good (hasan), the weak (daif) and the fabricated (maudu) in other words everything right from wrong. And they did not have the same reputation like the books which situated at the first and second ranks among the scholars. Such as the *Musnad* of al-Tayalisi (d. 204 a.h.), the *Musannaf* of Abd al-Razzaq, *Musannaf* of Ibn Abi Shayba, the books of al-Tabarani and al-Baihaqi. (Dahlawi, 393)

Such books should be used by only hadith scholars to his opinion. (Dahlawi, 395)

4. The fourth rank of the books are those compiled after long centuries and which include the reports which were not found at the first and second ranks of books. So they include generally weak, fabricated and unreliable reports in terms of hadith science. For example *al-Duafa* of Ibn Hibban, *al-Kamil* of Ibn Adi, the books of al-Khatib al-Bagdadi, Abu Nuaym, Ibn Asakir and Daylami. The hadiths existing on fourth layer shouldn't be used because of their unreliability. (Dahlawi, 394-395)

5. The last rank is comprised of the books including hadiths which have no basis in these four ranks such as the *al-Mauduat* (the fabricat-

ed hadiths) of Ibn al-Jauzi. (Dahlawi, 395) These kind of works which Dahlawi pointed out collected only fabricated hadiths. So they are never used as evidence in any religious matter.

#### 4. Conclusion

Even if it has some internal defects at certain points, the initiative of Dahlawi which appeared three hundred and fifty years ago is very important for all hadith readers to have a consciousness of source. In the opinion of some contemporary researchers the Muslims are still situated in an unconsciousness of source. Aside from some technical problems with the books, hadiths usually can be transferred from some books written outside the science of hadith. Or all narrated knowledge in hadith sources are supposed as sound by lots of people (Kirbasoglu, 61 ff.) This shows that all people who read and use hadiths must be very much careful.

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