

## Contribution of Muslim Women Scholars to Ḥadīth Transmission and Authentication

MUSFERAH MEHFOOZ\*

### Abstract

*Muslim history witnessed many women who mastered the science of ḥadīth and demonstrated their expertise in the science of al-jarḥ wa 'l-ta'dīl (invalidation and validation of ḥadīth narrators). The science of al-jarḥ wa 'l-ta'dīl is one of the subtlest and the most important branches of the science of ḥadīth, which assesses the authenticity of the narrations attributed to the Prophet (peace be on him), based on the trustworthiness or otherwise of ḥadīth narrators. Since the beginning of Islamic history, Muslim women constantly took part in narrating, preserving, and memorizing ḥadīths. These efforts continued in the later periods. This study aims to investigate the contribution of these women scholars of ḥadīth (muḥaddithāt), especially of 'Ā'ishah, the wife of the Prophet, to the transmission and authentication of ḥadīths. Furthermore, it highlights the intellectual contribution of women scholars of ḥadīth in order to encourage contemporary Muslim women to continue the legacy of their predecessors by mastering this science.*

### Keywords

*ḥadīth, narrations, criticism, muḥaddithāt, jarḥ, ta'dīl.*

### Introduction

The science of ḥadīth is an important field to which Muslim women have made a remarkable contribution. The women scholars of ḥadīth played an important role in transmitting ḥadīths and developing sciences allied to them. All the important compilers of the Prophetic traditions received many ḥadīths from their women teachers because every important ḥadīth collection provides the names of numerous women as the immediate

---

\* Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies, Department of Humanities, COMSATS University Islamabad, Lahore Campus, Pakistan.

authorities of the author. *Ḥadīth* writing is considered a remarkable endeavour of Muslims in human history. The six canonical compilations of *ḥadīth* literature contain many names of women *ḥadīth* narrators. This clearly shows that Muslim women played an important role in preserving and developing *ḥadīth* sciences. They mastered the science of *ḥadīth*, had their own *ijāzahs* (certificates to teach *ḥadīths*), travelled widely to seek knowledge, and delivered lectures in significant mosques and schools of learning. They not only narrated and evaluated *ḥadīths*, but also issued legal edicts.<sup>1</sup>

These women scholars of *ḥadīth* mostly belonged to the intellectual elite of religious scholars and jurists of the time and grew up in learned households, as we discern from the familial connections mentioned in their biographies. However, this should not undermine the historical significance of women's equality with their male counterparts in the discipline.<sup>2</sup> Particularly, the women of the early generations (female Companions and Successors) doubtlessly played a significant role in preserving and transmitting a huge body of Prophetic traditions.

### **Significant Role of *Muḥaddithāt* during the Early Period of Islam**

During the lifetime of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him), women played their part as *ḥadīth* transmitters and after the Prophet's demise, many female Companions, particularly the Prophet's wives, were viewed as important custodians of *ḥadīth* knowledge, which they obtained during the lifetime of the Prophet. The earliest and most distinguished female transmitters of *ḥadīths* included the wives of the Prophet such as Ḥafṣah bint 'Umar (d. 41/661), Maymūnah bint al-Ḥārith (d. 51/673), Umm Salamah Hind bint Abī Umayyah (d. 61/680), Umm Ḥabībah bint Abī Sufyān (d. 44/664), and 'Ā'ishah bint Abī Bakr (d. 58/678). 'Ā'ishah was an authoritative reporter and interpreter of the Prophetic traditions.<sup>3</sup> A *ḥadīth*-scholar 'Āmir b. Shuraḥbīl al-Sha'bī (d. 103/723) narrated that whenever Masrūq b. al-Ajda' (d. 62/682) narrated from 'Ā'ishah, he would start by saying, "Described to me the honest lady, the daughter of the honest man, the one announced honest by God, the beloved of the beloved of God."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-I'tidāl* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1416/1995), 7:465.

<sup>2</sup> Oaima Abou-Bakr, "Teaching the Words of the Prophet: Women Instructors of the Hadith (Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries)," *Hawwa* 1, no. 3 (2003): 306–28.

<sup>3</sup> Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1994), 7:160.

<sup>4</sup> Muḥammad b. Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1904–18), 8:64.

Muslim women scholars' engagement with ḥadīth narration and its allied sciences did not stop with the demise of the Prophet. Rather, it continued during the time of the righteous caliphs. There are a number of women scholars of ḥadīth other than the mothers of the believers (*ummahāt al-mu'minīn*) who continued recording and transmitting the Prophetic traditions. They had unique characteristics and talents. For example, the daughter of Umm Salamah, Zaynab bint Abī Salamah (d. 73/694) narrated twenty-one Prophetic traditions.<sup>5</sup> Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (d. 463/1071) emphasized Zaynab's reputation as a knowledgeable woman. She mostly narrated from Umm Salamah and other wives of the Prophet. Themes of the Prophetic traditions narrated by her included ritual purity, prayers, funerary procedure, and eschatology.<sup>6</sup>

Umm Dardā' al-Ṣughrā (d. 81 AH), a prominent female scholar narrated twenty-three Prophetic traditions and enjoyed a scholarly prestige similar to that of Muḥammad b. Sīrīn (d. 110/729) and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728).<sup>7</sup> Ṣafīyyah bint Shaybah (d. 90 AH) narrated thirty-four Prophetic traditions. Ḥafṣah bint Sīrīn (d. 92 AH) narrated seventeen traditions. She was a female ascetic who also achieved prominence as a ḥadīth transmitter. She resembled Umm Dardā' in many ways<sup>8</sup> and was known in the historical sources as the most prominent sibling of Ibn Sīrīn.<sup>9</sup> In Baṣrah, she attracted students who were impressed by her piety as well as her knowledge of the Prophetic traditions and their legal and practical relevance.<sup>10</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) reports that when her brother Ibn Sīrīn could not answer any question regarding the Qur'ān, he would refer it to her.<sup>11</sup>

The niece of 'Ā'ishah, 'Amrah bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 98 AH) narrated sixty-seven Prophetic traditions. She was brought up by her aunt 'Ā'ishah. 'Amrah's reports not only included sayings of the Prophet

<sup>5</sup> Yūsuf b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī Asmā' al-Rijāl*, ed. Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1406/1985), 35:602; Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1985), 3:200–01.

<sup>6</sup> Yūsuf b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī'āb fī Ma'rifat al-Aṣḥāb* (Cairo: Maktabat Nahḍat Miṣr), 2:196–97.

<sup>7</sup> Muḥammad b. Ḥibbān, *Kitāb al-Thiqāt* (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyyah, 1393 AH), 3:120.

<sup>8</sup> Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*, 8:353.

<sup>9</sup> Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Ḥajar, *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1993), 9:184–86.

<sup>10</sup> Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Sarakhsī, *Kitāb al-Mabsūṭ* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1989), 5:142–44.

<sup>11</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Jawzī, *Aḥkām al-Nisā'*, ed. 'Amr 'Abd al-Mun'im Salīm (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyyah, 1997), 179.

narrated by ‘Ā’ishah but also included ‘Ā’ishah’s independent legal judgements (*ijtihād*) and her interpretations of the Prophetic traditions. Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Ḥazm (d. 120/737), the governor of Medina, wrote once to ‘Amrah, seeking counsel on the punishment of a thief.<sup>12</sup> ‘Amrah reported on the authority of ‘Ā’ishah that the hand of a thief was cut off for an amount over one-quarter of a dinar. ‘Amrah had a remarkable command over the science of *ḥadīth* and was among a few Muslim women whom medieval biographers referred to as a *faqīhah* (jurist). Ibn Sa’d referred to her as a learned woman (*‘ālimah*). She not only preserved and disseminated ‘Ā’ishah’s reports but also deeply understood their practical and legal implications. For this reason, the scholars of *ḥadīth*-criticism praised her along with ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr and Hishām b. ‘Urwah for being one of the most trusted sources of ‘Ā’ishah’s narrations.<sup>13</sup> It is also important to note that once caliph ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (r. 99–101/717–720) ordered Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Ḥazm to write down all the Prophetic traditions narrated by her.<sup>14</sup> Mu‘ādhah bint ‘Abd Allāh (d. 100 AH) and ‘Ā’ishah bint Ṭalḥah (d. 101 AH) narrated fourteen and thirteen Prophetic traditions respectively. ‘Ā’ishah bint Ṭalḥah was the niece of ‘Ā’ishah, the wife of the Prophet.<sup>15</sup> Fāṭimah bint al-Mundhir (d. 763 CE), the granddaughter of Asmā’ bint Abī Bakr, who married her maternal cousin, the famous *ḥadīth*-scholar Hishām b. ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr (d. 146 AH),<sup>16</sup> narrated fourteen Prophetic traditions. Thirteen of them were reported from Asmā’ bint Abī Bakr and the remaining one from Umm Salamah. In addition, Umaynah, the daughter of Companion Anas b. Mālīk (d. 93/711), narrated many Prophetic traditions from her father. ‘Ābidah al-Madaniyyah narrated from Mālīk b. Anas (d. 179/795). She was famous for memorizing numerous Prophetic traditions.<sup>17</sup> Besides the aforementioned women scholars of the Prophetic traditions, numerous other women scholars excelled in *ḥadīth* sciences and delivered public lectures on *ḥadīths*.

The transmission, memorization, and preservation of the Prophetic traditions by women scholars continued. They belonged to different segments of society and came from various backgrounds and social

<sup>12</sup> Ibn Sa’d, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*, 2:295.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 8:353.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta’rīkh Baghdād* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1967), 14:248.

<sup>16</sup> Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar, *al-Iṣābah fī Tamayiz al-Ṣaḥābah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1995), 11:44–46.

<sup>17</sup> Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā’* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1932–38), 2:167–68.

strata. They proved that class or gender could not hinder them from ascending through the positions of Islamic scholarship. For instance, ‘Ābidah al-Madaniyyah, a slave girl of Muḥammad b. Yazīd, learned a substantial number of Prophetic traditions from the instructors of ḥadīth in Medina. Ibn Yazīd gifted her to his cousin Ḥabīb b. al-Walīd Daḥḥūn, who was a learned traditionist of al-Andalus and visited Medina during his pilgrimage to Mecca. Impressed by her academic achievements, Daḥḥūn married her after manumitting her and took her with him to al-Andalus.<sup>18</sup> Zaynab bint Sulaymān (d. 142/759), the great-granddaughter of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās (d. 68/687), had expertise in ḥadīth sciences and achieved a distinguished position amongst the renowned women scholars of the Prophetic traditions of her time.<sup>19</sup>

This remarkable tradition of Muslim women’s mastery of ḥadīth and its allied sciences continued to the sixth century AH. For instance, during the fourth century AH, Fāṭimah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 312/924), known as al-Ṣūfiyyah for her piety, Umm al-Faṭḥ Amat al-Salām Zaynab bint al-Qāḍī Abī Bakr Aḥmad (d. 390/1000), Amat al-Wāḥid bint al-Ḥusayn al-Maḥāmālī (d. 377/987), and many other women scholars delivered lectures on and contributed to ḥadīth sciences.<sup>20</sup>

Another example is of Karīmah bint Aḥmad al-Marwaziyyah (d. 463/1070) who was viewed as an outstanding expert on Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870). Abū Dharr ‘Abd b. Aḥmad (d. 434 AH) who was a leading scholar and belonged to Herat advised his pupils to study Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī under her, as he considered her an expert of ḥadīth transmission.<sup>21</sup> Famous ḥadīth-scholar and prominent historian Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) also studied the ḥadīth under her.<sup>22</sup> Karīmah’s name also occurs in Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar’s (d. 852/1449) chain of narrators.<sup>23</sup> Another example is of ‘Ā’ishah bint ‘Abd al-Hādī who was the teacher of Ibn Ḥajar and was recognized as a competent ḥadīth scholar of her time and many students travelled to study ḥadīth sciences under her. In addition, Fāṭimah bint al-Ḥasan of the fifth century AH was famous for her insights and piety, as well as for her expertise in the science of Prophetic traditions and their chains of

<sup>18</sup> Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Maqqarī, *Nafh al-Ṭīb fī Ghuṣn al-Andalus al-Raṭīb* (Aligarh: Maṭba‘ah-i Muslim Institute, 1921), 2:96.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Ta’rīkh Baghdād*, 14:434–35.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Yāqūt b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Mu‘jam al-‘Udabā’: Irshād al-Arīb ilā Ma’rifat al-Adīb* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 1:247.

<sup>22</sup> Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar, *al-Majma’ al-Mu’assis li al-Mu‘jam al-Mufahris* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma’rifah, 1413/1992), 2:77.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:227.

narrators.<sup>24</sup> Umm al-Bahā' Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad (d. 539 AH) was another famous expert on the *Ṣaḥīḥ* in the sixth century AH. In his biographical account of Aḥmad b. Khalīl b. Kaykaldī (d. 802/1399), Ibn Ḥajar remarks that among his important narrations is the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, which he narrated from Ghānim b. Aḥmad al-Julūdī (d. 538 AH), who studied it under Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad.<sup>25</sup>

## Literature Review

Many contemporary scholars wrote on the contributions of Muslim women to Islamic sciences, especially the science of *ḥadīth*. In his *A'lām al-Nisā' fī 'Ālamay al-'Arab wa 'l-Islām*, 'Umar Riḍā Kaḥḥālāh (d.1987) provided rich information about Muslim women scholars.<sup>26</sup> In his *al-Muḥaddithāt: The Women Scholars in Islam*, Mohammad Akram Nadwi summarized his 40-volume biographical dictionary, in Arabic, of the Muslim women who studied and taught *ḥadīth*.<sup>27</sup> He demonstrated that women played a central role in preserving the Prophet's teachings. In his *Ḥadīth Literature: Its Origin, Development and Special Features*, Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi explained the origin of *ḥadīth* literature, the evolution of the *isnād* system, the relationship between scholars and the state, the issue of fabrication, and the gradual development of a systematic approach to the material. An interesting appendix of this book demonstrates that a high proportion of the medieval *ḥadīth* scholars were women.<sup>28</sup> "Articulating Gender: Muslim Women intellectuals in the Pre-Modern Period"<sup>29</sup> and "Teaching the Words of the Prophet: Women Instructors of the Hadith (Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries)"<sup>30</sup> by Omais Abou-Bakr are also important contributions to the present discussion. Ruth Roded's *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections: From Ibn Sa'd to Who's Who*<sup>31</sup> and Asma Sayeed's works "Women and Ḥadīth

<sup>24</sup> Al-Maqqarī, *Nafh al-Tīb*, 2:96.

<sup>25</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Majma' al-Mu'assis*, 2:354-55.

<sup>26</sup> 'Umar Riḍā Kaḥḥālāh, *A'lām al-Nisā' fī 'Ālamay al-'Arab wa 'l-Islām* (Damascus: al-Maktabah al-Hāshimiyah, 1940).

<sup>27</sup> Mohammad Akram Nadwi, *al-Muḥaddithāt: The Women Scholars of Islam* (London: Interface, 2007).

<sup>28</sup> Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, *Ḥadīth Literature: Its Origin, Development and Special Features* (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 1993).

<sup>29</sup> Omais Abou-Bakr, "Articulating Gender: Muslim Women Intellectuals in the Pre-Modern Period," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (2010): 127-44.

<sup>30</sup> Abou-Bakr, "Teaching the Words of the Prophet: Women Instructors of the Hadith (Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries)," *Hawwa* 1, no. 3 (2003): 306-28.

<sup>31</sup> Ruth Roded, *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections: From Ibn Sa'd to Who's Who* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994).

Transmission: Two Case Studies from Mamluk Damascus”<sup>32</sup> and *Women and the Transmission of Religious Knowledge in Islam*,<sup>33</sup> which concentrate primarily on the field of ḥadīth are important contributions to Muslim social and intellectual history of the early and classical eras with special reference to Islamic law and ḥadīth studies. According to Mona Hassan, “Sayeed combs through the classical biographical dictionaries to track the ebb and flow of women transmitters of ḥadīth from the seventh to the sixteenth centuries.”<sup>34</sup> Mona Hassan’s “Relations, Narrations, and Judgments: The Scholarly Networks and Contributions of an Early Female Muslim Jurist”<sup>35</sup> is also an important work that highlights the efforts of the women scholars of ḥadīth.

### The Science of *al-Jarḥ wa ’l-Ta’dīl*: An Introduction

The science of *al-Jarḥ wa ’l-ta’dīl* (invalidation and validation of the narrators) is one of the important ḥadīth sciences. It assesses the biographies of the narrators to see whether to accept or reject their narrations.<sup>36</sup> *Al-jarḥ* refers to attributing to narrators something that hurts their trustworthiness in terms of piety or memory. *Al-Ta’dīl*, on the other hand, means praising the personality of the narrator by proving that he is *’ādil* (honest) and *ḍābiṭ* (perfect in memorizing).<sup>37</sup> *Al-Jarḥ wa ’l-ta’dīl* can semantically be interpreted in many senses but basically, this term is used exclusively in the science of ḥadīth to assess the credibility of the narrators and this is what many scholars have restricted it to.<sup>38</sup>

*Ḥadīth* criticism and assessment of ḥadīth narrators began early in Islamic history.<sup>39</sup> The Companions of the Prophet were the first to develop the science of *al-jarḥ wa ’l-ta’dīl*. The criterion of the Companions

<sup>32</sup> Asma Sayeed, “Women and Ḥadīth Transmission: Two Case Studies from Mamluk Damascus,” *Studia Islamica* 95 (2002): 71–94.

<sup>33</sup> Sayeed, *Women and the Transmission of Religious Knowledge in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>34</sup> Mona F. Hassan, “Relations, Narrations, and Judgments: The Scholarly Networks and Contributions of an Early Female Muslim Jurist,” *Islamic Law and Society* 22, no. 4 (2015): 324.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 323–351.

<sup>36</sup> Al Dhahabī, *Mizān al-’itidāl*, 7:465.

<sup>37</sup> Abū ’l-Walīd Sulaymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī, *al-Ta’dīl wa ’l-Tajrīḥ* (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risālah, 1985), 2:282.

<sup>38</sup> Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Lāḥim, *al-Jarḥ wa ’l-Ta’dīl* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1988), 30–31.

<sup>39</sup> Taqī ’l-Dīn al-Subkī enumerates the prolific memorizers (*ḥuffāz*), from Abū Bakr and to al-’Alā’ī (d. 761 AH), a total of 212 figures. See Taqī ’l-Dīn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi’iyyah al-Kubrā wa ’l-Wuṣṭā wa ’l-Ṣuḡhrā* (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-’Arabiyyah, 1964), 1:314–18.

regarding the acceptance or rejection of Prophetic narrations was not lenient. They would not accept any narration unless it was supported by proof. They would also take into account the credibility and reputation of the narrators. They set up a trend for the preservation of authentic traditions, based on sound principles to ensure accurate and exact transmission of the Prophetic traditions.

The science of *al-jarḥ wa 'l-ta'dīl* revolved around the description of the personal details of narrators. The critics had to take a range of issues into consideration such as the narrator's reputation, personality, beliefs, travels, other narrations reported by him, and teachers under whom he studied Islamic sciences.<sup>40</sup> In a nutshell, the most important criterion that drew the interest of the critics and formed the basis for other criteria, is a narrator's probity (*'adālah*) and retention (*ḍabt*).<sup>41</sup> Thus, the critics employed a number of methods to gauge a narrator's probity and retention.<sup>42</sup>

The scholars of *ḥadīth* agree that assessing *ḥadīth* narrators (*jarḥ*) is a communal duty (*farḍ 'alā 'l-kifāyah*) of Muslims. The earlier *muḥaddithūn* made great efforts to search and find authentic traditions. The methodology adopted by the *ḥadīth* experts for this endeavour was systematic. They carefully studied and verified the biographies of all *ḥadīth* narrators who transmitted the traditions. This field of study was termed as '*ilm asmā' al rijāl*'. Biographies of all *ḥadīth* narrators were recorded to ascertain the care and caution they exercised in narrating reports especially from the Prophet.

### Women Scholars and the *Ḥadīth* Transmission and Authentication

Muslim scholars do not reject the authority of women to invalidate (*jarḥ*) or validate (*ta'dīl*) a narrator of *ḥadīth* as such. The reason for the rejection of such authority is based on the absence of enough information about a narrator and this applies to both men and women. Since the women of that time did not mix up with men and had less exposure to social life and lesser information about the lives and personalities of the majority of male narrators, they were not in a position to critique a narrator. However, if a woman possessed enough information about a narrator, her opinion on invalidating (*jarḥ*) or validating (*ta'dīl*) would be trusted. It is also argued that if a man does

<sup>40</sup> 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah, *Lamahāt min Ta'riḥ al-Sunnah wa 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth*, (Aleppo: Maktabat al-Maṭbū'āt al-Islāmiyyah, 1984), 84.

<sup>41</sup> Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-A'zamī, *Manhaj al-Naqd 'ind al-Muḥaddithīn: Nash'atuhu wa Ta'riḥuh* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Kauthar, 1990), 20.

<sup>42</sup> Al-Lāḥim, *al-Jarḥ wa 'l-Ta'dīl*, 43, 47, 62, 77.



not have enough knowledge about a narrator, his witness or remarks will also not be considered.<sup>43</sup> Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) and Abū 'l-Walīd al-Bājī (d. 474 AH) were among the scholars who accepted the authority of women to invalidate (*jarḥ*) or validate (*ta'dīl*) a narrator of ḥadīth. Proponents of giving such authority to women base their arguments on the incident of slander against 'Ā'ishah, in which the Prophet asked her maidservant Barīrah for her opinion about the incident and considered her view valid.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī says that it is confirmed that information and statements of righteous women were accepted by the early generations of Muslims.<sup>45</sup> This implies that invalidation or validation of the narrators by women should also be accepted.

Ḥadīths narrated by Muslim women bear the same status and hold the same categories, i.e., *ṣaḥīḥ* (sound), *ḥasan* (good) and *da'īf* (weak) as ḥadīths narrated by men. Not only that, women's narrations are preferred over men's narrations because women are not known to have narrated any fabricated ḥadīth. There are a great number of ḥadīths narrated by women alone, which the traditionists have accepted.

'Ā'ishah alone reported the ḥadīth about the modesty of 'Uthmān b. 'Affān that Allah's Messenger said, "Should I not show modesty to one whom the angels show modesty."<sup>46</sup>

Muḥammad b. Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742) narrated from 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn that Ṣafīyyah, the wife of the Prophet, told him that once during the *i'tikāf* she visited the Prophet in the mosque. After this short meeting, he accompanied her to the door. On the door, the Prophet met two Anṣārī men. They greeted him. He informed them that Ṣafīyyah bint Ḥuyayy was accompanying him. They were embarrassed and said, "O Prophet, we cannot think of any evil about you." The Prophet replied, "Satan reaches in the human body where blood reaches in it. I was afraid Satan might insert an evil thought in your minds."<sup>47</sup>

The commentators of ḥadīth frequently preferred women's narrations because they had stronger *isnāds*. One example is Barīrah who was a slave girl freed by 'Ā'ishah and a notably influential, strong-willed woman. Barīrah narrates that charity (*ṣadaqah*) that she received and

<sup>43</sup> Nadwī, *al-Muḥaddithāt*, 237.

<sup>44</sup> 'Abd al-Malik b. Hishām, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyyah* (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-'Aṣriyyah, 1994), 3:313–14.

<sup>45</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*, 14:73.

<sup>46</sup> Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Kitāb faḍā'il al-ṣaḥābah, Bāb min faḍā'il 'Uthmān b. 'Affān.

<sup>47</sup> Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Kitāb al-i'tikāf, Bāb hal yakhruj al-mu'takif li ḥawā'ijihī ilā bāb al-masjid.

then passed on to a member of the Prophet's household was deemed a gift (and not charity) from her. Ibn Ḥajar asserts that scholars have enumerated more than 300 rulings based on her tradition, indicating its importance for legal discussions.<sup>48</sup>

Umm 'Aṭiyyah narrated a *ḥadīth* about washing the deceased.<sup>49</sup> It was quoted by numerous jurists. It is mentioned in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī who derived many rulings from it. After her migration to Baṣrah, many Companions and Successors visited Umm 'Aṭiyyah to hear this *ḥadīth* and learn how to wash the deceased.<sup>50</sup> Ibn Sīrīn was one of those who learned washing the deceased from her.<sup>51</sup> According to Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, Ibn Sīrīn was the most knowledgeable among all the Successors about washing the deceased.<sup>52</sup> Al-Tirmidhī also judged Umm 'Aṭiyyah's *ḥadīth* to be sound and good.<sup>53</sup>

### **Few Examples of Invalidation (*Jarḥ*) and Validation (*Ta'dīl*) by 'Ā'ishah, the Wife of the Prophet**

This section presents some examples of invalidation (*jarḥ*) and validation (*ta'dīl*) by 'Ā'ishah. These examples highlight her competency and accuracy in *ḥadīth* narration. The following examples clearly show that narrations reported by 'Ā'ishah were upheld and regarded as authentic due to the invalidation (*jarḥ*) and validation (*ta'dīl*) by her and the legal and rational arguments with which she supported her narrations. It is important to mention here that the given instances of the invalidation (*jarḥ*) and validation (*ta'dīl*) of the Prophet's Companions relate to memorization and preservation of knowledge rather than their probity ('*dālah*), because Sunnī Muslims believe that all Companions of the Prophet were just and righteous ('*udūl*).

'Amrah bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān narrates that it was reported to 'Ā'ishah that 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar said, "The deceased person is punished for the wailing of the living over him." 'Ā'ishah said, "May God forgive 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar. He did not lie but he forgot or made a mistake. The true narration is that the Messenger of God passed by a deceased Jewish woman and said, 'They are wailing over her and she is being punished in

<sup>48</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣābah*, 12:157.

<sup>49</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Kitāb al-janā'iz, Bāb mā yustaḥabb an yughsal witrān.

<sup>50</sup> Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, 3:35.

<sup>51</sup> Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān b. al-Ash'ath, *Sunan*, Kitāb al-janā'iz, Bāb kayfa ghusl al-mayyit.

<sup>52</sup> Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 13 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Imiyyah, 1410/1989), 3:163.

<sup>53</sup> Muḥammad b. 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, Kitāb al-janā'iz, Bāb mā jā'a fī ghusl al-mayyit.

her grave.”<sup>54</sup> It is clear that ‘Ā’ishah made comment about the narration of Ibn ‘Umar for the purpose of preserving accurate information related to the ḥadīth in question.

Abū Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet said, “Evil omen verily lies in the woman, horse, and house.” When ‘Ā’ishah heard this, she commented, “Abū Hurayrah does not remember it for he entered and the Prophet was saying, ‘May Allah destroy the Jews as they say bad omen is in three things: in a house, a woman and a horse.’ So he heard the last part of the saying and did not hear the first part.”<sup>55</sup>

‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar narrated that the Prophet stated, “A month is of twenty-nine days.” When this narration was reported before ‘Ā’ishah, she made the correction and proclaimed that, in fact, the Prophet informed us that a month could be of twenty-nine days.<sup>56</sup>

‘Ikrimah narrated that Ibn ‘Abbās said, “Muḥammad saw his Lord.”<sup>57</sup> Masrūq asked ‘Ā’ishah, “O mother, did the Prophet see his Lord?” She replied, “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 the Prophet saw his Lord, is a liar.” Then she recited the Qur’ānic verses 6:103<sup>58</sup> and 42:51<sup>59</sup> to support her view. She continued, “And whoever tells you that the Prophet knows what is going to happen tomorrow is a liar.” Then she recited the Qur’ānic verse 31:34.<sup>60</sup> She further added, “And whoever tells you that the Prophet concealed (some of Allah’s orders) is a liar.” Then she again recited the Qur’ānic verse 5:67.<sup>61</sup> At the end, she concluded, “But this is the fact that the Prophet saw Gabriel twice in his true form.”<sup>62</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Kitāb al-janā’iz, Bāb al-mayyit yu’adhhab bi bukā’ ahlihi ‘alayh.

<sup>55</sup> Muḥammad b. Bahādur al-Zarkashī, *al-Ijābah li Īrād mā Istadrakathu ‘Ā’ishah ‘alā ‘l-Ṣaḥābah* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 2001), 128.

<sup>56</sup> Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1992–94), 6:243.

<sup>57</sup> Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, Kitāb tafsīr al-Qur’ān ‘an Rasūl Allāh, Bāb wa min sūrat Wa ‘l-Najm.

<sup>58</sup> “No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision: He is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things.”

<sup>59</sup> “It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration, or from behind a veil, or by the sending of a messenger to reveal, with Allah’s permission, what Allah wills: for He is Most High, Most Wise.”

<sup>60</sup> “Nor does anyone know what it is that he will earn on the morrow.”

<sup>61</sup> “O Messenger! Proclaim the (message) which hath been sent to thee from thy Lord. If thou didst not, thou wouldst not have fulfilled and proclaimed His mission. And Allah will defend thee from men (who mean mischief).”

<sup>62</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Kitāb al-tafsīr, Bāb sūrat Wa ‘l-Najm.

‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr reported, “When Sa’d b. Abī Waqqāṣ died, the mothers of the believers (i.e., the wives of the Prophet) requested to bring his body to the mosque because they wanted to offer funeral prayer. The Companions of the Prophet did so and his bier was placed before their apartments so that they could offer funeral prayer. But some people criticized offering funeral prayer inside the mosque. They thought it was not appropriate to bring the body of a deceased person in the mosque. When this discussion was brought into the knowledge of ‘Ā’ishah, she said, “The people are criticizing us for bringing the bier inside the mosque. Had the Prophet not offered the funeral prayer of Suhayl b. Bayḍā’ in the mosque?”<sup>63</sup>

Sālim narrated from his father ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar about the completion of the rituals of *ḥajj*, “Everything becomes permissible except perfume and women.” But ‘Ā’ishah made the correction by mentioning “except women” and explained that she put perfume on the Prophet on that occasion.”<sup>64</sup>

‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar narrated that the Prophet performed four *‘umrahs* one of which was in the month of Rajab. When this was brought into the knowledge of ‘Ā’ishah, she replied, “Allah’s Messenger never performed any *‘umrah* in Rajab.”<sup>65</sup>

‘Alqamah b. Qays reported, “We were with ‘Ā’ishah and Abū Hurayrah was also there. ‘Ā’ishah asked him, ‘O Abū Hurayrah, are you the one who narrates from the Prophet that a woman was tormented in Hell because she did not give food or drink to her cat nor did she let it out to feed on small creatures until it died?’ Abū Hurayrah said, ‘I heard it from the Prophet.’ ‘Ā’ishah responded, ‘A believer is too dear to God to be tormented on account of a cat. It must have been that the woman was a disbeliever. O Abū Hurayrah, when you relate traditions from the Prophet, be careful of what you say!’”<sup>66</sup>

These are only a few narrations by ‘Ā’ishah, which clearly indicate the exercise of the principles of invalidation (*jarḥ*) and validation (*ta’dīl*) with reference to *ḥadīth* literature. Moreover, there are many other examples of the learned Companions, including the wives and daughters of the Prophet, and many others like ‘Amrah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and ‘Ā’ishah bint Ṭalḥah.

<sup>63</sup> Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Kitāb al-janā’iz, Bāb al-ṣalāh ‘alā ’l-janāzah fī ’l-masjid.

<sup>64</sup> Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, Kitāb al-ḥajj, Bāb mā yaḥill bi ’l-taḥallul al-awwal min maḥzūrāt al-iḥrām.

<sup>65</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Kitāb al-ḥajj, Bāb kam i’tamara al-Nabī ṣallā Allāh ‘alayhi wa sallam.

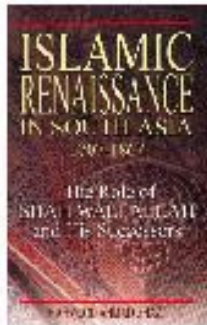
<sup>66</sup> Muḥammad b. Bahādur al-Zarkashī, *al-Ijābah li Irād mā Istadrakathu ‘Ā’ishah ‘alā ’l-Ṣaḥābah* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1970), 118.

## Conclusion

The importance of the scholarly contribution of Muslim women, especially of ‘Ā’ishah, the wife of the Prophet, to the transmission and authentication of ḥadīth literature cannot be overemphasized. Throughout Islamic history, Muslim women scholars travelled widely for seeking knowledge and delivered numerous lectures in significant mosques and schools of learning. They not only narrated and evaluated the ḥadīths but also issued jurist edicts. Thus, they played an important role in Islamic scholarship and made efforts to promote ḥadīth and its allied sciences. The teaching activities and academic services of these women were not restricted to any social stratum. Rather, they extended them to the renowned educational institutions, where people used to attend their lectures. Contemporary Muslim women should also learn Islamic sciences especially the primary sources of Islam, the Qur’ān and ḥadīth. They must take inspiration from the role and contribution of the past leading Muslim women and follow in their footsteps. This study persuades Muslim women to play their role in advancing and disseminating Islamic sciences. Further research on the contribution of Muslim women to Islamic sciences will help Muslim community in effectively addressing the challenges of the contemporary world.



## BOOKS ON HISTORY



### The Role of Shāh Wali Allāh and His Successors

Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi

This is a study of the evolution of Islamic thought in the Shāh Wali Allāh's contribution to it in particular for he represents the zenith of Islamic intellectual contribution and scholarly excellence in South Asia. The author, with his insight into the dynamics of Indian Muslim history, traces significant moments of the rise and fall in the cultural career of the Indian Muslim community until the crisis-ridden era of Shāh Wali Allāh. Against this backdrop, he brings out the impact of the great thinker on the development of Islamic thought and highlights his epoch-making contribution at a time the community was witnessing a major socio-political turmoil in its eventful history.

ISBN 969-408-231-5(PB)  
ISBN 969-408-232-3(HB)  
Pages 322

Overseas:  
US \$ 35(PB)(including postage)  
US \$ 38(HB)(including postage)

In Pakistan:  
Rs. 400/- (PB)(Postage Extra)  
Rs. 450/- (HB)(Postage Extra)



### Islamic Methodology in History

Fazlur Rahman

The book traces the historical evolution of the application of the four basic principles that supply the framework for all Islamic thought, viz the Qur'an, the Sunnah, Ijtihad and Ijma' and discusses how these principles have influenced the Islamic development itself.

ISBN: 969-408-001-0  
Pages 192

Overseas:  
US \$ 28 (including postage)

In Pakistan:  
Rs. 200/- (Postage Extra)



### Quranic Concept of History

Mazharuddin Siddiqui

The historical shifts in the fortunes of communities and nations and the ruins and relics of ancient cities and past glories are capable of giving us an understanding of the principles underlying the rise and fall of societies and civilizations. The Qur'an, while stressing the moral and spiritual development of the individual and the raising of the moral tone of society, frequently calls attention to the lessons of history to emphasize the factors that govern material success as well as moral and spiritual well-being and salvation. This is an attempt to build up a concept of history from a study of the Qur'an.

ISBN: 969-408-0045  
Pages 228

Overseas:  
US \$ 30(including postage)

In Pakistan:  
Rs. 250/- (Postage Extra)

**ISLAMIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

**P.O. Box: 1035, Islamabad (Pakistan), Ph: 92-51-9261761-5 Ext: 308**

**Email: [iri.publications@iiu.edu.pk](mailto:iri.publications@iiu.edu.pk)**