

## **Hadeeth: Rules for Acceptance and Transmission**

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### **Prologue**

#### **The Condition for the Acceptance of Hadeeth**

A Hadith must meet the following five criteria in order to be accepted in Islamic law as a source of legal ordinance:

##### **1. Continuity of the chain of transmitters (ittisal assanad):**

This chain of transmitters has to be unbroken in order for the Hadith to be acceptable. That is, none of the transmitters must be missing from the chain of narrators.

Furthermore, each transmitter must also have heard the Hadith in question directly from the transmitter before him. Knowledge of this is verified with the help of the biographical sciences of the science of Hadith.

##### **2. The integrity ('adalah) of the transmitters:**

The integrity of the transmitters is established in terms of their outward observance of Islam. In other words, it is ascertained that they practice what is required of them by Islam and they are not known to engage in the doing of things which are forbidden. Again this precondition is verified through the biographical sciences of Hadith.

##### **3. Soundness of memory of the transmitters:**

It must be verified through the biographical sciences of Hadith that each transmitter has a sound memory or that his books were accurate and that he only transmitted directly from his books.

##### **4. Conformity of the Hadith:**

It is important that the Hadith conform with similar Hadiths on the same topics which are stronger than it. This conformity should be both in the chain of transmitters and the text. Non-conformity in the chain of transmitters for example, might be if one of the transmitters in the chain is different than in a stronger version of the same Hadith. Non-conformity in text would imply divergence in the meaning of this Hadith with one which is stronger.

##### **5. The absence of defects ('illah) in the Hadith:**

A defect ('illah) in Hadith is defined as a hidden defect in the Hadith which takes away from its authenticity. A Hadith which has such a defect is one which appears to be free from defect at first while after investigation it is discovered that it has a certain defect which would not be apparent without investigation. The defect can be in the chain of transmitters or in text or both.

### Classification of Hadeeth

There are two distinct types of Hadith:

#### A. The recurrent Hadith (al-Hadith al-mutawatir):

This type of Hadith is decisive in its certainty (qat'i thubut). There is no doubt that it actually came down from the Prophet (peace be upon him). There are four conditions which must be present for a Hadith to be of this category:

1. At least four different persons must have narrated the Hadith.
2. It must have been impossible for these four or more to have concurred on a lie.
3. They must have narrated the Hadith from similar people (the first two conditions being applicable) from the beginning of the chain of transmitters until the end of it.
4. Their narration of Hadith must rely on the mind and the senses not the mind only because the mind might be mistaken (as imagining something to have happened).

#### B. The non-recurrent Hadith (al-Hadith al-ahad):

Any Hadith which is not recurrent (mutawatir) is called non-recurrent ('ahad). This category is divided into three sub-groupings according to the number of narrators of the Hadith:

1. The well-known Hadith (al-Hadith al-mashhur). This is a Hadith which has been narrated by three or more people in the chain of transmitters but did not arrive at the rank of recurrent Hadith.
2. The strong Hadith (al-Hadith al-aziz). This is a Hadith in which there are no less than two narrators in each part of the chain of narrators.
3. The rare Hadith (al-Hadith al-gharib). This is a Hadith which is narrated by a single person at one point in the chain of transmitters.

\*\* The non-recurrent Hadith is sub-divided into three more classifications regarding the beginning of the chain of transmitters:

1. The Elevated Hadith (al-Hadith al-Marfu). This is a Hadith the chain of narrators for which begins with the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).
2. The Suspended Hadith (al-Hadith al-mawquf). This is a Hadith the chain of narrators for which does not trace back to the Prophet (peace be upon him) but traces back instead to a Companion of the Prophet (peace be upon him).
3. The Cut-off Hadith (al-Hadith al-maqtu'). This is a Hadith the chain of narrators for which traces back only to a successor of the Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

\*\* The non-recurrent Hadith is broken into three classifications regarding their acceptance as a source of Islamic Law:

1. The authentic Hadith (al-Hadith as-sahih). This is a Hadith which satisfies the five criteria for accepting a Hadith.
2. The good Hadith (al-Hadith al-hasan). This is the Hadith which, like the authentic Hadith, also satisfies these five criteria except the third criteria of the soundness of memory of the transmitters is only slightly satisfied.
3. The weak Hadith (al-Hadith ad-da'if). This is a Hadith which does not satisfy all the five criteria for accepting Hadith. The weak Hadith is classified in different categories regarding which of these five criteria is not met:

C. Weakness in the Hadith due to lack continuity in the chain of transmitters.

1. The continuity is missing at the end of chain of transmitters the Hadith is called "hanging" (mu'allaq).
2. If the continuity is missing in the middle of the chain of transmitters, the Hadith is known as "interrupted" (munqati').
3. If two successive transmitters or more are missing in the middle of the chain of transmitters, the Hadith is called "problematic" (mu'dil).
4. If the first transmitter, a Companion of the Prophet (peace be upon him), is missing from the chain of transmitters, the Hadith is called "incompletely transmitted" (mursal).

D. Weakness in the Hadith due to lack of integrity ('adalah) in narrators.

1. A Hadith which has been fabricated is known as "fabricated" (mawdu').
2. If the Matn (text) of a Hadith came down through one channel of transmission only and the transmitter of that Hadith does not satisfy the criteria for integrity or his memory is not good then the Hadith is said to be "rejected" (munkar).
3. If a Hadith is transmitted by somebody who is charged with lying and that Hadith is known only through his transmission then the Hadith is said to be "abandoned" (matruk).
4. Three subgroupings of weak Hadith are classified as:

4.1. Mudallas is the chain of "forged" transmitters.

This is a Hadith which the transmitter has transmitted from some other transmitter whom he has met but under whom he did not study, yet regarding whom he transmitted the Hadith in a way implying that he heard from him.

4.2. Forged regarding teachers (mudallas ash-shuyukh).

This is a Hadith in which the transmitter calls his teacher (shaikh) by nicknames other than the names by which he is well known.

4.3. Forged regarding the naming of transmitters (mudallas at-tasiyah).

This is a Hadith which is transmitted by a weak transmitter between trustworthy transmitters

who met each other with the weak transmitter between them having deleted, so as not to be deleted.

5. If one of the transmitter of the Hadith is not named then the Hadith is called "obscure" (mubham).
6. If something has been added to a Hadith, then that Hadith is known as "interpolated" (mudraj), interpolation might be in the chain of narrators or in the text (matn).

**E. Weakness due to the inaccuracy of the memories of the transmitters:**

1. If a Hadith has been transmitted by different weak channels, non of them being stronger than the others, then the Hadith is called "shaky" (mud-tarib).
2. If there is a change in the wording of the Hadith then the Hadith is called either "distorted" (musahhaf) or "interpolated" (muharaf).
3. If there is inversion in the words of the chain of narrators (sanad) or text (matn) of the Hadith, then the Hadith is called "inverted" (maqlub).

**F. If the weakness is due to non-conformity of a Hadith then it is called "odd" (shadhhdh).**

**G. Weakness in a Hadith because of a "defect" ('illah).**

In this case the Hadith is called "defective" (mu'all).

It has to be stressed that in Islamic Law only authentic (sahih) and good (hasan) Hadiths are used in deriving ordinance.