Finding a Principled Approach to Matn Analysis

By Sami Catovic

"The Sunnah was the iron framework of the House of Islam; and if you remove the framework from a building, can you be surprised if it breaks down like a house of cards"? Here, the twentieth century scholar Muḥammad Asad clearly articulated the role Sunnah plays in the construction of the "house of Islam." Attempts have been made historically, as well as in contemporary times, to dissociate the Sunnah of the Prophet Muḥammad from the Message he brought, the Qur'an.[1] This approach is academically unsound, as well as has no real import for the masses.

The Qur'an clearly establishes the authority of the Prophet in numerous cases, such as, "Surely you have in the Messenger of Allāh the pattern of excellence for anyone whose hope is in Allāh and the Last Day and who remembers Allāh much."[2] The *uswah*, or pattern, is only available to us through the Sunnah of the Prophet, which is primarily found in the ḥadīth. The believer is instructed throughout the Qur'an to not only obey God, but also His messenger.[3]

The majority of scholars have held to the principle that obeying God (the Qur'an) cannot be separated from obedience to the Prophet.[4] In other words, the authority of the Qur'an and the Prophet are equal in conveying teachings and establishing a pattern of behavior. The Qur'an and ḥadīth, however, are not necessarily equal in authority. The authenticity of the Qur'an, for Muslims, is not questioned – and those ḥadīth that attain to the authenticity of the Qur'an in establishing a normative practice of the Prophet are on equal footing with the Qur'an. However, ḥadīth that do not rise to a sufficient level of authenticity would not necessarily be considered on equal footing with the Qur'an; rather they would provide auxiliary material for legislation.

The example of the Prophet is transmitted to us primarily through reports.[5] The stages of transmission begin with the Companions, who lived with the Prophet and observed his example. They transmitted what heard or saw during the life of the Prophet to those who were not present. After the Prophet's death, they became the vehicle by which those who followed could learn about the Prophet. This was done primarily through the oral tradition, but evidence also shows that from the time of the Prophet, his ḥadīth were in fact written down, contrary to what has been asserted by some orientalists that the traditions were actually written down much later.[6]

There is also early evidence for the actual compilation of ḥadīth. For example, the Umayyad caliph Umar bin 'Abdel 'Azīz (d. 101 AH/720 CE) called for the compilation of ḥadīth during his time. Among other commands to collect ḥadīth, he wrote in a letter to his governor in Madīnah, Abū Bakr bin Ḥazm where he instructed him, "Accept nothing other than the ḥadīth of the Prophet, peace be on him."[7]

Sunnah as practice differs from written or oral validation, or the ḥadīth literature. Practice depends on established practice and is not necessarily validated from written or oral documentation. The documenting of the Sunnah was maintained through oral and written tradition. Writing, however, was to aid memory, not necessarily for establishing validity of a tradition.[8]

However, at the end of the second century we see the first comprehensive collections of narrations in book form. The most famous was the *Muwaṭṭā'* of Imām Mālik. Thereafter, the *musnad* collections began, with the chain of narrators being listed in the ḥadīth. By this time, the traditions of the Prophet were narrated and recorded with their chains. Thereafter, compilation of

the *jami'* collections was established. Here, not only the chain was important but also an evaluation of the narrators in the chain to determine the probable authenticity of a particular narration. In the centuries that followed it was generally agreed upon that there were six canonical collections of ḥadīth. These were Bukhārī (d. 256 AH/870 CE), Muslim (d. 261 AH/875 CE), Abū Dāwūd (d. 275 AH/888 CE), Tirmidhī (d. 279 AH/892 CE), ibn Mājah (d. 283 AH/887 CE) and al-Nasā'ī(d. 303 AH/915 CE).[9]

Science of ḥadīth Criticism

The early development of ḥadīth criticism primarily focused on the structure of the chain and the evaluation of the narrators of the tradition. Specialists in the field developed a highly complex system by which to judge the narrators in the chain of transmission to determine the level of their trustworthiness in conveying a particular ḥadīth. This science, the *al-`adl wa al-tajrīh* (impugnment and validation) contributed to the classification of alleged ḥadīth from authentic to fabricated. The highest level of authenticity were those ḥadīths that reached the status of *Mutawātir*.

The general principle behind the reliability of the ḥadīths which reached the status of *Mutawātir* was that they were transmitted in the first three generations on such a large scale, with multiple chains of narration, that the chance of fabrication was inconceivable. Scholars differed as to how many chains were necessary to rise to this status.[10] If a ḥadīth was not at the level of *Mutawātir* it fell into the category of *Āḥād*. *Āḥād* traditions were those ḥadīth that did not reach the status of *Mutawātir*,[11] and therefore, could be one chain of transmission or several.

According to most scholars of ḥadīth, the *Āḥād* traditions were further divided into two sub-categories: the *Maqbūl* (accepted) and the *Mardūd* (rejected).[12] The *Maqbūl* in turn were broken down into *Ṣaḥīḥ*(sound) and *Ḥasan* (fair). Whether a ḥadīth was *Ḥasan* or *Ṣaḥīḥ* depended largely in part on the integrity of the chain and the evaluation of the narrators in the chain. In other words, the level of trustworthiness of the narrators in the chain and the overall integrity of the chain, along with the scholars' methodology of evaluation, resulted in the appropriate categorization of the ḥadīth.

Along with this determination was the principle that both the chain and the *matn*, the chain and content of the ḥadīth, also had to be sound. It has been argued that although the *matn* also had to have been sound, that ḥadīth scholars did not develop or focus their attention on developing a system by which the *matn* could be analyzed. For example, Khāled Abū al-Fadl, citing ibn Khaldūn, observed:

When it comes to reports, of one relies only on the [method] of transmission without evaluating [these reports] in light of the principles of human conduct, the fundamentals of politics, the nature of civilization, and the conditions for social associations, and without comparing ancient sources to contemporary sources and the present to the past, he could fall into errors and mistakes and could deviate from the path of truth. Historians, [Qur'anic]interpreters and leading transmitters have often fallen into error by accepting [the authenticity of certain] reports and incidents. This is because they relied only on the transmission, whether of value or worthless. The did not [carefully] inspect [these reports] in light of [fundamental] principles of [historical analysis] or compare the reports to each other or examine them according to the standards of wisdom or investigate the nature of beings. Furthermore, they did not decide on the authenticity

of these reports according to the standards of reason and discernment. Consequently, they were led astray from the truth and became lost in the wilderness of error and delusion.[13]

While Ibn Khaldūn outlined some of the challenges faced in evaluating a tradition, the numerous criteria he proposed are mostly untenable. Further, it would be incorrect to hold that no analysis of the *matn* was undertaken by ḥadīth scholars. Any hesitancy by the scholars to work out and develop a comprehensive detailed approach to *matn* stemmed possibly from their fear of being conclusion-driven or subjective in their understanding of the ḥadīth. In other words, the science of ḥadīth criticism focusing on the narrators and the integrity of the chain of transmission lent itself to a more objective evaluation of a particular ḥadīth. The principles of evaluating the chain were established, those principles were applied to a particular narration, and the resulting tradition was graded accordingly – whether the scholar was inclined to agree to the content (i.e., the *matn*) of the resulting tradition was irrelevant.

However, scholars did emphasize the importance of the text also being sound and not just the chain. As Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī stated,

The goodness of a dinar is known when it is measured against another. Thus if it differs in redness and purity, it will be known that it is counterfeit. A diamond is evaluated by measuring it against another one. If it differs in brilliance and hardness, it will be known to be glass. The authenticity of ḥadīth is known by its coming from reliable narrators and the statement itself must be worthy of being a statement of Prophethood.[14]

Principles by which the scholars of ḥadīth evaluated the *matn* of a ḥadīth included the following: fanciful statements the Prophet could not have made; statements that were against reason and history; statements that contradict the Qur'an or *Mutawātir* traditions; statements that promised disproportionate reward for minor good deeds and vice versa; and statements that violate the rules of Arabic grammar; and traditions that were unbefitting to the prophetic office.[15]

In addition to identifying suspect ḥadīth based on the *matn*, various methods were developed when an apparent conflict between ḥadīth occurred. This was the science of *Mukhtalif al ḥadīth* (Conflict in ḥadīth) and *Mushkil al-ḥadīth* (difficulty in ḥadīth).[16] This science attempted to reconcile apparently conflicting ḥadīth, via the various tools of textual analysis including *ta'wīl* (interpretation to reconcile conflicting ḥadīth), *takhṣīṣ* (a method by one is reconciled with the other through particularization of the general), and *al-jam' wa'l-tawfīq* (reconciling through providing background information to particularize the ḥadīth to a specific set of circumstances). The scholar needed not only a strong background in ḥadīth but also in the sciences of fiqh and *usul al fiqh*.

When a conflict could not be resolved, scholars such as Suyuti proposed the following methodology. If the chronology of the conflicting ḥadīth could be determined then *Naskh* (abrogation) would take place, by which the later ḥadīth would have abrogated the earlier ḥadīth. If it were not possible to determine the chronology, then the rules of preference – *al tarjīḥ* – would be invoked. Suyuti outlined a series of factors by which preference could be guided, which include the following:

- Conditions of narrators – ages, knowledge, number, et cetera – stronger narration should take preference
- Clarity of language used in narration

- Whether narration is verbatim verses conceptual
- Preference to time – *madanī* take preference to *makkī*
- Wording of ḥadīth – specific takes preference to general, literal to metaphoric, one that expounds cause to one that does not, explicit over implicit, verbal to the actual, longer to the shorter, et cetera
- Prohibition takes preference over permissibility, imposition of penalty, over one that does not.
- Preference to ḥadīth that complies with Qur'an and other *aḥādīth*[17]

When not possible to determine a preference, the ḥadīth would be suspended (*al-tawaqquf*), whereby the conflict remained unresolved but no action was to be taken based on the ḥadīth. The order, therefore, of the methodology for the evaluation of apparently conflicting authenticated ḥadīth (as this occurs only in dealing with *maqbūl* traditions) is reconciliation, abrogation, preference, then suspension.

An example of reconciliation occurs in the following analysis. In the Sunan of Ibn Mājah is reported a ḥadīth that states, "O My Lord! Help me live as a pauper, let me die as a pauper, and resurrect me among the paupers."[18] This ḥadīth appears to conflict with several ḥadīth and verses from the Qur'an dealing with poverty, such as the tradition narrated by Āishah that "the Prophet, peace be upon him, prayed to God against the evil of poverty (*fitnat al faqr*)." In Sahih Muslim it is also narrated that he said, "God loves His Servant who is affluent, pious, and modest." Further there is a tradition that states, "O Lord, I seek Thy refuge from disbelief and poverty."[19]

In *Sūrah al-Dūḥā* in the Qur'an, God says about the Prophet, "and He found you poor and made you affluent."[20] There are several ways to deal with the initial ḥadīth of ibn Mājah that apparently conflicts with the other traditions and the implications in the Qur'anic text. However, following Suyūṭī's categorization, one would begin with an attempt at reconciliation. This was done, for example, by Sheikh Qaradāwī, where he argued that the initial ḥadīth was to be understood metaphorically. Poverty in this tradition is meant to convey modesty and humility. Thus the traditions were reconciled with one another and the validity of the first tradition is maintained.[21]

Other traditions provided greater challenges for reconciliation and required other tools of analysis. For example, in the ḥadīth narrated in Abū Dāwūd we find the following: "Umm Salama, may God be pleased with her, said: I was with the Messenger of God when Maymuna was also present, at which time Ibn Maktūm turned up, and this was after we were ordered to practice veiling. So the Prophet told us to 'hide from him.' We said, 'O Messenger of God! Is he not blind? He can neither see nor recognize us!' Then the Prophet said: 'Are you blind too then? Can you not see him?'[22] This tradition demonstrates that the Prophet forbade women from looking at men, whether they could see them or not. Yet we find in the *Sīrah* and ḥadīth literature numerous traditions of women looking at men, without condemnation of the Prophet.

Further, there is a specific ḥadīth involving the blind companion ibn Makhtum, where the Prophet told Fāṭima bint Qays "to observe your waiting period in the house of ibn Umm Maktūm, for he is a blind man, you may be changing your clothes but he would not be able to see you."[23] The initial ḥadīth is difficult to uphold and reconcile with other traditions that are in direct conflict with it. Therefore, the approach taken by some scholars classical and contemporary has been to reject the initial ḥadīth in preference for the other evidence, which permits women to look upon men.[24]

Another example of irreconcilable conflict is an alleged ḥadīth found in Abū Dāwūd regarding female infanticide, which states, "both the perpetrator of infanticide and its victim are in Hell." This is clearly in conflict with the Qur'anic verse "and when the female child buried alive is questioned: for what crime was she killed?"[25] There is no way to uphold the validity of the alleged ḥadīth in light of the Qur'anic verse, and therefore the ḥadīth is rejected.

Principled Approach to *Matn* Analysis

The *matn* criticisms outlined above focus more on the tools that can be used to look at apparently conflicting statements or practices attributed to the Prophet. However, another complementary approach is based on the establishment of certain principles by which a tradition is evaluated. This approach has been invoked in the times of the companions and the succeeding generations, although it may not have been specifically articulated as such. Qādī Abū Yūsuf referred to this approach in his warning during the period of proliferation of numerous forged traditions. He said, "ḥadīth multiplies so much so that some ḥadīths which are traced back through chains of transmission are not well-known to legal experts, nor do they conform to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Beware of solitary ḥadīths and keep close to the collective spirit of ḥadīth…therefore make the Qur'an and the well-known Sunnah your guide and follow it."

Judging a tradition based on a principle was something that the companions themselves had invoked at times. For example, the famous tradition of the women who had starved her cat is found in both Bukhārī and Muslim. The cat was kept in captivity until it died of hunger and thus the woman was sent to Hell. According to one tradition, God said to her, "You did not feed the cat nor watered her while you tied her, nor did you send her out so that she could feed herself from the cast of the earth." However, in another tradition, we find ʿĀishah confronting Abū Hurayrah regarding this tradition. She told him: "Are you the one who reported the ḥadīth that 'a woman was tortured concerning a cat that she had kept in captivity and refused to feed or water the cat?' To this he said "I heard it from the Prophet." Then she said, "Did you know who that woman was? The woman who did so was a disbeliever. For a believer is much too honored by God Most High to let him be tortured for the sake of a cat. When you speak concerning the Prophet, you must be careful as to what you are saying."[26]

This debate between ʿĀishah and Abu Hurayrah is significant because ʿĀishah did not merely tell Abu Hurayrah that he made a mistake in relating the tradition. She also said that the tradition itself, as narrated by Abū Hurayrah violated a certain principle which she then articulated, "A believer is much too honored…to be tortured for the sake of a cat." She challenged the *matn* of the ḥadīth by demonstrating how it conflicted with the principle she put forth.

In another tradition narrated by Bukhārī regarding the Night Journey (*isrā' wal miʿrāj*), ʿĀishah again analyze the narration of the event as articulated by some of the companions based on it violating a Qur'anic verse. The relevant portion of the tradition is as follows:
Narrated Masrūq: I said to ʿĀishah, "O Mother! Did Prophet Muḥammad see his Lord?" ʿĀishah h said, "What you have said makes my hair stand on end! Know that if somebody tells you one of the following three things, he is a liar: Whoever tells you that Muḥammad saw his Lord, is a liar." Then ʿĀishah recited the Verse: 'No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision. He is the Most Courteous Well-Acquainted with all things.' (6:103) 'It is not fitting for a human being that Allāh should speak to him except by inspiration or from behind a veil.' (4:51).[27]

ʿĀishah's strong language (using the term "liars") addressed to those who claimed that the Prophet saw his Lord on the night journey is based on her understanding of the verse "No vision can grasp Him" and that "He does not speak except through inspiration or behind a veil." For ʿĀishah, what was articulated by some in describing what happened clearly contradicted the Qurʾan and thus had to be rejected based on the Qurʾanic principle. The validity, arguments, or evidence that may contradict ʿĀishah's conclusion may be debated and in fact was. The point though is that she judged a tradition based on certain principles that she derived and articulated.

The use of a principled approach is commonly found in the area of theology. Many theologians adopted a certain methodology in dealing with verses from the Qurʾan as well as ḥadīth that speak about God. Positive knowledge about God had to be based on the Qurʾan and ḥadīth that reached the status of *Mutawātir*. Who is God and the implications and understanding of *tawḥīd* had to be based on evidence that was free from all doubt and possible speculation or error. Thus, the requirement of Qurʾanic texts and *Mutawātir* ḥadīth to establish positive knowledge. *Āḥād* traditions were to be understood within the context of the principles derived from the Qurʾan and *Mutawātir* traditions.

For example, ʿAbd al Raḥmān ibn al-Jawzī in *Dafʿ Shubah al-Tashbīh bi-Akaff al-Tanzīh* established his first principles by which he evaluated verses and traditions that speak about God. The Qurʾanic verse (amongst others that convey a similar meaning) "There is nothing like Him" was the guiding principle by which he looked at the various traditions narrated concerning God. In light of this clear unequivocal verse, all traditions that seem to indicate a place, space, or form for the Creator are dismissed as inauthentic due to the chain, and if the chain is sound, they are interpreted metaphorically where possible. Ibn al-Jawzī stated, "Any text [of the Qurʾan and Sunnah] is only held according to its literal meaning when it is possible and feasible. If something would redirect or negate this being done, it is understood and held according to its figurative understanding."[28] In other words, literal meaning is only appropriate when it does not violate the principle that "God is not like His creation." If a tradition indicates similarity then it is either a forged ḥadīth or one that must interpreted in a way that does not violate the guiding principle.

For example, we find in Bukhārī and Muslim traditions references to God "laughing." For Ibn al-Jawzī, laughing is something that is done by humans and therefore it cannot be understood as referring to God. He explained those traditions by what occurs when one laughs, and then interpreted accordingly. He says: "Laughter that seizes people is merely a reference to when someone manifests the teeth that are concealed by the mouth. But this is impossible with respect to God, Glorified and Exalted is He. It is [therefore] necessary to construe it to mean, "God manifested His generosity and graciousness."[29] The analysis thus breaks down into the following:

- The literal meaning of the text states that God laughs
- Laughing is something that is done by creatures
- God cannot be similar to creatures
- The tradition is either incorrect or must be interpreted metaphorically in order not to violate the initial principle – God cannot be similar to creatures

What is important to note from this line of argument is that God is not understood by gathering all traditions relating to Him and His alleged attributes and thus constructing an image of the creator. Rather, an initial principle is established, as set forth by God Himself in the

Qur'an, and then the traditions are understood within the context of that principle. Ibn al-Jawzī goes to great length in his text to show how others have begun with a principle that God is like us (although they deny this by word) and then find in various traditions and verses those that confirm this pre-conceived notion.

Matn Analysis and the Authorial Enterprise

Khāled Abū al-Fadl develops a theory of ḥadīth criticism based on what he calls the authorial enterprise.[30] For Fadl, one cannot divorce the role of the narrators in contributing to the narration of the ḥadīth. In other words, what we have narrated to us may contain what the Prophet had said, but we heard it through people who contributed to the text of the ḥadīth, either intentionally or not. One may have narrated a tradition in a certain way based on their own circumstances and biases, which colored their understanding and selection of narration. There was a reason why one person remembered a certain tradition, but not others. The reporters may have remembered the specific saying accurately, but failed to see the relevance in the context in which it was given, and therefore may or may not have narrated the context in which it was given. However, according to Fadl, the context itself may be critical to understanding the import of the tradition.

Further, these traditions were integrated into existing legal structures by which some may have placed more value in the tradition as compared to others. For Fadl it is unrealistic to think that one can merely state that the Prophet declared something, unless one also looks to the authorial enterprise in the chain of transmission. The Prophetic voice may be found to be stronger or less strong when the authorial enterprise is considered.

For an example of his evaluation of the authorial enterprise, Fadl looks to the tradition found in Bukhārī: "No people will succeed who entrust their affairs to a woman." According to Fadl, the majority of these reports go back to the Companion Nufay' b. al-Ḥārith, known as Abū Bakrah al-Thaqafī (d. 52 AH/672 CE). Although ḥadīth scholars have found him trustworthy, Fadl finds his life, opinions, and ḥadīth narrated by him as reflecting a person who is politically a pacifist and as one who sought to uphold the traditional role of men in society. For example, Abū Bakrah did not seek to get involved in the disputes between 'Āishah and 'Alī, and Ali and Mu'āwiyah. The circumstances surrounding the tradition are that the Prophet apparently said it upon hearing that a woman had assumed power in Persia.

Fadl speculates that it was possible Abū Bakrah's subjectivities caused him to mishear what the Prophet had said. It may have been that he said, "A people who are led by this woman will not succeed." But Abū Bakrah's bias caused him to have heard it as a general statement, rather than referring specifically to what was occurring in Persia.[31] For Fadl the authorial enterprise does not end with an analysis of the narrator but also to whom he narrated to and why it was popular and easily accepted. For example, was it easily accepted because this was a patriarchal society? Fadl argues that these issues raise serious doubts about the competency of the tradition, irrespective of Bukhārī's acceptance of it as authentic.

Fadl's investigation of Abū Bakrah as a narrator is rather extensive but it does contain a significant amount of speculation. Further, this approach toward critiquing a ḥadīth makes one subject to being accused of being result-driven and subjective, rather than objectively evaluating the evidence presented. One's own biases and prejudices are also brought to the analysis of the text. One equipped with a modern education, influenced by modern (predominantly Western) ideas of patriarchy could result in an analysis that is skewed in favor of one's current opinions

and ideas. Such an approach could result in the allegation that one sought to investigate a ḥadīth one was troubled by in order to undermine its alleged authenticity. The scholars of ḥadīth of old have established their own grades of what they consider appropriate guidelines in evaluating whether someone is trustworthy or not. It is from those initial premises that they decided whether a tradition was accepted or not. This minimized the amount of bias and prejudice that the scholar brought to his analysis.

Further, not only the evaluation of those within the chain of narration and their alleged biases, but the companions themselves become subject to criticism. This line of reasoning put forward by Fadl calls into question the accepted principle, as articulated by ibn Ḥajar, that, "The *Ahl al Sunnah* are unanimous that all (the companions) are *'udūl*, i.e. truthful." The Adala is that there has been no intentional deviation from the truth. This does not mean that they were infallible (as some may understand it) but rather that they did not intentionally deviate from the truth. Fadl's critique lends to questioning this foundational principle in the transmission of ḥadīth, for it can delve into potential motives of the companions, which would undermine their accepted status as truthful.

However, Fadl provides a useful principle or tool that can be used in evaluating a particular ḥadīth. This principle is that a higher standard should be employed for traditions that have a strong social impact, transcending a specific legal obligation. For example, the tradition that is reported in various forms contains the statement, "It is not lawful for anyone to prostrate to anyone. If I would have ordered any person to prostrate to another, I would have commanded wives to prostrate to their husbands because of the enormity of the rights of husbands over their wives." After sighting the various versions of this tradition (at times conflicting) Fadl observes these reports reach beyond other traditions that specify narrow legal obligation; these reports explicate a fundamental principle that is supposed to impact all marriages and all gender relations. While the physical act of prostration to the husband is not permitted, the moral substance of prostration does apply through such traditions.[32]

For Fadl, this tradition and similar ones establish a widespread moral and social structure and therefore require a high level of scrutiny. According to Fadl, "In considering each report, we need to think about the effect or impact of applying this report in a normative fashion, and the greater the impact, the stricter the scrutiny. The greater the impact the heavier the burden of proof that a report will be required to meet."[33]

The principle of the impact of a report on social norms in shaping a society can be somewhat objectively applied. In other words, any report that has a strong and broad social impact should cause one to pause before acting upon it. It should not be accepted merely because it is found in one of the six canonical collections. Nor should it be rejected off-hand as not meeting our sensibilities (as that would cause us to fall into the subjective), but should cause one to investigate the matter further and see if it meets a higher standard.

This approach is fairly normal in traditions that relate to *tawhid*. When a conscientious person comes across an authentic tradition that seems to conflict with an established principle of *tawḥīd*, one pauses before accepting it outright (or rejecting it). A conscientious individual will suspend his judgment until he or she investigates the tradition further. A principled approach is also found in the area of *Sīrah* literature as articulated by Sheikh Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī. He "accepted the narrations whose wordings confirm to the fixed principles and laws even if their chains of narrators were not sound and…[he] rejected those *aḥādīth* which are described as authentic because they do not conform to the fixed principles and laws according to… [his] understanding of Allāh's religion and the methodology of the *Da'wah*."[34]

In contemporary times people have free access to nearly all the ḥadīth collections by merely surfing the web. The traditions collected in the canonical collections are deemed by most Muslims to be authentic, especially those found in Bukhārī and Muslim. Any attempt to undermine or raise doubts as to the science of ḥadīth criticism in the chains of transmission will prove unsuccessful, first because the compilers put forth the best human effort in determining authenticity and second, because undermining that system will potentially undermine the whole corpus of ḥadīth. However, if scholars establish some basic overriding principles, not necessarily to automatically reject or accept a particular tradition, but provide a framework that would cause one to pause when they come across a particular tradition and inquire further, it may control the quick judgment people reach merely by finding a particular ḥadīth in an authentic collection.

Bibliography

· Al-Ghazālī, Muḥammad, *Understanding The Life of Prophet Muhammad*. International Islamic Publishing House, 1997.
· A'ẓamī, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā, *Studies in Early ḥadīth Literature*. Al-Maktab Al-Islāmī, 1968.
  - *Studies in ḥadīth Methodology and Literature*. American
         Trust Publications, 1992.
· Brown, Daniel, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.
· Doi, A. Raḥmān, *Ḥadīth: An Introduction*. Kazi Publications, 1980.
· Al-Fadl, Khāled Abū, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women* Oneworld Publications, 2001.
· Ibn al-Jawzī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān, *The Attributes of God*, Abdullah bin Hamid Ali, trans. Amal Press Ltd., 2006.
· Ibn al-Ṣalāh, al-Shahrazūrī, *An Introduction to the Science of Ḥadīth*. Garnet Publishing, 2006.
· Kamālī, Muḥammad Hāshim, *A Textbook of ḥadīth Studies*. Islamic Foundation, 2005.
· Ṣiddīqī, Muḥammad, *Ḥadīth Literature: Its Origin, Development and Special Features*. Islamic Texts Society, 2003.

[1] See, e.g., Daniel Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[2] (33:21).
[3] See, for example, (4:59) and (3:164).
[4] See Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, pp.10-12.
[5] This was not the only means, as the practices of the companions and subsequent generations also reflected the practices of the Prophet.
[6] Muḥammad Ṣiddīqī, *Ḥadīth Literature: Its Origin, Development and Special Features* (Islamic Texts Society, 2003), p.6. See also Muḥammad Muṣṭafā A'ẓamī, *Studies in Early Ḥadīth Literature* (Al-Maktab Al-Islāmī, 1968), pp.22-25.
[7] Muḥammad Hāshim Kamālī, *A Textbook of Ḥadīth Studies* (Islamic Foundation, 2005), p.28.

[8] A'ẓamī, *Studies in Early Ḥadīth Literature*, pp.20,25.

[9] As of 5 century AH this was not generally agreed upon, as is evidenced by Shahrazūrī, who lists five canonical collections, not including Ibn Mājah. See ibn al-Salāh al-Shahrazūrī, *An Introduction to the Science of Ḥadīth*. (Garnet Publishing, 2006), p.22.

[10] See Kamālī, *Textbook*, pp.169-170.

[11] *Āḥād* is sometimes mistakenly translated as "solitary" or "single transmission" giving the impression that there is only one chain of transmission.

[12] A'ẓamī, *Studies in Ḥadīth Methodology and Literature* (American Trust Publications, 1992), p.61.

[13] Ibn Khaldūn referred more generally to the transmission of history and not necessarily just the transmission of ḥadīth. See Khāled Abū al-Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women* (Oneworld Publications, 2001), p.110.

[14] See A'ẓamī, *Ḥadīth Methodology*, p.57.

[15] See Ṣiddīqī, *Hadith Literature*, p.114; and A. Raḥmān Doi, *Hadith: An Introduction* (Kazi Publications, 1980), p.32.

[16] See Kamālī, *Textbook*, pp.109-122.

[17] Ibid, p.110.

[18] Ibid, p.113.

[19] Ibid.

[20] (93:8).

[21] Ibid,p.113.

[22] Ibid, p.114.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Of course this would be conditioned that the look does not invoke unlawful desire.

[25] (81:8-9).

[26] See Kamālī, *Textbook*,pp.115-116.

[27] Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, 6:378.

[28] 'Abd Al-Raḥmān ibn al-Jawzī, *The Attributes of God*, Tr. Abdullāh bin Hāmid Ali (Amal Press Ltd., 2006), p.43.

[29] Ibid., p.82.

[30] See Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name*, Chapter Four: "The Text and Authority." p?

[31] See Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name*, p.113.

[32] See Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name*, pp.212-213.

[33] Ibid. p.88.

[34] Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Understanding The Life of Prophet Muḥammad* (International Islamic Publishing House, 1997), p.15.